

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1233

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

Historic name: Thomas, Franklin Rosborough "Frank" House

Other names/site number:

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: 758 Flintridge Avenue

City or town: La Cañada Flintridge State: CA 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Not For Publication: [] Vicinity: []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 X 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 [check] 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 [X] local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

A [] B [X] C [X] D []

Signature of certifying official/Title: California State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 12/12/14
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting official:
Date:
Title:
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

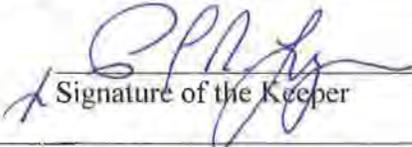
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4. National Park Service Certification

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

2/3/2015
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

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

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement:

Other: Mid-century Modern

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood: Weatherboard

Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Franklin Rosborough "Frank" Thomas House was designed by Theodore Criley, Jr. in the Mid-century Modern style for Frank Thomas and his family. Construction began in November 1948, and the house was complete by April 1949. It is located in La Cañada Flintridge, California, approximately 18 miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles, and approximately six miles northwest of Pasadena. The Thomas House stands at the northeast corner of its 1.77-acre parcel. The site is wooded, with the building surrounded by foliage and paths through the woodland, obscuring views of the building from the street. The immediately surrounding landscaping, inspired by preliminary site plans done in 1948 by noted landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, is well-developed, and includes mature trees, shrubs, and ivy. The house exhibits the modest scale and massing, horizontal emphasis, and asymmetrical plan associated with Mid-century Modern homes. Though additions were made to the Thomas House over the years, it retains significant character-defining features on the interior and exterior. It retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Narrative Description¹

Exterior

The Thomas House, designed by architect Theodore Criley, Jr. and built by contractor Ray Gerhart, is located on the southwest side of Flintridge Avenue, at the intersection of Cathcart Drive and Flintridge Avenue. The lot is bounded on the north, south, and west by single-family residences. The property contains a one-story, single-family residence constructed in 1949. It is

¹ Adapted from Ted Thomas, "758 Flintridge Avenue, a brief history," Unpublished, 2014.

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set back from the street behind mature trees and shrubs, and is situated at an angle on the eastern portion of the lot amidst lush landscaping and mature trees. The building is in the Mid-century Modern in style. It is of wood frame construction, and is linear in presentation with an asymmetrical plan consisting of a roughly rectangular central element with several wings projecting parallel to the central structure. The roof is a low-pitched shed roof with a wide overhang and boxed eaves, clad in composition roofing. The exterior walls are clad in redwood siding. The primary entrance is deeply recessed in the middle portion of the north façade, and consists of a simple wooden door, set off-center among frosted plate-glass windows, beneath the boxed eaves. The door is accessed by a small brick porch set beneath eaves exposed and latticed to form a pergola. There is a low, broad masonry chimney projecting from the southeast portion of the roof. Fenestration consists primarily of wood side-sliding windows. The south and north façades feature plate glass windows and window walls, and there is a partially glazed wooden door at the western end of the south façade. There is a large concrete patio with a redwood lattice inlay accessed through the window wall on the south façade, and a carport at the northeast corner of the house. The carport is located on a small motor court behind a basket-weave fence, and covered by a low-pitched, side-gabled roof with exposed rafters. There is a storage and garden shed to the southwest of the house, which was constructed in 1958 and designed to be compatible with the house. It is on a masonry foundation, and features a shed roof with exposed eaves, exterior walls clad in redwood siding, and side-sliding windows.

Exterior Alterations

In 1962, around the time that the family's fourth child was born, Thomas hired Pasadena architect Curtis Chambers to convert the garage into a fourth bedroom and shop, enlarge the adjoining half bath to a whole bath, and transform part of the backyard into an attached, enclosed carport. Thomas asked Chambers to extend the existing basket-weave redwood fencing around the perimeter of the carport, and to make one of the walls into the carport door, making an entire section of what appeared to be fence rise like a garage door to reveal the two parking spaces within the carport. A parking area and brick terrace was also added in 1962.

In 1982, Thomas installed solar panels on the roof, which were removed in 1989. Storage sheds for hot water tanks were built adjacent to the back door, also in 1982. In 1984, the patio was re-poured and drainage improved, and the redwood grid inlay in the patio was replaced. Around the same time, the roof was resurfaced from its original pea gravel to composition roofing. This substantially increased the amount of rain runoff, and so, in 1985, a collection trough was added to the fascia above the dining room. In 2014, the redwood grid inlay in the patio was replaced again.

The Thomas House retains significant character-defining features on the exterior, including:

- Asymmetrical plan
- Low-pitched or flat roof
- Wide, open eaves with exposed rafters with the ends covered by a single board
- Sheltered, recessed entry door in mid-section of house

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- Natural materials (wood, stone, brick)
- Lack of exterior decorative detail
- Exterior living spaces
- Carport
- Low, broad masonry chimney
- Window walls

Interior

The Thomas House is a one story, four-bedroom, three-bathroom Mid-century Modern house that includes a studio space used by Thomas for his animation work. There is what Thomas referred to as a "gallery" leading from the entry into the dining room. The gallery features a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows and glass doors, which overlook the patio. The redwood siding used on the exterior of the home continues to the interior, and is featured prominently in the studio, dining room, and entry spaces. There is original varnished oak built-in furniture with rectangular pulls throughout the house, including the living room, studio, gallery, and bedrooms. The studio features large pocket doors, also of varnished oak. One of the most prominent interior character-defining features is the living room "feature wall" consisting of a brick masonry fireplace surrounded by built-in cabinetry, bookshelves, and varnished oak decorative squares. There are additional brick masonry fireplaces in the dining room and studio. The bedroom wing features glazed plywood walls, extensive built-in furniture, and the signature drawer pulls utilized on the built-in furniture throughout the rest of the house.

Interior Alterations

In 1952, contractor Charles Terry completed the built-in desks and wardrobe features in one of the bedrooms, which then became the boys' room. In 1962, around the time that the family's fourth child was born, Thomas hired Pasadena architect Curtis Chambers to convert the garage into a fourth bedroom and shop, enlarge the adjoining half bath to a whole, and transform part of the backyard into an attached, enclosed carport. Also in 1962, insulation was added to the dining room and gallery, accomplished by dropping the ceiling to half the depth of the exposed rafters. In 1962 and again in 1990, the kitchen was remodeled on the same footprint as the original.

The Thomas House retains significant character-defining interior features in the main living spaces, including:

- Relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces
- Walls of windows
- Built-in varnished oak furniture
- Asymmetrical floor plan
- Natural wall cladding

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Integrity

Although there have been alterations to the property over time, the Thomas House retains all seven aspects of integrity. *Location:* The house is in its original location. *Design:* The Thomas House retains significant character-defining features of its original Mid-century Modern architecture as designed by Ted Criley, Jr. and therefore retains integrity of design. *Setting:* Features of the original setting are intact, including the relationship of the house with the existing wooded landscape and with Flintridge Avenue. The Thomas House therefore retains integrity of setting. *Materials and Workmanship:* Although there have been some alterations over time, the Thomas House retains the majority of its historic materials, including natural materials that feature prominently on the interior and exterior. The Thomas House also reflects the physical evidence of period construction techniques. Therefore, integrity of materials and workmanship have been retained. *Feeling:* The Thomas House retains the significant physical features that convey the building's character as a Mid-century Modern house and therefore retains integrity of feeling. *Association:* The property continues to convey its historic association with Frank Thomas, and retains significant character-defining features of its original Mid-century Modern design. Therefore, it retains integrity of association.

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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

Other

Period of Significance

1949 - 1978

1949

Significant Dates

1962

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Thomas, Franklin Rosborough "Frank"

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Criley Jr., Theodore

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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 Thomas House is significant for its association with Frederick Rosborough "Frank" Thomas, a significant figure in the motion picture animation industry (classified under Other: Animation). It is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion B for its association with Frank Thomas, one of Disney's "Nine Old Men." The period of significance under Criterion B is 1949, reflecting the date that construction was completed and Thomas moved into the house, until 1978, when Frank Thomas retired from Disney Studios. The Thomas House was constructed more than 50 years ago, but it remained associated with Frank Thomas' productive professional period until 1978. Therefore, it must meet Criteria Consideration G of "exceptional importance" required for properties that continued to achieve significance into a period less than 50 years ago. The Thomas House exhibits exceptional importance due to Thomas' significance in the animation industry in Hollywood, his 43-year career at Disney Studios, and his personal achievements and innovations in the field of animation. Therefore, the Thomas House meets Criterion Consideration G for properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty years.

The Thomas House is significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of Mid-century Modern architecture in Southern California, as a prominent example of the residential work of architect Theodore Criley, Jr., and for its association with preeminent landscape architect Garrett Eckbo. The period of significance under Criterion C is 1949, reflecting the date the house was completed.

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

Criterion B

The Thomas House is eligible under Criterion B as the long-term home of Franklin Rosborough "Frank" Thomas (1912-2004). It is the only property solely associated with Thomas' life and storied career, and the house is an outward expression of Thomas' interests and personality. He worked closely with architect Theodore Criley, Jr., collaborating on details on the interior, including a large-windowed studio with drafting tables, and exterior of the house throughout the process. Thomas' interest in the outdoors is reflected in the development and integration of the landscape with the house (with early design suggestions from Garrett Eckbo and N.K. Barrus), in the rock walls and paths throughout the property (many of them built by Thomas himself), and in the plantings selected for the property. The house was his family home and artist's canvas for fifty-five years, until he passed away there in 2004, three days after his 92nd birthday.

Frank Thomas was a member of Walt Disney's elite "Nine Old Men," and a pioneering animator who worked on many classic short and feature films during his forty-three year career at Disney Studios. In addition to his achievements as an animator and directing animator, Thomas authored four books in collaboration with his lifelong friend and colleague Ollie Johnston: *Disney*

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Animation: The Illusion of Life, Too Funny for Words, Walt Disney's Bambi: The Story and the Film, and The Disney Villain. Thomas and Johnston were also the title subjects of an award-winning 1995 feature-length documentary entitled *Frank and Ollie*, written and directed by Thomas' son, Theodore "Ted" Thomas.

Walt Disney Studios

Walt Disney started his film career with *Alice's Wonderland*, made in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1923. In August of the same year, with contracts to create more films about Alice, Walt moved to Hollywood, California, and formed a company with his brother, Roy. Ub Iwerks and several of Walt's friends from Kansas City joined the company in 1924. By 1926, with a successful series of films about Alice, Disney's staff grew to twelve, and the company moved to a new studio on Hyperion Avenue. In 1928, Walt began production on a series of short animated films featuring an original character – Mickey Mouse. Later the same year, Disney released *Steamboat Willie*, the first Mickey Mouse cartoon, and the first animated film created with synchronized sound. The use of sound made Disney the foremost animation studio in the world.² In 1932, Disney made animation history again by releasing *Flowers and Trees*, the first cartoon in color. Disney was by then so successful that its personnel was over 100 people, and, in 1933, the "astounding" success of Disney's *Three Little Pigs* financed expansion of the company's facilities.³

By 1934, when Frank Thomas began to work for Disney, the company was well-established, with a little over two hundred employees. In December 1937, Disney made animation history again, releasing the first American feature-length animated film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The following year, Walt Disney decided to make one feature-length animated film a year. In 1939, the Disney Corporation had so many employees that the company moved to larger facilities in Burbank. Unfortunately, World War II isolated Disney's foreign market from its subsequent films, so *Pinocchio*, *Fantasia*, and *Bambi* all lost money in the box office. However, despite a reduction in staff and financial hardships throughout World War II, the Disney Corporation was then and continues to be the most important animation studio in history. Frank Thomas, along with his colleagues in Disney's "Nine Old Men," were afforded the opportunity to work for Disney on America's most important animated films from the mid-1930s until the late 1970s.

