

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

RECEIVED - 2280

JAN 11 2001

388

OHP

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 by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. 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 Blinn, Edmund, House

other names/site number Women's City Club of Pasadena

2. Location

street & number 160 North Oakland Avenue not for publication

city or town Pasadena vicinity

state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 91101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 2/22/01
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

California Office of Historic Preservation
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 the Keeper

Date of Action
4.5.01

Blinn, Edmund, House
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA
County and State

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL: Clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Prairie School

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	CONCRETE
walls	STUCCO
roof	ASPHALT
other	WOOD
	GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1905

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Maher, George Washington

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

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:

Design and Historic Preservation
Section, Planning and Permitting
Department, City of Pasadena

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Description

The Edmund Blinn House is a two-story building constructed as a single-family residence in 1905/06 in a variation of the Prairie School style. In 1941 it became the headquarters of the Women's City Club of Pasadena at which time a few alterations were made. It is rectangular in shape, with a north-south (street-facing) dimension of 35.5 feet and an east-west dimension of 85.5 feet. The building occupies a prominent position at what was once the intersection of the east-west and north-south legs of T-shaped Ford Place (the north-south leg having since been re-named South Oakland Avenue). It is centered at the termination of the east-west leg so that from the west-facing rooms of the house one may look directly down Ford Place to its intersection with South Los Robles Avenue. The Blinn House retains much of its integrity: its fine wood detailing, art glass, and other architectural features still intact. The only major alterations were the addition of a dining room on the northeast corner of the first floor and the enclosure of the front porch with glass---all done after the Club took over the house in 1941. The only out-building, a garage, still remains but has been somewhat altered.

The Blinn House has a low-pitched hipped roof covered with composition shingles. The eaves are boxed. There is a continuous band of heavy curvilinear wooden molding at the edge of the eave and another similar band of molding at the point where the eave meets the wall. Two stucco-clad newer chimneys pierce the roof--one at the ridge-line parallel to the street, the other, with an east-west orientation, on the south-sloping side of the roof. Each chimney has a metal top that slopes inward surmounted by a mansard-style cap. At the center rear and at the easterly end of the north side, cut-away openings have been made in the roof to allow for vertical windows to bring light and air to attic rooms. The perpendicular walls at each side of the windows created by these cut-aways are wood-shingled.

The exterior walls of the house are smoothly plastered. The size and style of windows and doors are varied, but all are slightly inset into the walls and are surrounded by often heavy wooden

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

**Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA**

Description (continued)

molding of various widths. Most of the windows have prominently projecting sills. A description of each elevation of the house follows:

West (front) facade: A wooden arched trellis roof is attached to the house just above the top of the first-floor windows and extends the entire length of the facade. The north and south ends extend about twenty feet beyond the house to arch over the original driveways and also extend about twenty feet back at these points. The trellis arches placed immediately against the house are identically sized, with one arch above each of the three windows (these windows formerly having been openings onto the front porch). The lattice-work of the trellis is supported by a heavy beam repeatedly carved in the shape of the segmental arch motif that appears throughout the exterior and interior of the house:



The beam itself is supported by an elephantine Doric plaster column between each window. The continuation of the beam across the driveways and similar beams at the easterly end of the driveway trellises are supported by a quartet of identical columns. The trellis is also supported at each end of the front facade by curving plaster brackets that extend from the wall. As mentioned above, the three first-floor windows represent an alteration that filled in the former openings onto the front porch. They are identically styled: a large pane flanked by two narrow sash windows. No wooden molding is visible, except for small sills.

The entire second floor of the front facade is a loggia wherein the main wall of the house is recessed underneath a continuation of the main roof. The roof is supported by square plaster piers at each corner and by two sets of paired wooden Doric columns.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Description (continued)

The size of the three openings matches the size of the first-floor openings below. The house opens onto the loggia by means of three sets of single-paned french doors. At each end of this facade are wrap-around bays that extend about two feet from the main wall. Curved plaster bracketing supports those sides of the bays that do not look out onto the loggia. The roofs of the bays have the segmental arch motif. Inset within both larger sides of each bay are casement windows, the tops of which also echo the motif. The central panes are clear, but flanking panes and the panes on the side projecting walls of each bay are decorated with stained leaded glass. The decoration borders the top and sides of each pane but does not continue to the very bottom of each side. The outline of the lower part of the top border repeats the segmental arch motif. The theme of the glass decoration is delicately rendered water lilies and wisteria--a design that is repeated in many other windows and in certain interior features of the house. (The wisteria pattern was meant to complement the wisteria vine that once covered the trellis at the front of the house.)

North facade: The first floor of this wall contains the main entrance to the house on its easterly end and a secondary entrance to the front porch on its westerly end. The main entrance is an impressive feature, approached by a flight of four semi-circular concrete steps with two curving metal hand-rails. The wooden door has a large metal strike-plate and an inset stained-glass panel in a stylized, Wrightian design of vertical leaded lines and water lilies. The stoop is sheltered by a heavy wooden canopy that is supported by plaster pilasters at both sides of the door and by the flat molded tops of two curving plaster brackets similar in look to those at the front of the house. The segmental arch motif is repeated five times at the entrance: three times in the canopy which has three progressively smaller sections, once in the wall that surrounds the recessed door, and again in the top of the door itself. A metal lantern appears on the walls to each side of the front door. The tops of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Description (continued)

these fixtures also echo the segmental arch motif, and their sides are covered with opaque glass. To the west of the main door, between it and the projecting wall of the later dining room addition, is a vertically-oriented large plate-glass window that is also obviously a later addition. (The original tripartite window, whose flanking panes also featured the water lily and wisteria design, was saved and installed in an interior hallway of the house.) A similar undisturbed original tripartite window still exists to the west of the main door. The entrance to the front porch at the westerly end of the facade, formerly an open arch, has been filled in by a door with ten glass panes, flanked by two plain sash windows. It is approached by six concrete steps with a metal railing. Two lanterns at both sides of the opening are similar in style to those adjacent to the main door.

