

**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.

**1. Name of Property**

**DRAFT**

Historic name: Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children

Other names/site number: Blind Children's Center

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: 4120 Marathon Street

City or town: Los Angeles State: California County: Los Angeles

Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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

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

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

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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

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#### 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>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
_____	_____	sites
<u>1</u>	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Mid-Century Modern

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Concrete; steel; 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children is located in the East Hollywood area of the City of Los Angeles. The L-shaped property is situated on the south side of the street in the approximate middle of the block between Vermont Avenue on the west and Madison Avenue on the east. It extends all the way to Melrose Avenue on the south. Contributing resources include the main building on the north facing Marathon Street, and in the center of the property, a garage/storage building and a swimming pool. The noncontributing additional classroom building southeast of the main building was constructed post-period of significance across the playground, which is not counted as a separate resource. Mid-Century Modern in style and two-stories in height, the main building is constructed of concrete and has a U-shaped plan. There is a driveway on the west side of the property with surface parking east of the main building and south along Melrose Avenue. Integrity of setting has been lost due to changes to the school grounds and increased surrounding development. The property retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.



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## **Narrative Description**

### **Main Building**

#### Exterior

The main building is one and two-stories in height and Mid-Century Modern in style, generally U-shaped in plan with a one-story wing projecting from the north façade. The roof of the two-story portion of the building was intended to be hipped according to the drawings dated May 5, 1950, and is actually flat with an overhanging eave.<sup>1</sup> The one-story wing has a flat roof with an overhanging eave. Steel windows are used throughout the building with the exception of the one-story wing. Secondary entrances consist of single or double doors covered by flat concrete canopies. Doors are metal clad wood cores with windows in the upper halves.

The primary (north) façade is three bays wide. The central bay is occupied by the recessed main entrance, which consists of a non-original, fully glazed, aluminum-framed system with double doors, transoms, and sidelights. Above the main entrance and extending across the west bay is a balcony with a non-original decorative railing. A steel casement window is centered above the main entrance on the second story. The east bay is occupied by steel casement windows on the first and second stories, which are stacked vertically. There is a raised concrete planter along the length of the east bay. The one-story wing that projects from the west bay has multi-paned, wood-framed picture windows on the north facade and west elevation. There is another raised concrete planter in front of the north-facing picture window. On the second story, there is a sliding glass door that opens on to the balcony.

The west and south elevations are simple in design with steel casement and hopper windows distributed irregularly across the first and second stories. At the north and south ends of the west elevation are doorways.

The east elevation was originally the open end of the U-shaped plan. The center of the U was partially filled with a one-story addition in 2009.<sup>2</sup> The façade of the addition is symmetrically arranged with a recessed set of double doors covered by a flat canopy and flanked by strips of metal windows set within a Kalwall system. The steel casement windows remain on the second story. Centered on the first story of the north wing is a doorway. To the south is a steel casement window. Originally there was an inset balcony in the southeast corner of the north wing. It was enclosed with windows at an unknown date. The south wing is one-story in height with a doorway in the center and a small steel sash window to the north.

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<sup>1</sup> LADBS Permit No. 1950LA10378, Certificate of Occupancy May 28, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> LADBS Permit No. 08014-10000-03382, March 10, 2009.

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### Interior

The first and second floors have double-loaded corridors. At the north end of the first floor is the lobby and administrative spaces such as a meeting room and offices. At the south end are a kitchen, classrooms, and toilet rooms. The second floor originally included a doctor's office, a guestroom, and a sitting room with access to the balcony, and bedrooms with shared bathrooms for boarding children. The bedrooms were repurposed as offices and the bathrooms have been removed. A partial basement at the south end of the building contains a boiler room and a laundry room.

### Alterations

Most, not all, of the alterations to the main building are documented by the building permit record. The building has experienced some minor alterations at unknown dates, an addition in 2009, and a comprehensive rehabilitation in 2023-24.<sup>3</sup> The main entrance doors were originally solid wood with fixed sidelights and transoms. The assembly was replaced with an aluminum-framed system at an unknown date and again in 2023-24, closer to the system in the 1950 drawings. A few steel windows had been replaced and metal security bars installed at dates unknown. In 2023-24, all of the windows and associated hardware were repaired and those previously replaced were restored. Additionally, the non-original security bars were removed.

In 2009, a one-story addition was constructed in the center of the U-shaped plan. When the balcony at the north end of the east façade was infilled is unknown. The 2023-24 rehabilitation included the installation of an elevator at the north end of the east elevation, which required one window to be removed and infilled. This location caused the least amount of impact to the historic character of the building and the elevator overrun is minimally visible from Marathon Avenue. Other accessibility improvements included a new code compliant ramp at the south end of the east façade.<sup>4</sup> On the interior, the 2023-24 rehabilitation included the preservation of the floor plans, rehabilitation of original built-ins, and installation of new building systems, while maintaining original ceiling heights and features in common spaces.<sup>5</sup>

### **Ancillary Buildings and Accessory Structure**

The original construction included a one-story building in the southeastern portion of the property.<sup>6</sup> It has a rectangular plan, stucco exterior, and hipped roof. Half of the building is a two-car garage, and the other half was a carport. In 1955, the carport was enclosed for storage.<sup>7</sup> In 2009, a permit was issued for the conversion of the storage room into toilet rooms, apparently not acted upon. North of the garage/storage building is a swimming pool. Although there is no

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<sup>3</sup> LADBS Permit Nos. 22016-10001-23894, June 29, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> LADBS Permit No. 22016-10002-33763, February 12, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> LADBS Permit No. 22016-10000-90464, June 29, 20024.

<sup>6</sup> LADBS Permit No. 1950LA10379, Certificate of Occupancy May 28, 1951.

<sup>7</sup> LADBS Permit No. 1955LA1527 April 7, 1955.

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permit on record for this structure, newspaper articles and historic photographs document that it was constructed circa 1951.<sup>8</sup>

In 1977, an additional classroom building was constructed. The concrete block building has a rectangular plan and a flat roof.<sup>9</sup> In 1982, it was enlarged by an addition.

In 2023-24, the playground, ancillary buildings, and swimming pool were improved.

### **Integrity**

The Nursery School retains all aspects of integrity except setting. The property retains integrity of location as the main building has not been moved. Integrity of design was negatively impacted by the 2009 addition; however, the form, plan, and style of the main building are still intact. The key materials from the period of significance are embodied in the concrete construction and steel windows. The property retains integrity of materials because these features have not been removed. The construction of the main building does not appear to have involved any innovative construction techniques. However, the property retains integrity of workmanship as the key materials remain unaltered. The property retains integrity of feeling because it still expresses its function and aesthetic from the date of construction. It still feels like a school constructed during the post-World War II era. The property retains integrity of association because it possesses the physical features that link it directly to the Nursery School. The integrity of the immediate setting has been diminished by the replacement of the semi-circular driveway and front lawn with surface parking, the installation of modern playground equipment, and the alteration of the landscape. The broad setting has been changed by new development on both sides and across the street from the property.

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<sup>8</sup> "Seven Blind Girls Break Ground for New School," *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1950.

<sup>9</sup> LADBS Permit No. 1977LA46287 June 10, 1977.

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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

EDUCATION

SOCIAL HISTORY: WOMEN'S HISTORY

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1951-1965

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1951

1965

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Williams, Paul R. (architect)

Carter, George W. (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 Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children is eligible for listing in the National Register at the local level under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Social History: Women's History, the school is significant in the contexts of education and women who played a central role in the development of children's services. The school was founded in 1938 by members of the Delta Gamma Fraternity of Women, which adopted aid to the blind as their primary mission. The nursery school filled an important gap in the education of blind children before they entered elementary school. Although public schools offered classes for the visually impaired, children were unprepared for kindergarten and parents lacked support. The main building was constructed as the permanent home of the Nursery School in 1951. The property is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its association with master architect Paul R. Williams. The main building is one of the very few schools designed by Williams. It also represents his custom of donating or reducing his fee for projects that intersected with his social beliefs. The period of significance is 1951 to 1965, which corresponds with the year the main building was completed to the year the name changed to the Blind Children's Center, which continues to occupy the property.

