

State of California — The Resources Agency
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary #
 HRI #
 Trinomial
 NRHP Status Code

Other Listings
 Review Code

Reviewer

Date

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*Resource Name or #: 1544 Drake Avenue, Burlingame, CA

P1. Other Identifier:

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

*a. County: San Mateo

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: Montara Mountain Date: 2012 T ; R ; ¼ of ¼ of Sec ; M.D. B.M.
 c. Address: 1544 Drake Avenue City: Burlingame, CA Zip: 94010
 d. UTM: Zone: 10 ; mE/ 554831.3 mN 4160227.1 (G.P.S.)
 e. Other Locational Data: APN 025-224-110. Lot 11, Block 224 (e.g., parcel #, etc., as appropriate) Elevation:

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

SETTING

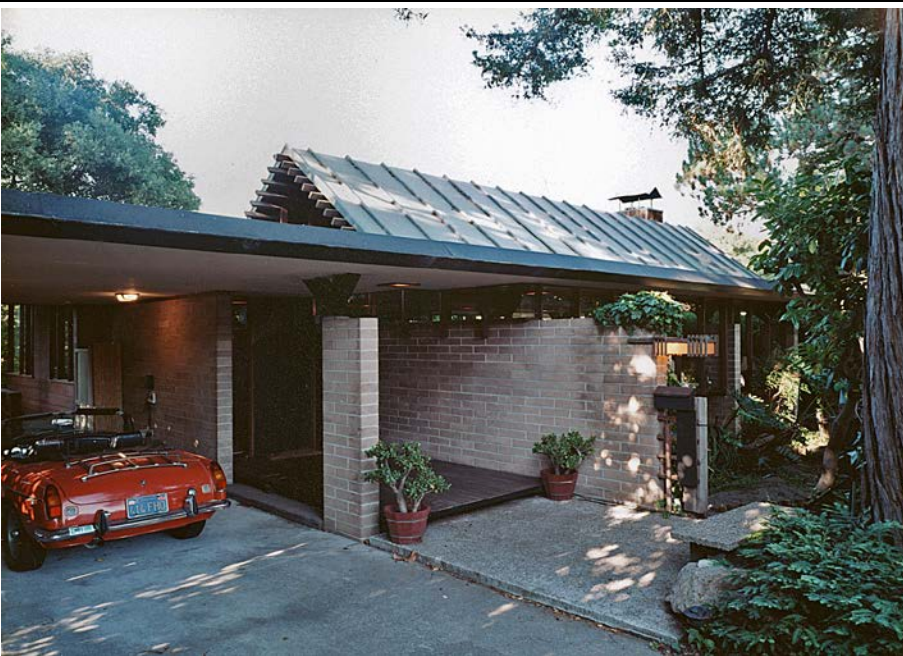
The house located at 1544 Drake Avenue in the city of Burlingame, California, is situated on a parcel of approximately 8,600 square feet in area. The parcel, a portion of which straddles Mills Creek, generally is rectangular in shape, measuring 144.58 feet and 133.5 feet on its east and west sides respectively. The north side measures 65.3 feet, with the 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.

See continuation sheet.

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP2 single family property

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5a.



P5b. Description of Photo: (View, date, accession #) Front entry & carport. Date & photographer unknown.

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources: Historic Prehistoric Both

*P7. Owner and Address:
 Graeme Whifler
 Dan Whifler
 Margaret Whifler
 20 La Salle Road
 Hillsborough, CA 94010

*P8. Recorded by:
 Thomas Rex Hardy, AIA, Architect
 Robert Bruce Anderson
 510 Stockton St #101
 San Francisco, CA 94108

*P9. Date Recorded: 6/13/2014

*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)
 Intensive

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.") None.

*Attachments: NONE Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (List):

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(Description continued from 1)

The 1544 Drake Avenue house is a single-story, single-family structure 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 large, mature redwood tree and a small Japanese garden with decorative wood fence effectively buffer the house from the street and sidewalk. This small garden of the front yard also includes a wood deck, plantings, and a small pond bound by rocks that extend to the masonry chimney at the east end of the house. A driveway located at the southwest corner of the site, situated between a cypress and the aforementioned redwood tree, provides access to an attached carport that accommodate 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 that runs 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.

