

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: Whifler, William A., House

Other names/site number: House at 1544 Drake Ave. Burlingame, CA

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1544 Drake Avenue

City or town: Burlingame State: CA County: San Mateo

Not For Publication: Vicinity: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 ___ meets ___ does not meet 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> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </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.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/California Modern

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: reinforced concrete; Walls: horizontal redwood siding, glass curtain walls, structural steel; Roof: metal/copper; Chimney: wood, metal/copper; Soffit undersides: plaster; Decking & Railing: wood

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 William A. Whifler House, located at 1544 Drake Avenue in Burlingame, is a one-story wood and masonry building of roughly 1,500 square feet built on the site of a large formal garden that was parceled off from the architect's childhood home. Using a steel frame for the living room, carport area at the front of the home, the house captures as much sunlight in a shaded area as possible by using glass curtain walls to sill level around the entire perimeter of the living room. The house is cantilevered over the back portion of the lot with a four foot walkway following the perimeter of the house around the back and connecting with the decked interior. Glass is framed between redwood mullions from floor to ceiling in some areas to take advantage of views such as the reflecting pool off one corner of the living room. The deck is viewed through floor to ceiling glass non-bearing walls. The vaulted roof swings delicately into the overhang portion of the house, remaining light in character, while the rugged strength of steel carries out the soffit design of the overhang. The building has undergone no modifications since construction in 1958. It is in pristine condition retaining high historical integrity.

Narrative Description

Site

The house is situated on a parcel approximately 8,600 square feet in area. The parcel, a portion of which straddles Mills Creek, generally is rectangular in shape, measuring 144.58 feet and 133.5 feet on its east and west sides respectively. The north side measures 65.3 feet, with the

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parcel's northeast corner being clipped off at a shallow angle. The parcel's south side measures 60 feet and is angled parallel to Drake Avenue.

The house is a single-story, single-family building that consists of a set of simple rectilinear forms that fit snugly onto a trapezoidal site. The front elevation of the house is set back a relatively short distance from the street. A driveway located at the southwest corner of the site, situated between a cypress and a mature redwood tree, provides access to an attached carport that accommodates one car. The carport is open on three sides and is adjacent to a wood deck that leads to the house's front entry.

A narrow yard along the east side of the parcel consists of bamboo planting and a decorative wood fence that screen the house's east elevation. This narrow space also provides access from the house's front yard to a relatively small, rectangular courtyard with wood deck, whose three edges are defined by windows and doors of the house's interior living spaces. The private, intimate feeling of this exterior living space is enhanced by vigorous wisteria present along the east perimeter of the property.

The rear portion of the house and its wood deck cantilever over an abrupt slope leading down to Mills Creek, which bisects the northwest corner of the site. The landscape of the house's rear yard is largely uncultivated, and slopes on each side of the creek bed are covered in ivy. The expanse of Mills Creek, running through the neighborhood and present on adjacent and nearby properties, offers a feeling of spaciousness to the narrow width, and somewhat confining nature, of the lot configuration of 1544 Drake Avenue.

Exterior

The house is configured in a U-shape that creates a small courtyard on its east side. A covered one-vehicle carport on the southwest corner is accessed by a short driveway from Drake Avenue. The carport is open at the north and south ends, with a flat roof supported by a full height concrete masonry wall on the east, and by two six-foot concrete masonry piers and steel V-shape support members on the west side. The carport's openness minimizes its visual impact on the house, which is entered modestly through a wood door set back deeply from the front wall of the house. The front entry is flanked by the carport wall on the left and by the masonry end wall of the living room on the right. The front door is set between narrow glass sidelights that fill the remaining area of the entry wall.

Two large flat roof planes with wide overhangs float above walls of the house at two different heights. The overhangs on the lower roof extend into the interior of the house, creating soffits that contain integral rectangular down light fixtures. The undersides of the soffits and roof overhangs are finished in painted plaster.

A tall peaked roof, its exterior finished with standing seam copper panels, runs the length of the living area and is penetrated at the northeast corner by a tall chimney sheathed with vertical redwood siding and capped with a copper rain hood. The open gable ends of the copper roof are infilled with glass curtain walls, affording considerable penetration of natural light into the

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interiors as well as offering views to the outside. The higher section of flat roof begins nine feet above the floor level and covers the remainder of the house, following the outline of the walls with a broad 3'-6" overhang.

The front wall of the house consists of three bays of glass curtain wall set between masonry end walls and intermediate masonry piers. The lower part of the wall is wood-framed with redwood siding on the exterior. The glass panels of the curtain wall first run horizontally above the lower wall creating a glass shelf, and then extend vertically until meeting the painted plaster of the flat roof overhang above.

The remaining exterior walls of the house are finished in 1x10 redwood horizontal siding with a one-inch reveal between boards, which emphasize the horizontality of the forms. Exterior openings are filled with redwood sash windows, both fixed and casement, and with metal sliding patio doors.¹

The small, U-shaped courtyard patio, formed by three walls of the house and the east side property line fence, is surfaced with 2x4 wood decking that continues around the house on the north and west sides. Much of the deck on the north and west sides is cantilevered over the steep slope that leads to Mills Creek. The perimeter railing of the deck consists of horizontal redwood members and a flat redwood cap, and is supported by double 2x4 redwood posts spaced four feet apart.

The sloping topography and soil conditions at the site posed an engineering challenge that was resolved efficiently and elegantly by a hybrid foundation system consisting of a combination of concrete and masonry stem walls on concrete grade beams, supported in turn on 20-inch diameter concrete piers bearing eight or twelve feet below natural grade. The number of these expensive piers was minimized by the substantial cantilevered span of the wood floor framing that extends nearly 12 feet beyond the rear wall of the house. The span is reduced by cantilevered concrete fins or haunches perpendicular to the rear foundation walls. This engineering solution has the additional aesthetic benefit of creating a deck that appears to float over the rear yard with what appears to be minimal support.

Interior

Upon entering the house, the visitor arrives in a small rectangular vestibule, facing a pair of shoji screen sliding doors concealing a coat closet. The vestibule also serves as a transition point, from which one turns left to enter the open dining room or turns right to enter the spacious living room, the signature living area of the house.

The living room is an amalgam of remarkably original design ideas that ingeniously form a harmonious whole. One of the most notable and creative concepts is the exposed peaked roof structure in which nearly all the components are visible, yet detailed and finished in a warm manner and perfectly scaled for the small house.

¹ Contrary to the exterior siding as built, the original drawings called for substantial 2x2 projecting horizontal redwood battens to run in between each siding board.

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This peaked gable roof is supported by four W-shaped rigid steel bents that span the width of the living room. These 6" x 6" wide flange Bethlehem Steel members, welded and fabricated by the Golden West Iron Works of South San Francisco², appear to rest very lightly on six-foot tall by two-foot wide concrete masonry piers while, at the same time, supporting the insulated plywood roof deck consisting of 2x4 redwood purlins at 8-inch centers. The shorter, outer arms of the W-shaped bents support a four-foot wide exterior roof overhang that continues into the living interior to form a soffit with recessed lights. Two V-shaped bents sitting on masonry piers support the flat roof over the carport and entry.

The living room is wrapped in a glass and redwood curtain wall. The glass is butt-jointed at corners and has a horizontal return that lands on a short wall, creating a glass shelf. The glazing provides a glimpse of the exposed steel roof structure above the six-foot masonry piers.

Facing east in the living room, one soon notices an interesting asymmetrical composition in masonry with a firebox sitting on a thin concrete hearth slab that floats several inches above the oak flooring. The slab appears to extend out beyond the walls to create a hovering plane outside the corner of the living room.

A masonry wall extends a few inches over the firebox opening and a low masonry wall completes the fireplace end wall composition. The wood-framed chimney can be seen running vertically in the corner while the rest of the wall is filled with a glass curtain wall with redwood mullions.

