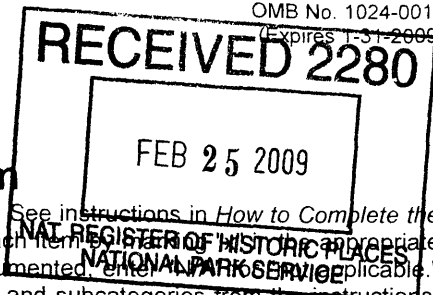


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" in the appropriate box. For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Mello, Clarence and Mary, House

Other names/site number The Mello House

2. Location

Street & Number 541 Fremont Drive

Not for Publication N/A

City or Town Pasadena

Vicinity N/A

State California Code CA County Los Angeles

Code 03937

Zip Code 91103

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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Wanda Wayne 23 FEB 2009
Signature of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

4/10/09
Date of Action

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.
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.
- C
- 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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Period of Significance

1957

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Dates

1957

Architect/Builder

Buff, Straub, and Hensman

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Please see Section 8 Continuation Sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Please see Section 9 Continuation Sheets. See MPS Form.

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 #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: City of Pasadena Planning Department

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property 0.95

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	392960	3779660	3		
2				4		

x See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)
See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification
See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title	Barbara Lamprecht, Architectural Historian	
Organization	Jones & Stokes	Date <u>April 4, 2008</u>
Street & Number	811 W. 7 th Street, Suite 800	Telephone <u>213-627-5376</u>
City or Town	Los Angeles	State <u>CA</u> Zip Code <u>90027</u>

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

Photographs

Representative photographs of the property.

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name	Clarence E. Mello	
Organization		Telephone <u>(626) 792-6466</u>
Street & Number	541 Fremont Drive	
City or Town	Pasadena	State <u>CA</u> Zip Code <u>91103</u>

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. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

*Mello, Clarence and Mary, House
Los Angeles County, California
MPS: Cultural Resources of the Recent Past*

Section 7 Page 5

Description

Summary

The one-story glass and wood frame house demonstrates the flexibility of the modular post-and-beam construction technique employed in addressing different sites, budgets and programs—as long as it was employed by a master architect, in this case Calvin Straub along with Conrad Buff and Donald Hensman. The owners, Mary and Clarence Mello, loved camping and the architects integrated that activity into what creating what their daughter and current co-owner Anne describes as a “tent with doors,” a description that could be applied to much of Buff, Straub & Hensman’s architecture during this period. Completed in April 1957, the Mello House is a post-and-beam house with a broadly pitched roof sited on a large, idiosyncratically-shaped “wedge” lot. At \$36,689.99,¹ it was built very cheaply for a middle-class couple with imminent plans for a large family of five children. Nonetheless, it shares with more upscale Buff, Straub & Hensman houses all the character-defining features of their work, including rigorously planned “zone” designations for specific activities and an abundance of terraces, decks and private patios woven throughout the composition. All additions and renovations were done under the firm’s supervision. Occupied by the Mello family, it retains exceptional integrity.

The property at 541 Fremont Drive is on the eastern bank of the Arroyo Seco within the Prospect Historic District (noncontributing to the historic district due to date of construction outside the period of significance of the larger district). The property is located at 541 Fremont Drive, Pasadena, California, a cul-de-sac extending southwest from Rosemont Avenue. The building is sited with its primary elevation facing east toward Fremont Avenue. The rear (west) elevation overlooks the Arroyo Seco. This is the parcel historically associated with the property. The parcel is identified as Assessor Parcel Number 5711-003-017, which is located at LEGAL TRACT #3050 LOT COM AT MOST W COR OF LOT 1 TH N 38/42’ e 106 FT TH N 49/36’ E 97.08 FT THE 60/21’40” E 161.12 FT TH S 54/55’40” E 100 FT TH S 37/55’40” E 45.20 FT TH S 26/49’20” W 20.52 FT TH N OF LEGAL LOT 1.