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

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*NRHP Status Code

*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 1544 Drake Avenue, Burlingame, CA

B1. Historic Name: 1544 Drake Avenue, Burlingame, CA

B2. Common Name: 1544 Drake Avenue, Burlingame, CA

B3. Original Use: Single-family residential

B4. Present Use: Single-family residential

*B5. **Architectural Style:** California Modern

*B6. **Construction History:** (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations) Built 1958

*B7. **Moved?** No Yes Unknown **Date:**

Original Location:

*B8. **Related Features:** Mills Creek

B9a. Architect: William Arthur Whifler

b. Builder: Ed Peterson, San Mateo

*B10. **Significance: Theme:** Modernist Residential Architecture

Area: San Mateo

Period of Significance: 1958

Property Type: Residential

Applicable Criteria: 3

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

HISTORY

The history of ownership and jurisdiction of the parcel of land on which the existing house at 1544 Drake Avenue is situated seems traceable possibly as far back as 1827, when Mexico granted the Buri Buri Rancho provisionally to Don Jose Antonio Sanchez. The 1827 date of this significant transaction was attributed to H.H. Bancroft by Constance Lister, in her 1934 unpublished manuscript entitled, "A History of Burlingame". However, one page earlier in this same manuscript, Lister had just asserted that Buri Buri Rancho was "... granted on September 23, 1835, to Don Jose Antonio Sanchez by Jose Castro, then chief member of the 'Excellent Territorial Deputation' and Chief Regidor Adminterim of the Territory of Upper California."

See continuation sheet

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) N/A

*B12. **References:**

(*See continuation sheet*)

B13. Remarks:

*B14. **Evaluator:** Robert Bruce Anderson

***Date of Evaluation:** 13 June 2014

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch Map with north arrow required.)

See continuation sheet

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(History continued)

Notwithstanding the apparent uncertainty or confusion concerning the actual date in which this historically-significant transfer of ownership or jurisdiction occurred, Buri Buri Rancho was said at the time to comprise some 14,639.10 acres of land, bounded on the north by Visitacion Rancho and the DeHaro Rancho; on the west by the San Pedro Rancho and public land; on the south by San Mateo Rancho; and on the east by the shoreline of San Francisco Bay. (Using present-day place names, Buri Buri Rancho extended from the city of South San Francisco on the north to Sanchez Avenue in Burlingame (named for the grantee) on the south, and from the Santa Cruz mountains, or the coastal range on the west, to the shoreline of San Francisco Bay on the east.)

Sanchez died in 1843, leaving ten surviving children as his sole heirs. In 1848, Mexico ceded Alta California to the United States by the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the Mexican War. Four years later, on March 9, 1852, Sanchez' heirs filed a petition to confirm their ownership and rights to four leagues of land within Buri Buri Rancho, and on February 19, 1864, a decision was entered granting to them 14,639.10 acres of land.

In May of 1866, before the District Court of the Twelfth Judicial District of the State of California, in and for the County of San Mateo, Ansel I. Easton and D. Ogden Mills filed suit to obtain or secure fractional shares of land granted to the heirs of Don Jose Antonio Sanchez. On June 17, 1869, the District Court in San Mateo partitioned Rancho Buri Buri, finding that a partition of the subject property would be more advantageous to the present owners than a sale thereof. Accordingly, this partitioning assigned to Ansel I. Easton 1,463 acres, or one-tenth, of the Buri Buri Rancho acreage that earlier had been granted to Jose Ysidro Sanchez, one of Sanchez' ten children; and assigned to D. Ogden Mills 1,463 acres, or one-tenth of the Buri Buri Rancho acreage that earlier had been granted to Sanchez' first son, Jose de la Cruz Sanchez.