The east end of the second story of the north facade looks out over the roof of the one-story dining room addition. Near the northeast corner of the main wall is a wrap-around projecting bay similar in style to those at the front of the house, but with plain glass. To the east of it is an opening to a former sleeping porch that has been filled in with glass louvers. To the west of the bay window is a small square window covered with a metal grille and a band of three narrow vertically-oriented windows. Above the main door is a pair of horizontally-oriented windows, each with two transom panes. To the west of these is the north-facing side of the front wrap-around bay.

East (rear) facade: This facade is the most utilitarian appearing side of the house and consists mostly of filled-in sleeping porches on the second floor and a filled-in, formerly open, service porch along the entire length of the first floor. The south end of the service porch has been left open to form an entry porch at the southeast corner, its floor-level raised considerably above the ground, which is approached on the south side of the house by a flight of six concrete steps. To the north of the entry porch, two formerly open bays of equal size have

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Description (continued)

been filled in with clapboard siding and each bay has a band of three four-paned sash windows. Some of the window glass has been replaced with air-handling equipment. There is an entrance to the basement at the north end of this facade, its solid wood door reached by five descending concrete steps set between solid plaster balusters.

The second floor of the east facade has one small louvered window at its south end set in a solid wall that is probably original. To the north are two formerly open porches, paralleling the formerly open bays on the first floor below. The openings of the southerly porch have been completely filled in with clapboard siding, while the northerly porch now has three louvered-glass windows. The easterly section of the wrap-around bay window at the northeast corner is visible through the glass.

South facade: On the west end of the first floor is a single tri-partite window arrangement similar to those on the front facade. This window is set in a plaster wall that has filled in the formerly open entrance to the front porch. The "ghost" in the plaster reveals that the top of this opening once echoed the segmental arch motif. To the east is a band of five smaller windows, each with the same decorative borders seen on the windows in the north wall. A small, single square casement window occupies the wall to the east. Adjacent to this is an even smaller horizontally-oriented window that occupies an indentation in the plaster indicating it was once a long vertically-oriented window. To the east of this is a one-story projection that begins in walls that are perpendicular to the house (each of these walls having a single vertically-oriented window), but whose outer wall is gently curved in a five-foot radius from the house. In the curve is a band of five single-paned vertically-oriented windows. Paralleling them at basement level is another band of five small windows. East of the projection is a single entry door approached by two concrete steps. Midway up the wall above it is a casement window indicating a landing

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Description (continued)

for an interior rear stairway. To the east at normal first-floor level is a single window with a protective grille. At the corner of the house is the entrance to the rear service porch area mentioned in the description of the east facade. The top of its stucco opening recalls the segmental arch motif. The north wall of what remains of the once-open porch has been filled in with clapboard siding, a single entrance door, and a four-paned sash window to the east of it. On the east wall of the open area is another single window with a protective grille.

The second story of the south facade has the south-facing portion of the wrap-around bay at its west end. To the east is a single casement window and another single window high up on the wall. Adjacent to the east is a tripartite window with panes decorated like those on the north side. This is the window at the landing of the main interior staircase. The top of this window frame has the segmental arch motif. Next to the east, two pairs of single-paned vertically-oriented windows look out onto the roof of the curved first-floor projection. East of this is a single bay in the style of the wrap-around bays, but its surfaces are plastered except for a small double casement window with a curved top that occupies the center of the south-facing wall of the bay.

Garage (carriage house): The garage is basically square (21 by 26 feet) with a hipped roof of composition shingles and a boxed eave with double molding similar to that of the main house. The west facade has a solid sliding door on its north end. This door is set within a plaster frame that has the segmental arch motif at its top. On the south end of the west facade is a pair of solid square doors set in a square opening, but "ghosts" in the plaster indicate the top may also once have been characterized by the motif. The thresholds of both doors are scored concrete, the same pattern found in the original driveways on both sides of the house that once connected the garage with the street. At the base of the northerly door is a pair of cone-shaped bumper guards made of iron. A square window with two panes is centered high on

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Description (continued)

the wall of both the north and south facades. The east facade has no openings. Mounted on the westerly end of the south facade is a horizontal block of wood on which are five hooks in a row--perhaps once the anchors for a clothesline. The interior of the garage is one large room.

Dining Room Addition: The dining room addition is a one-story wing added perpendicularly to the north facade of the house at its easterly end. It is more utilitarian in style than the original residence. It has a flat roof with a continuous band of metal flashing around its perimeter. On the west, street-facing facade are three sets of identical window groupings--a six-paned central window flanked by single sash windows. Heavy carved molding surrounds each window grouping. The only inconsistency in this facade is a single large sash window positioned between the middle and northerly set of window groupings. At the north end of the addition there is a small westerly and northerly projection. The south-facing wall of this projection has a single door with wood panels below and a glass panel above which is approached by four concrete steps with a utilitarian iron railing. To its east is a single sash window. One window grouping similar to those on the main west wall occupies the center of the projection's west facade. There is another in the center of the projection's north facade. The east side of the projection has three single-paned windows with an awning above. The north side of the main portion of the dining room addition has a grouping of windows similar to the west facade. West of it is a single wood-paneled door approached by a concrete ramp that is mainly in an east-west orientation and makes a dog-leg south to the door. This ramp has a metal railing on both sides. The east wall of the dining room addition has three sets of shuttered horizontal openings. This wall is flush with the original wall of the house to the south.

Landscaping: The original landscaping on the south, north, and east of the building has been replaced with asphalt for parking.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Description (continued)

The west (front) yard and the ell formed by the north facade of the original house and the west wall of the dining room addition are well landscaped. Camellias and other flowering shrubs are planted close to the house while lawn predominates nearer the street. The vegetation within the ell is quite lush with ferns and other sub-tropical shrubs. Tall date palms occupy the parkway between the sidewalk and the street. The scored concrete driveway on the north side of the house has been cut off by the west wall of the dining room addition.