Disney's "Nine Old Men"

Disney's "Nine Old Men" was a group of elite animators, including Les Clark, Wolfgang Reitherman, Eric Larson, Ward Kimball, Milt Kahl, John Lounsbery, Marc Davis, Ollie Johnston, and Frank Thomas. These men started their lengthy careers at Disney in the 1930s,

² Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation* (New York: Hyperion, 1995), p. 20.

³ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, p. 20.

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acting as assistants to older, more experienced animators on animated short films and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. By the early 1940s, the Nine Old Men were working their way up the ranks of Disney's Animation Department, working on such films as *Pinocchio* and *Bambi*, and serving on the Animation Board to help manage the department. By 1950, Disney's Animation Board became a permanent group of nine supervising animators. "It was then that Walt [Disney] jokingly called them his Nine Old Men, after FDR's nickname for the Supreme Court Justices whose alleged 'lowered mental and physical vigor' threatened his New Deal programs."⁴ As a result of economic factors during and after World War II as well as the employees' strike in 1941, Disney's staff was reduced in every department, making Walt rely more and more on animation to "carry the films."⁵ The Nine Old Men became supervising or directing animators, and had unprecedented control over the direction and content of films. Author John Canemaker discussed the Nine Old Men:

The Nine Old Men made us believe in the most fantastic things because *they* believed in them: Bambi ice skating, Mickey Mouse giving a broom its marching orders, Sleeping Beauty's prince slaying a dragon, a hippo and an alligator in a *pas de deux*, two dogs having a romantic pasta dinner. The Nine became a dazzling repertory company of "actors with a pencil" (as the bromide goes), who, for all their differences, fit remarkably well together and changed roles nimbly with each new film; at various times they were lovesick squirrels, grandfatherly cats, princes and princesses, befuddled wizards, treacherous pirates, sexy pixies, kidnapping and dognapping harridans, the Mad Hatter and the March Hare, centaurs, and Pegasus, among other fabulous creatures.⁶

Walt Disney and his Nine Old Men made animation history. "The lives and art-making methods of the Nine Old Men shed a light on a certain period in film history at a particular Hollywood fantasy factory whose creations 'represent America to more people than the bald eagle.'"⁷ The Nine Old Men served as mentors and sources of inspiration for several successful animators, such as Dan Haskett (*The Simpsons*), Brenda Chapman (*The Prince of Egypt* and *Brave*), Don Bluth (*The Land Before Time* and *An American Tail*), Brad Bird (*Iron Giant*, *The Incredibles*, and *Ratatouille*), and Henry Selick and Tim Burton (*Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*). The Nine Old Men are "the ones who set the standards for everybody – for the medium, and to build on. [...The Nine Old Men learned from their predecessors at Disney, and took animation...] to a higher level. They mastered the medium and were able to advance it."⁸ Together with their fellow animators at Disney, the Nine Old Men produced a monumental body

⁴ John Canemaker, *Walt Disney's Nine Old Men and the Art of Animation* (New York: Disney Editions, 2001), p. 6.

⁵ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, p. 159.

⁶ Canemaker, *Disney's Nine Old Men*, p. 7.

⁷ Canemaker, *Disney's Nine Old Men*, p. 7.

⁸ Richard Williams, quoted in Canemaker, *Disney's Nine Old Men*, p. 296.

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of work, including *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *Lady and the Tramp*, *Pinocchio*, *Bambi*, *The Jungle Book*, and *Alice in Wonderland*.

Franklin Rosborough "Frank" Thomas

Born in Santa Monica, California in 1912, Thomas moved to Fresno with his family at an early age, where his father was president of Fresno State College.⁹ The youngest of three boys, at eight years old he was selected by Lewis Terman of Stanford University (creator of the Stanford-Binet IQ test) to participate in a long-term study of gifted children. Thomas taught himself how to play piano, and began to draw cartoons featuring his family and friends. Family camping trips in the High Sierra region fostered a lifelong love of the outdoors. As a sophomore at Fresno State College, Thomas wrote and directed a film spoofing college life for a school project. The film won considerable acclaim and was run in the local theaters. That project sparked Thomas' ambition to go seriously into the arts in some form. His father promised to send him to an art school of his choice if he finished his education at Stanford. At Stanford, Thomas majored in art and won recognition for his cartoons for the school newspaper, the *Chaparral*. During his Stanford years, he met and became friends with another art major, Ollie Johnston. The two formed an instant friendship that was to last for over 70 years.

After graduating from Stanford in 1933, Thomas moved to Los Angeles, where he attended the Chouinard Art Institute and studied under Pruett Carter, one of the most important magazine illustrators of the day. Fellow young artist and Stanford graduate, James Algar, lived in the same rooming house as Thomas, and was employed by the Walt Disney Studios. At Algar's suggestion, Thomas applied for an opening as an "in-between" in the animation department and started working there on September 24, 1934. He was the 224th employee hired by Disney's fledgling company. After six months, Thomas was moved to Fred Moore's unit and became the star animator's assistant. His earliest assignments included the short *Mickey's Elephant*.

Only three years later, Thomas was part of animation history as a key member of the animation team for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Hollywood's first full-length animated feature. He was one of eight animators who concentrated on the seven dwarfs in three sections of the film. This was followed by a top spot animating the title character in *Pinocchio*. Thomas helped to design the character and did groundbreaking animation work on such scenes as the "I've Got No Strings" musical section. For *Bambi*, Thomas experimented for over six months to get the proper look and characterization for Bambi and some of the other animals. He worked closely with fellow animator Milt Kahl to solve difficult design and animation issues in order to convince Walt Disney that pencil-drawn animals could make for a believable motion picture.

In 1941, Thomas joined Walt Disney and a handpicked group of eighteen artists and writers on a goodwill trip to South America. He was the only animator in the group that toured Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and other Latin American countries. Two films, *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros*, resulted from the trip.

⁹ Biographical information about Frank Thomas derived from Ted Thomas, "Frank Thomas biography," unpublished, 2014.

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At the outbreak of World War II, Thomas enlisted in the Army Air Force, and was tasked with directing and animating training films as part of the First Motion Picture Unit. In February 1946, after armistice and discharge from the service, Thomas married Jeanette Armentrout of Greeley, Colorado, following a four-year courtship. Jeannette attended Stephens College in Columbus, Missouri, and then received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Stanford University.¹⁰ She taught in California secondary schools and at the Colorado State College of Education during World War II, and later taught music in La Cañada schools. She was an active docent at the Gamble House in Pasadena, and in 1989 published a book on the Greene and Greene masterpiece entitled *Images of the Gamble House*. They raised four children together.

Thomas rejoined the Disney Studio on April 1, 1946, and contributed to every major animated film that came out of Disney for the next thirty years. For the 1949 feature *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*, Thomas was promoted to directing animator and created the scene with the superstitious Ichabod riding home on a dark and scary night. In 1950, he animated a series of famous villains, starting with *Cinderella's* wicked stepmother. This was followed by the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* and the nefarious Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*. In 1955, Thomas animated the classic scene of a cocker spaniel named Lady and a rover named Tramp sharing spaghetti and meatballs on a "Bella Notte" in the 1955 feature, *Lady and the Tramp*, a scene often pointed to as one of the most famous in animation history. He then animated (with Ollie Johnston) the three good fairies in *Sleeping Beauty* and the lead adult Dalmatians in *101 Dalmatians*. He went on to serve as directing animator on *The Jungle Book*, *The Aristocats*, *Robin Hood*, and *The Rescuers*, and shared an Academy Award for *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day*. After working on early story development, character design, and animation for the 1981 feature *The Fox and the Hound*, Thomas retired from animation in January 1978.

Noted animation historian, author, and filmmaker John Canemaker described Thomas' talents, noting that "Thomas is particularly known and admired for his ability to animate emotionally sensitive material; the saddest scenes, the most romantic, most deeply felt sequences, the sincerest heart-tuggers usually found their way to his drawing board."¹¹ Fellow animation icon Chuck Jones, legendary director of *Bugs Bunny* and *Wile E. Coyote*, described Thomas as "the Laurence Olivier of animation."¹² Academy Award-winning filmmaker John Lasseter, chief creative officer at Pixar Animation Studios and director of the *Toy Story* films, *A Bug's Life*, and the *Cars* films, said of Thomas, "Frank was a giant in our field and he meant everything to me and to all of us who love the art of animation."¹³

For five years after their retirement in 1978 from Disney, Thomas and his best friend, Ollie Johnston, worked full-time researching and writing the definitive book on their craft, entitled

¹⁰ Chris Arrant, "Jeannette Thomas, Widow Of Legendary Disney Animator Frank Thomas, and Gamble House Historian/Author, Dies At Age 91," *Cartoon Brew*, October 3, 2012. <http://www.cartoonbrew.com/biz/jeannette-thomas-widow-of-legendary-disney-animator-frank-thomas-and-gamble-house-historianauthor-dies-at-age-91-70928.html>.

¹¹ Canemaker, *Disney's Nine Old Men*.

¹² "A Tribute to Frank Thomas," Frank and Ollie, <http://www.frankanollie.com/FrankTribute.html>.

¹³ "A Tribute to Frank Thomas," Frank and Ollie, <http://www.frankanollie.com/FrankTribute.html>.

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Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life. The book became a comprehensive text about the history and craft of animation. *Too Funny for Words*, the duo's second book, was published six years later and explored the humor and story elements that went into Disney's features and shorts. Their third book, *Walt Disney's Bambi: The Story and the Film*, published in 1990, told the behind-the-scenes story of the creation of what is considered one of the greatest animated films of all time. Their final collaboration, *The Disney Villain*, was published in 1993.

In 1995, Thomas and Johnston were the subjects of a feature length documentary, "Frank and Ollie," released by Walt Disney Pictures. Written, produced, and directed by Thomas's son, Theodore (Ted) Thomas, and produced by Ted's wife, Kuniko Okubo, the film played at film festivals around the world and received acclaim for its insightful look at the lives, careers, and extraordinary friendship of the two legendary animators.

In addition to his career as an animator, Thomas expressed his musical talents as the pianist in the popular jazz group, the Firehouse Five Plus Two. Formed in the 1940s, the group consisted of Disney artists, and achieved worldwide success with their numerous Dixieland jazz recordings and personal appearances. On several occasions, they shared the stage with New Orleans luminaries such as Louis Armstrong and Kid Ory, appeared on Bing Crosby's radio show and Milton Berle's television show, performed at the opening day of Disneyland, and appeared twice in the Tournament of Roses New Year's Day Rose Parade. The group disbanded in 1971.