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

**Criterion A—EDUCATION AND SOCIAL HISTORY: WOMEN'S HISTORY**

Women and the Development of Children's Services

Property types associated with children's services are identified as significant in the "Women's Rights in Los Angeles" context within the *Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement*. Women played an important role in the Progressive Era social reform movement principally through clubs. The Woman's Club Movement established the idea that women had a moral duty and responsibility to transform public policy. The first wave of clubs was started by middle class White women and a second phase was led by Black women. Both were involved with issues surrounding public education, literacy, temperance, child labor, juvenile justice, social welfare, and suffrage.

Women exerted greater influence over education than many other social issues because it involved children, which was considered their natural domain. Kindergartens and nursery schools throughout the United States were the creation of women's clubs. The Los Angeles Women's Club was founded by Caroline Severance in 1878, disbanded in 1880, and reformed in 1885. The accomplishments of the Los Angeles Women's Club included the creation of a free kindergarten for working-class children and an orphanage. Severance, who had been exposed to the concept of kindergarten on the East Coast, formed the Free Kindergarten Association in Los Angeles in 1884. The first kindergarten was opened at the Mission Chapel First Congregational

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Church (demolished), with twenty-nine children enrolled and Nellie Mackey as teacher. A second was opened in 1886 at 1201 N. Main Street (demolished). Both relied solely on contributions from the women of the association, whose membership overlapped significantly with the Los Angeles Women's Club. By 1886, several kindergartens had been opened in Los Angeles. In 1889, the system was incorporated into Los Angeles public school system.<sup>10</sup>

The Orphan's Home Society was another outgrowth of the Los Angeles Women's Club. Mary K. Simons Gibson started the first Protestant orphanage in the city in 1883.<sup>11</sup> The original location was a house (demolished) on present-day Broadway between Fifth and Sixth Streets. The second location was an eight-acre plot somewhere on Figueroa Street. The third location was a two-story building (demolished) at the northwest corner of W. Alpine Street and N. Cleveland Street. In 1888, a new three-story brick building was designed by Kyser, Morgan and Wells to replace the existing facilities on the Alpine Street property. In 1910, Charles M. Stimson donated five acres of land at 815 N. El Centro Avenue for the orphanage's last incarnation; architects Parkinson & Bergstrom designed an orphanage based on cottages rather than a single institutional building. The orphanage was subsequently remodeled and was later renamed the Hollygrove Orphanage in 1957.<sup>12</sup>

Women of color, who were barred from participating in White women's clubs, began to rally around the issue of suffrage and formed their own organizations such as the Progressive Women's Club, Helping Hand Society, and Stickney Women's Christian Temperance Union. Key among the African American clubs was the Sojourner Truth Industrial Club, founded in 1904 to improve the low wages and bad working conditions faced by Black women. To address the childcare needs of working African American women, the Woman's Day Nursery Association was formed in January of 1907 at the Wesley Chapel AME Church (demolished). In 1908, the group opened its first nursery facility, followed by a new location at 1123 Channing Street (demolished) circa 1909 that offered supervised play, lunch, and a light supper.<sup>13</sup>

The public education system and social safety net eventually replaced private kindergartens and orphanages. Women's groups continued to sponsor children and family services such as after-school programs and services for children with special needs like the Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children.

### Education of the Blind in California

Education is a theme in the Public and Private Institutional Development context of the *Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement*. A narrative for this theme was not developed

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<sup>10</sup> Historic Resources Group, "Women's Rights in Los Angeles, 1850-1980," *Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement* (Los Angeles: Office of Historic Resources, October 2018), 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> The Daughters of Charity, a Catholic order established an orphanage and hospital called the Wilson Home in 1856. Originally located near El Pueblo de Los Angeles, it was renamed the Los Angeles Orphan Asylum and relocated to Boyle Heights in 1891.

<sup>12</sup> Historic Resources Group, "Women's Rights in Los Angeles, 1850-1980," 12.

<sup>13</sup> Historic Resources Group, "Women's Rights in Los Angeles, 1850-1980," 24-25.

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because the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) had developed a historic context statement in 2014. The *LAUSD Historic Context Statement* broadly discusses the history of public education and campus planning in Los Angeles, and not with regard to children with special needs. Thus, the following background information is offered as a framework for understanding the significance of the Nursery School in association with the education of children with blindness and visual impairments.

The history of educating the blind can be divided into three broad eras characterized by societal attitudes toward the handicapped in general. These three eras represent the ages of 1) indifference and segregation, 2) pity and humanitarianism, and 3) self-reliance and integration. In ancient times, the handicapped were sacrificed for the welfare of the state. Imperfect newborns were killed or left to die from exposure. Attitudes toward the handicapped softened with the rise of Christianity as persons with disabilities like blindness became the responsibility of the church. Asylums for the blind were established in the early Middle Ages. History records scattered attempts during this period to educate blind persons. The years 1200 to 1700 are distinguished mostly by charitable efforts motivated by humanitarian concerns.

In his 1749 “Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who See,” the French philosopher Denis Diderot suggested that the sense of touch could be honed for teaching blind persons to read and write, foreshadowing the nineteenth century invention of the Braille system. The first school for the blind was established in Paris by Valentin Haüy. The L’Institution Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles opened in 1784 with funding from the Philanthropic Society. In 1786, Haüy published “Essay on the Education of the Blind” in which he shared his teaching methods, endeavoring to make the education of blind children similar to that of sighted children.<sup>14</sup>

The most famous student at L’Institution Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles was Louis Braille. Haüy had experimented with the use of embossed Roman letters for blind reading material; however, they were not sufficiently distinct to touch. In 1829, Braille introduced a system of raised dots that represented the letters of the alphabet. These dots had the advantage of being easier to feel and faster to write. Although Braille’s system was not adopted in France until after his death in 1852, it eventually became the universally accepted form of reading and writing for blind persons.<sup>15</sup>

The schools for the blind in Europe became the models for those established in the United States. The New England Asylum for the Blind (later called the Perkins School for the Blind) was established by the Massachusetts State Legislature in 1829. Samuel Gridley Howe, a noted physician and abolitionist, was appointed as the first superintendent and became the leading advocate of education for the blind. He travelled throughout Europe to learn how the blind were being educated. Howe originated many improvements in teaching methods as well as a process for printing books in Braille. In 1837, Howe admitted and personally taught Laura Bridgman, a young deaf-blind girl who later became a teacher at the school. She became famous as the first

<sup>14</sup> “Our History,” Valentin Haüy Association <https://www.avh.asso.fr/fr/lassociation/notre-histoire> (accessed April 13, 2023).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



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known deaf-blind person to be successfully educated in the United States. The Perkins School for the Blind became the template for the American institutions that followed.

Although public education was included in California's first Constitution in 1849, state aid was not guaranteed, and elementary school attendance (children aged 8 to 14) was not compulsory until 1874. As the concept of public education was still new, the education of handicapped children was still considered humanitarianism and supported by private charities. As public schools were few and far between, resident schools like the Perkins School for the Blind became the norm. In 1860, the Society for the Instruction and Maintenance of the Indigent Deaf, Dumb, and Blind in California was founded in San Francisco. They supported a school called the California State Asylum for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind. In 1906, the name was changed to the California Institute for the Deaf and Blind and the school became part of the State school system; however, it did not receive any public-school funds.<sup>16</sup>

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some blind children from Los Angeles attended the California Institute for the Deaf and Blind. Most were either tutored at home or received no education depending on the economic status of their parents. The situation changed in 1916 when the LAUSD initiated a program for blind elementary school children. The program was championed by Maude C. Waters, a member of the Board of Education;<sup>17</sup> Kate M. Foley with the California State Library;<sup>18</sup> and Frances Blend, a local teacher. Five children were enrolled in the first class at the Jefferson Street School, which was taught by Blend.<sup>19</sup> The Ebell Club donated \$15 per month for the transportation of the children to and from school.<sup>20</sup>

The LAUSD program represented an awareness of the unique requirements of blind children as well as the movement toward their integration with sighted children. In 1935, the program was formally called the School for the Blind and Sight Saving. It was still located on the same campus; by this time the name had been changed to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Street School.<sup>21</sup> In 1952, the school was renamed the Frances Blend School in honor of Blend who served as the principal until her retirement. The school moved to its campus at 5210 Clinton Street sometime in the late 1960s.