Interior: The interior of the Blinn House is worthy of comment because its decorative elements echo the motifs of the segmental arch and the stained-glass water lily/wisteria design found on the exterior. The first floor contains an entry hall with a grand staircase, living room, dining room, library, bathroom, and kitchen. Because the original owner was in the lumber business, the public rooms are resplendent with unpainted woods of various types, such as mahogany and oak, found in the floors, wainscoting, tall baseboards, window and door moldings, and box-beamed ceilings. The segmental arch motif is found in the approaches to the living room and dining room from the entry hall, in the panels of the staircase railings, in the window shapes, and even in the firebox opening in the fireplace. A band of five sliding glass doors connects the living room with the former front porch--each glass panel bordered with the same water lily/wisteria pattern of the other windows in the room. The same design can be found in the floor-to-ceiling tilework that surrounds the fireplace, the patterns created by mosaic glass squares of different colors scattered among the darker background tiles. The fireplace in the dining room is faced with mono-chromed tile. The library to the south of the dining room occupies the curved bay mentioned in the discussion of the exterior and connects to the rear stairwell. These stairs lead to a billiard room in the basement directly below the library. The billiard room also has a fireplace, and there is a wine closet directly adjacent to the room. Many of the light fixtures

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 9

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Description (continued)

in the public rooms are original and recall the water lily pattern of the windows. The original kitchen area on the first floor has been enlarged to serve the needs of the club, expanding into the formerly open-air service-porch areas at the rear of the house.

The midpoint landing of the main staircase is dominated by a tripartite decorative window and has a window seat along its entire south side. The upstairs landing is large, the stairwell surrounded on three sides by a railing that repeats the segmental arch motif. There are five bedrooms and three bathrooms, two of which are en suite. The master bedroom at the northwest corner has a faux fireplace that supports a gas heater, while the bedroom off the corridor to the east of the staircase has a real fireplace. The projections formed by the wrap-around window bays in the northwest and southwest bedrooms accommodate window seats with intricate coving patterns in the plaster of the ceiling above. All the upstairs woodwork has been painted, probably since the house was first built. In the southeast corner of the second story is a sewing room, but the remainder of the east end of the house was made up of sleeping porches now converted into office space. The rear stairs also lead up to servants' quarters in the attic level which contain two quite large sleeping rooms and a bathroom. All the woodwork in the attic level remains unpainted.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Statement of Significance

The Edmund Blinn House was completed in 1906. Commissioned by Edmund Beardsley Blinn, retired from the wholesale lumber business in Chicago, the house was designed by Chicago architect George Washington Maher. It is significant under Criterion C as the only example of Maher's residential work on the west coast and as a fine example of Prairie School architecture, a Midwestern style that is not commonly found in the Pasadena area. The house was purchased from the Blinn family in 1941 by a local philanthropist and sold to the Women's City Club at a discount in 1945 to be used as their clubhouse and as a meeting place for a variety of other women's groups. Since 1941 it has played an important role in women's history in Pasadena by serving as the home and "incubator" of a number of post-war women's organizations. The Women's City Club has made only minor alterations to the house, adding a dining room annex, itself designed by the prominent local architect Myron Hunt, and enclosing the front porch with glass. These changes have not impacted the basic integrity of the original design.

The original owner was Edmund Beardsley Blinn, born in Keyesville, New York on July 30, 1861. His father having died at an early age, Blinn and his family moved to Chicago about 1868. After a minimal education in the public schools, Blinn went to work in a planing mill when he was fourteen years old. As a young adult, he became involved in the wholesale lumber business, first in Iowa and then back in Chicago. After a stint as a salesman with the S. P. Baker Company, Blinn went into business for himself. The E. B. Blinn Lumber Company was very successful, with large-scale clients, especially in the meat-packing industry. Blinn invested much of his money in agricultural land, including 20,000 acres of wheat land near Lewiston, Montana and vast citrus groves in Riverside, California. Blinn married the former Kate May Hoch of Winterset, Iowa on October 7, 1885. They were to have two daughters and two sons. Their last home in the east was in Oak Park.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

After spending two winters in Pasadena, the Blinns retired there in 1905, as did so many wealthy Easterners and Midwesterners at the turn-of-the-20th-century, attracted by the climate and the city's growing reputation as a cultural and resort center. Edmund Blinn's brother, L. W. Blinn who was also in the lumber business, lived in Los Angeles. As the site of their permanent home Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Blinn chose Ford Place, a T-shaped street encompassing a four-square-block area east of the prestigious Maryland Hotel on Los Robles Avenue between Walnut and Union (formerly Herkimer) Streets. It was an exclusive subdivision, created in 1902 by Pasadena developer Tod Freeman, Sr. (At one time red sandstone pillars stood at each entrance to Ford Place with chains that could be drawn across to keep out undesirables.) As opposed to many of their fellow Pasadenans, the Blinns selected a non-local architect to design their new home. They had no doubt become acquainted with architect Maher's work when they lived in Oak Park, their residence on Home Avenue being just across the street from the Pleasant Home mansion that Maher had designed in 1897. The Blinns were probably confident that Maher would design for them a truly unique residence, unlike any other in Pasadena.

Blinn did not completely retire from his business interests. He would visit Chicago at least twice a year to check on the condition of his company. He served as a director of both the First National Bank of Pasadena and the Union Oil Company of California, owned a prominent office building in downtown Pasadena, and was president of the American Cement Products Company which made the Marbelite cement lamp posts used throughout Los Angeles. Blinn was also remembered as a generous supporter of worthy causes.