Ansel Ives Easton was one of seven children, migrated to California in 1852, and later married Darius Ogden Mills' sister, Adeline. Ansel and Adeline had two children, Ansel Mills and daughter Jenny, before Ansel died in 1868 at the age of 49. Soon after inheriting the Easton family property located within the former Buri Buri Rancho, Ansel Mills began developing it in 1905.

On April 15, 1911, a subdivision map, entitled "Easton Addition to Burlingame, Number 5," was filed on behalf of Ansel M. Easton and recorded with the County of San Mateo, vol. 7, page 46. This subdivision map consists of six blocks, each with a mid-block alley, with a total of 90 lots. "Easton Addition to Burlingame, Number 5," is bounded on the east by El Camino Real; on the south by Adeline Drive; on the west by Vancouver Avenue; and on the north by Mills Creek. The map also delineates and names six streets within the subdivision that Ansel M. Easton specifically dedicated to public use and that the Board of Supervisors of San Mateo County formally accepted; Vancouver Avenue, Bernal Avenue, Drake Avenue, Cabrillo Avenue, Cortez Avenue, and Balboa Avenue.

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William Jacob Foepfel, born December 18, 1856, in Dessau, Germany, arrived in the United States on August 18, 1875, and became a U.S. citizen on November 17, 1886. Anna Louise Merbach, born in Germany in 1861, arrived in the United States in 1872. Anna and William met in New York City, and were married there on March 20, 1881. They had two children: Gustave W. Foepfel, born August 23, 1885, in New York City, and Clara Foepfel, who was born on April 25, 1890. Where Clara was born is unknown, as is an approximate date of when the Foepfel family arrived in California.

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’.” (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. Historic records of the County Assessors’ Office indicate that the residential structure located at 1540 Drake Avenue was constructed in 1912.

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. 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. The 1956 Polk’s Directory for San Mateo and Burlingame listed Mrs. Clara F. Whifler as the resident of 1540 Drake Avenue.

A major resubdivision of Easton Addition No. 5 occurred ca. 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, which 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. (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 subsequently had been changed to its present-day street address of 1544 Drake Avenue.)

The Assessor’s parcel number (or APN) for 1544 Drake Avenue today is designated as 025-224-110, identified as lot 11, block 224, on page 22 of Assessor’s book 25.

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BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The 1544 Drake Avenue house is a one-story wood and masonry structure of roughly 1,500 square feet, 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 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. (NB. 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.)

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.

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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.

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.

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 Francisco, 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.

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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 our 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.

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 at 1544 Drake Avenue 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.

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WILLIAM A. WHIFLER ARCHITECT

The architect of the California Modern style house, located at 1544 Drake Avenue in Burlingame, was William Arthur 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.

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

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 structures located within the mid-Peninsula communities of San Mateo, Burlingame and Hillsborough. The notable exception occurred in 1971, when Whifler, with two other architects of record, designed the City of Burlingame's new City Hall.

In 1967, Whifler and Paul Zimmerman co-founded the Department of Architecture at the College of San Mateo, where Whifler taught classes and studios at the department until his death in 1984. According to Zimmerman, a fellow faculty member and close colleague, Whifler's lasting legacy at CSM was teaching and working closely with young students.

Whifler as Practitioner

Whifler began his studies at Stanford in engineering, only later on moving into architecture. The course content and lasting influence of these two separate, but 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, which he built for his mother, Clara Whifler, in 1958.

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.

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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 structure 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 at 1544 Drake Avenue 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."

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.

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." (Italics added.)

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, apparently 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. 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 ca. 1968 and is located at 2180 Forest View, Hillsborough.

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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.

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 but 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 but \$25,000.00.

With the obvious exception of the new Burlingame City Hall, for which Whifler was one of three architects commissioned for this 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 an 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 work. Lucchesi also observed that Whifler was a very modest and humble designer, never promoting his work or himself.

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.

Whifler as Teacher and Mentor

Whifler was appointed to the faculty of the College of San Mateo in 1966. As mentioned at the outset of this section, Whifler, together with Paul C. Zimmerman, who was appointed to the faculty at CSM in 1967, established the college’s Department of Architecture in 1967.