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<sup>16</sup> "History of the California School for the Blind, 1860-1950," California School for the Blind <https://www.csbcde.ca.gov/about/history/> (accessed April 13, 2023). In 1922, the programs for deaf and blind children were separated, and the two schools continued to share a facility in Berkeley for many years. In 1980, the California School for the Blind moved to a new campus in Fremont.

<sup>17</sup> Waters was a teacher before she married Russell J. Waters who was the president of the Citizens National Trust and Savings Bank of Los Angeles and a member of U.S. House of Representatives. In addition to serving on the Board of Education, she was an important figure in the suffrage movement.

<sup>18</sup> Foley was blind from infancy and graduated from the California Institute for the Deaf and Blind in 1895. She joined the staff of the California State Library in 1914 and became an advocate for blind literacy.

<sup>19</sup> The address was 737 W. Jefferson Street, later W. Jefferson Boulevard.

<sup>20</sup> "Boys Willing to Become Officers," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1916; "Women's Work and Women's Clubs," *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1916; "Seeks Extra Help for Feeble Minds," *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1917.

<sup>21</sup> The address was 3232 University Avenue.

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### Background on the Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children<sup>22</sup>

The idea for the Nursery School developed at the 1936 Delta Gamma National Convention, where Ruth Billow, a Delta Gamma from the University of Akron who was blind, stood before the convention body and requested that aid to the blind be adopted as their official philanthropy.<sup>23</sup> A committee of Southern California alumnae groups united to find a need in the area. The chapters included Beverly-Westwood, Glendale, Los Angeles, Pasadena, and San Fernando. The committee consulted with Frances Blend and learned that while public schools provided educational programs for school age blind children, no resources existed for infants, preschoolers, and their parents.<sup>24</sup> At the time, there were only two nursery schools in the country devoted to the care of such children; one was in Massachusetts and the other in New Jersey.<sup>25</sup>

Based upon their research, the committee, led by Dr. Titcomb, resolved to create the first nursery school for visually impaired children on the West Coast. The non-profit and non-sectarian Nursery School was founded in the home of Grace Seward Wines on October 3, 1938.<sup>26</sup> Wines was a Stanford University graduate, a Delta Gamma member, and a kindergarten teacher.<sup>27</sup> She allowed her home to be used by the Nursery School until more suitable arrangements could be made. In addition to Wines, the Nursery School began with one full-time nurse and three children. The nurse, Gene Scott, was brought from the Boston School for Blind Babies. The children attended school from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm Monday through Friday.

Scott was not able to remain in Los Angeles. When she was replaced with Ruth Hodgson, the school moved to her home and the program expanded. The children stayed day and night five days a week. The number of children also grew by three and came from outside the Los Angeles area. Martha Orwell, another trained nurse, was added to the staff. Several medical professionals, mostly Delta Gamma members or their husbands, supported the staff. These included the pediatrician Dr. Jeanette Harrison and the psychologist and speech therapist Dr. Sara Stinchfield Hawk. Ophthalmologists Dr. Robert Hare and Dr. John Jordan examined the children periodically, and through their efforts, some children received surgery to conserve or improve their vision.<sup>28</sup>

By October 1941, the Nursery School purchased a house at 2531 Fifth Avenue, which became its first permanent home.<sup>29</sup> One of the greatest benefits of the program was the opportunity for the children to interact with other children with visual impairments. At the time, blind children were

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<sup>22</sup> Adapted from "Who We Are," *Blind Children's Center* <https://www.blindchildrenscenter.org/who-weare/> (accessed September 2, 2022).

<sup>23</sup> "Service for Sight," *Delta Gama Foundation*, <https://www.deltagamma.org/foundation/service-for-sight/> (accessed September 3, 2022).

<sup>24</sup> "Sorority to Aid Blind," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1938; "Tea to Honor Pledges," *Los Angeles Times*, April 18, 1938.

<sup>25</sup> "Sightless 3-Year-Old Starts in at New School," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1938.

<sup>26</sup> The house was located at 936 W. Seventeenth Street (demolished).

<sup>27</sup> "Sightless 3-Year-Old Starts in at New School," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1938.

<sup>28</sup> "School Trains Visually Deficient and Blind Tots," *Los Angeles Times*, December 12, 1943.

<sup>29</sup> The house is still extant and used as a single-family residence.

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often isolated, which stymied the development of their social skills. Tuition was always based upon the parents' ability to pay, which meant additional funds were required to cover the costs. Fundraising was mostly local and consisted of Delta Gamma membership drives, special benefits, fashion shows, and donations from businesses.<sup>30</sup> Fundraising through private sources was curtailed when the U.S. entered World War II, and the school feared that it might close. With the support from the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor and the California Department of Social Welfare, the school remained open.

The house on Fifth Avenue could only accommodate six boarding children at a time, while the program had the capacity to provide services to many more who were turned away.<sup>31</sup> In January 1945, the search for a possible location began and by that summer, \$15,000 had been raised for a building fund.<sup>32</sup> In 1946, the Nursery School had fifteen different children rotating and twenty-eight more children on a waiting list.<sup>33</sup> The Los Angeles Fire Department would not allow an enrollment of more than six. After changing locations thrice in their short history, the Nursery School concluded that it needed a permanent building constructed specifically to accommodate visually impaired preschoolers. The Nursery School launched a fundraising campaign at the 1946 Delta Gamma National Convention to bring attention to this need, generating financial support from Delta Gamma chapters in twenty-five states.

By 1947, enough funds had been raised to purchase a lot on Marathon Avenue.<sup>34</sup> The location is notable for its proximity to the Braille Institute of America on Vermont Avenue.<sup>35</sup> Although the two organizations were not directly associated, there was a history of mutual support.<sup>36</sup> As discussed below in greater detail, the architect Paul R. Williams was engaged and provided preliminary floor plans.<sup>37</sup> Research did not reveal any previous relationship between the two. The new building would accommodate twelve to fifteen resident children and two mothers for temporary training as well as non-residential programs.<sup>38</sup> The estimated cost of construction was \$150,000, which was established as the fundraising goal.

Further efforts expanded the fundraising reach beyond the Delta Gamma community. The entertainment industry columnist Hedda Hopper became a supporter of the school and used her influence to raise funds among the Hollywood elite. One such fundraiser was held at the home of the comedian Harold Lloyd and involved motion picture costume designers at various studios.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Mildred Johnston, "A History of The Blind Children's Center formerly known as The Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children," unpublished manuscript (Hollywood: The Blind Children's Center, June 1969), 2.

<sup>31</sup> "Blind Children to be Helped by Unique Fashion Auction," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1947.

<sup>32</sup> Johnston, manuscript, 1969, 7-8.

<sup>33</sup> Mildred Johnston, untitled and unpublished manuscript (Hollywood: The Blind Children's Center, 1982), 4.

<sup>34</sup> Fay Hammond, "Fashion Show and Party Benefit Blind Children," *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 1947.

<sup>35</sup> Johnston, manuscript, 1969, 10.

<sup>36</sup> "Blind Career Course Told," *Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 1939.

<sup>37</sup> "Report of the Building Committee," Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children, February 14, 1949. According to an unpublished manuscript that appears to be an early draft of the school's history by Johnston, Reeta Brooks was responsible for recommending Williams as the architect.