Description

Access is obtained from a relatively narrow driveway that opens up to the site, which continues flat before dropping off sharply to the lower Arroyo Seco below. The views to the northwest from the house offer an unusual and grand view of the San Gabriel Mountains, just beyond a grove of giant, mature Deodar Cedars beyond the site and growing in the broad river bed, not far from the Rose Bowl. It is located on a quiet cul-de-sac street in west Pasadena, and despite the upscale setting of the community, especially known for “La Miniatura,” the Millard House by Frank Lloyd Wright, feels the most rural and least suburban of Buff, Straub and Hensman houses reviewed.

The immediate setting of the 2,000-square-foot wood tongue-and-groove, glass and brick house includes the remains, seen in brick paving and piers in the forecourt (adjacent to the public entrance) and at the back of the house, of a large Pasadena estate, intentionally integrated into the composition by the architects and the Mellors.

The exterior materials palette of the house is typical Buff, Straub and Hensman: a 6’ module of dark-stained posts (articulated with lighter members nailed on both sides) contains either grouped panels of warm gold-yellow stucco, wood, or glass; a brick fireplace concludes the simple palette. These load-bearing posts rise to a datum line of a lightweight beam/header that is continuous throughout the house; above the datum line may be operable transoms (for example, above large pairs of French doors in living room), fixed lights, or plywood or stucco panels. A large wood deck surrounds the house in the rear, where the hillside gently and then steeply falls away. The house is thus Janus-faced in appearing low and ground-hugging on the public side, the east elevation, and more imposing, with a stronger Japanese aesthetic seen in the shallow pitched roof, on the west elevation overlooking the Arroyo.

¹ As indicated by Mary Mello’s notes. Total payments to Cal Straub were \$4,769.70.

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In plan, it is comprised of a pinwheel shape of two back-to-back "L"s. Like a rock in a stream, one leg of the L, jutting out toward Fremont Street, divides paths of circulation, with a formal public entrance to the right (north) of this L volume. Behaving like a bridge, the roof of this L volume continues south to define an open-walled area for cars and family use, and terminates as the roof for a freestanding work room. This strategy provides a central yard/courtyard leading to the informal family entrance and the large family room/kitchen. This area is the fulcrum of the house. To the north lies the living room. Terraces of wood planking or washed small "Japanese" pebbles set in concrete surround the house.

Both the family and public entrances are on the same plane in plan, separated by the master bedroom/kitchen volume. The formal path to the house consists of a long pebble concrete path leading to a pair of solid French doors. Just as a leg of the L distinguished the paths for family and visitor, a bank of cabinetry just beyond the living room entrance forces one to go left into family space or right into public space, the living room, and experience the view to the northwest, obtained through glass walls on two sides of the room. The long side has glass entirely along the long side of the rectangular room. A fireplace occupies the corner area on the north wall of the living room and to its right is a slender full-height fixed glass window. Perpendicular to the fireplace side is a built-in wood carcass sofa, with a wood soffit containing translucent panels hiding light bulbs operated by existing and operable electrical switches. Because of the band of clerestory glass here, this light also softly illuminates the exterior public entrance.

The different ways the same wood members is of note here. To the rear of the living room, the patio is made of 1x3 wood planks stained sage green and separated on the module by 4x4 dark-stained wood "posts" used horizontally. These posts, extending beyond the planking, mimic the rafter tails above, reinforcing the rhythm of the module in two planes. The same planking is used vertically as siding, seen on the wall immediately adjacent to the front door, again reinforcing the composition in an easily tangible way. The rafter size throughout is 4x6.

The master bedroom suite with bathroom with original and extant fixtures lies east of the open kitchen, and, like many Buff, Straub, and Hensman plans, is located well away from the children's bedrooms on the west. The east wall of this suite is glass and opens onto a private terrace and "secret" garden, a privacy conferred through the use of original and extant fiberglass panels set in wood; these panels are adjacent to and south of the public path to the front door.