The north wall of the living room faces the U-shaped courtyard and consists of glass that spans floor to ceiling and runs just outside the face of the concrete masonry piers. A slatted wood bench hovers above the floor and extends through to the exterior, where the only supports for the bench appear to be the three ornamental slatted wood elements installed near the masonry piers.

The gable end walls of the living room are filled with glass above the masonry, flooding the space with light. While perception of steel and masonry tends to be one of strength and mass, the materials in this composition are sized so carefully, and detailed so thoughtfully, that the overall effect of the room is one of great lightness and delicacy. The steel roof bents are only six-inch sections, and the exposed roof purlins only 2x4 wood members. The wide roof overhangs extend inside the room to become soffits that appear to float above the steel supporting structure, and the space is enclosed by glass in a way that articulates the lucidity of the design. The overall composition of the living room wing is a sophisticated synthesis of wood, steel, masonry, and glass elements that express the individual attributes of each material with great clarity, warmth and respect for the human scale of the occupants.

² *San Mateo Times*, March 4, 1960.

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A small dining room opens directly off the living room and provides a small seating area with steel sliding patio doors looking into the courtyard. A custom designed rectangular wood light fixture is suspended over the dining area.

The kitchen is a small and efficient U-shaped space with full width windows above the countertop across the west wall, looking out into the trees. Upper and lower mahogany cabinets are designed with streamlined integral wood pulls. Lower cabinets are topped with Formica countertops.

The only other circulation space in the house consists of a very short hallway that connects the remaining three rooms in the house: the two bedrooms and the single bathroom. The walls are finished with mahogany paneling, and interior doors are flat slab hollow core mahogany. Operable hallway casement windows are tall and separated by redwood mullions. Hallway closet doors are cleverly designed bi-fold units that include full height vertical wood pulls as hardware, so discrete that the doors appear at first glance to be wood paneled walls rather than doors.

A small closet that provides space for the water heater is neatly located in the corner of this end hallway, concealed with blind doors to hide the presence of this utility.

The bathroom includes a built-in sunken bathtub with shower, a vanity counter with sink, a toilet, and a small cabinet. Large windows look out onto the rear deck and trees beyond.

The design, construction and detailing of the house unmistakably reflect the highly original thinking of an architect with the benefit of an engineering background and an uncommon interest in how components and systems can be combined in order to achieve rational and harmonious solutions.

Alterations

The house has remained in the family since its construction and no significant remodeling or alterations have taken place other than those involving repair or ordinary maintenance delineated as follows. A new cooktop and wall oven have been installed in existing cutouts with no modification made to surrounding countertops or cabinetry. A new refrigerator required the deepening of the cutout which was accomplished indiscernibly by expanding the rear opening eight inches into an adjacent closet space. All cabinetry retains the original natural wood varnish; tile countertops and linoleum flooring are original. The forced air heater has been replaced twice. 2x4 fir exterior decking as specified per the original plans has been replaced as needed. Exterior redwood siding has been painted with a clear weather sealer substitute of the original clear logwood oil. Interior sheetrock walls have been repainted. All natural unfinished wood throughout the residence has remained unfinished. The building is essentially unchanged since completion in 1958.

Integrity

Location: The building occupies its original location.

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Setting: The neighborhood's historic setting of single-family one story residential structures of typically 2 bedroom and one bath constructed between 1924 to 1939 remains unchanged in terms of use, the aesthetics of the 1500 block of Drake Avenue has been altered somewhat in the years 2005 to 2010 with the introduction of larger, two-story, four bedroom and four bath houses.

Design: Whifler's original design remains totally intact.

Materials: With very minor exception, such as the use of non-historic or substitute materials for making necessary adjustments for appliance upgrades, ordinary repairs, and conducting periodic maintenance, original materials and finishes of the house are intact.

Workmanship: The workmanship that created this house has not been altered or otherwise compromised. Having remained in the family since construction, the house has undergone no alterations or remodeling and exists in pristine original condition.

Feeling: The feeling that belongs to or has been long associated with this historic mid-century modernist house is intact.

Association: The original location, a largely unchanged setting, the wholly intact design, the presence of original materials and finishes, the absence of evidently altered or compromised workmanship, and the definitive feeling of mid-century, modernist design and construction strongly present in this house satisfy the aspect of association with an unusually high level of integrity.

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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

1958

Significant Dates

1958

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

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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 William A. Whifler House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture. The house embodies the distinctive characteristics of a mid-century California modernist residence, possesses high artistic values, and represents the work of master architect William Whifler. The home's well-crafted, cohesive use of wood, steel, masonry, and glass, interior rooms and improved outdoor spaces, including the Japanese garden in the house's front yard, coexist with one another through the extensive use of floor-to-ceiling planes of transparent glazing. With the notable exception of the peaked living room roof, ceilings and roof areas are horizontal planes that project expansively and appear to float above the walls. Widely-cantilevered eaves enhance the effect by extending into the interior of the house to create soffits that contain integral down light fixtures. The size and shape of the William Whifler House allow a harmonious union with the site and its setting and makes it somewhat rare in the mid -Peninsula communities of San Mateo, Burlingame, and Hillsborough where large homes are typical. The period of significance is 1958, the year of construction.

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

Historical Background

On the 10th day of November, 1920, William and Anna Foepfel purchased real property from Charles Milton and Anna D. Pray on Drake Avenue, Burlingame, identified in the record bill of sale by the County recorder as "lot number six (6), in block number fifty-four (54) as designated on a 'Map entitled 'Map of Easton Addition to Burlingame No. 5'.'" ³ This parcel subsequently was assigned a street address of 1540 Drake Avenue. At the time of purchase by the Foepfels, the 1920 Directory for San Mateo, Burlingame and Hillsborough by Willis L. Hall indicated that one Sven Phillip, whose occupation was listed as wireless engineer, resided at 1540 Drake Avenue; and that the sellers, Milton and Anna Pray, lived nearby at 1272 Cabrillo Avenue. ⁴ Historic records of the County Assessors' Office indicate that the residence located at 1540 Drake Avenue was constructed in 1912. ⁵

This 1540 Drake house, the childhood home of architect William Whifler, was a one story California Craftsman style bungalow with low-pitched roof lines, deeply overhanging eaves, and natural weathered wood shingled siding. The interior reflected the craftsman design esthetic with the predominate use of natural wood grained doors, framing, molding, wall paneling and built-ins. At the core of the homes layout was a U-shaped open courtyard that allowed for a

³ Indenture made on 10th of November, 1920, between Anna D. Pray and Charles Milton Pray, parties of the first part, and William J. Foepfel and Anna L. Foepfel, parties of the second part, thereby granting sale and conveyance of Lot 6, Block 54, as designated on Map of Easton Addition to Burlingame No. 5, and as recorded on the 16th day of August, 1911. Recorder's Office, County of San Mateo, Redwood City, California.

⁴ *Directory of San Mateo, Burlingame and Hillsborough*. Willis L. Hall, Burlingame Publishing Co. 1920.

⁵ *Assessor's Standards Division, County of San Mateo*. December 1, 1988.