Thomas' animation included such moments as the first date and spaghetti dinner in *Lady and the Tramp*, Thumper teaching Bambi how to ice-skate, Baloo telling Mowgli that he cannot stay in the jungle in *The Jungle Book*, Pinocchio trapped in the birdcage by the evil puppeteer Stromboli, Captain Hook playing the piano in *Peter Pan*, and the dancing penguins in *Mary Poppins*, among many others. He also animated several of Mickey Mouse's scenes in such films as *The Pointer* and *Brave Little Tailor*. Thomas was cited in *Who's Who in America*, received the Liberty Bell Award from the city of Philadelphia, and was commemorated in "Frank and Ollie Day," celebrated in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Denver, Metropolitan Dade County, and Bal Harbor, Florida. Upon his death, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles suspended its session for a day in his honor.¹⁴

Criterion C

The Thomas House as designed by Theodore Criley, Jr. is an excellent local example of Mid-century Modern residential architecture and reflects the Modern ideal of integration of buildings within the landscape. Mid-century Modern is a term used to describe the post-World War II iteration of the International Style in both residential and commercial design. The International Style was characterized by geometric forms, smooth wall surfaces, and an absence of exterior decoration. Mid-century Modern represents the adaptation of these elements to the local climate and topography, as well as to the postwar need for efficiently-built, moderately-priced homes. Mid-century Modernism is often characterized by a clear expression of structure and materials, large expanses of glass, and open interior plans. Modernists rejected the idea that decorative

¹⁴ Adapted from Ted Thomas, "Frank Thomas biography," 2014.

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exterior details are the defining features of architectural styles. Mid-century Modernism in Southern California is characterized by an attention to functionality of interior space and the integration of outdoor views into the interior living experience, emphasis on outdoor living spaces, walls of windows, flat or low-pitched roofs with wide, overhanging eaves and exposed rafters, natural building materials, and asymmetrical plans.

The roots of the style can be traced to early Modernists like Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler, whose local work inspired "second generation" Modern architects like Gregory Ain, Craig Ellwood, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Pierre Koenig, Raphael Soriano, and many more. These post-war architects developed an indigenous Modernism that was born from the International Style but matured into a fundamentally regional style, fostered in part by *Art and Architecture* magazine's pivotal Case Study Program (1945-1966). The style gained popularity because its use of standardized, prefabricated materials permitted quick and economical construction.

Completed in 1949, the Thomas House is an excellent local example of Mid-century Modernism, and retains significant character-defining features of the original design. Its horizontality, asymmetrical floor plan, and natural building materials, combined with the relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces created by the walls of windows and the inside-out design process are significant features of its Mid-century Modern design. Because air conditioning was not widely available in the late 1940s, outdoor living space and well-designed air flow throughout the interior of Mid-century homes were particularly important design elements. The variety of indoor and outdoor spaces at the Thomas House are characteristic of Mid-century Modern homes, but their high degree of finish (the redwood lattice in the concrete patio and the redwood siding on the interior and exterior walls, for example) set the home apart from others constructed during the same period.

The design of the Thomas House was a collaborative effort between architect Theodore Criley, Jr. and clients Frank and Jeanette Thomas. Frank and Jeanette's attention to detail and requests for various spaces within the home (e.g. Frank requested that the plans accommodate a baby grand piano and Jeanette asked for a utility sink large enough to bathe a family dog) made for a complex but productive design process. Criley worked with Frank and Jeanette to perfectly site the house on the property. The home originally was to be situated on the hillside that exists at the northern portion of the property, but this plan proved too expensive, and thus the house was redesigned for properly graded land at the base of the hill. Throughout this process, Frank Thomas and his Disney colleague Marc Davis produced sketches of potential landscaping for the yard, inspired by landscape architect Garrett Eckbo's preliminary landscape design for the property. Though none of these plans came fully to fruition, they all came together to form a cohesive woodland landscape consistent with Frank Thomas's vision of his property, working harmoniously with the extant woodland landscape in La Cañada Flintridge.

The interior spaces were organized for flow and function, not purely for style or social conformity. Thus, the front door opens to a small entryway that gives way to a gallery to the east and the bedroom wing to the west. The gallery replaces the central circulation hallway typical of

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earlier homes, and rooms were designed from the inside out – a view of the lush landscaping or of the mountains was as critical to the design of the room as any other design element – and, in some cases, took precedence over other design elements. The built-in furnishings, placed to Frank and Jeanette Thomas' exact specifications, were done with a high degree of finish. There is a focal wall of varnished oak panels surrounding the masonry fireplace in the living room, and a varnished oak "lighting trough" above the built-in couch.¹⁵ The living room fireplace itself was placed at precisely the distance from the built-in couch that Frank Thomas deemed optimal. Built-in cabinetry, bookshelves, and storage line the living room, dining room, and studio, utilizing almost every available space to its fullest extent, while leaving room in the studio for a baby grand piano. The studio was designed with a mountain view in mind, and was thus oriented to allow Thomas to draw or play piano while gazing at the mountains through the windows. Original built-in cabinetry and other features remain throughout the house.

Theodore Criley, Jr.

Theodore "Ted" Criley, Jr., AIA, was born in Los Angeles in 1905, and attended school in California, Missouri, and France. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Stanford University in 1927, and attended USC's School of Architecture from 1927 to 1929. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from MIT in 1930, and became a licensed architect in California in 1937, though he opened a private practice in Los Angeles in 1936. In 1942, he became a member of the American Institute of Architects. During World War II, Criley left his private architecture practice in Los Angeles to serve as "a chief draftsman at U.S. naval bases and as an associate architect for numerous war housing projects."¹⁶ After the war, Criley resumed his practice in Los Angeles. He lectured at Scripps College from 1944 to 1946, and at the USC School of Architecture from 1946 to 1947.¹⁷ In 1951, Criley moved his practice to Claremont, and, in 1957, began a twenty-four year partnership with architect Fred W. McDowell, who had worked for Richard Neutra prior to entering Criley's firm in 1952.¹⁸ In 1957, the firm received the Church Architectural Guild Honorable Mention Award for the Claremont United Church of Christ, Congregational, and, in 1961, they won the Church Architectural Guild Award for Holy Family Catholic Church in Orange, California.

Criley was primarily interested in designing churches, colleges, and libraries. Throughout his 44 year career, Criley designed the master plan and many of the buildings for Pitzer College, and the master plan and several buildings and building additions for Claremont Graduate University, University Center, and Scripps College, all in Claremont. He also designed several Catholic schools in Southern California, including St. Michael's Girls High School in Los Angeles. Criley, either alone or with others, designed almost five hundred buildings, "many of them major, high profile commissions photographed by [...] Julius Shulman," about 450 alterations, and around 150 minor projects and alterations.¹⁹ Criley was "the lead architect for colleges,

¹⁵ Term taken from 1948 floor plan by Theodore Criley, Jr.

¹⁶ "Obituaries: Theodore Criley, Jr.," *Progress Bulletin*, September 18, 1984.

¹⁷ Barbara Lamprecht, "Significance of the Architect, Theodore Criley, Jr.," Special Collections, Claremont Heritage, Claremont, CA.

¹⁸ "Theodore Criley, Jr.," Special Collections, Claremont Heritage, Claremont, CA.

¹⁹ Lamprecht, "Significance of the Architect, Theodore Criley, Jr."

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churches, libraries, city halls, government buildings, residences, housing developments, hotels, auto body dealerships, and schools through Los Angeles, and Southern California," and was a renowned Modernist architect.²⁰

Criley was particularly prolific in the east San Gabriel Valley. He "was the architect or co-architect of more than 1,000 completed projects [...] many now acknowledged as some of the area's most important civic structures, including colleges churches, houses, businesses, and schools."²¹ However, Criley only had a few residential commissions prior to his partnership with Fred McDowell. Therefore, the Thomas House is a rare representation of that period and facet of Criley's work.

Criley's residential architecture is significantly different from his institutional and commercial designs. In contrast to Criley's "formal, strongly rectilinear, often symmetrical and axially oriented, [...] rendered in taut concrete and glass" institutional and commercial structures, his houses "share many of the features of postwar residential Modernism in Southern California," but are unique in their "easygoing organization of space," and in their "unfussy but direct connection to the land and to the site."²² He incorporated large masonry fireplaces, large window walls, a "blurring of the boundary between indoors and out," a strong sense of horizontality, and relatively open floor plans into his Modernist residential designs, all of which are present in the Thomas House.²³

Garrett Eckbo

Garret Eckbo was born in Cooperstown, New York, on November 28, 1910. In 1912, Eckbo moved with his mother and stepfather to Alameda, California. After a six-month visit to his paternal uncle in Norway in 1929, Eckbo "acquired both ambition and direction."²⁴ After graduating with a degree in Agriculture from the University of California at Berkeley in 1935, Eckbo moved to Los Angeles. In 1936, eager to expand his ideas about landscape, Eckbo entered a scholarship competition sponsored by Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. His winning design for a country estate on an island won the competition, and secured Eckbo a spot at the Graduate School, from which he graduated in 1938. Eckbo created hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of gardens in Los Angeles, developing his distinctive Modern style along the way. Eckbo's "mature gardens relied on circles as termini or places of stasis, defined by benches, lawn, or the white line of a concrete mowing strip," influenced and mirrored by the Modern paintings of Kandinsky and Moholy-Nagy. For individual clients, such as Frank Thomas, Eckbo sought "to create a domestic paradise within the tight limits of the suburban lot."²⁵ Eckbo

²⁰ Lamprecht, "Significance of the Architect, Theodore Criley, Jr."

²¹ Lamprecht, "Hugh Livingstone McNeil II House," City of Glendora Historic Structure Assessment, 2014.

²² Lamprecht, "Significance of the Architect, Theodore Criley, Jr."

²³ Lamprecht, "Significance of the Architect, Theodore Criley, Jr."

²⁴ Marc Treib and Dorothee Imbert, *Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), p. 4.

²⁵ Treib and Imbert, *Garrett Eckbo*, p. 69.

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believed firmly that landscape design was an agent for social change. He died in Oakland, California, in May 2000.²⁶

Conclusion

The Thomas House is significant for its association with the legendary Disney animator Frank Thomas; as an excellent example of Mid-century Modern architecture in Southern California; and a rare example of the residential work of prolific architect Theodore Criley, Jr. Frank Thomas was a significant and pioneering figure in animation history, and he worked at Disney Studios for more than forty years. The Thomas House was commissioned by Thomas as his family home and artist's studio, and he actively participated in its design. Although he spent his career working at the Disney studio plant in Burbank, the studio lot has been altered over time and it is unknown whether the animation studio where Frank worked is extant. The Thomas House is intricately tied to Thomas' life and career, and is the only extant resource that solely reflects his life and work. It retains significant character-defining features of its original design on the interior and exterior, including important landscape features. The Thomas House was originally constructed over fifty years ago, but it was associated with Frank Thomas' productive period until his retirement from Disney in 1978. The Thomas House is exceptionally important as the home of a renowned animation artist and member of Disney's elite Nine Old Men, and therefore meets Criterion Consideration G.

²⁶ Adapted from Dorothée Imbert, "Biography of Garrett Eckbo, 1910 – 2000," The Cultural Landscape Foundation, June 15, 2008.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

"A Tribute to Frank Thomas," Frank and Ollie, <http://www.frankanollie.com>.