Whifler and Zimmerman were close colleagues, who often jointly conducted design studios and critiqued

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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 and contributed to his overall thinking about design and architecture. Whifler evidently employed a method for teaching and drawing referred to at CSM as the "anti box" theory, perhaps best appreciated by the attached set of Whifler's sketches illustrative of this theory.

Echoing the observations above 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".

Whifler taught and mentored students at CSM for nearly two decades, until his untimely death in 1984.

EVALUATION

The California Modern house at 1544 Drake Avenue appears to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) under criterion 3 at the local level of significance. The period of its significance is 1958, the date of its construction.

This California Modern house, as designed by Burlingame architect William Arthur Whifler, A.I.A., possesses significance under criterion 3 as an extraordinary example of mid-century modernist residential architecture, especially given its existence at that particular point in time within the mid-Peninsula communities of San Mateo, Burlingame and Hillsborough. The design and construction of this house together achieve a refined elegance as is evident in the structure'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 being historically significant, a property must possess integrity in order to be considered eligible for the CRHR. There are seven qualities or aspects of integrity, most if not all of which must exist in a historic property. The existence and continued retention of integrity in a historic property is essential if it is to convey its historical significance. For the CRHR, integrity of a historic property is determined by reference to the following seven aspects of integrity as defined in Bulletin 15 of the National Register of Historic Places: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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The high level or degree of integrity that presently exists in the California Modern house at 1544 Drake Avenue is extraordinary by any measure, thereby only adding to its historical significance.

Location: Structure occupies original location.

Setting: The neighborhood's historic setting of single-family residential structures remains unchanged in terms of use, although some comparatively recent construction activity has altered the aesthetics of the 1500 block of Drake Avenue somewhat with the introduction of larger, two-story houses.

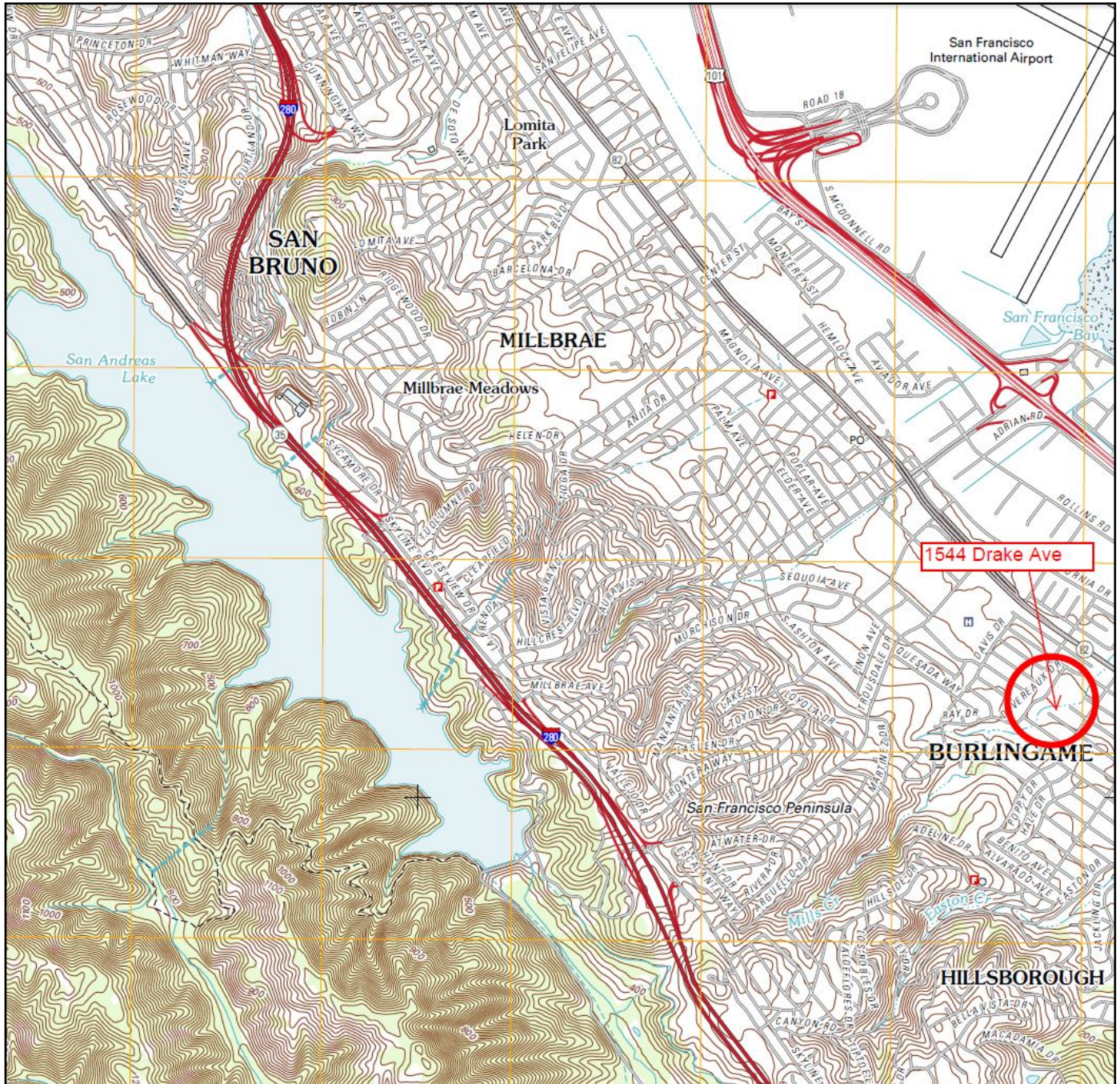
Design: Whifler's original design remains totally intact.