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convergence of indoor and outdoor living spaces. Many of these California Craftsman design elements would be later reinterpreted in the California Modernist Whifler House that was to be built next door.⁶

Clara grew up in the family home at 1540 Drake Avenue with her father, mother, and brother Gustave. On June 26, 1925, she married Arthur R. Whifler, who was born January 27, 1882, in Michigan. Clara and Arthur had one child, William Arthur Whifler, who was born March 17, 1926.⁷ The 1930 U.S. Census indicated that Arthur R., Clara and son William lived in San Mateo County, without specifying a specific address. Clara's father, William Foepfel, died on April 11, 1930, in Burlingame. Clara's husband and William's father, Arthur, died on September 18, 1944, in Burlingame, and nine years later, in 1953, Clara also lost her mother.⁸ The 1956 Polk's Directory for San Mateo and Burlingame listed Mrs. Clara F. Whifler as the resident of 1540 Drake Avenue.⁹

A major resubdivision of Easton Addition No. 5 occurred circa September, 1957, affecting the Whifler family property at 1540 Drake Avenue together with other, adjacent properties that also line Mills Creek and are accessed from Cabrillo Avenue. This resubdivision was aptly named Creekside. An earlier resubdivision of Easton Addition No. 5 was named Ray Park. Presumably favored if not in fact initiated by the Whifler family, the parcel underlying 1540 Drake Avenue was subdivided into two new parcels: 1540 Drake Avenue that prior to this resubdivision action had been designated as lot 6, block 54, was now designated as lot 4, block 54; and the new second parcel, abutting it to the west, was designated as lot 5, block 54.¹⁰ This new second parcel appears to have been assigned a street address initially of 1550 Drake Avenue; however, per Polk's 1963 Directory for Burlingame, it was subsequently changed to 1544 Drake Avenue.¹¹

William A. Whifler

Born at Mt. Zion Hospital in San Francisco on March 17, 1926, Whifler was a graduate of Stanford University, from which he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts on June 17, 1951. He died on July 6, 1984, at the age of 58, and was buried at Cypress Lawn Memorial Park in Colma, California.¹²

William Whifler grew up in Burlingame as the only child of Arthur R. and Clara Foepfel Whifler. On June 27, 1948, he and Jean Caroline Flagstad were married at the Episcopal Church of St. Matthew in San Mateo. William and Jean had three children: Graeme William, Daniel Garret and Margaret Claire. Upon graduation from Stanford, Whifler designed and began

⁶ William Whifler in conversation with son, Graeme Whifler, circa 1967.

⁷ *Whifler Family Archives*.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Polk's Directories for San Mateo and Burlingame* (San Francisco and Los Angeles: R.L. Polk & Co., 1956).

¹⁰ Map of Creekside, subdivision of Easton Addition No. 5, Burlingame, San Mateo, California. Robert Parlett, C.E. September, 1957. Assessor's Office, County of San Mateo, Redwood City, California.

¹¹ *Polk's Directories for San Mateo and Burlingame* (San Francisco and Los Angeles: R.L. Polk & Co., 1963).

¹² *Whifler Family Archives*.

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constructing the family home at 20 La Salle Road, Hillsborough in 1952. The Whifler family retains ownership of this property.¹³

Beginning in the mid-1950s, and for some 20 years, Whifler's architectural practice consisted primarily of designing more than a dozen single-family residential buildings located within the mid-Peninsula communities of San Mateo, Burlingame, and Hillsborough. The notable exception occurred in 1968, when Whifler, with two other architects of record, designed the City of Burlingame's new City Hall.¹⁴

Whifler began his studies at Stanford in engineering, only later on moving into architecture. The course content and lasting influence of these two separate, and definitely related fields of study are readily apparent in his architectural solutions. This is especially true in the design and construction of the house at 1544 Drake Avenue that he built for his mother, Clara Whifler, in 1958.¹⁵

Like so many other students of architecture and architectural practitioners of the 1950s, Whifler unquestionably was influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright as well as major Modernists of the period, such as Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Richard Neutra. More than likely Whifler's understanding and appreciation of the design philosophy and values underlying Modernist architecture also was shaped by noteworthy Bay Area architects lecturing at Stanford in the early 1950s, such as Albert Henry Hill, who had partnered with John Ekin Dinwiddie and the German Modernist Erich Mendelsohn; Ernest J. Kump, an architect, author and inventor with offices in Palo Alto and New York City; and Eldridge T. Spencer, architect for Stanford's Stern and Wilbur Halls and Tresidder Union. In addition, Stanford's faculty at the time included Matt Kahn, a widely recognized pioneer in design coursework at Stanford.

The house at 1544 Drake Avenue epitomizes the distinctive, character-defining features that are definitively associated with Modernist architecture: natural integration of indoor spaces with outdoor living areas; floor-to-ceiling glazing for penetration of natural light; an organic melding of wood, glass, steel and masonry; and sizing and shaping of the building to achieve a harmonious union with the site and its setting. Given its extraordinary design and use of building materials, as well as its 1958 date of construction, Whifler's house most likely existed at this point in time as a rare, exemplary expression of Modernist architecture among the mid-Peninsula communities of Burlingame, Hillsborough, and San Mateo. In 1965, The Women's Architectural League and the Northern California Chapter of the A.I.A. featured 1544 Drake Avenue in a local house tour. Reporting on the tour, an article in the *Burlingame Advance Star* observed: "As further contrast with the large homes [of Hillsborough] is the small, exquisite home of Mrs. Clara Whifler, designed by her architect son, William A. Whifler."¹⁶

¹³ *Whifler Family Archives*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Burlingame Advance Star*, March 14 and March 28, 1965.

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The title block on the plan set for 1544 Drake Avenue shows Hannum & Whifler, Architects, University Avenue, Palo Alto, as record architects for this project. An article featuring design and construction of 1544 Drake Avenue that appeared in a March 4, 1960, issue of the *San Mateo Times* cited Ed Peterson, San Mateo, as contractor; Golden West Iron Works of South San Francisco as fabricator of the steel frames; Michel & Pfeffer Iron Works Inc of South San Francisco as fabricator of the steel sliding glass doors; and Warren and Siebert, Palo Alto, as structural engineers.¹⁷

Early Whifler residential projects, completed prior to the Drake Avenue house, began with the house at 20 La Salle Road, Hillsborough, which he designed and built as the family home beginning in 1952. According to Graeme Whifler, “the architect’s home underwent eight major alterations and additions that nearly doubled the structure’s square footage, and served as experimental canvases for design concepts. Constructed in large part by the architect and his family.”

While apprenticing under Oscar Thayer, and prior to obtaining his license on October 8, 1956 as a registered California architect, Whifler completed work on two other early houses: 620 Pullman, Hillsborough, featured in the *California Book of Homes* in its 1955 issue; and 1280 View Haven, Hillsborough, completed in 1956 and referred to as the “Pentagon” house by Graeme Whifler due to its character-defining design and use of two pentagon pods. These two houses, along with the Whifler family house at 20 La Salle Road, have retained most, if not all, of their original design integrity and construction.

In addition to 1544 Drake Avenue and the three early houses identified immediately above, Whifler completed 10 other known residential projects.¹⁸ The last home that Whifler designed, 240 Glen Aulin, Burlingame, was completed in 1973. Graeme Whifler has observed that his father’s design for this house was inspired by major cathedrals in Europe, as the floor plan of the house resembles a cross, at the center of which is a circular kitchen. This house remains intact and under original ownership.

A second house that also remains under original ownership, its historic integrity reported to be intact and in exceptionally good condition, was completed circa 1968 and is located at 2180 Forest View, Hillsborough. Graeme Whifler has characterized this house as “a gem rich in detail.”

The other residential projects attributable to Whifler are located in communities on the San Francisco Peninsula, with the exception of a modest, two-story house located in Greenbrae, Marin County, and a cabin located on Sardine Lake, near Sierra City in Plumas County, California. It is Graeme Whifler’s opinion that most of these other residential buildings have experienced moderate to extensive alterations, thereby significantly diminishing their historic integrity.

¹⁷ *San Mateo Times*, March 4, 1960.

¹⁸ *Whifler Family Archives*.