Arrant, Chris. "Jeannette Thomas, Widow Of Legendary Disney Animator Frank Thomas, and Gamble House Historian/Author, Dies At Age 91," *Cartoon Brew*, October 3, 2012. <http://www.cartoonbrew.com/biz/jeannette-thomas-widow-of-legendary-disney-animator-frank-thomas-and-gamble-house-historianauthor-dies-at-age-91-70928.html>.

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McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. p. 629-648.

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Thomas, Frank and Ollie Johnston. *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*. New York: Disney Editions, 1995.

Thomas, Ted. "758 Flintridge Avenue, a brief history." 2014.

----- "Frank Thomas biography." Unpublished, 2014.

Treib, Marc and Dorothée Imbert. *Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

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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: Thomas House, La Cañada Flintridge, CA; Special Collections, Claremont Heritage, Claremont, CA

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.77 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

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

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 34.18735 N | Longitude: -118.19372 E |
| 2. Latitude: 34.18777 N | Longitude: -118.19296 E |
| 3. Latitude: 34.18734 N | Longitude: -118.19263 E |
| 4. Latitude: 34.18668 N | Longitude: -118.19384 E |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The property is comprised of those portions of Lots 2 and 5 in Block 8 of Flintridge in the city of La Cañada Flintridge, Los Angeles County, California, as per the map recorded in Book 26, pages 23 through 33. (See attached tract map.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries represent the historic and current boundaries of the Thomas House property.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Christine Lazzaretto, Principal and Molly Iker, Intern
organization: Historic Resources Group
street & number: 12 South Fair Oaks Avenue
city or town: Pasadena state: CA zip code: 91105
e-mail: christine@historicla.com
telephone: 626-793-2400 x112
date: July 31, 2014

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.

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Thomas House

City or Vicinity: La Cañada Flintridge

County: Los Angeles State: CA

Photographer: Theodore "Ted" Thomas

Date Photographed: June 6, 2014 to July 22, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

PHOTO #	DESCRIPTION/VIEW
0001	Exterior view of north façade, facing south. Detail of primary entrance, latticed eaves, brick path, and living room windows.
0002	Exterior facing southwest. Contextual view of house from Cathcart Drive.
0003	Exterior overview of east façade, facing southwest.
0004	Exterior overview of carport, facing south.
0005	Exterior overview of north façade, facing south.
0006	Exterior overview of north façade, facing southeast.
0007	Exterior view of north façade, facing southwest.
0008	Exterior, facing southwest. Detail of living room windows with view through interior.
0009	Exterior view of north façade, facing south. Detail of primary entrance and latticed eaves.
0010	Exterior, facing east. Detail of latticed and boxed eaves on north façade.
0011	Exterior overview of west façade, facing northeast.
0012	Exterior overview of south façade, facing northeast.
0013	Exterior view of patio and hillside, facing southwest.
0014	Exterior facing southwest. Detail of grounds and path.
0015	Exterior facing southeast. View of storage shed.
0016	Interior view of entryway, facing north.
0017	Interior view of gallery, dining room, and kitchen, facing southeast.
0018	Interior view of dining room, gallery, living room, and bedroom hallway, facing west.
0019	Interior facing northeast. Detail of dining room fireplace, built-in

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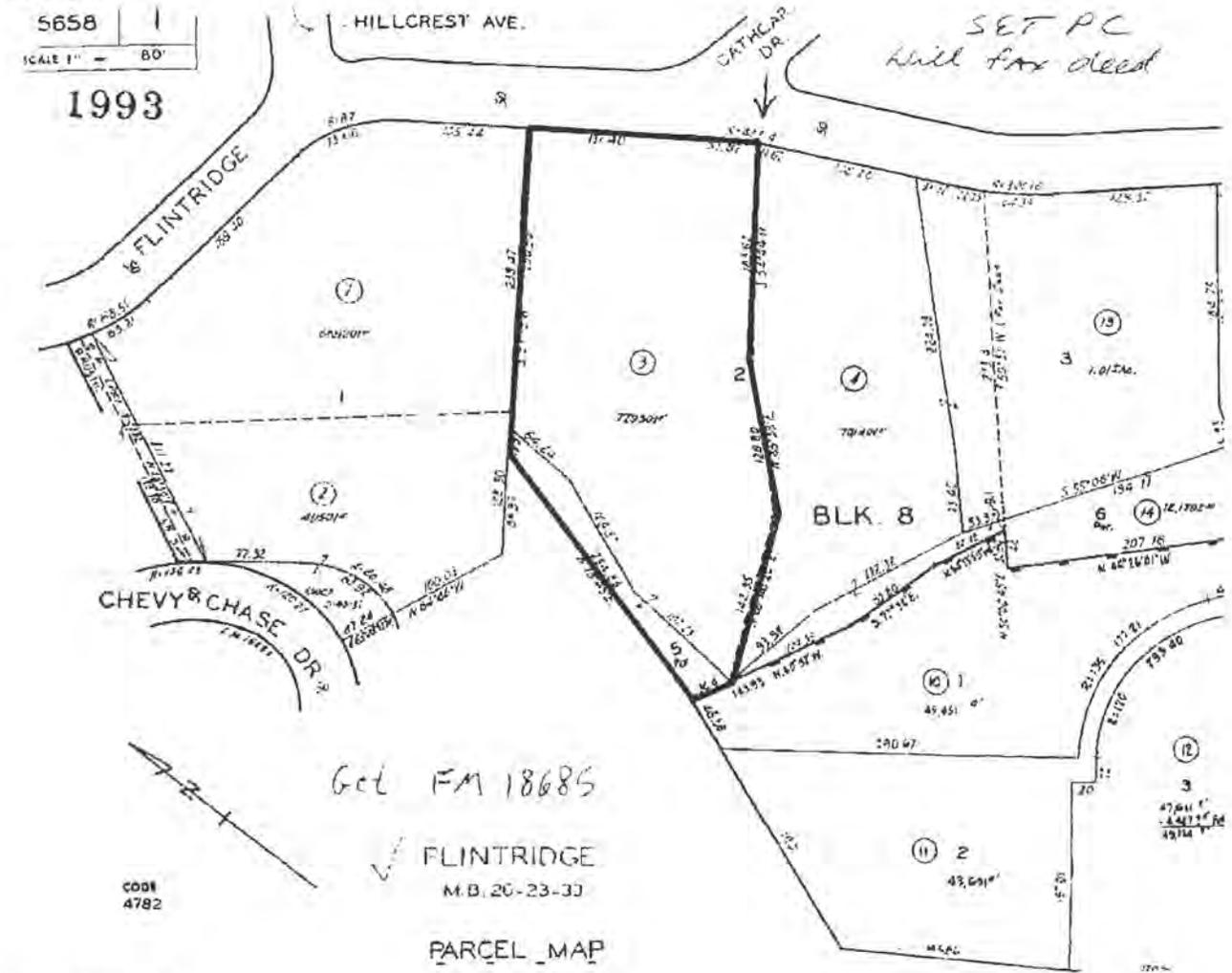
PHOTO #	DESCRIPTION/VIEW
	bookshelf, and firewood storage cabinet.
0020	Interior view of living room, facing northwest.
0021	Interior view of living room, facing west.
0022	Interior view of living room and studio, facing southwest.
0023	Interior facing southwest. Detail of masonry surrounding living room fireplace, built-in couch, and firewood storage cabinet.
0024	Interior facing northwest. Detail of lighting trough above built-in couch in living room.
0025	Interior facing southeast. Detail of built-in bookshelf east of built-in couch in living room.
0026	Interior view of studio, facing northwest.
0027	Interior view of studio, facing northeast.

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Additional Documentation: Location Maps and Photo Keys

Figure 1.

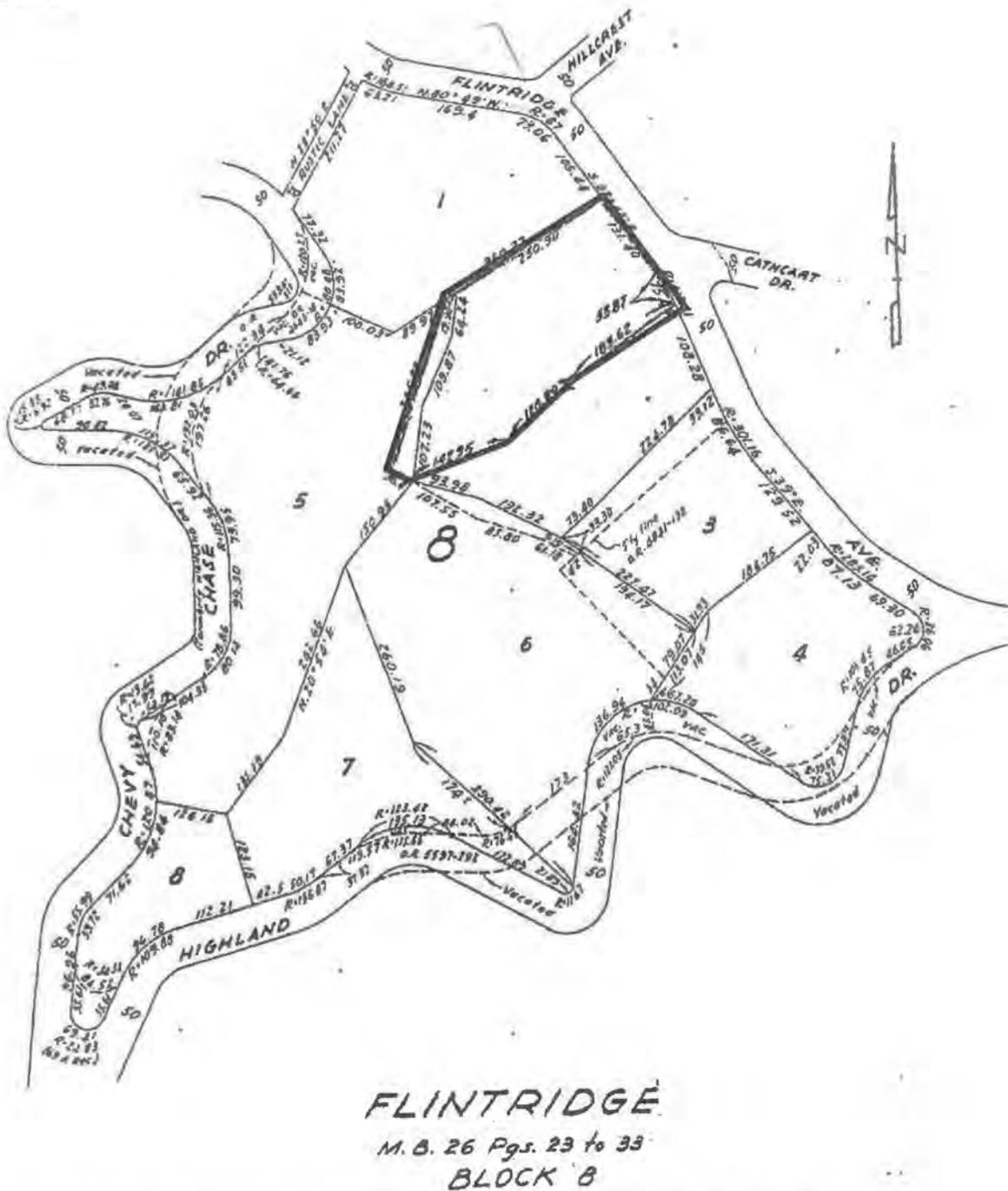


Parcel Map, 1993.

