

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Newcomb House

and/or common Melsek House

RECEIVED

DEC 28 1981

OHP

**2. Location**

street & number 675-677 North El Molino Avenue n/a not for publication

city, town Pasadena n/a vicinity of congressional district 22nd

state California code 06 county Los Angeles code 037

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> museum</span>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> park</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> religious</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> scientific</span>
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> transportation</span>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> other:</span>

**4. Owner of Property**

name James E. Melsek and Linda Iburg Melsek

street & number 677 North El Molino Avenue

city, town Pasadena n/a vicinity of state California 91101

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Assessor, County of Los Angeles

street & number 300 East Walnut Street

city, town Pasadena state California

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title see continuation sheet #1 has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date see continuation sheet  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records see continuation sheet

city, town see continuation sheet state California

①

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>      n/a      </u>

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The craftsman bungalow at 675-677 North El Molino Avenue is a two story, shingled residence situated on a prominent corner lot. A wide porch extends along the East facade and continues along the projecting northern wing of the house. The shingled walls are skirted at the bottom producing a slightly buttressed effect. The shingle siding is applied in a pattern of alternating wide and narrow rows and is carried to ground level hiding the foundation which is concrete. There is a partial basement with concrete walls. The porch floor and stairs are cement. Large battered columns constructed of large cobblestones interspersed with clumps of clinker brick support the porch roof. A matching porch wall connects the columns. The columns and walls have cement caps. A massive chimney of matching stone and clinker brick rises on the North side of the house and is visible under the porch roof as well as above the first story roof line. It is flanked by benches also of stone topped with cement. A smaller chimney rising from the second floor roof vents the original gas gravity furnace.

This is a multi-gabled structure with a very low-pitched roof covered with rolled composition roofing. It is called an airplane bungalow in part for the wing-like expanse of roof. The airplane motif is further carried out by an elaborate strut and fretwork in the gables which support the "wings" of the porch roof. An important craftsman feature, this intricate beamwork within the gables extends as an open pergola over the driveway on the South side of the house. The pergola is further supported by a pair of stone and clinker brick piers on the South side of the driveway.

The house exhibits many well-developed bungalow features. Besides the low-pitched roof, the eaves are greatly extended beyond the edge of the house. Structural members such as the rafter tails and supporting beams within the gables are exposed. Another craftsman feature is the way the roof is constructed in which the raised edge of the roof actually forms the gutters. The downspouts are original and are carefully matched to the shape of the house. Less common, but significant, is the "orientalizing" of the roof line by raising the ridgeline of each gable to a peak. This oriental effect is carried through to the bellcast chimney caps.

The many windows and doors which are intended to give unlimited access to nature are another typical craftsman feature. The large oak front door with its diamond pattern of beveled glass is flanked by full length sidelights. These sidelights can be opened for ventilation and they retain their original screens. The front door and its sidelights are finished on the exterior with natural quarter-sawn oak trim. Windows in the main living areas are of the casement type. On all windows and doors, the extended lintels and flared or battered trim reflect the overall style of the house and enhance its harmony through craftsmanship and attention to detail.

(see continuation sheet #2)

3

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1914 **Builder/Architect** Bert Williams, contractor

### Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Newcomb House is a "rare example of a late, mature development in the craftsman bungalow style...as well as being a stand-out example of the 'airplane' style craftsman bungalow, never numerous and now relatively rare."<sup>1</sup>

The bungalow was a popular architectural style in Southern California and developed in Pasadena primarily during the years 1901-1920. It was a style well-suited to the warm climate. Emphasis was on harmony with nature, and floorplans were often irregular in order to better embrace the landscape. The buttressing of walls and columns gave an organic feel to a structure as if it grew on the site. Natural building materials were used extensively, such as wooden shingles for siding and cobblestones from the nearby arroyo creekbed for foundations. As the bungalow style matured, it became a form further characterized by its horizontality and informality. Horizontality was achieved through low-pitched, broad gables with extending eaves. Informality and outdoor living were achieved through the use of large porches, the multiplicity of doors and windows, and open spaces in the interior. These typical and mature bungalow features are well exemplified in the Newcomb House.

The Newcomb House, so known for its original owner and builder, Dr. R. H. Newcomb, also exhibits typical craftsman features. The Arts and Crafts movement was strong in Pasadena and was closely associated with the bungalow and its development. In fact, the craftsman bungalow is a recognized style in Pasadena. In architecture, the craftsman movement made popular the extensive use of wood and the exposure and enhancement of structural forms, such as rafter tails. Craftsmanship was usually emphasized in exterior construction, particularly in and around porches. Detailed craftsmanship was carried through to the interior with such features as beamed ceilings and almost always with some built-in furniture. The epitome of the movement can be found in homes designed by Charles and Henry Greene. Few homes attained the high art of the Greenes, but the brothers popularized oriental motifs and the use of clinker bricks--two features found in the Newcomb House.