Edmund Blinn died at his Ford Place home on February 2, 1922 at the age of 61. Mrs. Blinn continued living in their home until she sold it in 1941.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

The architect George Washington Maher was born in Mill Creek, West Virginia on December 25, 1864. He studied architecture in Chicago in various professional offices (working as an apprentice draftsman side-by-side with Frank Lloyd Wright when they were both employed by Lyman R. Silsbe). Maher was also said to have been a friend of famed Chicago architect Louis H. Sullivan. Maher started his own practice in 1888. He developed a specialty in unique residential design and also made a name for himself in the creation of memorials and monuments. He took on some commercial and school jobs as well. Maher was particularly interested in the effect that architecture could have on urban planning and wrote several articles exploring that subject. He became a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and served as president of its Chicago chapter in 1918. He also chaired the committee on municipal art and the town planning committee. A resident of Kenilworth, a suburb of Chicago, Maher was in business with his son by the early 1920s. After the popularity of the Prairie style faded, he was reduced to designing homes in traditional styles. George Maher committed suicide on September 12, 1926, said to have been frustrated in his dream of creating a whole new style of architecture indigenous to the United States.

Maher's residential work has been characterized as a highly personal interpretation of the Prairie School style--sometimes called a "second Chicago School." His work was very consistent, often easily identifiable as his own. His designs were very popular with both the public and fellow architects who imitated him widely. One critic has stated that Maher's "influence on the Midwest was profound and prolonged and, in its time, was certainly as great as was Wright's" (Brooks 36). Many of his houses were built outside the Chicago city center and, as a result, spread the Prairie influence into small towns. Prairie school architecture has been described as "ahistorical"--i.e., not concerned with the interpretation of traditional styles. It was embraced by individualists who preferred a house that was not rooted to any particular time or place. Although firmly based in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

the flat-walled Prairie School style, Maher's houses tended to incorporate at least hints of other unrelated styles, such as English Arts and Crafts, American Colonial Revival, and even Italian Revival. Maher-influenced houses began to appear all over the country before World War I--two-story rectangular boxes with banded windows, low-hipped roofs, slanted corner piers, and shallow arches over the front doors.

The shallow segmental arch with its unique projecting ends, so prominent on the Blinn house, occurs in a number of residences that Maher designed beginning in 1904 and seems to be one of his "trademarks." Another unique Maher touch was the use of what he called the "motif-rhythm" theory wherein a local indigenous plant and/or a recurring geometric shape was featured as a motif in both the exterior and interior design, becoming a unifying decorative element, similar to a repetitive theme in music. These motifs were often repeated in wall stenciling, fabrics, glass, and in mosaic work above the fireplace. Although the water lilies and wisteria used as motifs in the Blinn house were not indigenous plants, they are consistently used throughout. (It has also been pointed out that two other Maher-designed houses under construction at the same time in the east used the same motifs, leading to speculation that he was also conscious of the economics of bulk production.)

Maher seems to have been proud of his plans for the Blinn house: he exhibited them in 1906 at a gathering of the Chicago Architectural Club. Most of Maher's surviving works are in Illinois and Wisconsin. Except for a combined water tower/library building in Fresno, built in 1894, the Blinn house is thought to be the only Maher design on the west coast.

The second the current owner of the Blinn House is the Women's City Club of Pasadena. Women's groups have been influential in the physical and cultural growth of Pasadena from its earliest years. Literary and musical societies were founded as far back

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

as the 1870s in the settlers' attempts to create a civilized and cultural setting for their frontier town. Other groups concerned themselves with the betterment of education, charitable endeavors, and business opportunities for women. Pasadena's attraction to wealthy winter visitors and later year-round residents was partly based on their perception that it was a relatively sophisticated young community and, symbiotically, their patronage and participation helped to make it so. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) is the oldest women's organization to have any longevity, its local chapter having been formed in 1883. It was followed by the Women's Reading Club of 1888, which later became the still-thriving Shakespeare Club. The Women's Civic League was founded in 1911 for "the public consideration of social and economic questions" and provided most of the inspiration for the City's still-impressive Beaux Arts civic center in the 1920s. The Pasadena Women's Club, organized in then-unincorporated East Pasadena, was founded in 1912 and remained the oldest purely social and philanthropic female organization in the community until it disbanded a few years ago. Only the Shakespeare Club and the Pasadena Women's Club had their own clubhouses.

By the early 1940s it had become apparent that there was a need in Pasadena for a club house for all the other women's organizations that had no headquarters. Gloria Gartz, a wealthy resident who was heir to the Crane plumbing fortune, had long felt that the activities of women merited the dignity and convenience of a central meeting place. The Blinn House seemed to her an ideal location, near downtown Pasadena and across the street from the men-only University Club. In 1941, Ms. Gartz convinced Mrs. Blinn, who had been contemplating its sale, that this would also be a way to preserve her home from demolition or from conversion into a boarding house. After the house was sold to Ms. Gartz it was turned into a clubhouse and she invited various women's groups to meet there. It was known for a while

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

as the Women's Clubhouse, used monthly by as many as thirty organizations and 1,500 women.

By 1945 it was evident that the clubhouse could not economically sustain itself under this arrangement. A new non-profit and non-political organization, called the Women's City Club, was formed. It pioneered the idea of having as its membership base not only individuals but other women's organizations. By the end of 1945, thirteen organizations and 357 individuals had joined. By 1946, the success of the new club made possible the addition of a wing containing a main dining room and a smaller dining room, known as the Newcomb Room, which together would seat 162. Daily luncheons and weekly dinners were instituted (a total of about 2,500 meals served per month), a schedule which continues to the present day. A number of regularly scheduled social events, lectures, and cultural programs have also been maintained through the years.

