

857

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

JUN 13 1989

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Loring House
other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number 1730 Spruce Street n/a not for publication
city, town Berkeley n/a vicinity
state California code CA county Alameda code 001 zip code 94709

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Kathryn Swathin 6/5/89
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. 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:) _____

Alvany Lynn Entered in the National Register 7/13/87
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Prairie School

Other: Secessionist

Western Stick

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stucco

walls stucco

roof other: not visible

other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Loring House is a small, detached, two-story and basement wood frame, Prairie School residence clad in stucco with wood trim. It is located on the west side of Spruce Street in a residential section of Berkeley, California, on a down-sloping lot about 700 ft. north of the University of California campus. In plan the house roughly delineates a cross-shape with unequal arms; its greatest dimensions are about 40 x 60 ft. The most prominent design feature is a widely projecting roof that from most vantage points appears flat, conceals the centrally located chimney, and emphasizes the projections of the central front wing. A ribbon of wooden casement windows wraps around this wing directly under the roof and makes the latter appear to float above the mass of the building, tied to it only by plain rectangular piers at the corners of the building. Both interior and exterior decorative elements are usually Secessionist motifs. The house is in good condition and very little altered. It possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

In addition to the roof and front wing projections and the ribbon windows, the house's horizontality is further emphasized by extended window sills, by the eaves' light-colored soffit with a dark forward edge, and generally by color: the stucco is a light color, the wood trim darker. At the inverse corner between front and left wings are the entry and an entry porch described by a low extension of the house wall. The greater projection of the left wing is disguised by two vertical panels of wood, one on each side of the entry corner. These panels have geometric patterns that reflect contemporary ideas of the Viennese Secessionists and predict Wright's later textile blocks. A similar panel decorates the right-most pier and justifies a change in level for the large stair-landing window on the house's north elevation. Because of the hill's slope, the basement is visible only as a garage door behind the south wing under an open porch, and at the rear, where a great five-sided bay window projects from the main story.

The interior is finished in white plaster and natural redwood trim. Decorative elements, usually Secessionist in flavor, include muntin patterns often with a box of four or nine small squares, segmentally arched doorways with stepped brackets, geometrically patterned leaded glass for the main living room window, a high metal fireplace hood, and simple interior cornices. Basically the materials themselves are the interior decorations. The plan wraps around a central chimney with a single room in each wing: living room to the south, dining room to the west (formerly with a view of the Golden Gate out the rear bay window), bookcase-lined study to the east (street side), great staircase and kitchen to the north. The entry hall is small, full of doors, and lit from the stair landing window. The living and dining rooms flow into each other through a wide arch, but the rooms have different axes and are defined as different spaces by the ceiling's cornicework.

 See continuation sheet

X

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 7.1

Loring House, Berkeley, CA

7. DESCRIPTION (cont.):

The original 50-ft. lot was expanded an additional 35 ft. to the north about the 1930s to contain more garden and a detached garage some 25 ft. distant from the house. Only the original lot is being nominated; the landscaping is neither original nor notably distinguished. The only known alterations are conversion of the basement into a separate residential unit some time after 1941, partial kitchen remodeling, and repainting of the original dark brown exterior wood trim (evident from the screen door's inner side and from a c. 1975 photo) to its present bland green only a few tones darker than the stucco.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G n/a

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1914

Significant Dates

1914

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

Thomas, John Hudson

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Loring House appears eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a period of construction and represents the works of a master but little-known architect, John Hudson Thomas (1878-1945). Constructed in 1914, the house is the truest and earliest example of Prairie School architecture in Berkeley, a city with a long history of innovative architecture. Though largely neglected in the literature of his own time, Thomas has been praised by the eminent architectural historian David Gebhard in the same sentence as Bernard Maybeck and Julia Morgan. (1) Marcus Whiffen published a Thomas house to illustrate Western Stick Style. (2) The house is Thomas' most directly Prairie School building, and he could easily recognize and claim its appearance today (except for the paint color on exterior wood trim), for it retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Berkeley, California, has a heritage of unconventional architecture that goes back to the late 1870s when the Rev. Joseph Worcester built himself a natural shingled house on a solitary, view-commanding hillside. The intellectual community that gathered around the University of California provided fertile ground for the out-of-mainstream architects who created what became known locally as The Bay Tradition and nationally as Western Stick Style. In the 1890s philosophers Charles Keeler and Joseph Worcester, and young architects Willis Polk, A. C. Schweinfurth, Ernest Coxhead, Bernard Maybeck and others met frequently for mutual encouragement and exchange of ideas. Keeler's Hillside Club, initially a women's neighborhood protection group which became a major civic force, concerned itself not only with urban planning sensitive to the hills and the existing landscape, but also with general guidelines for the appropriate architecture. The group campaigned for simple rustic houses embracing many of the Craftsman ideals. In this civic group the circle of architects found clients and a whole area of the city ripe for rustic originality. The concern with good architecture and planning lived on in the city of Berkeley in such a way that, after the great fire of 1923 that narrowly missed the Loring House on its way to destroying some thirty square blocks, the burned area was quickly rebuilt with equally interesting houses. The spirit lives still: by and large Berkeley houses do not show aluminum windows and other insensitive remodelings since World War II, architectural experimentation continues in the buildable areas, and a strong preservation movement has developed around the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association founded in the early 1970s. It is not surprising that this context nurtured a Prairie School house while Frank Lloyd Wright was himself still working in the style. (3)