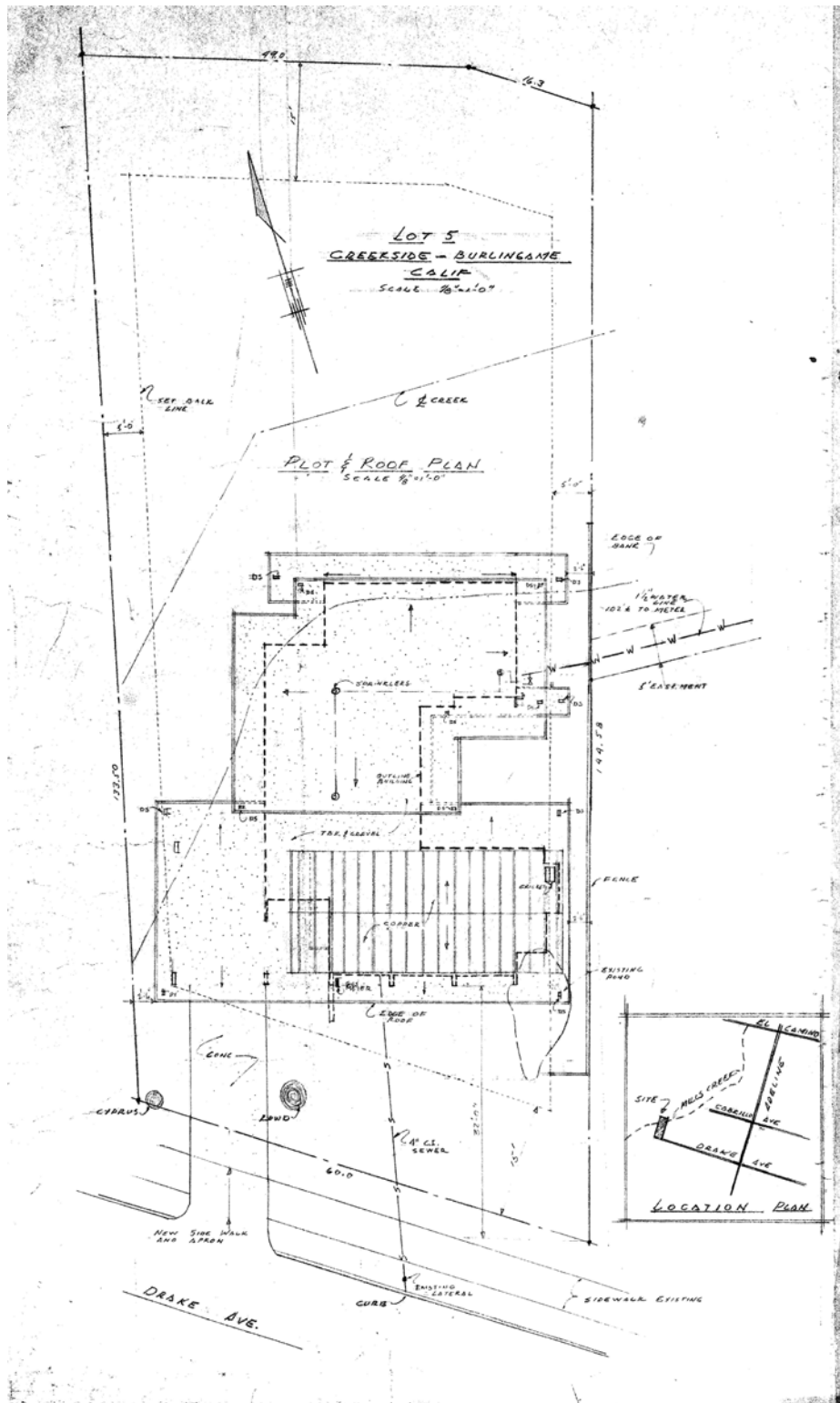
Materials: With very minor exception, such as the use of non-historic or substitute materials for making necessary adjustments for appliance upgrades, ordinary repairs and conducting periodic maintenance, original materials and finishes of the house appear to be intact.