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Whifler's one and only non-residential project was the new Burlingame City Hall, completed in April, 1970. Whifler and two other architects, Albert W. Kahl, AIA, and Venice T. Howell, AIA, worked jointly in designing and supervising construction of this civic building located at 501 Primrose Avenue. Its most evident, character defining feature is the circular, octagon-shaped structure housing chambers of the City Council, standing apart from and connected to the curvilinear, two-story building containing the City's departmental offices. An enclosed, single-story arcade-like structure connects the Council chambers to City offices. Cost of the new complex was reported in the Burlingame Advance Star as being \$1,245,512.56, a source of some controversy within the community, as the former City Hall, located at 237 Park Avenue and erected in 1914, had reportedly cost only \$25,000.00.¹⁹

With the obvious exception of the new Burlingame City Hall, for which Whifler was one of three architects commissioned for the project, Whifler preferred to work on his own for the 20-plus years in which he designed and supervised construction of his residential buildings. According to John Lucchesi, an architect, a student of Whifler's at the College of San Mateo, and author of several articles regarding Whifler's work, Whifler always desired to work alone, for he liked being a sole practitioner and wanted any mistakes to be his own. Whifler, he recalled, was very sensitive to the importance of light, and especially enjoyed working with materials, with a pronounced interest in welding, putting things together and always wanting to make sure things worked. Lucchesi also observed that Whifler was a very modest and humble designer, never promoting his work or himself.²⁰

Beginning in 1963 and continuing until 1971, Polk's *San Mateo and Burlingame Directories* indicated that Whifler maintained an office at 1254 Howard Avenue in Burlingame. Polk's Directories during that period also indicate that a neighboring suite at that same address was often occupied by a fellow architect, Venice T. Howell, AIA.²¹

Whifler as Teacher and Mentor

In 1967, Whifler and Paul Zimmerman co-founded the Department of Architecture at the College of San Mateo (CSM),²² where Whifler taught classes and studios at the department until his death in 1984.²³ According to Zimmerman, a fellow faculty member and close colleague, Whifler's lasting legacy at CSM was teaching and working closely with young students.²⁴

Whifler and Zimmerman often jointly conducted design studios and critiqued students' projects together. According to Zimmerman, the design philosophy that Whifler brought to the studio and classroom was "total architecture", i.e., structure, color, materials, building things. Zimmerman believes that Whifler's initial study at Stanford of structural engineering definitely entered into

¹⁹ *Burlingame Advance Star*, April 1, 1970.

²⁰ Telephone interview with John Lucchesi, architect, and former student of William Whifler, May 6, 2014.

²¹ *Polk's Directories for San Mateo and Burlingame* (San Francisco and Los Angeles: R.L. Polk & Co., 1971).

²² American Institute of Architects, San Mateo Chapter, *Charrette Newsletter*, Summer, 2007.

²³ *Ibid*, Summer, 2002.

²⁴ Telephone interview with Paul C. Zimmerman, former architecture faculty member at College of San Mateo and close colleague of William Whifler, May 6, 2014.

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and contributed to his overall thinking about design and architecture.²⁵ Whifler evidently employed a method for teaching and drawing referred to at CSM as the “anti box” theory.

Echoing the observations of John Lucchesi, Zimmerman noted that Whifler “did not just paste things together,” and thought it was essential “to have all fingers fit into the glove”. For Whifler, there was no place in architecture for “cookie stamp” work; each house was to be well sited, well designed, and well put together. In short, Zimmerman said, Whifler was “just a damn good architect.”²⁶

Conclusion

The design and construction of this house together achieve a refined elegance as is evident in the building’s well-crafted, cohesive use of building materials that characterize modernist architecture: wood, steel, masonry, and glass. Interior rooms and improved outdoor spaces, such as the U-shaped, rectangular court and the Japanese garden in the house’s front yard, coexist with one another through the extensive use of floor-to-ceiling planes of transparent glazing. With the notable exception of the peaked living room roof, supported by steel frames fabricated in a manner whose custom configuration suggests the letter W, the ceilings and roof areas are horizontal planes that project expansively, enhanced by widely-cantilevered soffited eaves.

In addition to embracing California, and more specifically, Bay Area Modernism, the Whifler House draws inspiration from an intensely personal and local source, the next-door childhood home of the architect, a 1912 California Craftsman bungalow that had at its core a U-shaped courtyard. Formed with a similar U-shaped courtyard, the Whifler Home at 1544 Drake draws upon a delicate floating masonry and steel structure to hang a curtain of glass creating a masterwork of Modernism that is in part a re-imagination of the architect’s boyhood Craftsman home. The Whifler House exemplifies a historically significant contribution to Modernism in both design and use of materials. It also embodies a unique vision of high artistic values and is the work of a master. It is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Historic Maps and Records

Assessor's Book 025, Block 224, Lots 10 and 11.

District Court of the 12th Judicial District, County of San Mateo. Ansel I. Easton and D. Ogden Mills vs. Charles Lux et al. re partition of Rancho Buri Buri. Decree filed June 17, 1869.

Indenture made on 10th of November, 1920, between Anna D. Pray and Charles Milton Pray, parties of the first part, and William J. Foepfel and Anna L. Foepfel, parties of the second part, thereby granting sale and conveyance of Lot 6, Block 54, as designated on Map of Easton Addition to Burlingame No. 5, and as recorded on the 16th day of August, 1911.

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Map of the County of San Mateo. Davenport Bromfield, County Surveyor, August 1894.

Map of the County of San Mateo. Geo. A. Kneese, County Surveyor, 1927.

Map of Easton Addition to Burlingame, Number 5. F.W. Waggoner, C.E. Recorded in Vol. 7, Maps, Page 46 on Aug. 15, 1911, by H.O. Heiner, Recorder.

Map of Creekside, subdivision of Easton Addition No. 5. Burlingame, San Mateo, California. Robert Parlett, C.E. September, 1957.

Interviews

John Lucchesi, AIA, and former student of William Whifler. May 6, 2014.

Paul C. Zimmerman, former architecture faculty member at College of San Mateo and close colleague of William Whifler. May 6, 2014

Directories

Assessor's Standards Division, County of San Mateo. December 1, 1988.

Directory of Residents and Firms of San Mateo, Burlingame and Hillsborough. Compiled and published by Beverly W. Wall, June 1, 1918.

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Whifler Family Archives

Graeme Whifler, son and first child of William and Jean Whifler, compiled and provided the authors of this report with two DVDs containing copies of family archival materials, including birth certificates; marriage licenses; citizenship papers; diplomas; newspaper articles and newsletters; historic photographs of family residences at 1540 and 1544 Drake Avenue; architectural plans and drawings for 1544 Drake Avenue; and historic and contemporary photographs that illustrate the works of William Whifler.

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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
- Other

Name of repository: Whifler Family Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

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

1. Latitude: 37.587537 Longitude: -122.378952

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

San Mateo County Assessor's Parcel Number 025-224-110 identified as lot 11, block 224, on page 22 of Assessor's book 25.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Creekside subdivision (1957), creating lot 5 (1544 Drake Avenue) from formerly larger lot 4 (1540 Drake Avenue).

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Graeme Whifler
organization: _____
street & number: 3235 Cornwall Drive
city or town: Glendale state: CA zip code: 91206
e-mail: graemeww@gmail.com
telephone: (818) 244-7211
date: May 2015; Revised November 2015

Assisted by

Thomas Rex Hardy, AIA, Architect
Robert Bruce Anderson
510 Stockton St #101
San Francisco, CA 94108

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.)

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.

Name of Property: William A. Whifler House
City or Vicinity: Burlingame
County: San Mateo
State: California
Photographer: Thomas Rex Hardy
Date Photographed: April 11, 2014
Number of photos: 16

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- 1 of 16 Drake Avenue street view front of house, camera facing northeast.
- 2 of 16 From Japanese style yard to front of house, camera facing north.
- 3 of 16 Front entranceway, camera facing northeast.
- 4 of 16 Living room with entrance and dining area rear center right, camera faces northwest.
- 5 of 16 Living room with open ended peaked roof, W-shaped steel bents, concrete masonry piers, glass curtain walls, and U-shaped courtyard to left. Camera faces southeast.
- 6 of 16 Living room, camera facing west.
- 7 of 16 Living room, southeast corner.
- 8 of 16 Living Room corner seen from courtyard patio showing floating hearth extension, slatted bench, and butt joint at glass corner. Camera facing southwest.
- 9 of 16 Living room seen from courtyard patio, camera facing west.
- 10 of 16 Chimney and peaked roof detail. Camera facing southwest.
- 11 of 16 Northwest side of house with wood deck cantilever, lot downsloping at side and rear to Mills Creek, camera facing northeast.
- 12 of 16 Front of house, three bays of glass curtain walls, view though living room to courtyard, camera facing east.
- 13 of 16 From carport to front entrance. Camera facing southwest.
- 14 of 16 Glass corner at living room reveals steel structural supports for roof. Camera facing east.
- 15 of 16 Exterior light fixture of slatted wood and fiberglass at front of house, camera facing east.
- 16 of 16 Interior light fixture, from dining area looking to living room and outside courtyard. Camera facing east.