<sup>38</sup> "Report of the Building Committee," Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children, April 5, 1948.

<sup>39</sup> "Blind Children to be Helped by Unique Fashion Auction," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1947.

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Gowns, furs, jewelry, and hats modeled by movie stars and socialites were auctioned to raise funds for the Nursery School. The event raised \$65,000 as well as the profile of the school.<sup>40</sup>

The Nursery School's Board of Directors formed a Building Committee that included Reeta Brooks as chairperson, Esther Cooper, Nan Crawford, Betty Fenimore, Della Griffith, Bessie Hazard, Sue Jordan, and Muriel Reynolds. They held their first meeting on March 1, 1948, to refine the building plans and construction schedule.<sup>41</sup> By March 8, 1950, the Building Committee received bids ranging from \$157,000 to \$199,000. By this time the Nursery School had raised \$122,000, so the Building Committee asked Williams to change the plans, which were taken back out to bid. Ultimately, the builder George W. Carter was awarded a contract for \$150,808.<sup>42</sup> Not included in the contract were some interior finishes, fixtures, and furnishings that cost another \$25,000 to \$30,000.<sup>43</sup>

The Nursery School broke ground and fundraising continued during construction. Dr. Titcomb secured a \$20,000 grant from the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Los Angeles. A party co-hosted by actresses Betty Hutton and Esther Williams raised the remaining funds to cover the cost of construction. Ms. Williams would also contribute the funds for a swimming pool, so she could resume teaching the children how to swim.<sup>44</sup>

The Nursery School moved into its new building in 1951 and soon became nationally recognized as a model program. By 1952, over 2,000 American and international guests had visited the school's various locations.<sup>45</sup> Medical and educational professionals eagerly came to the Nursery School to learn from the teachers' practical experience with visually impaired children and study the school's educational methods.

Additions to the school program and several new projects developed over the next few years. A residence program was designed to accommodate children from remote areas. In 1958, there were approximately 100 children enrolled at the school including ten daycare preschoolers, twenty-two boarding preschoolers, and sixty infants.<sup>46</sup> Recognizing the need for a holistic approach, psychologists, social workers, and other professionals were added to the existing staff to provide a support system for the entire family. In 1965, the name of the Nursery School was changed to the Blind Children's Center to reflect this wide range of comprehensive services.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "Seven Blind Girls Break Ground for New School," *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1950.

<sup>41</sup> "Report of the Building Committee," Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children, March 1, 1948.

<sup>42</sup> "Annual Report of the Building Committee," Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children, February 20, 1951.

<sup>43</sup> "Report of the Building Committee," Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children, March 8, 1950.

<sup>44</sup> Hedda Hopper, "Stork Wait Busy Time for Esther, Swim Star Teaches Blind Tots While she 'Vacations,'" *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1949; "Seven Blind Girls Break Ground for New School," *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1950.

<sup>45</sup> Based upon the success of the Nursery School in Los Angeles, the Delta Gammas founded four more schools in St. Louis (1951), Kansas City (1952), Phoenix (1952), and Denver (1982).

<sup>46</sup> Cordell Hicks, "Nursery School Trains 92 Sightless Children," *Los Angeles Times*, February 24, 1958.

<sup>47</sup> The name Blind Children's Center first appears in the *Los Angeles Times* on October 27, 1965, "Alums Set First Fall Meeting."

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Thanks to the generosity of the Margaret Bundy Scott Trust, in 1984 the center expanded its services again through the development of educational and medical outreach programs. The center established itself as a research hub and published numerous booklets, videos, and CDs designed to educate and support parents of children with visual impairments and other professionals working in the field. To date, over 750,000 booklets have been translated into seventeen languages and have been distributed to individuals and groups in all fifty states and more than seventy-five countries. The organization of the center changed again in 1988 when an inclusion model was introduced. From that point forward, children who were sighted learned alongside children who were blind or visually impaired in each classroom, fostering an environment of compassion and empathy for all students.

### Brief Biography of Dr. Lillian Ray Titcomb

Dr. Lillian Ray Titcomb played a pivotal role in the Nursery School. From its founding in 1938 to its relocation to East Hollywood in 1951 she served as the president of the Board of Directors. Dr. Titcomb was born Lillian Emeline Ray on July 3, 1873, in Santa Cruz. She was the youngest daughter of John Preston Ray and Mary Pamela Ruggies. With an aptitude for science when girls rarely received higher education, Lillian attended Stanford University and earned a B.A. in physics in 1897 and a M.A. in physics in 1901.<sup>48</sup> She was a charter member of the Delta Gamma chapter at Stanford.<sup>49</sup> During and after graduate school she served as the matron of Roble Hall, the women's dormitory at Stanford. She resigned from the position in 1903 to attend the University of Berlin.<sup>50</sup> By 1904, she had returned from Europe and entered the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.<sup>51</sup> <sup>52</sup> She graduated in 1908 and apparently stayed on the East Coast working in a hospital.<sup>53</sup> While she was not the first woman to graduate from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, she was the only woman in her class.<sup>54</sup>

By 1910, she was living with her sister and brother-in-law in San Jose and working as a physician. Although she specialized in obstetrics, she managed a general practice.<sup>55</sup> By 1916, she had moved to Los Angeles and worked for the health department within the LAUSD.<sup>56</sup> When Dr. Ray joined the faculty at UCLA in 1919, it was still called the Southern Branch of the University of California and had just moved from Downtown to East Hollywood. The campus was on Vermont Avenue a short distance from the eventual location of the Nursery School. Her

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<sup>48</sup> "Social Notes," *The San Francisco Call*, May 28, 1901.

<sup>49</sup> "Stanford's New Societies," *The San Francisco Call*, March 16, 1897; "After Four Years At Palo Alto," *The San Francisco Examiner*, April 1, 1897.

<sup>50</sup> "Personal," *Santa Cruz Evening Sentinel*, April 28, 1903; "Personal Splashes," *Santa Cruz Surf*, April 22, 1904.

<sup>51</sup> "To Enter Johns Hopkins," *Santa Cruz Surf*, September 26, 1904.

<sup>52</sup> In 1890, five women, four of them daughters of Hopkins trustees, organized the Women's Fund Committee to raise money to establish the School of Medicine. Their one condition was that the school accept women. When the school opened in 1893, three of the eighteen students in the first class were women.

<sup>53</sup> "Social Notes," *Santa Cruz Evening News*, June 13, 1908.

<sup>54</sup> Bella Stumbo, "Birthday Salute to a Grand Old Lady," *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 1973.

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Census 1910.

<sup>56</sup> "School Health Work is Revised," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, September 12, 1916.

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title was Physician for Women, which presumably meant she attended to the medical needs of female students.<sup>57</sup> In 1920, Dr. Ray married Edwin Albion Titcomb and was henceforth known as Dr. Lillian Ray Titcomb. Her husband was an architect who worked for the well-known firm of Parkinson and Bergstrom. In addition to her regular duties, Dr. Titcomb lectured throughout the area regarding child welfare and public health issues. In 1923, she was elected president of the Women's University Club of Los Angeles. From 1928 to 1929, she served as the president of the UCLA Faculty Women's Club. Edwin died in 1931 and Lillian never remarried.<sup>58</sup> She continued to work at UCLA until her retirement in 1942.

Dr. Titcomb was the logical choice to lead the Delta Gamma's campaign to establish the Nursery School. Her medical training and experience meant she could speak with greater authority regarding the need for the Nursery School. She could also use her position as a spokesperson for child welfare and public health in the media to marshal support.

In addition to serving as president of the Board, she formed the Cradle Club for visually impaired infants and their parents in 1940. The program provided instruction for parents in the specialized care for their infants at no charge. Dr. Titcomb recognized the importance of early intervention as ages 0 to 8 are critical for brain development. The Nursery School was the only program in the area working with parents and their children on sensory learning from birth. This training continues to this day as the Early Head Start Home Visiting Program.