Workmanship: There is no apparent evidence that the workmanship that created this house has been altered or otherwise compromised.

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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(All photos and graphics by Thomas Rex Hardy, AIA unless noted otherwise)



Illustration 1. 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.

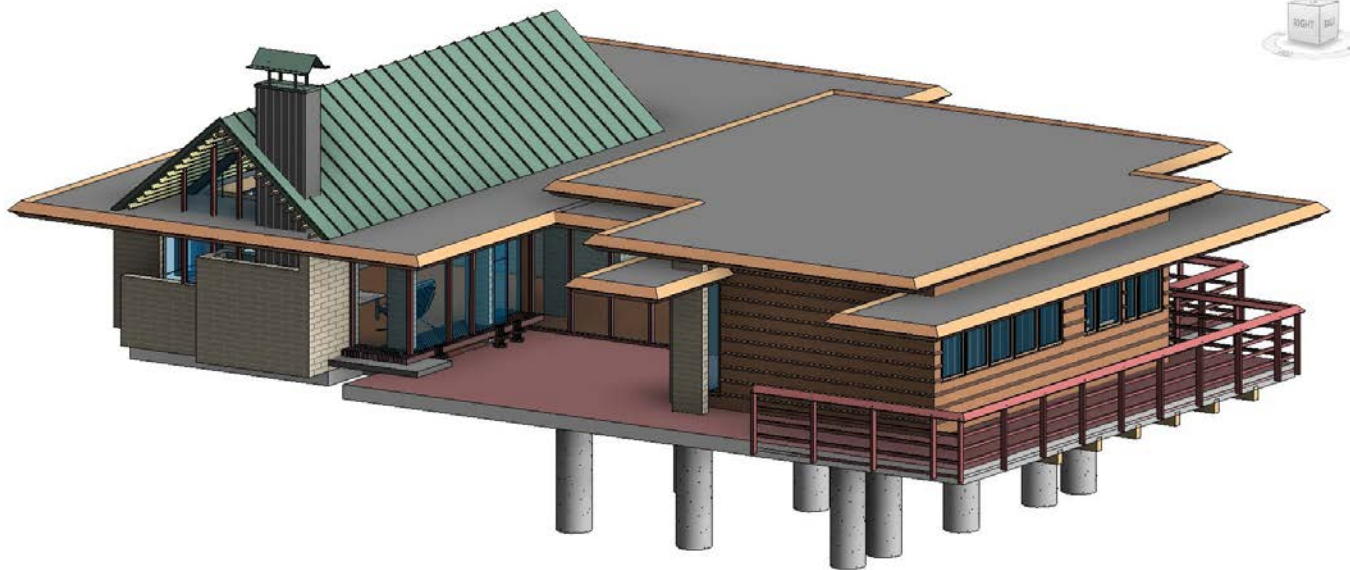


Illustration 2. Rear view of house showing wrap around deck and inner courtyard patio.
Revit model by Thomas Rex Hardy, AIA.