In December 1945 the Women's City Club purchased the property from Miss Gartz for about half its appraised value. This included not only the Blinn house and some of its furnishings but also a vacant lot to the north which gave the Club a 150-foot frontage along Los Robles Avenue. A lot in back of the clubhouse was purchased in 1960 to provide additional parking. (Sanborn maps indicate that the surviving garage may have been moved from the northeast to the southeast corner of the property sometime after 1930; however, there is no building permit on file to support this.) In 1964 the front porch of the Blinn house was enclosed and christened the Garden Room. Major restoration work and structural repairs were undertaken in 1995-96 thanks to a bequest from a Club member.

Besides its own activities, the Women's City Club continues to provide a home for a number of other organizations (some now with both men and women members). Among them: the local chapter of the League of Women Voters, founded in 1936; the Pasadena Council

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 16

**Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA**

Statement of Significance (continued)

of Women's Clubs, representing more than fifty organizations; the Women's Civic League, mentioned above; Zonta; Altrusa; American Association of University Women; Soroptimists; Pasadena Toastmistress Club; Business and Professional Women; Browning Society; and the Junior League. It also has reciprocal agreements with other clubs across the nation so that traveling members can find a congenial atmosphere in which to conduct a meeting or relax.

The Women's City Club has successfully carried out the three major aims of its charter: "1) to serve as a center for women's civic, cultural, and educational activities; 2) to provide a convenient place...for the business, professional and civic-minded women of the city to meet; and 3) to provide a place to entertain distinguished visitors to the city." For many years it was one of the only places in town that a businesswoman would feel comfortable meeting and entertaining her clients.

When organized in 1945, the Club adopted the revolutionary idea of not only being open to individual members but also to other organizations as well, providing a home to smaller business, professional, and charitable women's groups that otherwise would have had none. It also provided a supportive environment for females in the business and political worlds to develop their interests in areas that were formerly perceived to be for men only.

In summary, the Edmund Blinn House is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. Although the Women's City Club has made some additions and alterations to the building, it has retained its integrity and is still readily recognizable, inside and out, as the single-family residence that it once was. Its surroundings, although changed from single-family residential to institutional (the old Ford Place neighborhood now being owned by Fuller Theological Seminary), still retains much of its early look. Many of the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

original residences have been adaptively re-used as academic and student centers, but their exteriors have been restored. Ford Place between the Women's City Club and Union Street has become a landscaped pedestrian mall, but most of the original parkway plantings still survive.

The exterior architecture and interior design of the Edmund Blinn House are significant as the only example of the residential work on the west coast of Chicago architect George Maher, famed for his very personal and influential interpretation of the Prairie School style. It is also probably the earliest example of Prairie School architecture in Pasadena. ("La Miniatura"--a house near the Arroyo Seco designed by Frank Lloyd Wright--was not built until 1923.)

The City of Pasadena recognized the significant architectural and social history of this property in 1978 by declaring it Cultural Heritage Landmark #16. Historian Ann Scheid has called it "one of Pasadena's most significant landmarks" (Scheid 127). David Gebhard and Robert Winter in their book *Los Angeles: An Architectural Guide* has declared that "the interior, though somewhat remodeled, is nevertheless still exciting" (Gebhard and Winter 401).

Following is documentation of the original construction and alterations made to the building. The City of Pasadena issued building permit #3383 on November 16, 1905 for a fourteen-room, two-story frame residence to be constructed at 60 Ford Place (now 160 North Oakland Avenue). The cost was to be \$14,000--a significant sum of money in 1905 when the average Pasadena house and lot could be purchased for about \$3,000. (An article in a local newspaper the previous October had stated that the value of the new house would be \$40,000.) A. B. Tirrill of Pasadena was the contractor.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 18

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

Permits #3163J and 3578J, issued on January 10 and August 30, 1946 respectively, allowed the addition of an annex containing two dining rooms totaling 2,261 square feet. Hunt & Chambers of Pasadena (a partnership of Myron Hunt and H. C. Chambers) was identified as the architect for this project that had a combined cost of \$11,000.

On August 16, 1949, permit #464A was issued for a remodeling and expansion of the kitchen that was to cost \$2,500. No architect was identified on the permit. Permit #2414, issued on July 5, 1963, allowed the closing in of the front porch. W. L. Reichardt of Los Angeles was the architect and Ted Tyler of Pasadena was the contractor for this \$5,000 project.

The earthquake-damaged upper parts of the two brick chimneys were removed in July 1971 and replaced with metal stacks. The cost was \$950. Permit #40670 was issued on August 9, 1972 to convert a closet into a powder room on the first floor of the original house. No architect was listed for this \$1,000 project.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9, 10 Page 19

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Bibliography

Brooks, H. Allen. Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries. New York, Norton, 1972.

Gebhard, David and Robert Winter. Los Angeles: An Architectural Guide. Salt Lake City, Gibbs-Smith, 1994.

George W. Maher Quarterly. Sank City, WI. 1991-

McGroarty, John Steven. History of Los Angeles County. New York, American Historical Society, 1927.

Pasadena Community Book, 1943.

Pasadena Evening Star: 10/4/05; 10/13/05.

Pasadena Star-News: 10/10/54

Pineda, Manuel and C. Caswell Perry. Pasadena Area History. Pasadena, Historical Publishing Co., 1972.

Scheid, Ann. Pasadena: Crown of the Valley. Northridge, Windsor Press, 1986.

Who Was Who in America, v. 1, p. 769.