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets 9.1-9.3

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association
Univeristy of California, Santa Barbara

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	0
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5	6	4	6	8	0
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4	1	9	2	1	6	5
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies the southern portion of lot 58-2181-05, and is roughly 50 x 146 ft. in size.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lot that was associated with the property at the time of construction.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne B. Bloomfield, consulatant
organization n/a date 14 Feb. 1989, rev. 19 April 1989
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 8.1

Loring House, Berkeley, CA

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.):

While the Loring House is Berkeley's earliest and truest example of Prairie School architecture, it also embodies Sessionist details, rustic simplicity on the interior, and its own architect's signature floor plan in a fresh mixture typical of the Bay Tradition/Western Stick Style as found in Berkeley. The house reflects Prairie tenets in its floating, wide-eaved roof, simple rectangular corner piers, stucco cladding with wood trim, cross-shaped plan with one major room in each wing. In massing, roofline, windows, materials, and staggered cornering it strongly resembles two of the three "Houses for E. C. Waller" that were published in Architectural Record in 1912 to illustrate the review of Frank Lloyd Wright's Portfolios, and also the "Fireproof House for \$5000" that Wright had designed for the Ladies Home Journal in 1907 and executed in the Hunt Residence I and the Stockman Residence. (4) However, the Loring House is not simply a copy. Thomas did not entirely adopt Wright's over-powering horizontality, perhaps because he had to work with a lot that sloped down to the rear and was only 50 ft. wide. Thomas' staircase, typically, is more of an event than Wright's: with three landings it turns twice so as to light the entry hall without disturbing its enclosed feeling, and then the stair rises into a wide, light-defined space consisting of hall, stairspace, and outdoors brought in through the large north window. It is fascinating to find Thomas, in 1914 and on a Prairie House, repeating over and over again a few Secessionist decorative themes in a way that prefigures Wright's much later textile block designs and uses. The house plan, also, is as much Thomas as Wright: like a Thomas house of 1911, it is "the first of two basic types which Thomas employed during the teens . . . The kitchen is to one side of the hall, the living room to the other. The dining room is on axis with the entry hall and is separated by a wall. The upstairs circulation hall . . . is large." (5)

The Loring House is significant as a highly representative example of the work of a master, John Hudson Thomas, who has been recognized in recent years as one of the most fascinating and creative of the architects who worked in The Bay Tradition (Western Stick Style) in its second and third generations. (6) He "was the most innovative architect based in the East Bay involved in the residential development of the early teens. . . . The diversity of imagery in Thomas' work conveys the impression of a young architect who admired the work of avant garde designers which he saw in the progressive architectural periodicals of the period published in Europe and the United States. Thomas was eclectic. Although his sources were avant garde and had little relation to the imagery of historical architecture, Thomas' approach mirrored the traditional nineteenth century eclectic design method. From his sources he selected motifs which appealed to him and re-integrated them to form a personal style. His output was large and the style which he devised set the tone for residential development during the teens throughout Alameda County. (7)

In over 35 years of practice, Thomas worked almost exclusively on houses, and they were in a number of different modes or styles. Born in Ward, Nevada, in 1878 to a mining superintendant named Frederick Folger Thomas, he had grown up in the San Francisco Bay Area and earned degrees from Yale in 1901 and the University of California at Berkeley in 1904. After two years in the office of John Galen Howard, he formed a partnership with

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 8.2

Loring House, Berkeley, CA

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (cont.):