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Figure 2.



Tract Map showing Block 8 of Flintridge, originally drawn in 1914, courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

Figure 3.

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FRANKLIN "FRANK" THOMAS HOUSE
758 FLINTRIDGE AVE, LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE, CA 91011
USGS LOCATION COORDINATES: 34.18722, -118.19333



PROPERTY LOCATION

100 feet 50 m



Figure 4.

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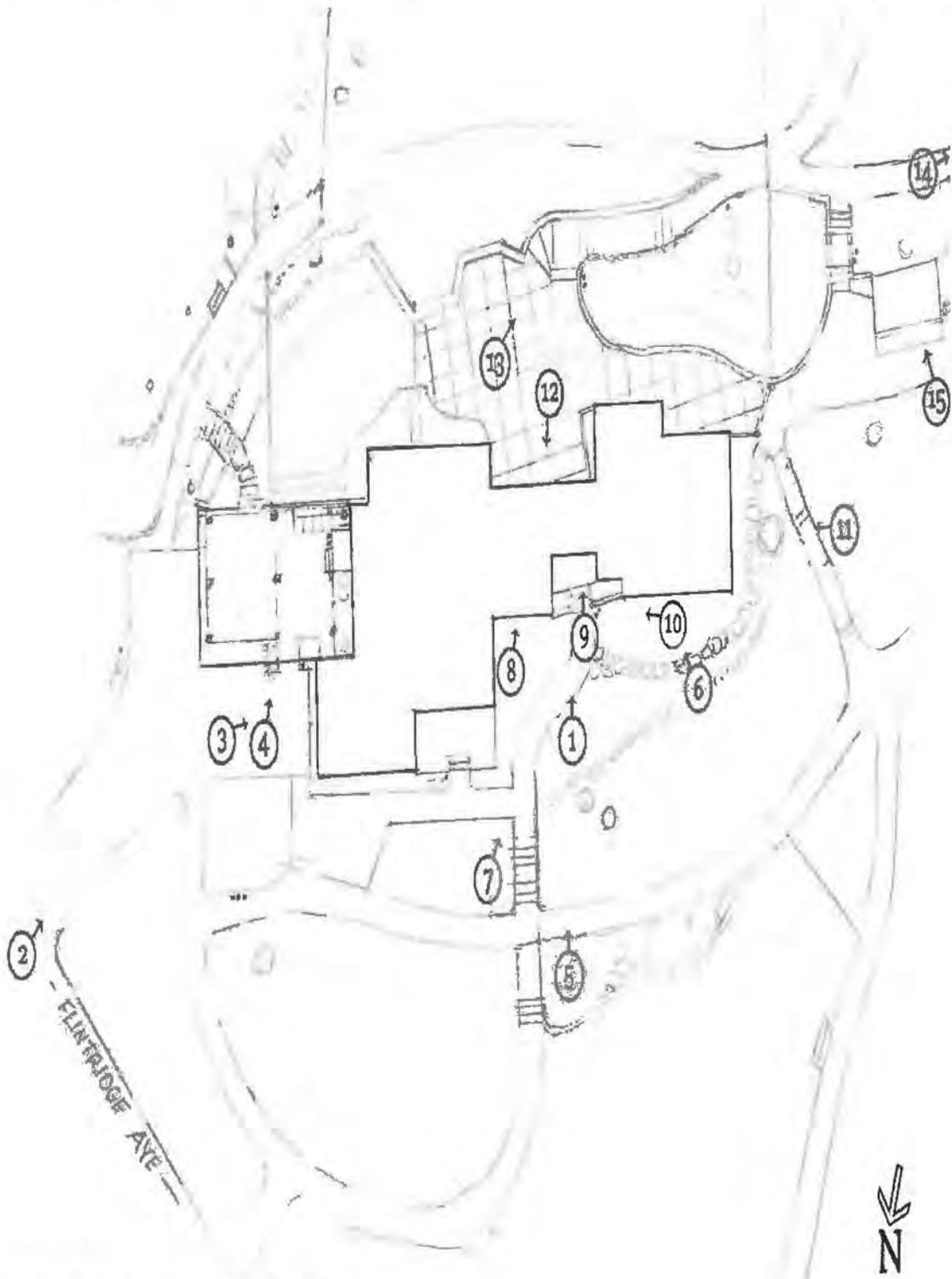


Photo key, exterior, Frank Thomas House
Figure 5.

Thomas, Franklin "Frank" House
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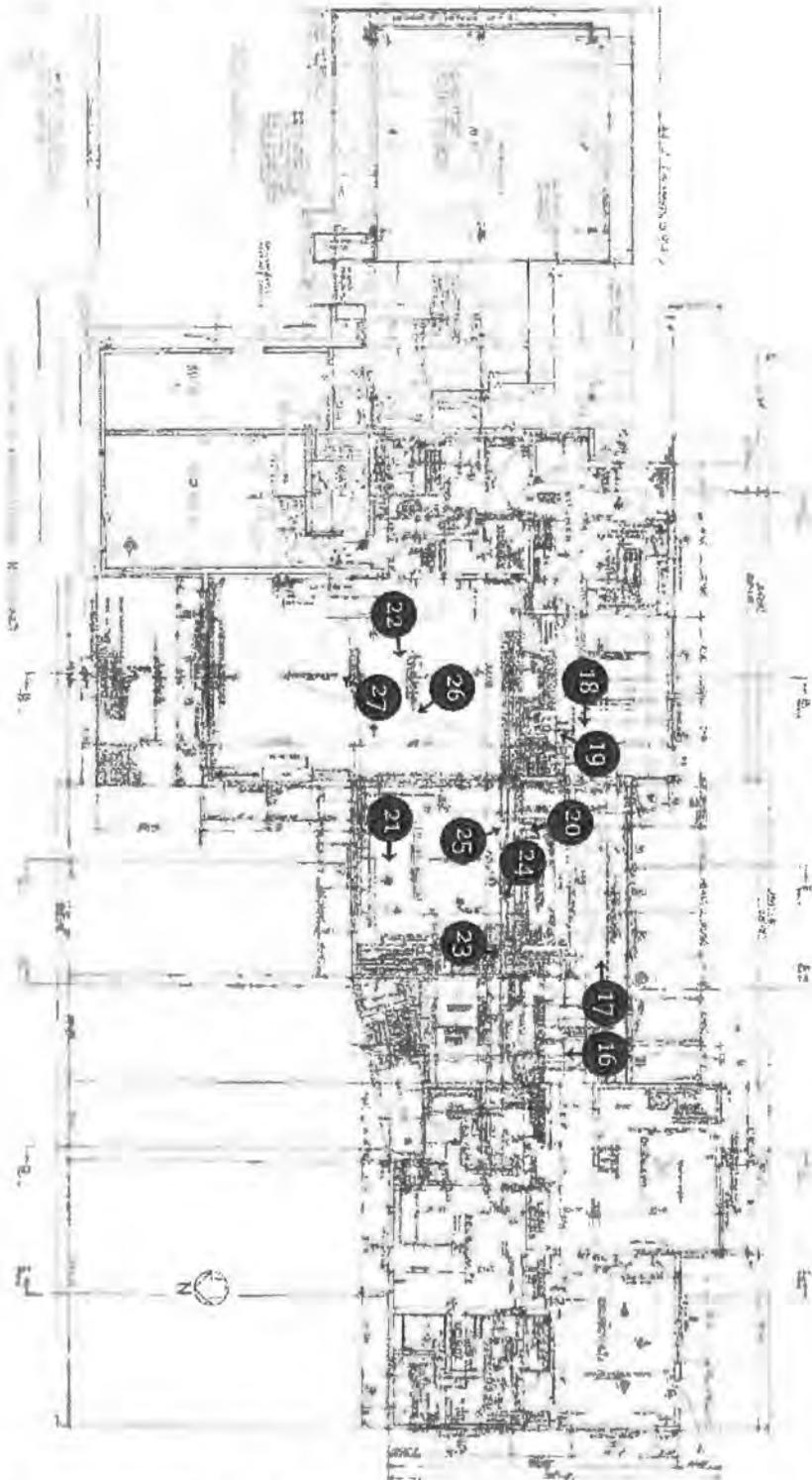
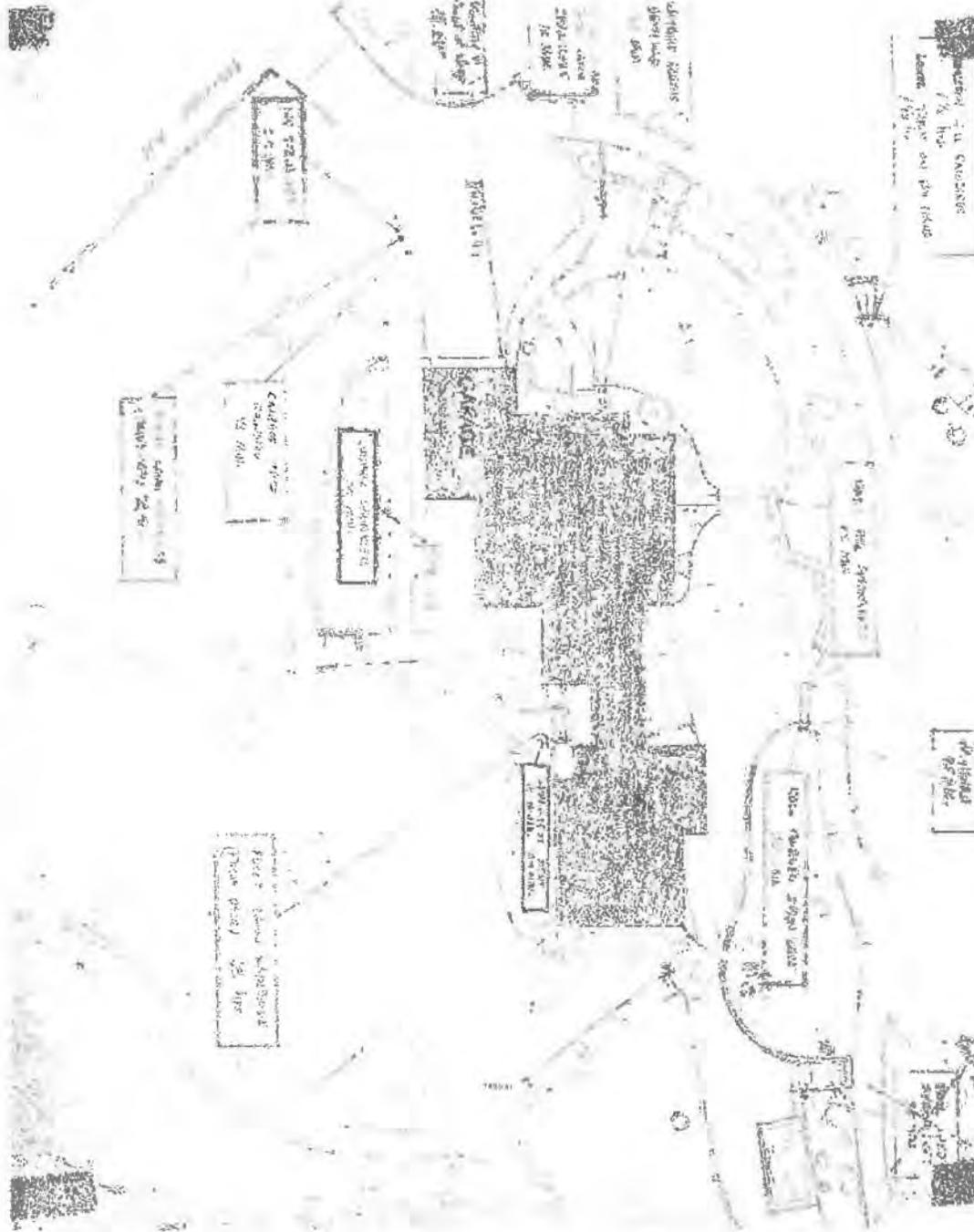


Photo key, interior, Frank Thomas House
Additional Documentation: Floor Plans and Renderings

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Figure 6.