When the Nursery School moved to East Hollywood, Dr. Titcomb finally resigned as Board president at the age of 78 and continued to stay involved as president emeritus. In 1952, Dr. Titcomb was honored for her public service by the Affiliated Teacher Organizations of Los Angeles. Her contribution cited was "scientific guidance to give to blind and near-blind children early physical and emotional training."<sup>59</sup> Dr. Titcomb died on May 15, 1974, just shy of her 101<sup>st</sup> birthday.<sup>60</sup>

### **Criterion A Conclusion**

The Nursery School is significant for its role in the history of education for the visually impaired in Los Angeles. It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that states began to make the education of blind children compulsory. LAUSD began integrating blind children into the public school system in 1916. Inclusive schools helped sighted children appreciate the abilities of visually impaired children so that they would have better attitudes towards them in adult life. Visually impaired children were not necessarily ready for education in the public school system, recognized as their right. The Nursery School was the first of its kind on the West Coast and played an important role in advancing the educational opportunities for visually impaired children by training preschoolers and supporting their parents. From its origins, the school had an open admissions policy and did not discriminate based upon race, ethnicity, or religion, resulting

<sup>57</sup> UCLA did not establish a medical school until 1945.

<sup>58</sup> U.S. Find a Grave Index.

<sup>59</sup> "Four Given Awards for Aid to School Children," *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 1952.

<sup>60</sup> "Rites Set for Dr. Titcomb," *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1974.

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in a culturally diverse program. The teaching methods developed at the school became a model for improving the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of visually impaired children. To this day, the center's publications are used throughout the country to inform parents and caregivers on the unique developmental needs of children who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Locally surveyed, the school meets the eligibility standards under the Children's Services theme of the "Women's Rights in Los Angeles" context.<sup>61</sup> It reflects the important role women played in organizing programs for the health, education, and welfare of children. The context only identified two potential resources associated with the Children's Services theme, the second location of the Woman's Day Nursery at 1123 S. Channing Street (demolished)<sup>62</sup> and the fifth location of the Los Angeles Orphan's Home at 815 N. El Centro Avenue (1957).<sup>63</sup>

The Nursery School was established and operated by women throughout most of its history. It was the first of five nursery schools in the country founded as part of Delta Gamma's Service for Sight initiative. All of the members the Board of Directors and Building Committee were women who were Delta Gammas. Until the nineteenth century, women, like people with physical disabilities, were excluded from mainstream education. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was still relatively uncommon for middle class White women to attend college, and fewer still like Dr. Titcomb earned graduate degrees and worked as professionals. Teaching and nursing were among the few professions open to women during this period. The Nursery School represents the leadership role women played in improving the educational opportunities for the visually impaired.

### **Criterion C—ARCHITECTURE**

#### Brief Biography of Paul R. Williams

Paul Revere Williams was born in Los Angeles on February 18, 1894, to Lila Wright Williams and Chester Stanley Williams who had recently moved from Memphis with their young son, Chester, Jr. When Paul was two years old, his father died, and two years later his mother died.<sup>64</sup> The children were placed in separate foster homes. Paul was raised by Charles and Emily Clarkson, who ensured that he received the benefits of a good education as well as the support of a good community at the First African American Episcopal Methodist Church.<sup>65</sup> Tragedy struck yet again in 1908, which Charles died, leaving Emily to raise Paul on her own. She devoted herself to the development of Paul's artistic talent.

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<sup>61</sup> Historic Resources Group, "Women's Rights in Los Angeles, 1850-1980," 90-91.

<sup>62</sup> The Woman's Day Nursery was organized by African American women but accepted children of all races. Additional research concluded the address was 1322 (not 1123) S. Channing Street and that the property has been redeveloped. The address 1123 S. Channing Street does not exist.

<sup>63</sup> "Women's Rights in Los Angeles, 1850-1980," Appendix B, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Both of his parents died of tuberculosis, per *Paul Revere was Here: On the Trail of L.A.'s Legendary Architect, Paul R. Williams* (Los Angeles Conservancy and Southern California Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects, 2021), 2.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

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Williams attended Polytechnic High School, which was racially integrated and offered courses in electricity, mechanical engineering, architectural drafting, and commerce.<sup>66</sup> In high school, he experienced the first hint of adversity when a teacher advised him against pursuing a career in architecture, because he would have difficulty attracting clients from the majority white community and the smaller black community could not provide enough work.<sup>67</sup>

After graduation in 1912, Williams systematically contacted every architecture firm in Los Angeles and offered his services, often at no cost.<sup>68</sup> In 1913, he finally secured a position with the important landscape architect, Wilbur D. Cook, Jr. Cook designed the original Beverly Hills Hotel grounds and the extensive gardens for the Walter Luther Dodge House—both important architectural landmarks in Los Angeles. Cook influenced Williams' ideas on town planning and the importance of integrating landscape with architecture.<sup>69</sup>

Williams worked for a number of important Los Angeles architects before opening his own office, including Reginald D. Johnson (1914-1917) and Arthur F. Kelly (1917-1921). With each of these positions, his experience expanded and his skills as a draftsman improved. During this period, there was interest by architectural professionals in providing guidance to the “men of the future” or *embryo architects*.<sup>70</sup> Licensed architects across the country organized ateliers, taught classes, gave advice and criticism to students and draftsmen and encouraged the development of a “trained, artistic, and efficient body of practitioners.”<sup>71</sup> Williams participated in a number of these mentoring programs including one sponsored by the Society of Beaux Arts Architects of California. The objective of the Beaux Arts Society was “the education of younger men of the community who are striving to become architects.”<sup>72</sup> To strengthen his knowledge of engineering, Williams also enrolled in courses at the University of Southern California.

Williams submitted entries to regional and national architectural competitions as a continuation of his self-directed preparation for the competitive nature of architecture. Winning a number of these contests, he came to the attention of the judges who were important members of the profession. These architects took notice of Williams and were impressed with his skills as a draftsman and his designs. He was soon offered a position with one of the judges, John C. Austin. From 1921 to 1924, Williams worked at Austin's firm primarily designing commercial buildings. Eventually he became chief draftsman with a staff of twenty. During Williams' tenure, the firm worked on many important projects including the Shrine Auditorium (1920-26),

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<sup>66</sup> Laura Myers, “Architect Paul Williams,” *West Adams Landmarks of African American History*. (Los Angeles: West Adams Heritage Association, 2009), 19.

<sup>67</sup> “Blacks Who Overcame the Odds,” *Ebony*, November 1986 (an abridgment of an essay written by Paul R. Williams in *The American Magazine*, 1937), 152.

<sup>68</sup> Karen Hudson, *Paul R. Williams Architect, A Legacy of Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 13.

<sup>69</sup> AIA Files, from “About Paul R. Williams,” *The Paul Revere Williams Project*.

<sup>70</sup> “Gallery Young Paul R. Williams,” *The Paul Revere Williams Project*.

<sup>71</sup> *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, July 8, 1921, from “About Paul R. Williams,” *The Paul Revere Williams Project*.

<sup>72</sup> *Architect and Engineer of California-Pacific Coast States*, June 1907, from “About Paul R. Williams,” *The Paul Revere Williams Project*.



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Hollywood Masonic Temple (1921), First Methodist Episcopal Church (1921-23, demolished), and Hollywood Guaranty Building (1923).

In 1921, Williams passed the State architectural licensing examination and shortly thereafter opened his own office.<sup>73</sup> He continued to work for Austin until he developed his own client base. Williams maintained his relationship with Austin and collaborated with him throughout the years. By 1923, he became a member of the AIA, an important recognition for any young architect and especially an architect of color.<sup>74</sup> Southern California's real estate landscape boomed during the 1920s. Williams' early practice flourished through his growing skills as a designer of modest houses for new homeowners and larger houses for more affluent clients in places like La Cañada Flintridge, San Marino, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, and the Pacific Palisades, Brentwood, Windsor Square, and Hancock Park neighborhoods of Los Angeles.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, he made connections within the African American community. One of his first major institutional projects was a new building for the Second Baptist Church in 1924, which he designed with Norman F. Marsh. In 1926, he independently received a commission for the 28<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA building. These two buildings are among the most important architectural landmarks in the Central Avenue Corridor.