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Location Map

1544 Drake Avenue, Burlingame, CA

Latitude: 37.587537

Longitude: -122.378952

Courtesy Google Earth



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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USGS Map

USGS Montara Mountain Quadrant

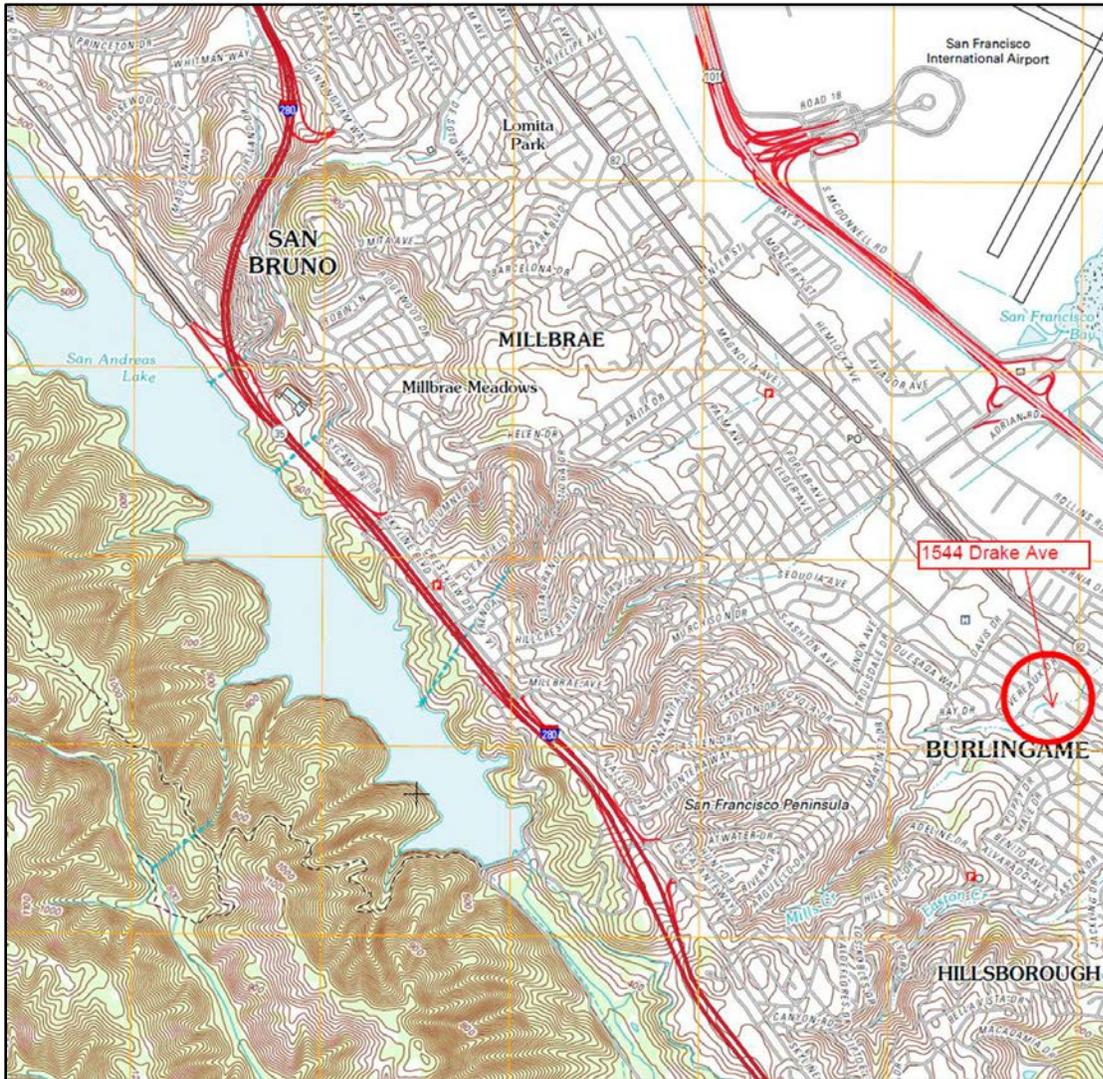
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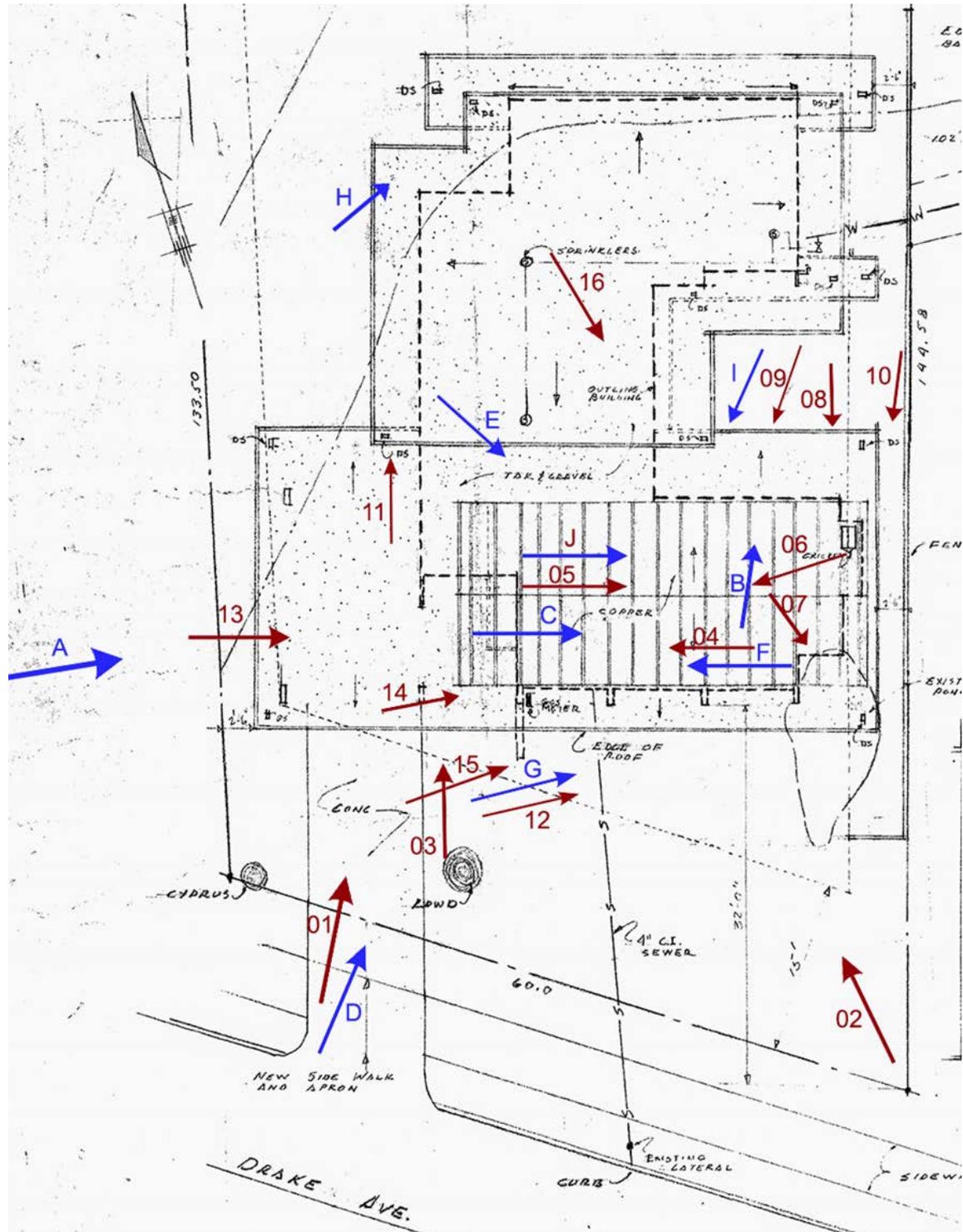


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Sketch Map/Photo Key

Photographs 1-16 are numbered in red (2014); figures A-J are lettered in blue (1958-2000).