The children's bedrooms are grouped in a spine and contained within the other L in the leg oriented east west. This L opens to the kitchen/family room (which has a second and much used original fireplace). These bedrooms are all slightly different in size and configuration. Of note is the careful consideration of how growing children could use and play in space: 8' wide hallway along all the bedrooms, used as a play area, flanks the bedrooms, whose doors are full-height sliding black chalk walls, still in use by family and extended family. A 1963 addition of two bedrooms, designed by the firm, juts off to the south and is aligned with the original guest room and detailed to match existing bedrooms.

Three characteristic skylights in the kitchen and the bathrooms illuminate potentially dark spaces.

Apart from the replacement of glass as needed, and the enclosure of some open-tailed rafters with fascia board to prevent rot on the east elevation, the house is original.

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Statement of Significance

A single-family house in the Modern style, designed by a master architect, of exceptionally high design quality, and retaining an outstanding degree of integrity, the Mello House meets the registration requirements outlined in the MPS. In a sense, the architecture so intimately reflects the evolution of the Mello family over time and is such a thoughtful response to individual client needs, met with a “generic” construction technology, that the description of the house is also a portrait of the family. The Mello House is particularly significant in that it demonstrates the flexibility of the modular post-and-beam construction technique developed by Buff, Straub and Hensman in addressing different sites, programs and budgets; the full integration with and transitions among site and structure, the full repertoire of character-defining features for post-and-beam houses. It is also significant as demonstrating innovation in residential Modernism within the period of significance, 1948 – 1968; indeed, it continues to convey lessons in how to live cheaply but well, and surrounded by nature, certainly the hope of many a returning G.I. For these reasons, the Mello House is eligible to qualify for listing under Criterion C, Architecture and Design, at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1957.

Of particular note in the Mello House is the early and unstinting organization on behalf of future liberation and casual, informal living, a planning approach that is a constant in Buff, Straub and Hensman houses and very evident here. The expected children’s needs and behavior were presciently analyzed by their parents and easily incorporated into the thinking of the architects.² Bedrooms were rotated among the children, so each could enjoy the different spaces; children’s drinking glasses were put at a low height in the custom-built, clear Douglas fir kitchen cabinets; terraces and secondary entrances on the south side of the children’s wing permit unseen egress and indicate a high level of trust. The two Ls were also zoned separately with two different water heaters and furnaces at Mary Mello’s request, so that “when all the kids were gone, they could close off one wing, which they did, because they knew they would live here their whole lives,” said Anne Mello.

Like many of their other houses, additions and renovations were designed by the firm. Permits and invoices track the changes in the firm’s identity, reinforcing the varying authorships: the house was designed and signed by Cal Straub, who wrote to the Mellos on USC stationery dated 23 April 1956 that the drawings were “well along;” the letterhead was “Straub + (Boris V.) Jocabowsky.” The two adult children interviewed said they had no recollection of their parents ever mentioning that person’s name, although Straub was a well-known figure to the family.

Significance—Conclusion

Argument under Criterion C- Eligible

As demonstrated above, the Mello House designed by master architects Buff, Straub and Hensman meets the registration requirements as outlined in the MPS. It has retained the respective required aspects of integrity. It is an excellent example of the firm’s body of work, as well as embodying the larger architectural concerns and expressions of Pasadena’s “Recent Past” as described in this Multiple Property Submission, Cultural Resources of the Recent Past, City of Pasadena. It is significant as demonstrating innovation in residential Modernism within the MPS period of significance, 1948 – 1968. Therefore, it is eligible to qualify for listing under Criterion C, Architecture and Design, at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1957.

² On-site interview with Ann Mello, daughter, who lived in the house since she was three. February 10, 2008.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet—Additional Documentation

*Mello, Clarence and Mary, House
Los Angeles County, California
MPS: Cultural Resources of the Recent Past*

Section 9, Page 8
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Bibliographic References

Buff, Straub, and Hensman Archives. Office, Buff, Smith, and Hensman, 1450 W. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena 91105.

Mello, Anne. On-site interview February 10, 2008. (Archival material including full sets of preliminary and working drawings, correspondence, budgets, ancillary costs, permits, related articles owned, available and on-site with Mello family.)