The airplane bungalow is a somewhat rare tangent of the craftsman movement. Those excentricities which distinguish this particular style were derived from a new machine of the time, the airplane. The Newcomb House obviously belongs to the craftsman genre with its craftsmanship and  
(see continuation sheet #3)

<sup>1</sup> The Treasures on Your Block, Pasadena's Architectural and Historical Inventory, Survey Area 2, City of Pasadena, Cultural Heritage Program, 1976.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Pasadena Architectural and Historical Inventory, Area 2.  
Building permits.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 1/4 acre.

Quadrangle name Pasadena, CA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	1	3	1	9	5	2	6	0	3	7	1	8	0	1	0	0	0
Zone		Easting						Northing									

B 

Zone		Easting						Northing									

C 

Zone		Easting						Northing									

D 

Zone		Easting						Northing									

E 

Zone		Easting						Northing									

F 

Zone		Easting						Northing									

G 

Zone		Easting						Northing									

H 

Zone		Easting						Northing									

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The East 145 feet of Lot 1 and the East 145 feet of the North 15 feet of Lot 2 of Strang and Baldwin's Replat of lots 1,2,12,13,14,15 and 16 of Araminta Thornton's Subdivision, in the City of Pasadena. Assessor's Book 5731, page 7, parcel 1. House occupies its original lot.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state n/a code county n/a code

state n/a code county n/a code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. and Linda I. Melsek, owners

organization n/a date December 24, 1981

street & number 677 North El Molino Avenue telephone (213) 793-1331

city or town Pasadena state CA 91101

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 7-27-82

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 9/2/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Register

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE 1 of 1

1. A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California, 1977,  
D. Gebhard and R. Winter. Peregrine Smith, Inc., Salt Lake City.

general distribution in libraries

2. Pasadena's Architectural and Historical Inventory, Area 2, 1976.

Cultural Heritage Program  
Housing and Community Development Department  
Pasadena City Hall  
100 North Garfield Avenue  
Pasadena, California 91109

NOTE: This property is listed in the local survey as the Melsek House,  
based upon the name of the current owners. This is the justification for  
entering "Melsek House" as the common name of the property under item 1  
of the National Register form.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET #2

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1 of 1

There is a matching two car garage on the southwest corner of the lot behind the house. The garage is accessible by driveways from both streets, which is a convenient feature for a corner house. There are also convenient cement and brick walks on the northern and eastern sides of the house giving easy access to all sides.

There are a few minor alterations which are externally visible, but generally alterations have been done with taste and sensitivity. An exterior stairway to the second floor was added on the south side of the house in 1937 (building permit issued). At the same time, an exterior door and a small porch were added at the top of these stairs. Also, the second story sleeping porch on the east side of the house was enclosed. In 1950 (building permit issued), a portion of the south end of the front porch was enclosed for a bathroom.

The interior of the house continues the craftsman theme. The living room is dominated by a huge fireplace of large cobblestones and clumps of clinker brick. On one side of the fireplace is a built-in bookcase. On the other side is a built-in wood bin. A low wainscot encircles the room. Elaborate box beams embellish the ceiling. There is no doorway between the living room and the dining room. The division is marked by more built-in bookcases which support large battered wooden columns. The lack of a dividing wall between these two rooms maintains an openness common in craftsman homes.

The dining room also has box beams in the ceiling, and there is a large built-in buffet on the south side of the room. Over the buffet is a large rectangular window of beveled glass, and within the buffet are several beveled glass mirrors. The dining room also has a decorative plate rail around the room. In both the living room and the dining room, the bookcases, the buffet, the mantelpiece, and wainscot, and all other wood trim is Douglas fir with a natural finish.

Throughout the house, particularly on the first floor, the interior has been changed very little. The floors in all the first floor living areas are quarter-sawn oak. Walls and ceilings throughout are of lath and plaster. Many originals remain including push button light switches and their brass plates. A few original light fixtures remain including a pair of brass wall sconces over the buffet. All doors, five-panelled and French type, are original and have original hardware. The kitchen cabinets and hardware are original. One bathroom retains its original plumbing fixtures including a pedestal sink. No alteration is planned for the downstairs other than paint stripping and refinishing of woodwork. This has recently been completed in the hallway and stairway.

The upstairs was modified somewhat in 1937 when the exterior stairway was added, and until recently it has been used as a separate living unit. Structural changes are not anticipated, but there is a concentrated restoration effort on the interior of the second floor. Emphasis has been on the reproduction and replacement of appropriate wood trim and moldings as well as extensive paint stripping and refinishing.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET #3

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1 of 1

attention to detail, but it is also a classic example of an airplane bungalow. The second story is smaller than the first and merges into the roof of the first story emphasizing the low horizontality of the structure. When viewed from the eastern second story window, the broad wing-like expanse of the first story roof is waist level and produces the effect of being in a cockpit. The most obvious airplane design feature in the Newcomb House is the intricate strut and fretwork in the gables of the porch roof. This design is reminiscent of the struts and frets of a biplane.