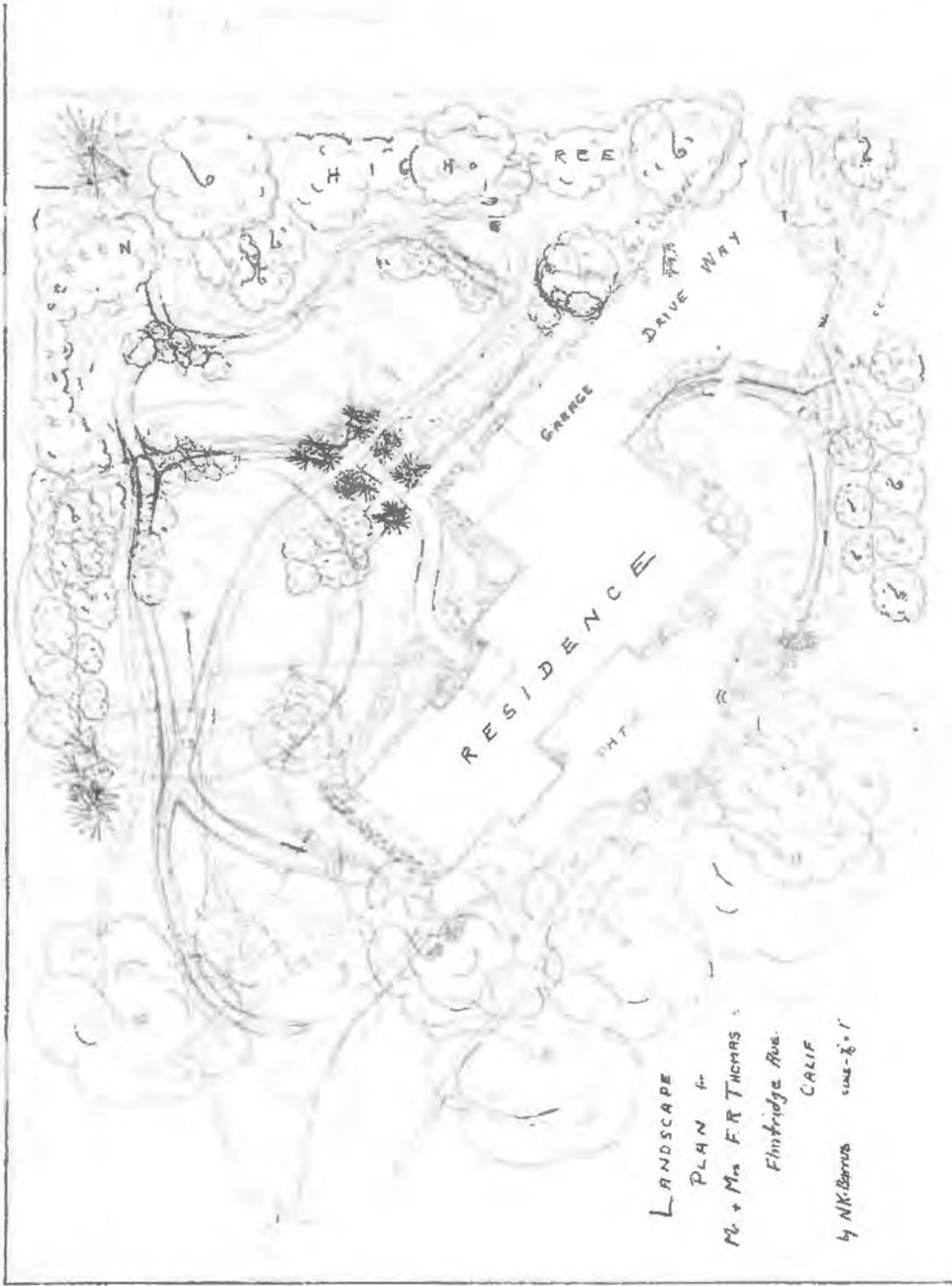


Site plan with notes for watering, Frank Thomas, 1948

Figure 7.

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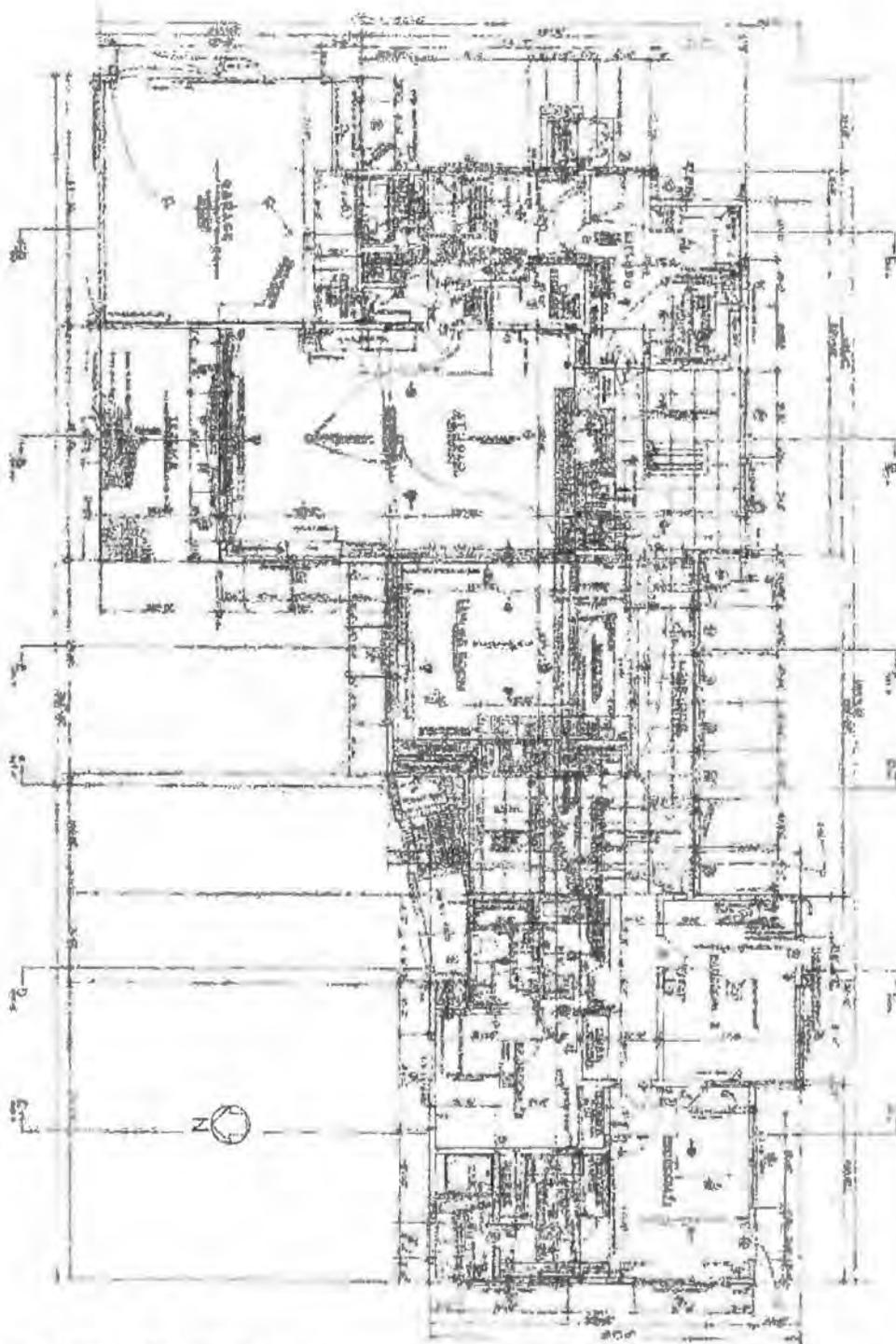


Landscape plan, N.K. Barrus, 1948

Figure 8.

Thomas, Franklin "Frank" House
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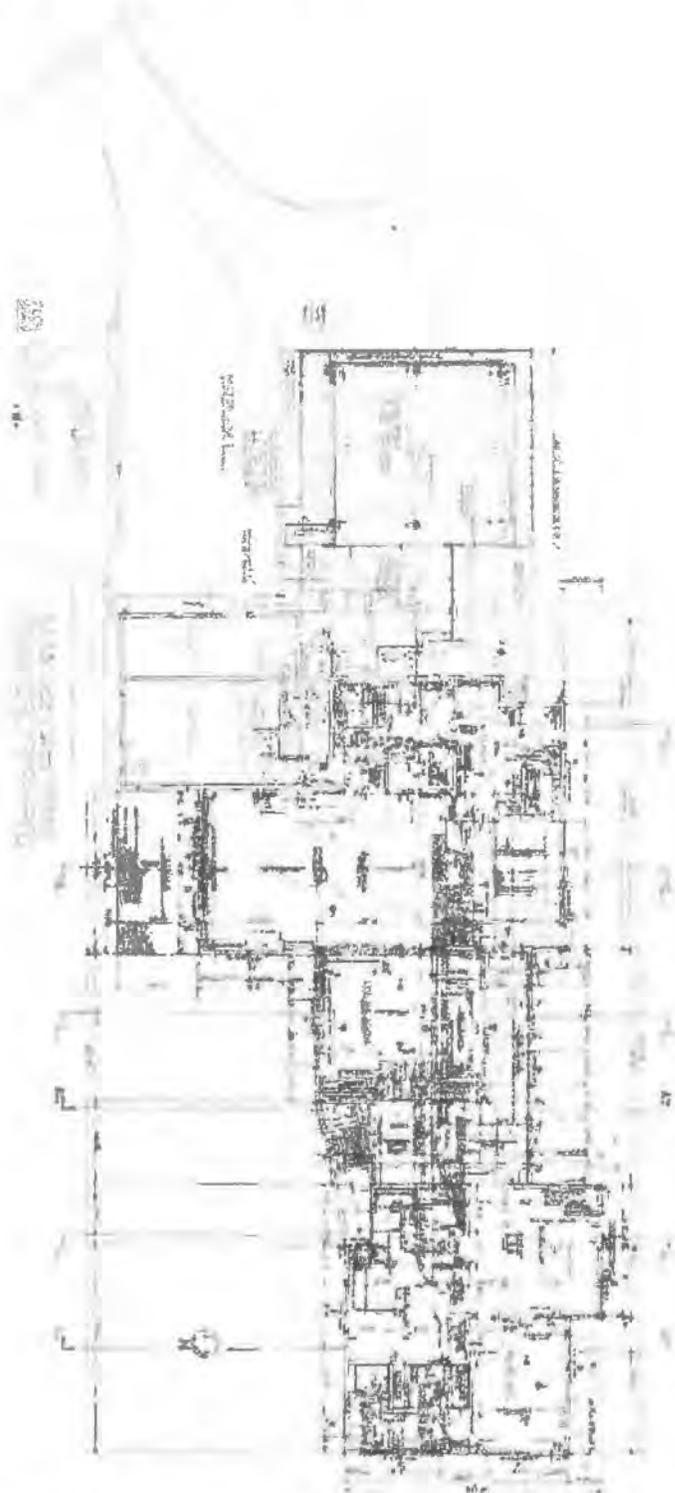
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Floor Plan, Thomas House, 1948
Figure 9.