Verbal Boundary Description

Assessor Parcel Number : 5711-003-017

Verbal Boundary Justification

This is the parcel historically associated with the property

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Mello, Clarence and Mary, House
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Section Photos Page 9

Photographs

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: east elevation, view west.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive1.tiff



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Section Photos Page 10

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: east elevations, view west.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive2.tiff



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Mello, Clarence and Mary, House
Los Angeles County, California
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Section Photos Page 11

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: north elevation, master bedroom wing, view south.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive3.tiff



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Los Angeles County, California
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Section Photos Page 12

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: north elevation, master bedroom wing, view southeast..
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive4.tiff



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Los Angeles County, California
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Section Photos Page 13

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: west elevation, view east.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive5.tiff



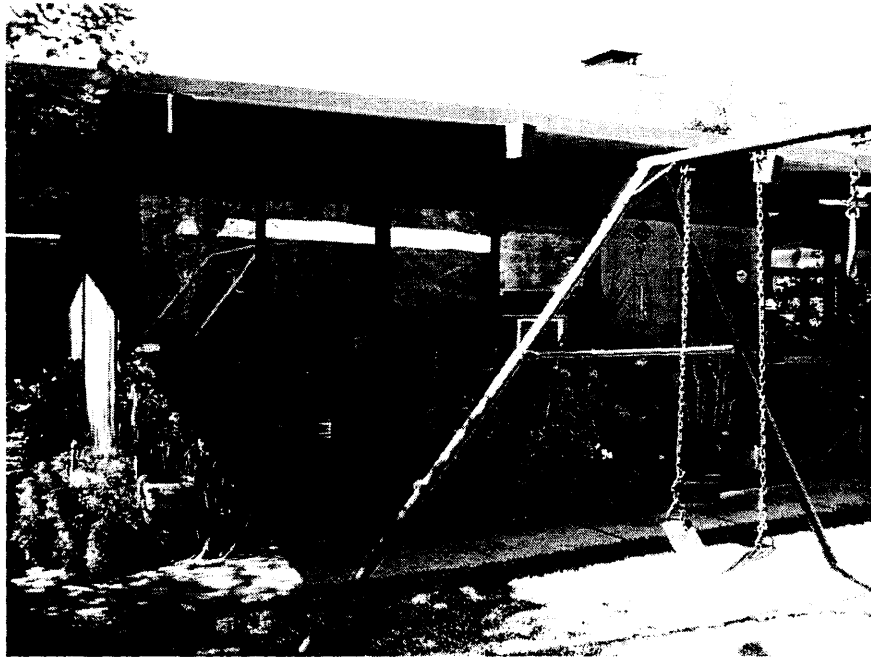
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*Mello, Clarence and Mary, House
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Section Photos Page 14

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: east elevation, kitchen/children's wing, view west.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive6.tiff



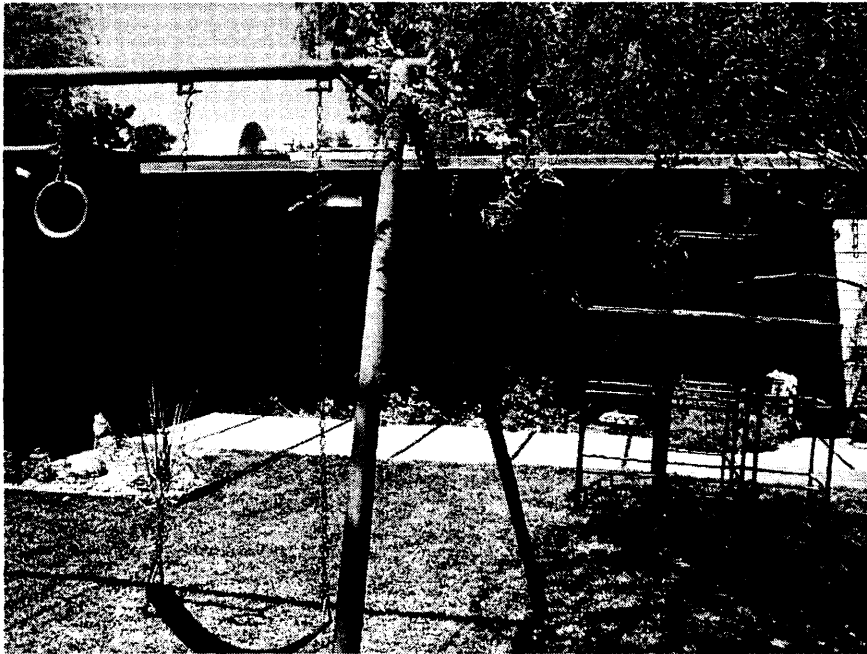
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Section Photos Page 15