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Illustration 3. Living Room, looking east towards fireplace.

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Illustration 4. Living Room exterior showing horizontal "shelf" at glass curtain walls between masonry piers and wide roof overhang.



Illustration 5. Glass corner at Living Room reveals steel structural supports for roof.

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Illustration 6 (*right*). Living Room corner seen from courtyard patio showing floating hearth extension, slatted bench, and butt joint at glass corner.



Illustration 7 (*below*). Living Room seen from courtyard patio.





Illustration 8. Living Room, southeast corner.

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Illustration 9.
Living Room looking
southwest.



Illustration 10.
Living Room looking
northwest.



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Illustration 11.
Living Room seen from courtyard patio. Steel sliding patio doors can
be seen at right.
(Historic photograph. Date and photographer unknown).

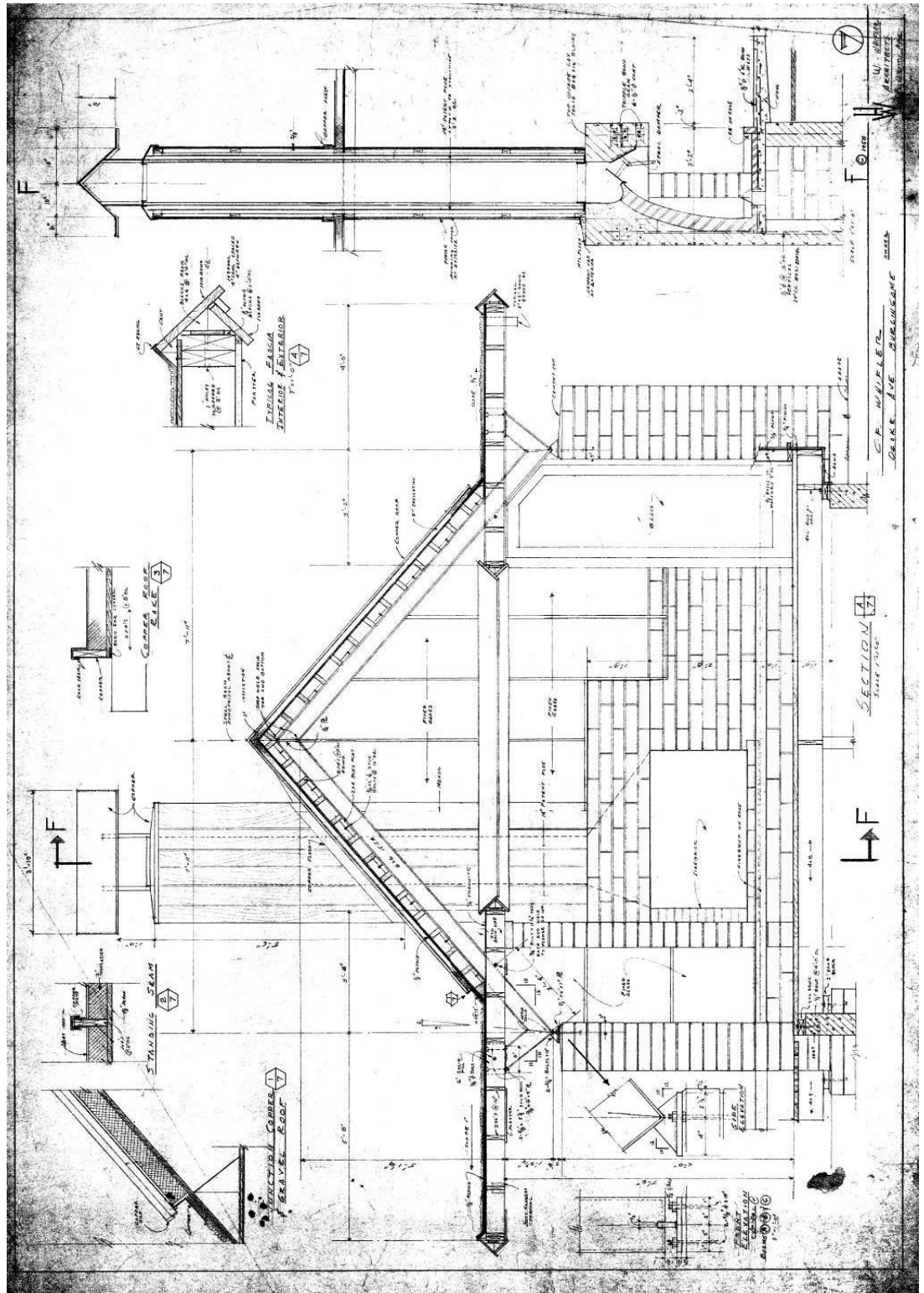
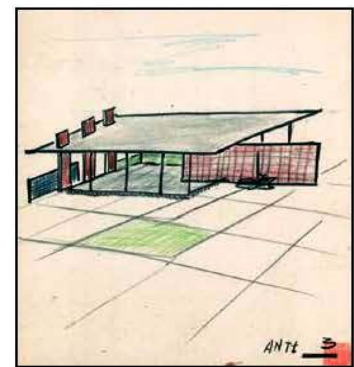
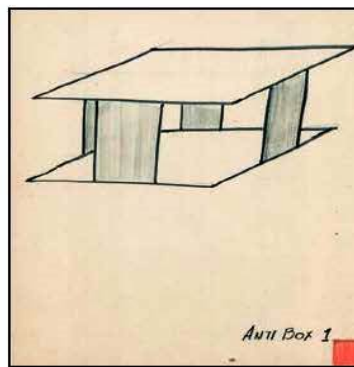
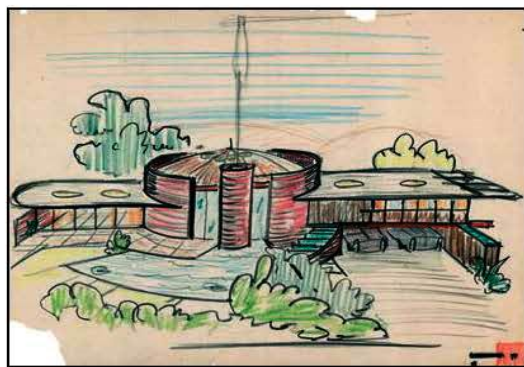
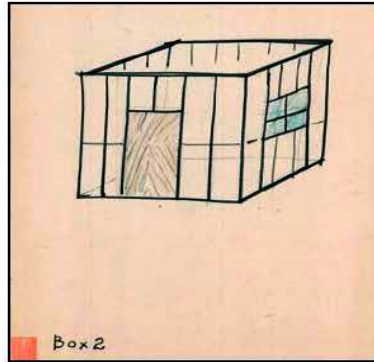
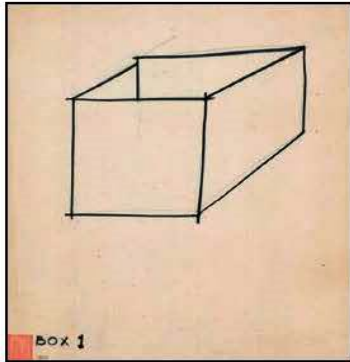


Illustration 12.
Sheet 7 of original working drawings by Hannum & Whifler 1958.
Cross section through Living Room and chimney detail.

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"Box / Anti-Box" sketches by William Whifler

Illustration 14.
Sketches illustrating one of William Whifler's design philosophies.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Page 29 of 29 Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 1544 Drake Avenue, Burlingame, CA

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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.