Howard's office supervisor George T. Plowman. His associate moved to Los Angeles in 1910, and thenceforth Thomas practiced alone from an office in Berkeley 1910-c.1930, and presumably from his home in Kensington near Berkeley until his death in 1945. The geographical range of his houses is known to extend in California from Healdsburg to Santa Barbara, and from San Francisco to Lake Tahoe, but most were concentrated in the East Bay: Berkeley, Oakland, Piedmont, etc. (8) Most of the Plowman and Thomas work was small, unpretentious wooden, craftsman-style houses, probably influenced by Plowman's relative conservatism and the Berkeley rustic tradition. Toward the end of their association, some of their houses showed a more assertive approach to design that is generally attributed to Thomas. Practicing alone after 1910, Thomas exploded into an immensely creative decade that included groups of designs identified by his biographer Thomas Gordon Smith as "parapet gabled houses," Pueblo Revival ones, English half-timbered and other European vernacular buildings, Prairie School, and taut linear ornament from the Viennese Secessionists. (9) His work of the year 1914 demonstrates this variety: the Prairie School Loring House, the shakes-and-boulders Rowell House, the Pueblo Park House, the Secessionist Peters Houses. But none rigidly follows a single style; as John Beach wrote of the 1913 Bell or Wintermute House, "Of all the Bay Area designers of the teens, only Thomas, with his unique sense of synthesis and eclectic design, could have used such potentially discordant elements to create such a powerful and coherent design." (10) After World War I Thomas changed his approach to one of single-source historical romance, typified by the 1928 Hume House, a miniature, idealized Spanish medieval castle. (11) He also used dollhouse Tudor, for instance for his own residence and some speculative houses in Kensington.

Thus the very uniqueness of the Loring House is typical of Thomas' work in his most creative decade. He here mixed a predominant Prairie School vision with Secessionist ornament, his much-repeated floor plan, and Bay Tradition interior finishes of natural redwood and white plaster.

The client, Ernest L. Loring, was a dentist who practiced in Berkeley at least 1903-1943. Before commissioning the house on Spruce Street, he had served a term on the Berkeley Board of Education. This position and the bookcase-lined study that fills the front wing of his house on Spruce Street testify to his membership in the intellectual community that gathered around the University. He bought the Spruce Street lot in November, 1913, and he signed the building contract with A. Peterson in February 1914 for a \$7459, "2-story and basement 9-room dwelling" designed by John Hudson Thomas, to be built in 120 days. Loring and his wife Mary were listed as living in the house--address at the time 1730 Bushnell Place--in the directories of 1915 through 1918. He sold the property in December 1918. (12)

Plans, elevations, and other drawings by John Hudson Thomas for the Ernest L. Loring House are preserved in the Architectural Drawing Collection at the University of California, Santa Barbara. (13)

(For endnotes, see continuation page 8.3.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8.3

Loring House, Berkeley, CA

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: ENDNOTES

(For full citations please see Section 9, Major Bibliographical References.)

1. Gebhard, 1976, 9-10.
2. Whiffin, 1981, 208, 212.
3. Longstreth, 1983, 312-317. Freudenham and Sussman, 1974, 2-12. Wilson, 1987, 7-17. Gebhard, 1976, 250-251, 257, 274. Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, 1986.
4. Montgomery Schuyler, 1912, 432-433. Storrer, 1978, No. 138, 139. Wright, 1907, 24.
5. Smith, 1975, 26-28.
6. Beach, 1976, 87. Gebhard, 1976, 9-10, 102, 104. Longstreth, 1983, 395 note 33. Wilson, 1987, 14, 15.
7. Smith, 1975, vi-vii.
8. Gebhard et al., 1983, 740-776.
9. Smith, 1975, 20, 23, 26, 32, 50, 101-102.
10. Beach, 1976, 95.
11. See Gebhard et al., 1985, 261, 528.
12. Alameda County Recorder, 1918, 419. Daily Pacific Builder, 1914, 3/3.
13. Gebhard et al., 1983, 760.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 9.1

Loring House, Berkeley, CA

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 9.2

Loring House, Berkeley, CA

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 9.3

Loring House, Berkeley, CA

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Photos Page P.1

Loring House, Berkeley, CA

PHOTOGRAPH CAPTIONS

Loring House
Berkeley, California
Photographs by Anne Bloomfield
July 1988
Negatives with photographer

1. East and south facades from sidewalk.
Photo 1 (175-9) of 13,
2. East and north facades from street.
Photo 2 (176-11) of 13.
3. Entry.
Photo 3 (175-6) of 13.
4. South elevation from east.
Photo 4 (175-7) of 13.
5. West elevation from northwest.
Photo 5 (175-2) of 13.
6. Detail: east elevation of north wing.
Photo 6 (176-10) of 13.
7. Interior hall doors.
Photo 7 (175-20) of 13.
8. Living room: fireplace detail, north wall.
Photo 8 (175-12) of 13.
9. Opening from dining room into living room, looking southeast.
Photo 9 (175-16) of 13.
10. North wall of dining room, looking west.
Photo 10 (175-15) of 13.
11. Stair landing window, looking northeast from second floor hall.
Photo 11 (176-0) of 13.
12. Window detail: south elevation of east wing.
Photo 12 (176-7) of 13.
13. Rear (west) elevation from west.
Photo 13 (175-00) of 13.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

*1730 Spruce St.
Berkeley, CA 94709
Alameda County*

Section number Maps Page Sketch Map

Loring House, Berkeley, CA