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: south elevation, view north..
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive7.tiff



National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet—Additional Documentation

*Mello, Clarence and Mary, House
Los Angeles County, California
MPS: Cultural Resources of the Recent Past*

Section Photos Page 16

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: north elevation, view south.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive8.tiff



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Los Angeles County, California
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Section Photos Page 17

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: west elevation, view east.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive9.tiff



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*Mello, Clarence and Mary, House
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MPS: Cultural Resources of the Recent Past*

Section Photos Page 18

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: north elevations, view south.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive10.tiff



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Section Photos Page 19

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: west elevation, view north.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive11.tiff



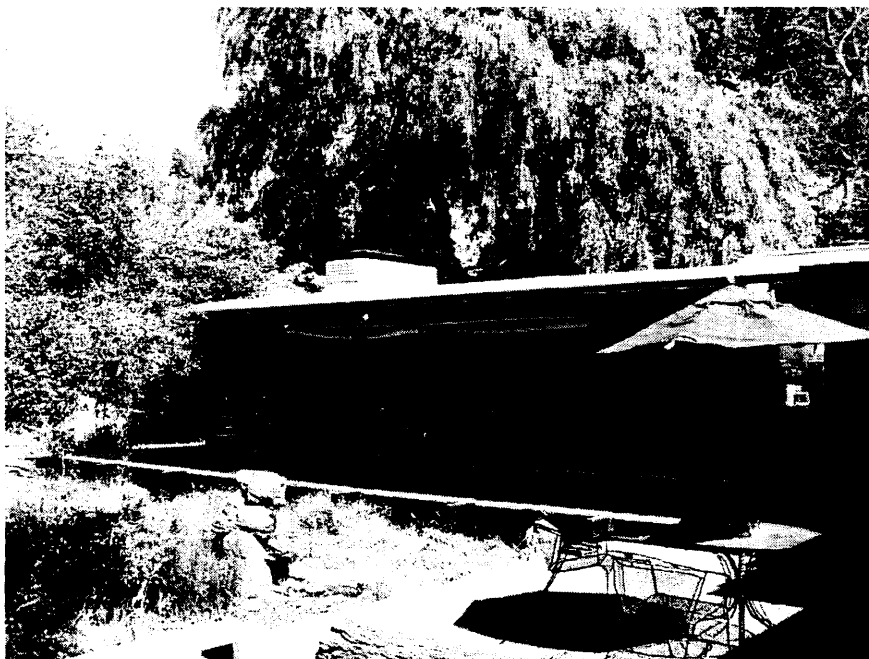
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Section Photos Page 20

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: west elevation, view northwest.
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive12.tiff