Verbal boundary description

Lots 14 and 15, Ford Place

Verbal boundary justification

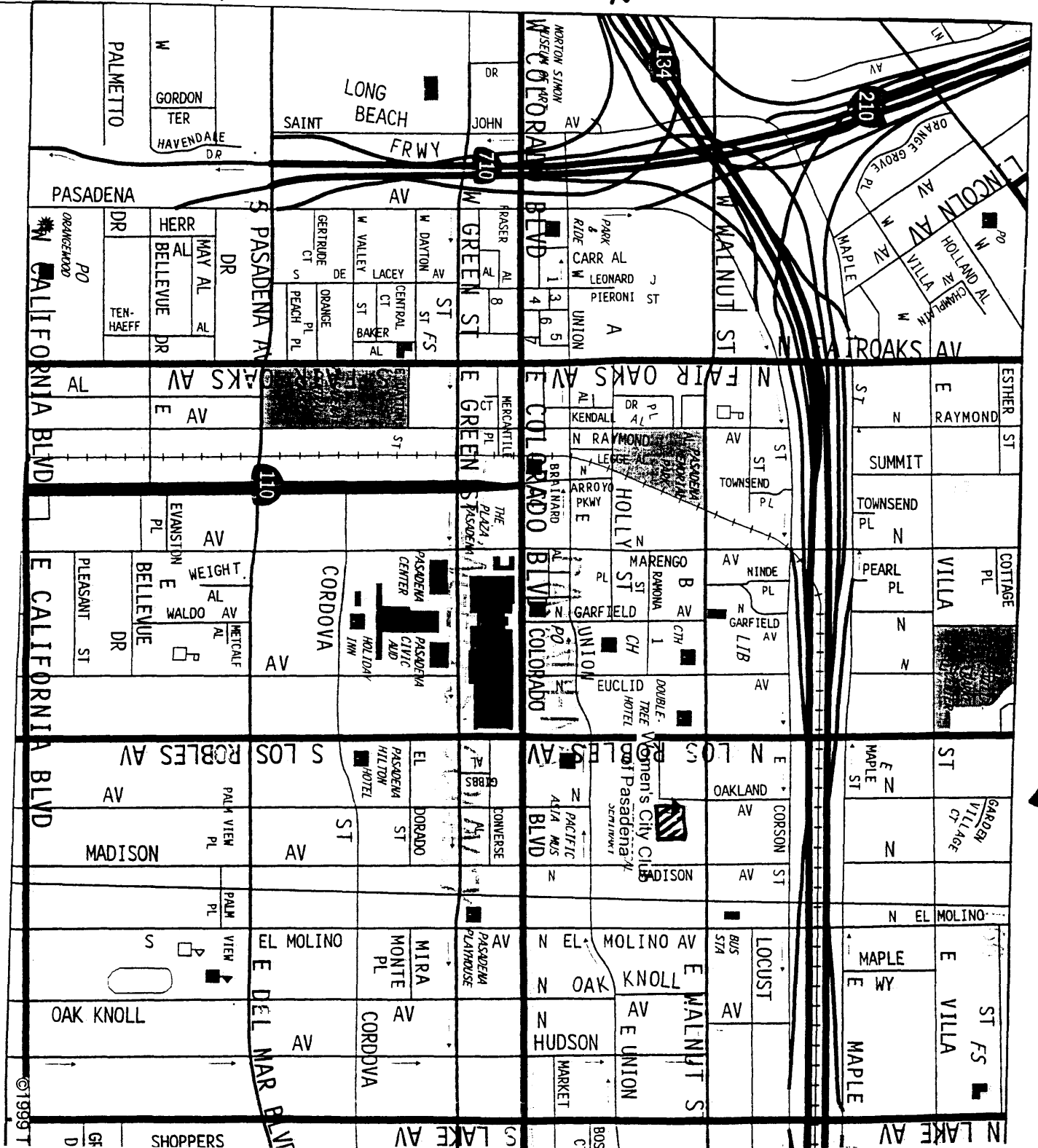
The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Edmund Blinn House.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page 20

LOCATION MAP



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page 21

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Photographs

1. General view from N-W corner, showing pergola in front of house, dining addition through entranceway. (24mm shift lens)
2. General frontal view from S-W corner, showing driveway. (24mm shift lens)
3. Front door on north side of house with broken-arch over, dining addition to left. (24mm shift lens)
4. Front door, detail, with broken arch over and in glass pattern (90mm lens)
5. Interior: Entrance hall & living room beyond, through broken arches, stairs left, main entrance right, from reception room (original dining room) (24mm shift lens)
6. Interior: Living room, with Garden Room (original front porch) beyond, from Entrance Hall (24mm shift lens)
7. Interior: Living room with fireplace, wisteria-pattern glass-tile mantle, entrance hall and front door back left (24mm shift lens)
8. Interior: Upstairs N-W (front) bedroom window-seat detail, with broken arch vault & in glass (24mm shift lens)
9. Interior: Stairs, 1st floor to landing, broken-arch pattern in railing (24mm shift lens)
10. Interior: Stairs, 2nd floor to landing, broken-arch pattern in railing and landing window (24mm shift lens)
11. Rear (S-E) view, showing kitchen entrance, broken-arch bay window from first floor library, broken arch window from second-floor bedroom, dining addition to right (24mm shift lens)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page 22

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

Photographs (continued)

12. Rear (N-E) view, showing addition and ramp entrance, from parking lot (24mm shift lens)
13. Carriage house, viewed from S-E corner of house, showing near parking area (24mm shift lens)

* * *

[Following the prints are photocopies from July, 1907, issue of *The Inland Architect*, as reproduced in the *Geo. Maher Quarterly*, showing the Blinn House at that time]