Residential design remained the focus of his practice through the 1930s.<sup>76</sup> The Great Depression dampened the growth of Los Angeles, but Williams' practice prospered as Hollywood celebrities continued to commission houses and vacation retreats. His clients included movie idols Lon Chaney (Beverly Hills, 1930), Barbara Stanwyck (Beverly Hills, 1936), Tyrone Power (Brentwood, 1937), and Bill (Bojangles) Robinson (Jefferson Park, 1937). As his reputation grew, his practice expanded to include buildings later considered architectural landmarks including the Music Corporation of America Headquarters Building (Beverly Hills, 1938/1964) and Saks Fifth Avenue (Beverly Hills, 1939, interior; 1940, 1948 additions).<sup>77</sup>

In the early 1940s, war preparation redirected materials and skilled labor from civilian purposes. Workers for defense industries urgently needed housing, and Williams served as chief architect for Pueblo del Rio, one of Los Angeles' first public housing projects.<sup>78</sup> After the declaration of war on December 8, 1941, Williams' staff dispersed, and he became an architect for the U.S. Navy. Major commissions after the war included the Stanley Mosk Courthouse (Los Angeles, 1947 with Austin, Field & Fry, Stanton & Stockwell, and Adrian Wilson) and the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building (Los Angeles, 1949). Williams and A. Quincy Jones, a young

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<sup>73</sup> His office was originally in the former Los Angeles Stock Exchange Building at 639 S. Spring Street. By 1929, it had moved to 3839 Wilshire Boulevard, a location closer to his client base in Hancock Park and affluent neighborhoods further west. In 1951, the office moved to 3757 Wilshire Boulevard.

<sup>74</sup> The Southern California Chapter of AIA elected Williams as an Associate member on September 30, 1922, a prerequisite for National AIA membership. He is the first known African American member in AIA.

<sup>75</sup> Laura Myers, "Architect Paul Williams," 19.

<sup>76</sup> Karen Hudson, *Paul R. Williams Architect, A Legacy of Style*, 14.

<sup>77</sup> Exhibition 1930s, *The Paul Revere Williams Project*.

<sup>78</sup> The consortium of architects included Paul R. Williams (chief architect), Adrian Wilson, Gordon B. Kaufmann, Walter C. Wurdeman & Weldon Becket, and Richard J. Neutra—also known as Southeast Housing Architects, Associated. The project was completed in 1942.

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prewar employee, partnered on the Tennis Club (1947) and the Town & Country Center (1948) in Palm Springs.<sup>79</sup>

Williams continued to maintain a steady stream of work throughout the 1950s and 1960s. His body of work helped to define the aesthetic identity of California. He designed in a wide variety of styles, both traditional and modern, yet his work is recognizable. In the course of his five-decade career, Williams designed thousands of buildings; served on many municipal, state, and federal commissions; and was active in political and social organizations earning the admiration and respect of his peers. He frequently donated his time and skills to projects he believed furthered the health and welfare of young people, African Americans in Southern California, and greater society. Williams retired from practice in 1973 and died in 1980 at the age of 85.<sup>80</sup>

### Williams and the Nursery School

The Nursery School is one of the very few school buildings designed by Williams. He received commissions for the design of two grammar schools from the LAUSD very early in his career. In 1925, Williams designed the Hostetter Grammar School at 2750 E. Hostetter Street and the Dacotah Grammar School at 1314 Dacotah Street.<sup>81</sup> Both schools have been demolished, renamed, and replaced with new buildings.<sup>82</sup> In 1925, his other commissions included the 28<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA and a few single-family houses. The following year his commissions for single-family houses doubled and for the remainder of the 1920s his work was primarily residential. As his reputation grew during the 1930s and 1940s, Williams received commissions for commercial and institutional buildings as well as large-scale housing developments. He did not receive another school commission until he was contacted by the Nursery School Building Committee in 1947.

The school also represents William's custom of donating or reducing his fee for projects that intersected with his social beliefs.<sup>83</sup> How the school came to hire Williams is unknown. According to the first report of the Building Committee dated March 1, 1948, Williams had been selected by a vote of the Board of Directors as the architect. He graciously reduced his regular fee by half and provided a sketch and floor plans. The other reports of the Building Committee provide a unique insight into the design process, which document William's personal involvement and his collaborative approach. The Building Committee continued to meet through project completion in 1951. Dr. Titcomb and the school staff provided comments on the floor plans with regard to the unique needs of blind children such as the height and location of features as well as the texture of materials. In return, Williams provided advice on cost saving measures when construction estimates were received. One such measure was a further reduction in his fee. In recognition of his contribution, Williams was made an honorary member of the Nursery

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<sup>79</sup> Exhibition 1940s, *The Paul Revere Williams Project*.

<sup>80</sup> Laura Meyers, "Architect Paul Williams"

<sup>81</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1925; and *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, July 4, 1925.

<sup>82</sup> Hostetter Grammar School became Carmen Lomas Garza Primary Center and Dacotah Grammar School became Christopher Dena Elementary School.

<sup>83</sup> "National Group Fetes Paul R. Williams for Civic Relations Work," *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1951.

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School's Board of Directors. At the time, only Delta Gammas were allowed on the Board. Williams took the position seriously and made numerous personal donations to the school.

The design evolved from its conception in 1947 to its completion in 1951 and continued to have a residential quality. As previously noted, the roof of the two-story portion of the building was intended to be hipped based upon the color rendering and original drawings prepared by Williams. The hipped roof, however, also conveyed a traditional aesthetic Williams was moving away from after World War II. As soon as the hipped roof was replaced with a flat roof, the building suddenly reflected a more modern aesthetic.

The building by Williams that is most akin to the Nursery School is the one he designed for his own family at 1690 S. Victoria Avenue in the Lafayette Square neighborhood. Completed in 1952, it was unlike the Period Revival style houses he designed before World War II and expressed his own preference for modern architecture. While the Nursery School exterior is concrete and the Williams House is mostly stucco, the two buildings have a similar appearance with flat overhanging roofs, balconies on the primary façades, steel sash windows, and minimal ornamentation. The genesis of the Williams House can clearly be seen in the Nursery School, although Williams explored with shapes and forms through the 1950s until his retirement.

### **Criterion C Conclusion**

That Williams took a personal interest in the Nursery School as opposed to delegating the project to an associate is remarkable as he was busier than ever after World War II. He had a staff of fifty and he was in the midst of alterations and additions to the Beverly Wilshire Hotel (1946-47), Beverly Hills Hotel (1947-51), Los Angeles General Hospital (1947-59, joint venture), and Ambassador Hotel (1949) as well as numerous other projects as far away as Bogota, Columbia. Other than a new building for the Howard University College of Dentistry (1948, joint venture) in Washington D.C., Williams did not design any more educational facilities until the 1950s. These included additions to the George Washington Carver Middle School (1953) at 4410 McKinley Avenue, the Botany Building (1956) at UCLA, and the Marina del Rey Middle School campus (1957-60). A new campus for Woodrow Wilson High School (1968-70) in El Sereno was one of William's last projects. The Nursery School is notable as one of the very few schools designed by the Williams and as a reflection of his civic mindedness.

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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: Blind Children's Center

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

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

Latitude: 34.084240                      Longitude: -118.290130

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

Assessor Parcel Number 5529-021-024, which corresponds to the Boundary Map (page 29).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is that historically associated with the school.