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Figure A. Open view—before next door development, fencing, and landscaping—of east side of house cantilevering next to creek on left with carport center frame, camera facing east, circa 1958. Courtesy Whifler Family Collection, photographer unknown.



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Figure B. From living room, Clara Whifler, original owner and mother of William A. Whifler, seated in U-shaped courtyard, camera looking east, circa 1962. Courtesy Whifler Family Collection, photographer unknown.



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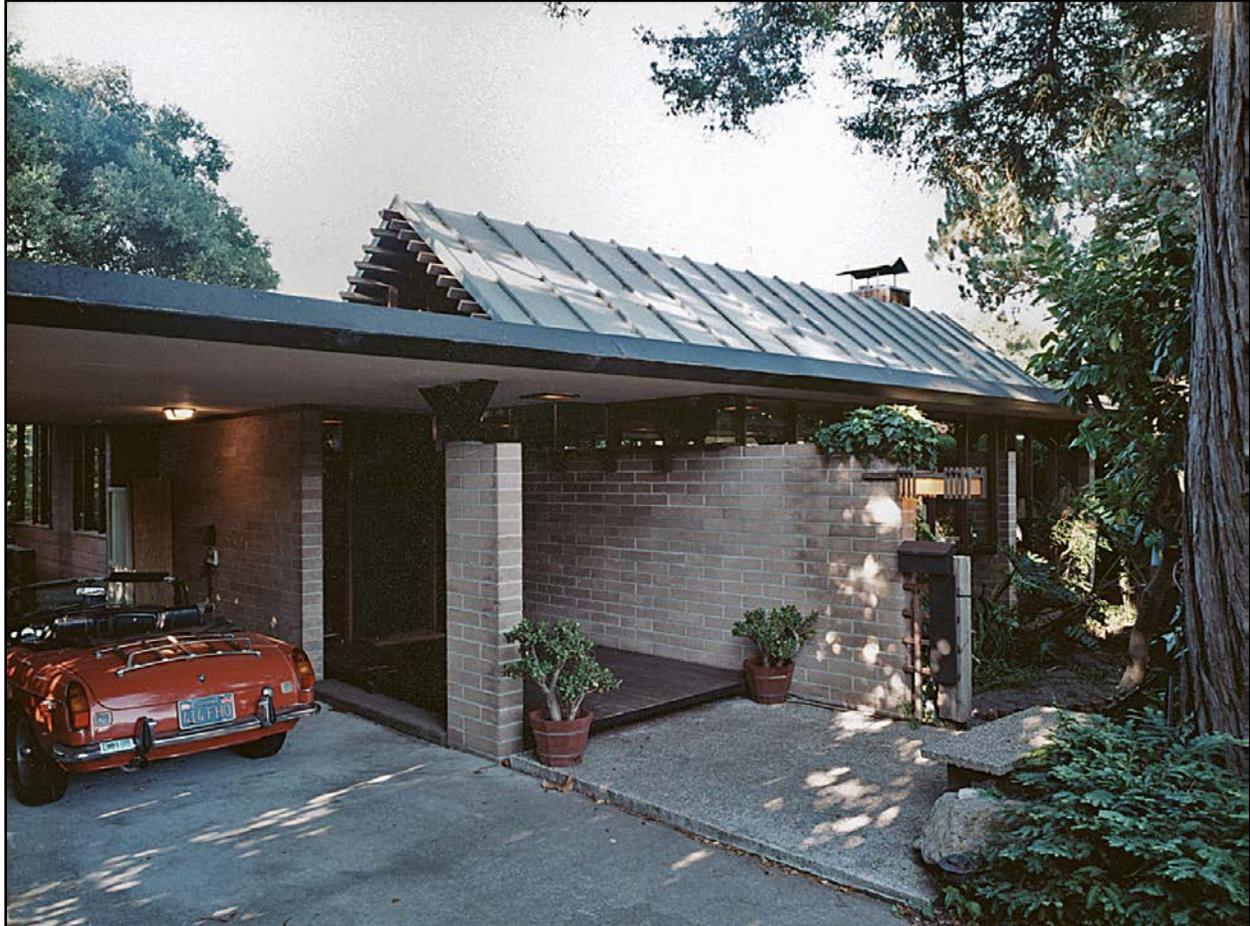
Figure C. Living room, Clara Whifler (left), local newspaper reporter (right), camera looking southeast, circa 1963. Courtesy Whifler Family Collection, photographer unknown.



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Figure D. Drake Avenue street view front of house, camera facing northeast, 2000. Graeme Whifler, Photographer.



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Figure E. Living room interior with exposed peak roof structure and fireplace, camera facing south, 2000. Graeme Whifler, Photographer.



Figure F. W-shaped rigid steel bents resting atop concrete masonry piers support peaked gable roof, roof overhang, and soffit, camera facing northwest, 2000. Graeme Whifler, Photographer.



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Figure G. Front of house, three bays of glass curtain walls, view through living room to courtyard, camera facing east, 2000. Graeme Whifler, Photographer.



Figure H. Rear of house, cantilevered wood wraparound deck with two flat roofs at planes/heights, Mills Creek down slope in background, camera facing east, 2000. Graeme Whifler, Photographer.



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Figure I. Living Room seen from courtyard patio. Steel sliding patio doors at right, camera facing west, 2000. Rebecca Raucher, Photographer.



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Figure J. Living Room with firebox, camera facing southeast, 2000. Rebecca Raucher, Photographer.



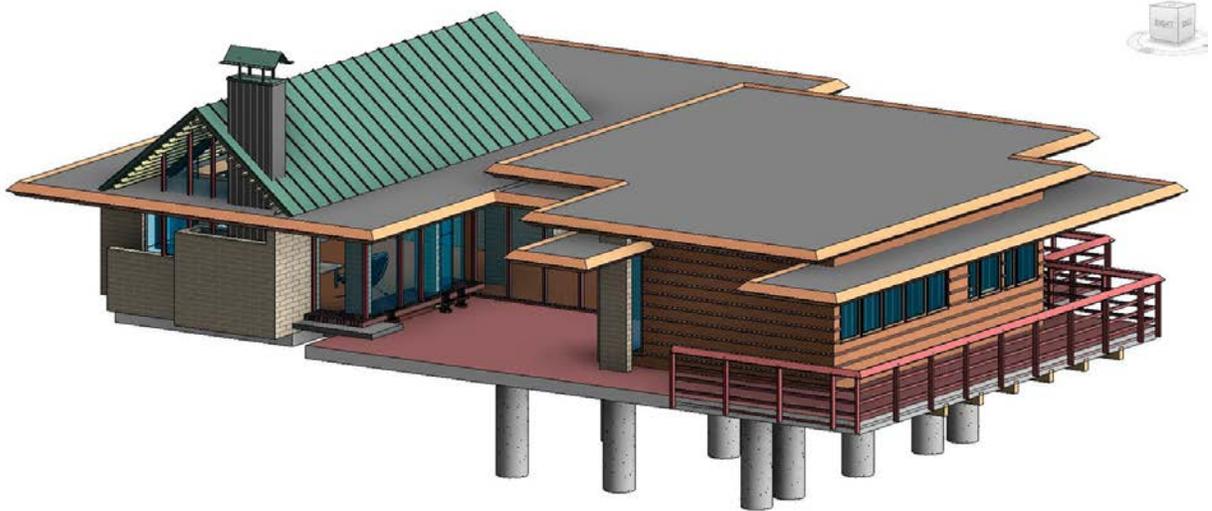
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Figure K. Front view of house with covered carport in the foreground, and standing seam copper roof over living room. *Revit model by Thomas Rex Hardy, AIA.*