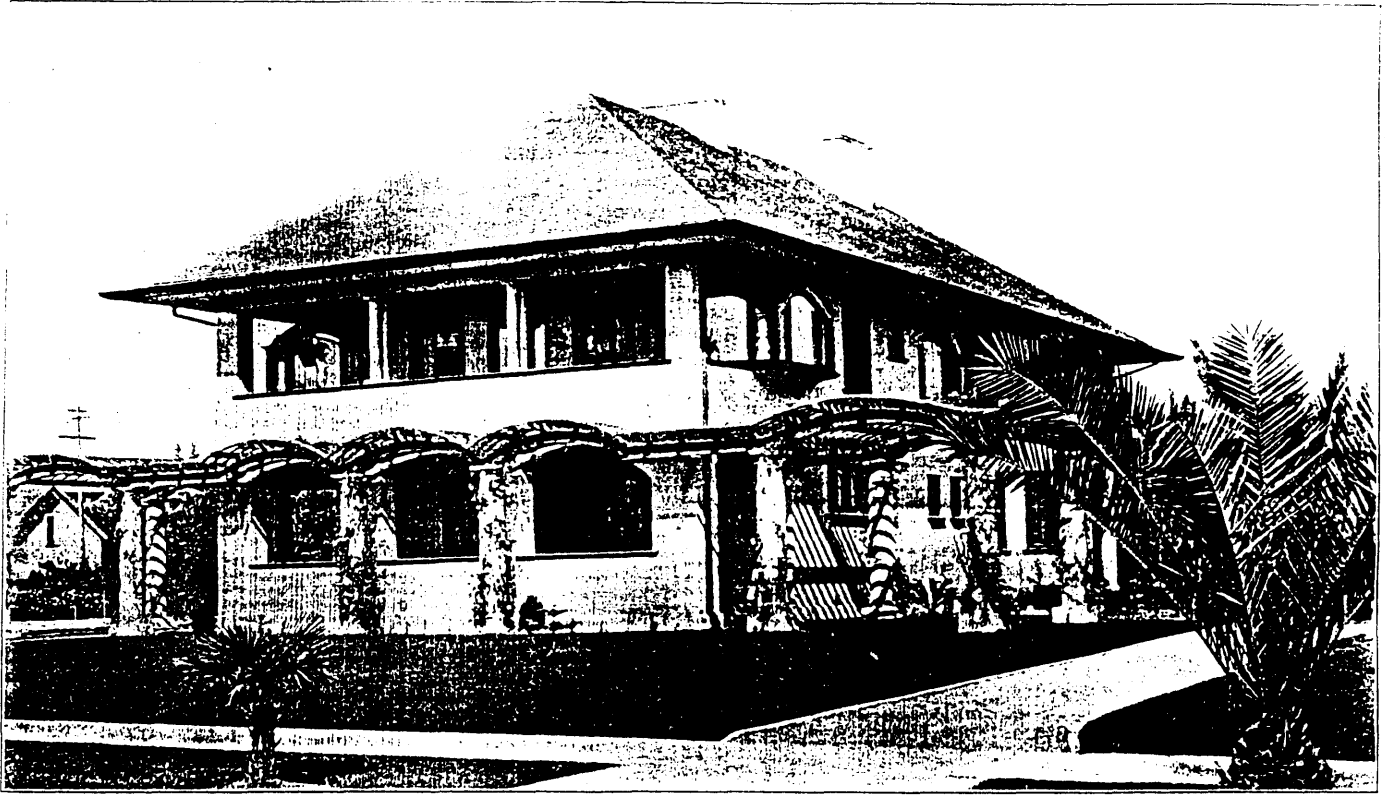
Photographer: Dr. William Thayer
Date: September 2000
Negatives stored in safe of Women's City Club of Pasadena



RESIDENCE OF E. B. BLINN, PASADENA, CAL.

George W. Maher, Architect, Chicago

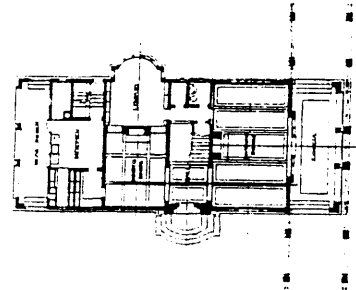
THE INLAND ARCHITECT
AND NEWS RECORD
JULY, 1907



THE PERGOLA, RESIDENCE OF E. B. BLINN, PASADENA, CAL.