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County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Teresa Grimes  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: 40 Arroyo Drive, Unit 101  
city or town: Pasadena state: CA zip code: 91105  
e-mail: [teresa.grimes@icloud.com](mailto:teresa.grimes@icloud.com)  
telephone: (323) 868-2391  
date: September 2024; Revised October 2024

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### 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.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Nursery School for Visually Handicapped Children  
City or Vicinity: Los Angeles  
County: Los Angeles  
State: California  
Photographer: Teresa Grimes  
Date Photographed: August 29, 2024 – September 16, 2024

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

1 of 19 4120 Marathon Street, view facing southwest

2 of 19 Main Building, view facing southwest toward north façade and east elevation

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- 3 of 19 Main Building, view facing south toward north façade
- 4 of 19 Main Building, view facing south toward front entrance
- 5 of 19 Main Building, view facing southeast toward north façade and west elevation
- 6 of 19 Main Building, view facing northwest across playground toward south and east elevations
- 7 of 19 Main Building, view facing northwest toward south and east elevations
- 8 of 19 Main Building, view facing northwest toward non-original addition on east elevation
- 9 of 19 Classroom Building, view facing east across playground toward west façade
- 10 of 19 Garage/Storage Building, view facing northeast toward south facade and west elevation
- 11 of 19 Swimming Pool, view facing southeast toward rear of Garage/Storage Building
- 12 of 19 Main Building, Lobby, view facing northeast
- 13 of 19 Main Building, Living Room, view facing northwest
- 14 of 19 Main Building, first floor, corridor, view facing south
- 15 of 19 Main Building, first floor, typical classroom, view facing southwest
- 16 of 19 Main Building, first floor, typical rest room, view facing northeast
- 17 of 19 Main Building, second floor, typical office, view facing northwest
- 18 of 19 Main Building, second floor, conference room, view facing northeast
- 19 of 19 Main Building, second floor, corridor, view facing south



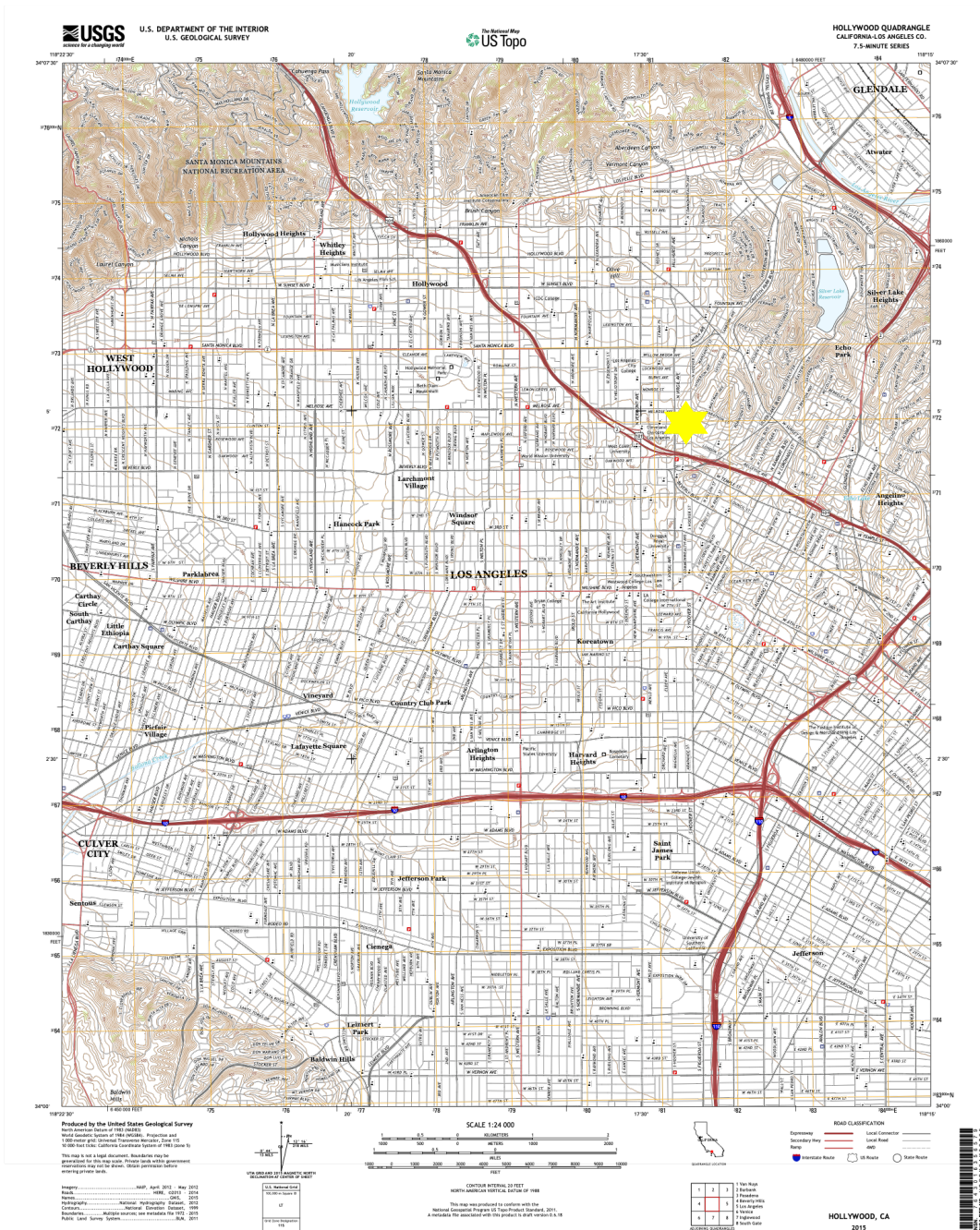
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### Location Map

USGS Hollywood Quad: Latitude: 34.084240

Longitude: -118.290130





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### Boundary Map

Base map courtesy of Los Angeles Office of the Assessor, property boundary outlined in yellow.