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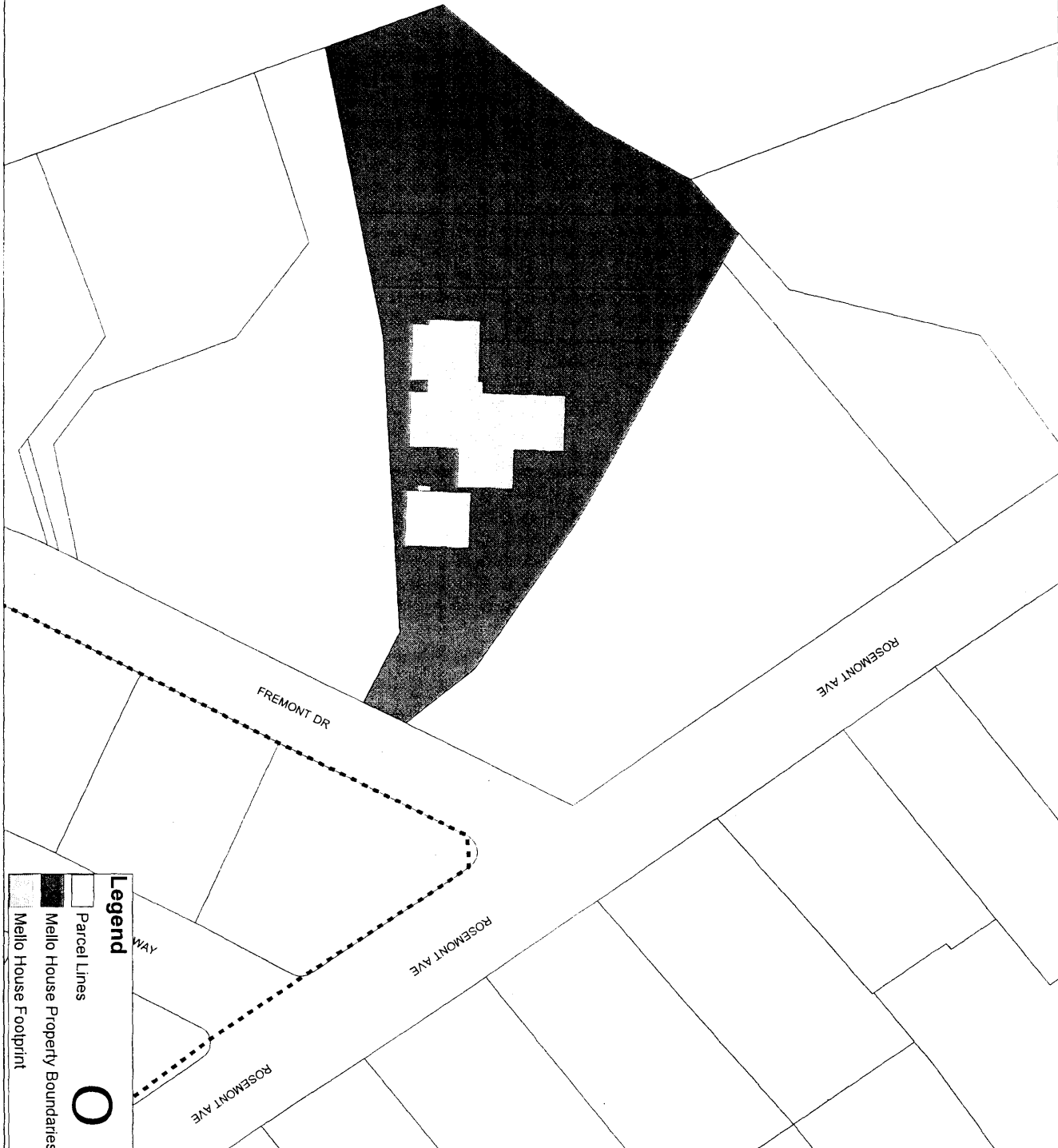
*Mello, Clarence and Mary, House
Los Angeles County, California
MPS: Cultural Resources of the Recent Past*

Section Photos Page 21

Fremont House – Pasadena
Los Angeles County, California
Barbara Lamprecht, Jones & Stokes
March 24, 2008
Negative: Jones & Stokes
View: detail of interior wall, original children's blackboardsl.)
CA_LosAngelesCounty_541FremontDrive13.tiff



Mello House - 541 Fremont Drive, Pasadena, CA



Legend

- Parcel Lines
- Mello House Property Boundaries
- Mello House Footprint

O