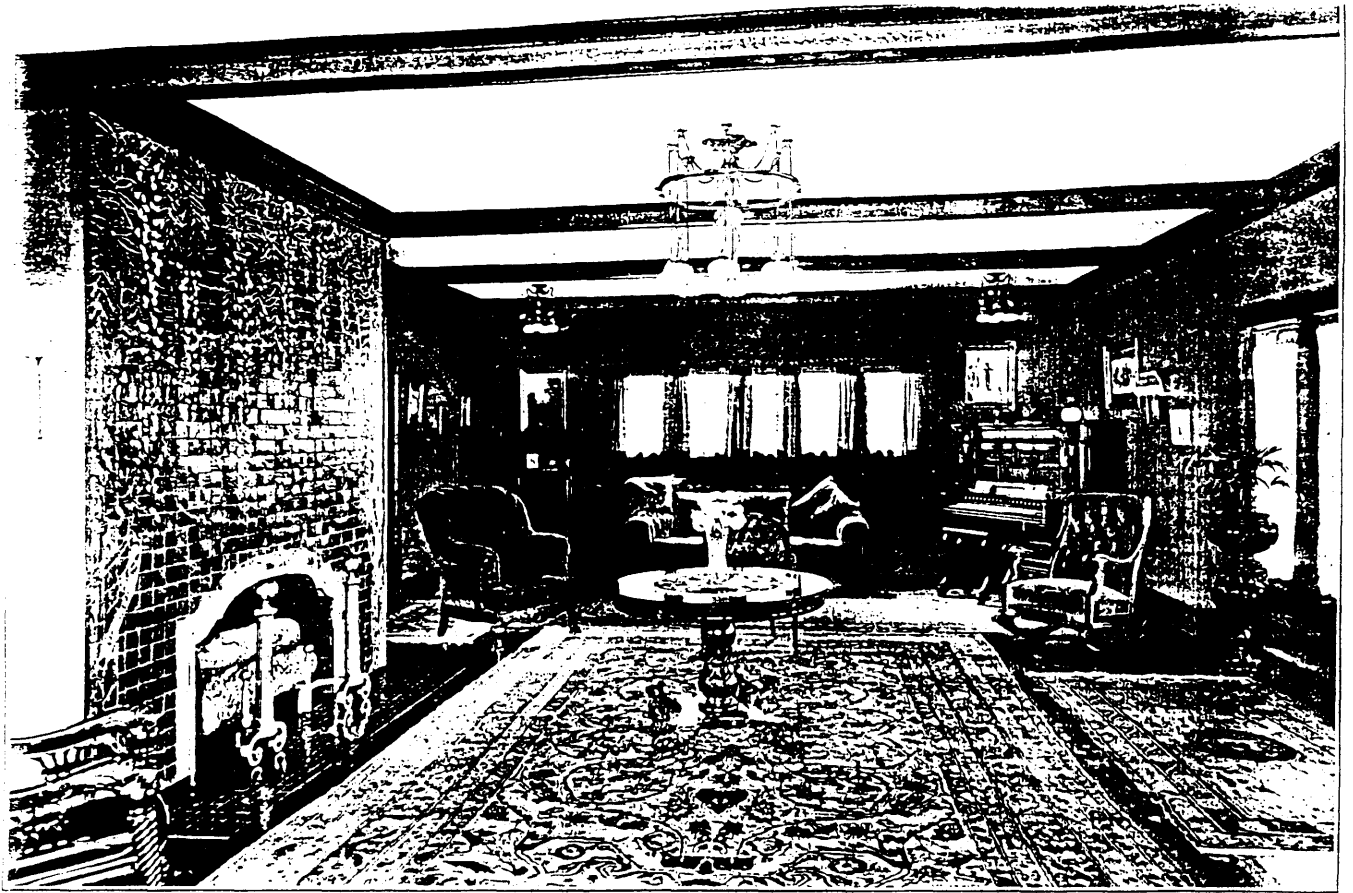
George W. Maher, Architect, Chicago

THE INLAND ARCHITECT
AND NEWS RECORD
JULY, 1907





View in Stairway Hall



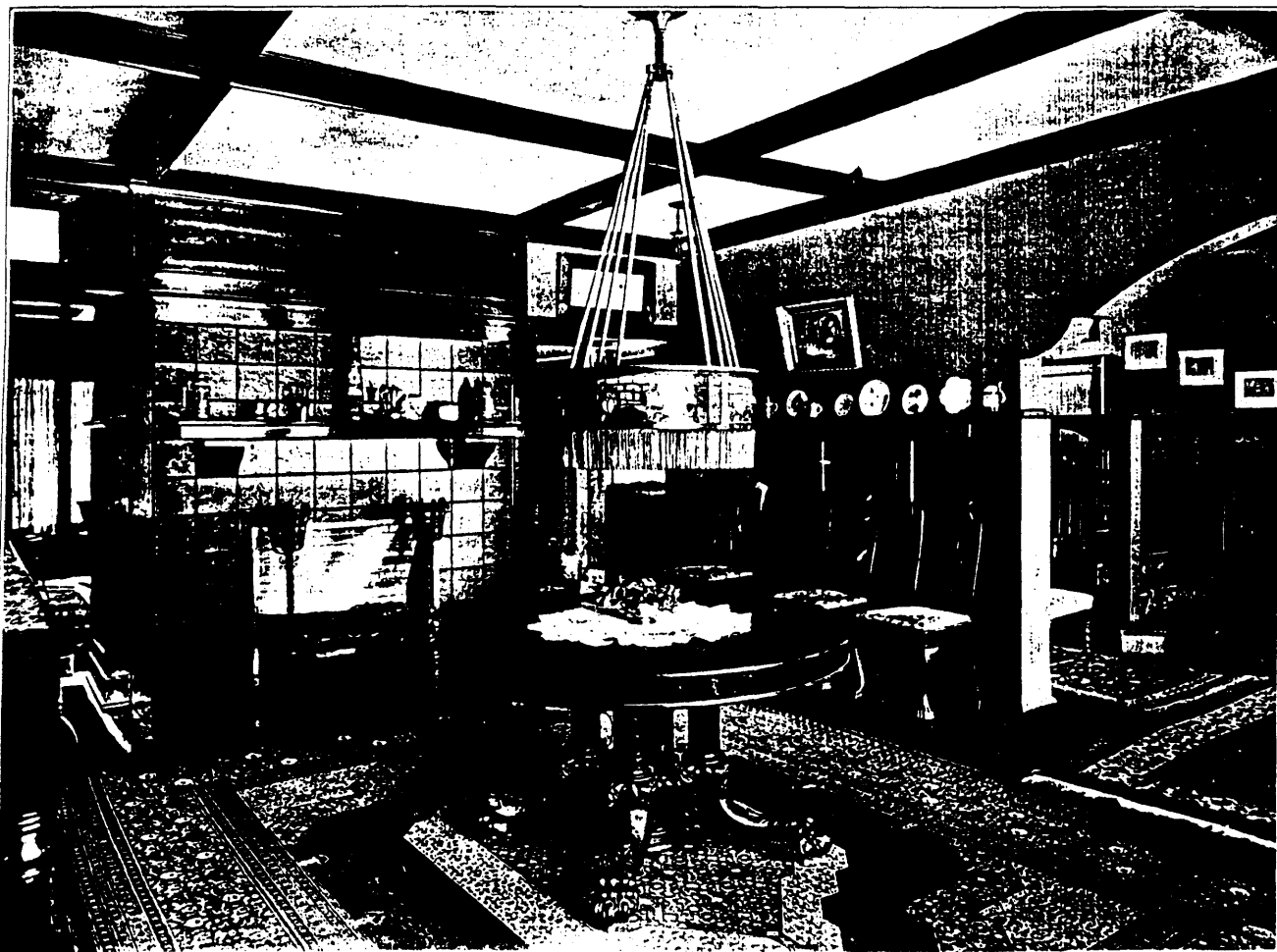
View in Living Room



View Towards Living Room



In the Library



The Dining Room

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page 23

Blinn, Edmund, House
Los Angeles County, CA

SKETCH MAP