Thomas, Franklin "Frank" House
Name of Property

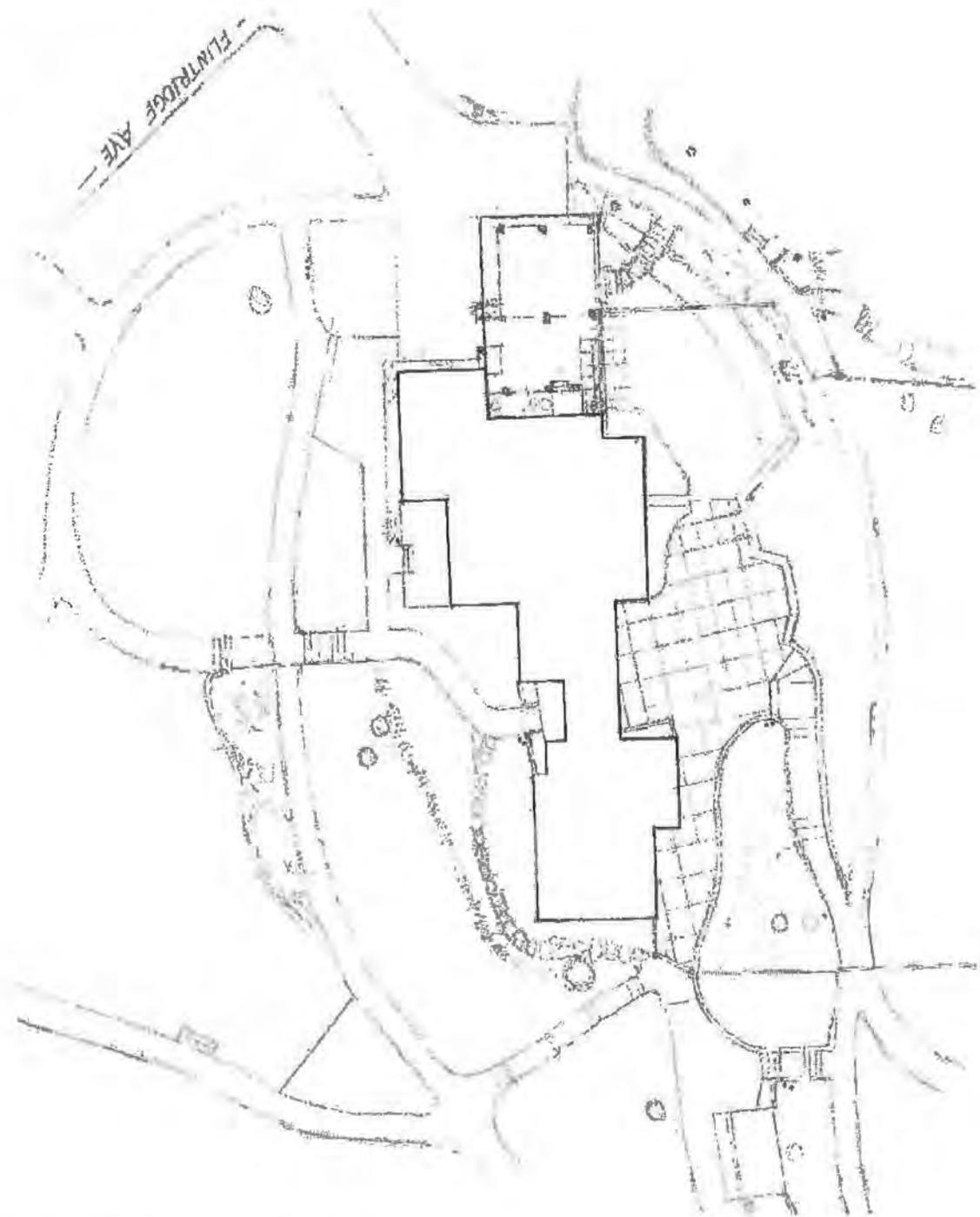
Los Angeles, CA
County and State



Floor and ground plan, Thomas House, after 1962 addition
Figure 10.

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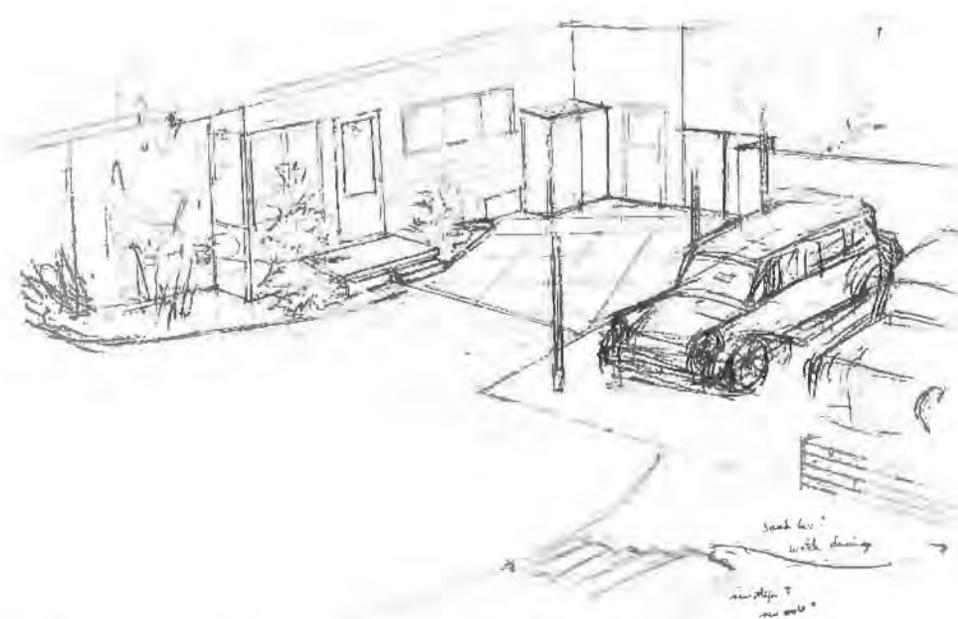


Site Plan, drawn by Frank Thomas, 1962

Figure 11.

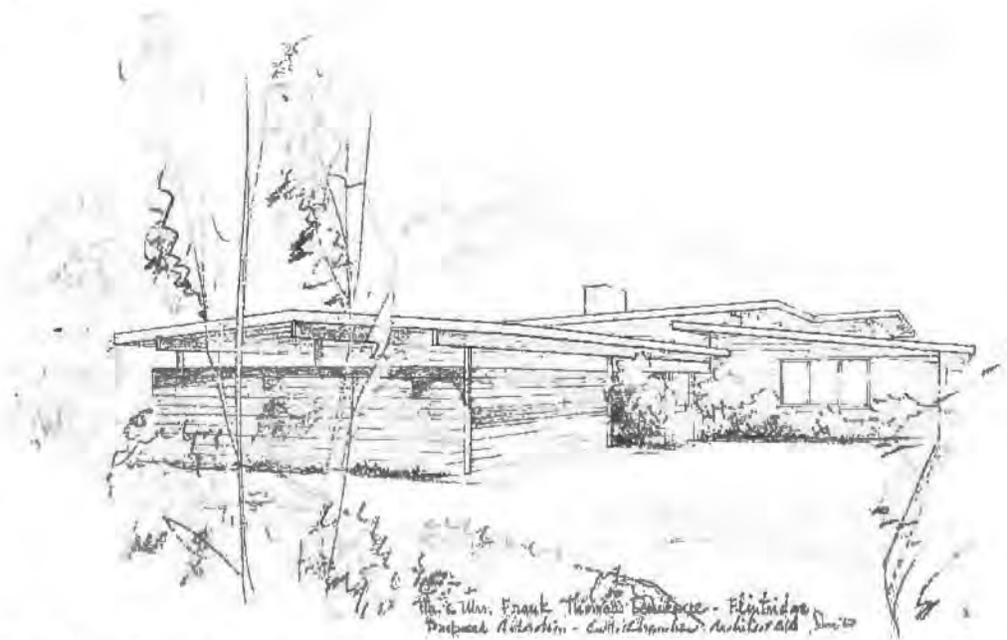
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Sketch of breezeway and carport (facing northeast), Frank Thomas, 1962

Figure 12.



Rendering of carport addition and garage alteration (facing southeast), Curtis Chambers, 1962.
Additional Documentation: Historic Photographs

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Figure 13.



Photograph of house under construction, view facing northwest, 1949, courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

Figure 14.



Photograph of house under construction, view facing southwest, 1949, courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

Figure 15.

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Ann and Gregg Thomas, 1950, redwood lattice in concrete patio and gallery window wall visible in background. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

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Figure 16.



Thomas family gathering in front of west façade, August 1951. Bedroom window, redwood siding, slanted roof, and raised foundation visible. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

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Figure 17.



Photograph of Ann and Gregg Thomas, around 1951. Kitchen window and boxed eaves visible in background. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

Figure 18.



Photograph of Gregg Thomas, around 1951, with redwood siding and basket weave fence visible in background. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

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Figure 19.



Exterior of garage and motor court, Thomas House, 1952, Courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

Figure 20.



Exterior of studio and living room, Thomas House, 1952, Courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

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Figure 21.



Photograph of Ann Thomas' birthday party, 1954. Patio with redwood lattice inlay, redwood siding on house, and dining room windows visible. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

Figure 22.



Photograph of play car on patio, March 1958, latticed eaves, boxed eaves, gallery window wall, dining room windows, redwood siding, kitchen window, and concrete patio with redwood latticed inlay visible. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

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Figure 23.



Photograph of wisteria being trained on latticed eaves, 1959, gallery window wall visible in background. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

Figure 24.



Photograph of Doug Thomas in front of gallery window wall, 1965, dining room window visible in background. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

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Figure 25.



Photograph of Doug Thomas in front of gallery window wall, 1965, interior and exterior redwood siding visible in background. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

Figure 26.



Photograph of Ann Thomas and two family dogs on lawn near west façade, redwood siding, brick path, flagstone walk, slanted roof, window addition, and bedroom window visible in background. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

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Figure 27.



Photograph of Frank Thomas at animation desk in studio, 1992, windows visible in background. Photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

Figure 28.



Photograph of Frank Thomas seated in the living room, living room built-in bookcases, windows, and studio visible in background, April 1, 2001, photograph courtesy of Theodore Thomas, Jr.