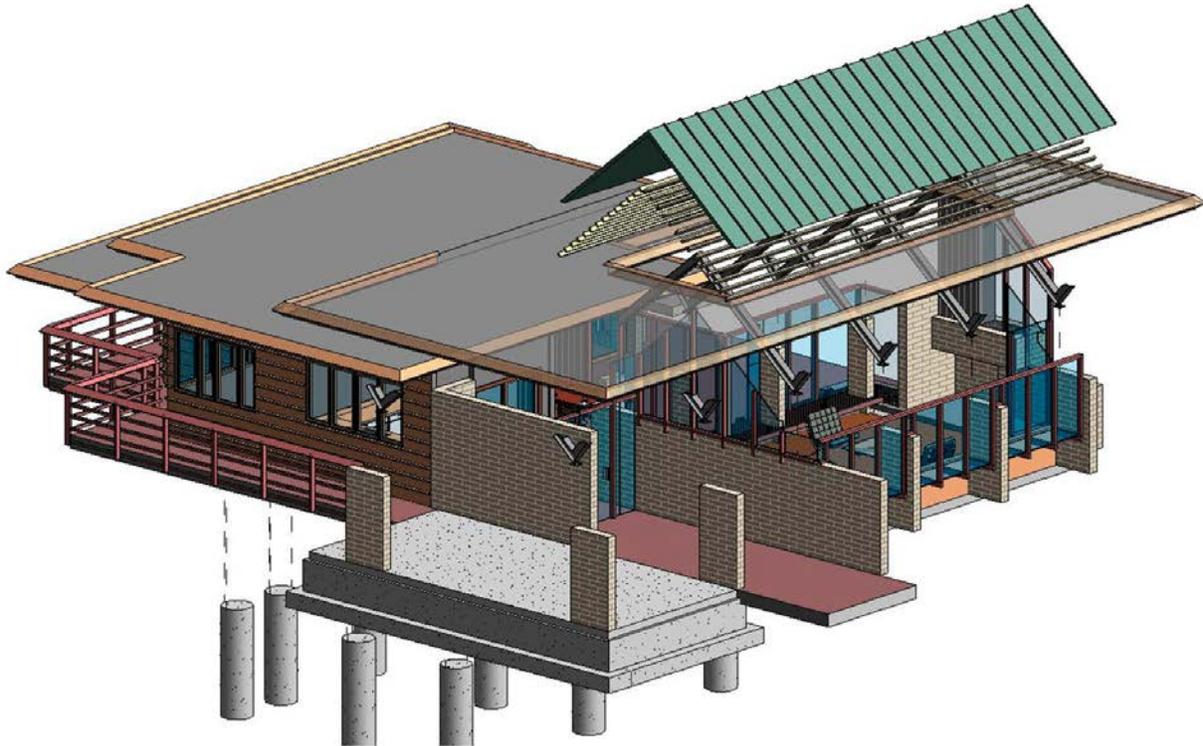
Figure L. Rear view of house showing wrap around deck and inner courtyard patio. *Revit model by Thomas Rex Hardy, AIA*



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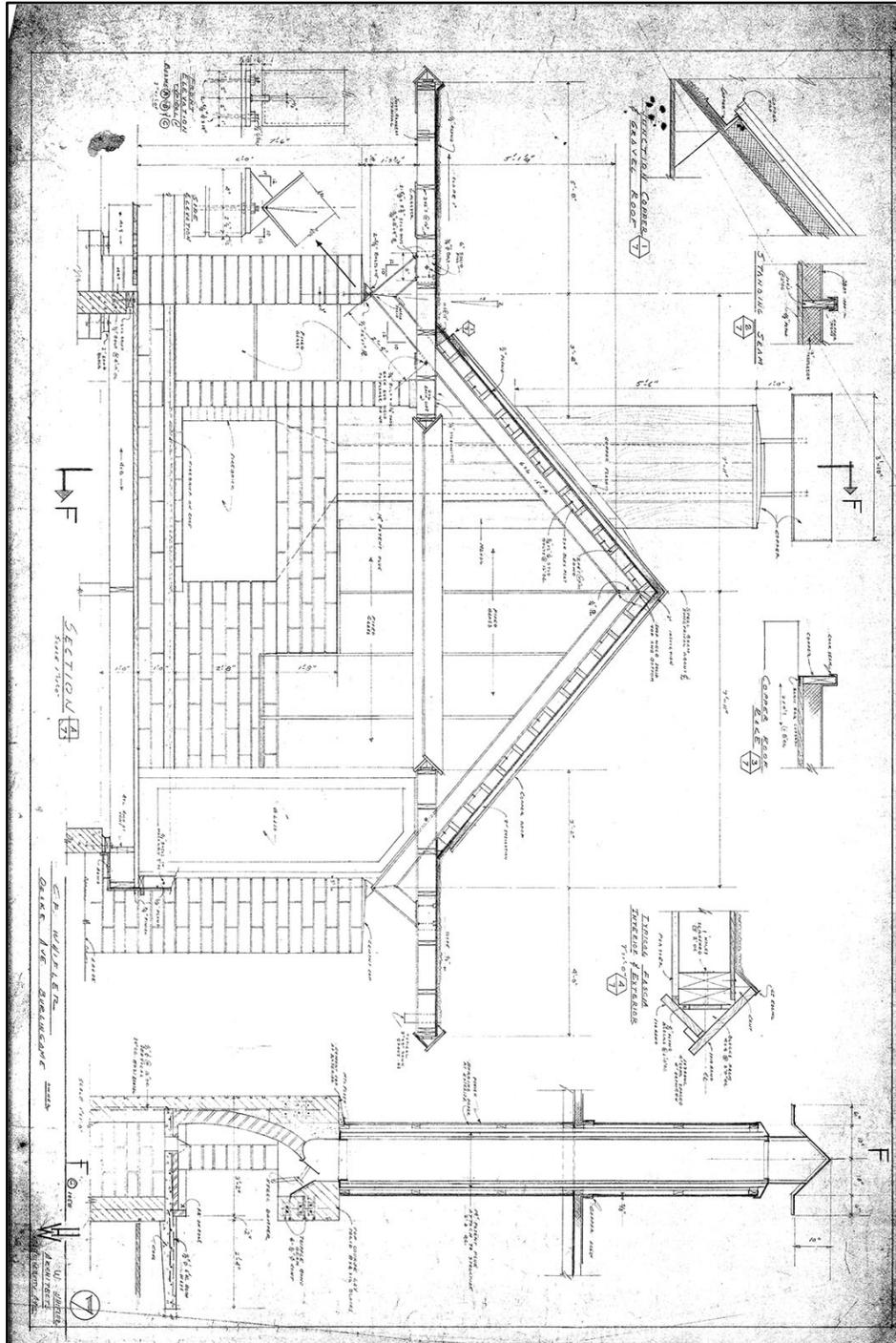
Figure M. Exploded front view showing concrete pier foundation, concrete masonry piers below W-shaped steel bents, glass curtain walls, and the 2x4 wood rafters supporting a copper clad roof. *Revit model by Thomas Rex Hardy, AIA*



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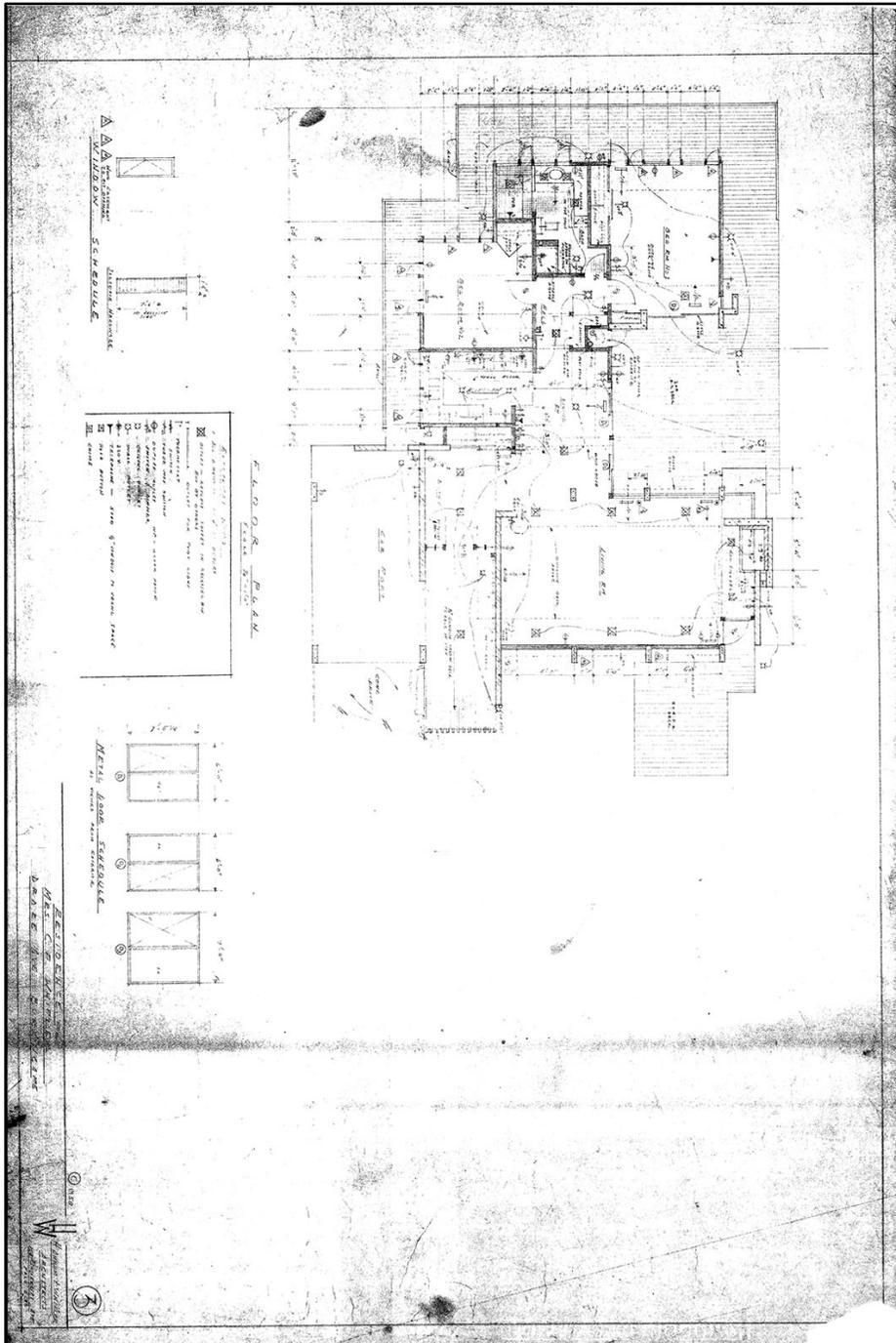
Figure N. Sheet 7 of original working drawings by Hannum & Whifler 1958.
Cross section through Living Room and chimney detail.



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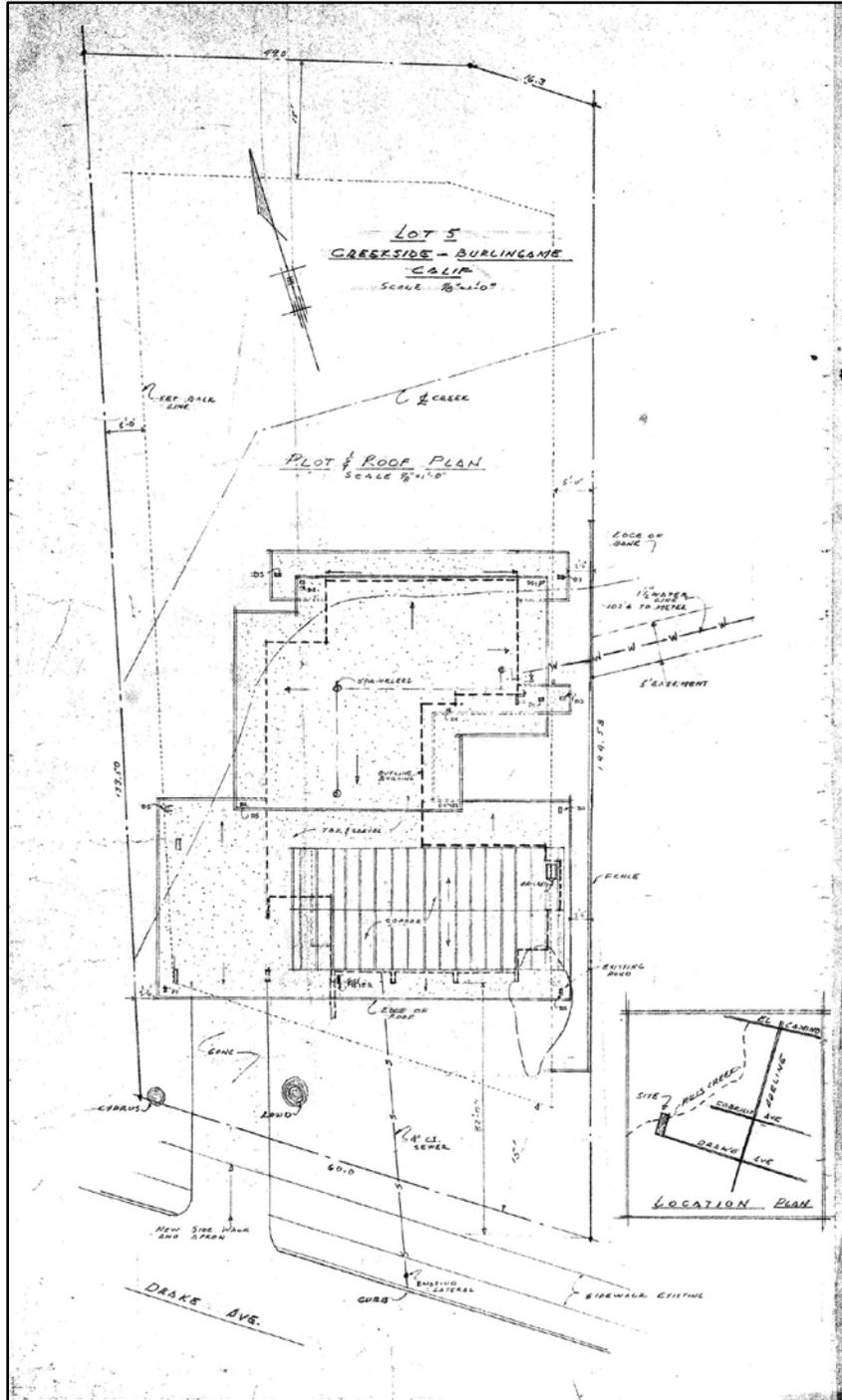
Figure O. Sheet 3 of original working drawings by Hannum & Whifler 1958. Floor Plan.



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Figure P. From sheet 1 of original working drawings by Hannum & Whifler 1958.
Plot and roof plan.



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Figure Q. Map of Creekside subdivision (1957), creating lot 5 (1544 Drake Avenue) from formerly larger lot 4 (1540 Drake Avenue).