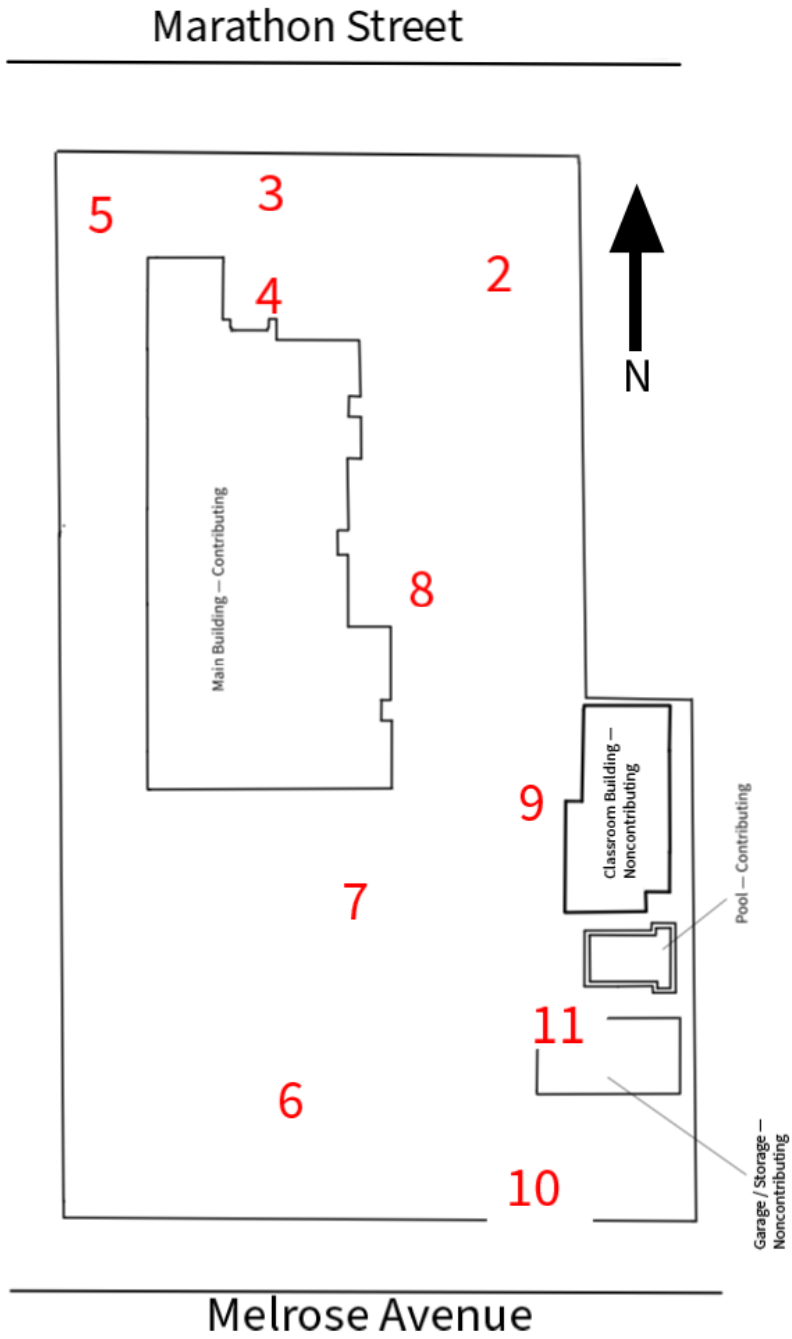


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**Sketch Map/Photo Key No. 1**

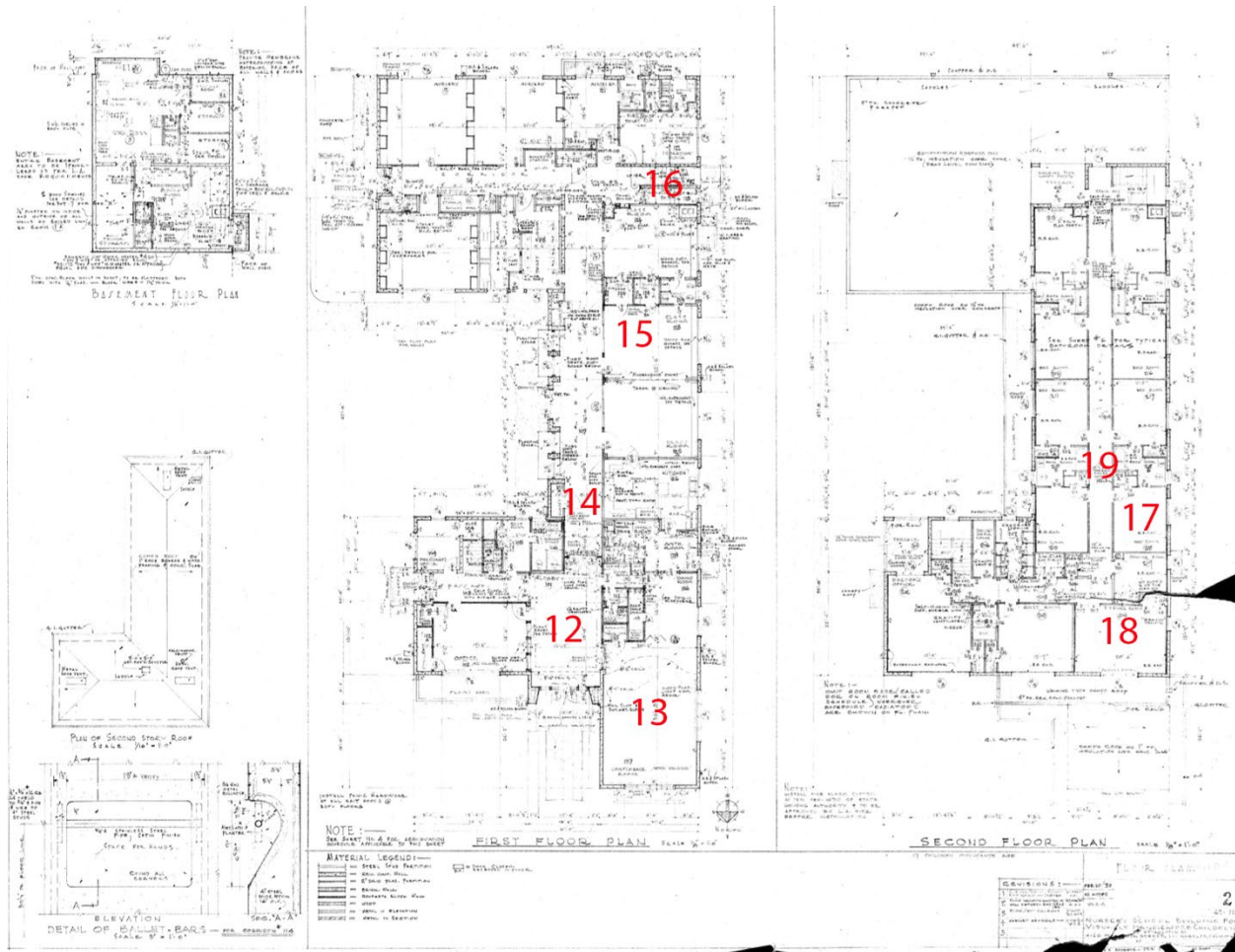
1



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### Sketch Map/Photo Key No. 2



Source: 1950 Floor Plans, Paul R. Williams, Architect

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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**Figure 1** First home of school, 936 W. Seventeenth Street (demolished), c. 1938; courtesy Blind Children's Center



**Figure 2** Second home of school, 2531 Fifth Avenue (2531 Fifth Avenue), c. 1941; courtesy Blind Children's Center





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**Figure 3** Watercolor rendering of Main Building designed by Paul R. Williams, c. 1947; courtesy Blind Children's Center



**Figure 4** Groundbreaking ceremony, Dr. Titcomb on the right and Paul R. Williams on the left, c. 1949; courtesy Blind Children's Center



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**Figure 5** Main Building under construction, c. 1950; courtesy Blind Children's Center



**Figure 6** Main Building, view from Marathon Street looking southwest, c. 1951; courtesy Blind Children's Center





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**Figure 7** Main Building, view from Marathon Street looking southeast, c. 1951; courtesy Blind Children's Center



**Figure 8** Main Building, detail view of main entrance on north façade, c. 1951; courtesy Blind Children's Center



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**Figure 9** Main Building, detail view of east elevation, c. 1951; courtesy Blind Children's Center



**Figure 10** View looking northwest from swimming pool toward playground and Main Building, c. 1951; courtesy Blind Children's Center





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**Figure 11** Delta Gammas with children on playground, 1951; Los Angeles Examiner Photographs Collection, USC Digital Library



**Figure 12** Paul R. Williams House, 1952; The Paul Revere Williams Project



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**Photo 1** 4120 Marathon Street, view facing southwest



**Photo 2** Main Building, view facing southwest toward north façade and east elevation





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**Photo 3** Main Building, view facing south toward north facade



**Photo 4** Main Building, view facing south toward front entrance



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**Photo 5** Main Building, view facing southeast toward north façade and west elevation



**Photo 6** Main Building, view facing northwest across playground toward south and east elevations





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**Photo 7** Main Building, view facing northwest toward south and east elevations



**Photo 8** Main Building, view facing northwest toward non-original addition on east elevation



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**Photo 9** Classroom Building, view facing east across playground toward west façade



**Photo 10** Garage/Storage Building, view facing northeast toward south facade and west elevation





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**Photo 11** Swimming Pool, view facing southeast toward rear of Garage/Storage Building



**Photo 12** Main Building, Lobby, view facing northeast



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**Photo 13** Main Building, Living Room, view facing northwest



**Photo 14** Main Building, first floor, corridor, view facing south





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**Photo 15** Main Building, first floor, typical classroom, view facing southwest



**Photo 16** Main Building, first floor, typical rest room, view facing northeast



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**Photo 17** Main Building, second floor, typical office, view facing northwest



**Photo 18** Main Building, second floor, conference room, view facing northeast



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**Photo 19** Main Building, second floor, corridor, view facing south