"Although the structure has more than minor significance alone, its relationship to the neighborhood is of great importance."<sup>2</sup> The neighborhood in which the Newcomb House is situated has structures dating back to the late 1800's and the beginnings of development in Pasadena. There are also numerous earlier examples of some of the many variations of the popular bungalow theme tracing the development of the bungalow in Pasadena. Built in 1914, the Newcomb House is one of the later houses on the block and it is a culmination of earlier development of the bungalow. "The dwelling is particularly well suited for its prominent corner location. It is sited in a graceful, but dominant manner so as to create a focal point for the surrounding neighborhood. Well related to its background neighborhood and sited to fit this corner, the house sums up the district and the mature bungalow style."<sup>3</sup>

The Newcomb House situated in one of Pasadena's oldest neighborhoods and on display from its prominent location, deserves recognition as a fine example of an intact craftsman bungalow and especially for its rarity as an "airplane" style bungalow.

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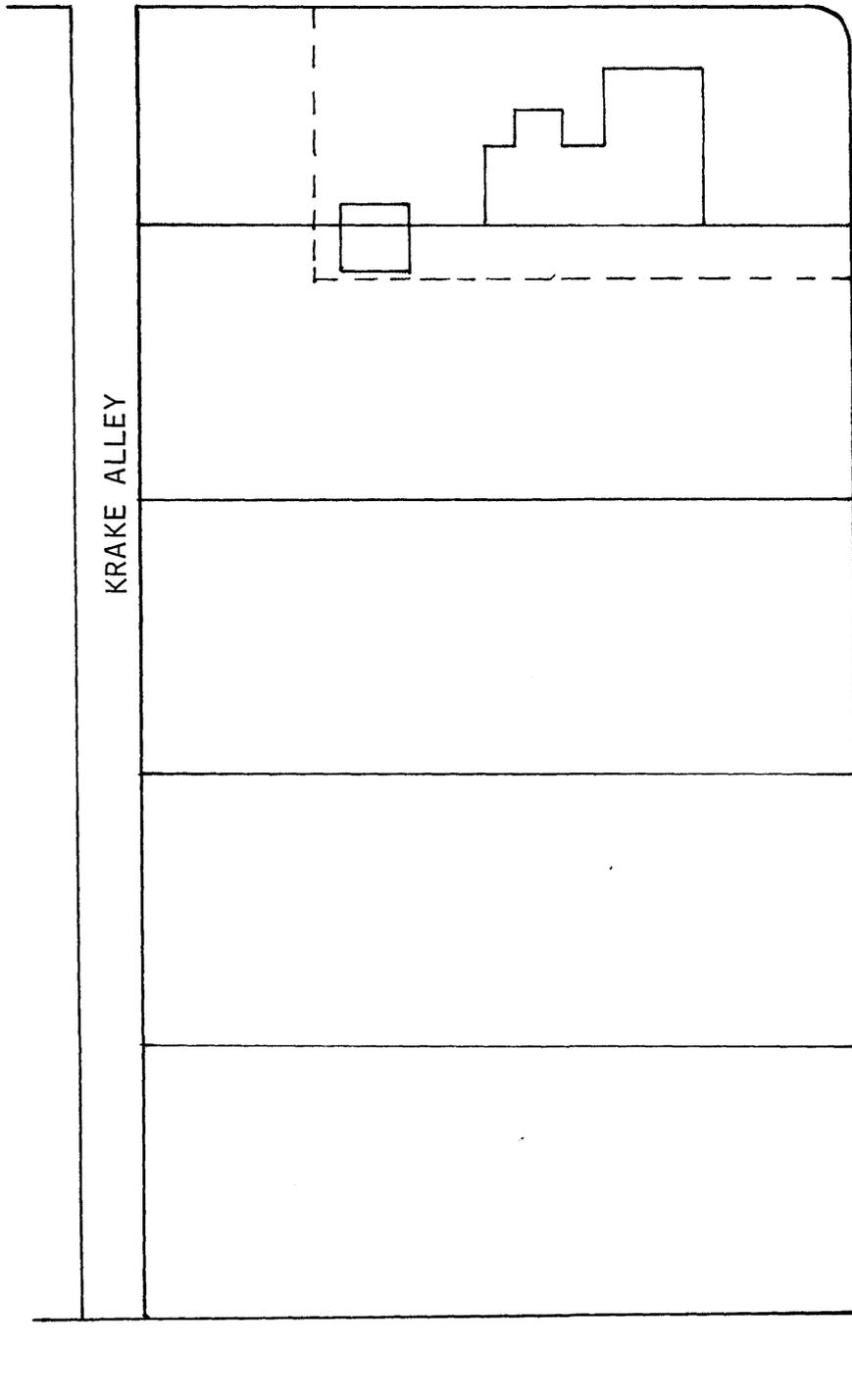
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Newcomb House  
675-677 North El Molino Avenue  
Pasadena, California

1 inch = 50 feet

EAST ORANGE GROVE BOULEVARD



NORTH EL MOLINO AVENUE