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

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





FLINTRIDGE
700 E

758



















































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Thomas, Franklin Rosborough "Frank", House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE COUNTY: CALIFORNIA, Los Angeles

DATE RECEIVED: 12/19/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/03/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001233

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: Y
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Franklin Rosborough "Frank" Thomas House is significant under National Register Criteria B and C in the areas of Architecture, Art, and Other: Animation. Built in 1949, the home is a handsome local example of mid-twentieth century, regional modernism, featuring redwood siding, large glass window walls, a low horizontal roofline, and an open interior plan that harmonizes with the exterior landscaping. The house was a collaborative effort between accomplished master architect Theodore Criley Jr. and the owners, resulting in an exemplary example of period design. The house served as the home and studio of pioneer animator Frank Thomas, whose 43-year career with the Disney Studios has been recognized for its exceptional contributions to the field. An award winning animation artist, author and teacher, Thomas was a member of Walt Disney's famous *Nine Old Men*, an elite group of pioneering animators who helped redefine the art of film animation during the early twentieth century.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept CRITERIA B=C

REVIEWER PAUL R. LUSIGNAN DISCIPLINE HISTORIAN

TELEPHONE _____ DATE 2/3/2015

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

651 South Saint John Avenue
Pasadena, California 91105 2913
Telephone 626 441 6333
Facsimile 626 441 2917
www.pasadenaheritage.org

P A S A D E N A H E R I T A G E

September 30, 2014

State Historical Resources Commission
c/o Jay Correia
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100 Sacramento, CA 95816

Re: **National Register Nomination of the Franklin Rosborough Thomas House
758 Flintridge Avenue, La Canada-Flintridge, California**



Dear Mr. Correia,

On behalf of Pasadena Heritage, I am writing you today in support of the National Register Nomination of the Frank Thomas House located in La Cañada, a community adjacent and with close ties to Pasadena.

I had the opportunity to visit this historic residence when the owners contacted our organization regarding a conservation easement. It was apparent that Ted Criley, Jr.'s design is of sophisticated architecture and craftsmanship. The building seamlessly melds indoor and outdoor spaces using broad spans of glazing and rustic wood materials inside and out. Criley also successfully harnessed indirect lighting and cross-ventilation to achieve function, comfort, and, importantly, client-specific needs.

Criley collaborated with homeowner Frank Thomas in the late 1940s on the design of the house. As one of the earliest Disney animators, Thomas is significant to American history for his major role in early animated feature films, including Snow White, Bambi, Alice in Wonderland, Mary Poppins, and many many more.

We are lucky that this treasure has been so well maintained and that Thomas' descendants recognize not only his contribution to American culture, but also have great respect for Criley's architectural talent. Pasadena Heritage respectfully asks the Commission to help us protect this resource with its listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse Lattig".

Jesse Lattig
Preservation Director

ALAN HESS
ARCHITECT
4991 CORKWOOD LANE
IRVINE, CA 92612
949 551 5343
alan@alanhess.net

October 8, 2014

State Historical Resources Commission
c/o Jay Correia
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816

re: Franklin Rosborough Thomas House, 758 Flintridge Avenue, La Canada-Flintridge

To the Historical Resources Commission:

I wholeheartedly support the nomination of the Franklin Thomas house. I concur that it is significant both as the home of a noted animator who played important roles in landmarks of cinema culture (Criterion B), and as a design by Theodore Criley, Jr. (Criterion C.) But even more, it is the intersection of these two aspects that makes this house highly significant as a landmark of both California and national culture. The fact that Frank Thomas chose to build a Modern house of this caliber for his family speaks to the interrelationship of modern industry, innovation, lifestyle, and architecture in mid-twentieth century California culture.

Frank Thomas' talents in animation and story-telling were recognized and utilized by Walt Disney, a major figure in the development of film as a modern medium of communication and entertainment. Thomas contributed to the Disney studio's groundbreaking efforts to push the twentieth century technology of film in new directions, demonstrating the impact of film on culture, the economy, and the lives of Americans in the midcentury era.

Modern architecture likewise sought to apply the possibilities of new technologies. The influence on architecture of modern industries such as aerospace and automobiles has long been noted; the influence of popular entertainment industries should also be recognized. This house is tangible proof of the unity of technology and culture. That's why I am especially enthusiastic about this landmark designation.

Thomas' choice of Ted Criley is also significant. Though not as widely known today among the many excellent architects of Southern California in the midcentury period, Criley's work is now being rediscovered. The son of a

prominent artist, Criley's career was broad, encompassing homes, churches, commercial buildings, and college campuses. We can now see that Criley (with his frequent partner Fred McDowell) was an excellent architect who developed an original expression within the Modern vocabulary of the times.

The Thomas house expresses Criley's Modernism at a relatively early point in his career. It captures many of the themes of Modernism. It is a suburban house, set on a site of great natural beauty with slopes and natural vegetation; the house takes advantage of these qualities in its siting, terraces, orientation, and views. It is a Modern design, using simple forms, large expanses of glass, and simple shed roofs in a well composed composition. Built-in furniture, especially in the living room, is an excellent expression of Modern concepts, integrating space and living functions in a unified, efficient, and beautiful composition.

The house, still owned by the Thomas family, has been well maintained and has excellent integrity. Through Criley's design and Thomas' sensibility, the house superbly captures many of the themes of Modern residential living in the mid century.

I wholeheartedly support this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Hess". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "H".

Alan Hess

**Franklin Rosborough "Frank" Thomas House
La Cañada Flintridge, Los Angeles County
Staff Report**

The Frank Thomas House was designed by Theodore Criley, Jr. in the Mid-century Modern style for Frank Thomas and his family. Completed in April 1949, the house sits on a wooded lot in La Cañada Flintridge, approximately 18 miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles, and approximately six miles northwest of Pasadena. Preliminary site plans were prepared in 1948 by landscape architect Garrett Eckbo. The house exhibits the modest scale and massing, horizontal emphasis, and asymmetrical plan associated with Mid-Century Modern homes. One large room served as a studio, specifically equipped with large windows and drafting tables. Though additions were made to the Frank Thomas House over the years, it retains integrity, and significant character defining features on the interior and exterior.

The Frank Thomas House is eligible under Criterion B for its association with Franklin Rosborough "Frank" Thomas, a pioneering animator and member of Walt Disney's elite "Nine Old Men," and who worked on many classic films during his forty-three year career at Disney. In addition to his achievements as an animator and directing animator, Thomas authored four books in collaboration with his lifelong friend and colleague Ollie Johnston. Thomas and Johnston were the title subjects of an award-winning 1995 feature-length documentary entitled *Frank and Ollie*. The period of significance under Criterion B is 1949, the date that construction was completed and Thomas moved into the house, until 1978, when Thomas retired from Disney Studios. The residence meets Criteria Consideration G because the house continued its association with Thomas' exceptional productive life into a period less than 50 years ago.

The Frank Thomas House is also significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of Mid-century Modern architecture and as a rare example of the residential work of renowned Modernist Theodore Criley Jr. Criley was the lead architect for colleges, churches, libraries, city halls, government buildings, housing developments, hotels, auto body dealerships, and schools throughout Southern California. Many of these buildings are acknowledged as some of the area's most important civic structures. The period of significance under Criterion C is 1949, the date the house was completed.

The Frank Thomas House is nominated to the National Register on behalf of the Thomas family. Architectural Historian Alan Hess, Pasadena Heritage, and the Los Angeles Conservancy sent letters of support for the nomination. Staff recommends that the State Historical Resources Commission determine that the Frank Thomas House meets National Register Criteria A and B at the local level of significance. Staff also recommends that the Frank Thomas House meets Criteria Consideration G because the residence continued to be associated with the career of Frank Thomas, a person of exceptional importance within the film industry through his retirement in 1978. Staff further recommends that the State Historic Preservation Officer forward the nomination to the National Park Service for final approval.

Jay Correia
State Historian III
October 16, 2014



October 29, 2014

Submitted electronically

Carol Roland-Nawi, Ph.D
State Historic Preservation Officer
c/o Jay Correia, Registration Unit
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816-7100
Email: jay.correia@parks.ca.gov

533 West 5th Street, Suite 520
Los Angeles, CA 90014

213 623 7400 (land)
213 623 3809 (fax)
losangelesconservancy.org

RE: National Register nomination, Franklin Rosborough Thomas House, La Cañada Flintridge

Dear Dr. Roland-Nawi:

On behalf of the Los Angeles Conservancy, I am writing to express our support for the nomination of the Franklin Rosborough Thomas House for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Located at 758 Flintridge Avenue in La Cañada Flintridge, the Thomas House is an important example of modern residential design that is significant for its association with Walt Disney Company animator Franklin "Frank" Thomas and with local architect Theodore Criley, Jr.

Pioneering animator Frank Thomas commissioned the house, which was completed in 1949. He actively participated in the design of the house, and resided there with his family for 55 years. Thomas' animation career with Walt Disney began in 1934, and he became a member of the elite group of the studio's animators referred to as the "Nine Old Men." His 43-year career at Disney included prominent animation work in the films "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Pinocchio," and "Bambi" and he contributed to every major animation feature produced by the studio between 1946 and 1976. His house in La Cañada Flintridge, which included a studio space for his animation work, is particularly significant as it is the only remaining resource associated with his life and career.

The one-story residence is Mid-century modern in style, featuring a low-pitched shed roof, exterior walls clad in redwood siding and wood sliding windows. It is a rare residential design by local architect Theodore Criley, Jr., whose career was focused mainly on civic and institutional buildings. With the Thomas House, Criley incorporated such features as a relatively open floor plan, large masonry fireplaces, and large expanses of glass windows.

The Conservancy has worked to raise awareness of Los Angeles County's built heritage from the postwar-era and recent past and the need to identify and protect significant resources from this era in our history. The Thomas House stands out as a notable example and we urge the Commission to vote to recommend listing the Thomas House in the National Register.



About the Los Angeles Conservancy:

The Los Angeles Conservancy is the largest local historic preservation organization in the United States, with over 6,000 members throughout the Los Angeles area. Established in 1978, the Conservancy works to preserve and revitalize the significant architectural heritage of Los Angeles County through advocacy and education.

Sincerely,



Adrian Scott Fine
Director of Advocacy



**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

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December 12, 2014

Ms. Carol Shull, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service 2280
1201 I (Eye) Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Subject: **Franklin Rosborough "Frank" Thomas House National Register of Historic Places Nomination**

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the **Frank Thomas House** nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The Frank Thomas House is located at 758 Flintridge Avenue in La Cañada Flintridge, a city in Los Angeles County. On November 7, 2014 at its regular quarterly meeting held in Sacramento, the California State Historical Resources Commission (Commission) found the property eligible for the National Register under Criterion B and Criterion C at the local level of Significance.

The Frank Thomas House is eligible under Criterion B for its association with Frank Thomas, a pioneering animator who worked for Walt Disney for forty-three years. The house is further eligible under Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of Mid-Century Modern Architecture and also as a residential example of the work of Theodore Criley Jr., a renowned architect of the Los Angeles region.

The property is nominated on behalf of the Thomas Family, the owners of the Frank Thomas House. If you have questions please contact Jay Correia of my staff at 916-445-7008 or jay.correia@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carol Roland-Nawi".

by Carol Roland-Nawi, Ph.D.
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures