

**DATE:** September 28, 2015

**a. INTRODUCTION**

This revised Historic-Cultural Monument nomination for 384 Delfern Drive (Singleton Estate) has been augmented based on the review of additional primary and secondary source documentation. Collections visited in the preparation of this nomination include:

- Wallace Neff Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino. Notable research findings include Wallace Neff's original drawings (plans and elevations) of the Singleton residence and correspondence between the Singletons and Neff.
- Wallace Neff Archives, University of Southern California Libraries, Los Angeles. Notable research findings include Neff's original specifications for the Singleton residence.
- Thomas Church Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Environmental Design Archives. Notable research findings include original schematic drawings by Church for the Singleton Estate, as well as correspondence between Neff, Church, landscape architect Phil Shipley, and the Singletons.

A review of these materials provided evidence of the following:

Although the Singleton commission occurred late in his career, Wallace Neff was intimately involved in the design of the Singleton Estate from start to finish. Drawings, specifications and correspondence between Neff and the Singletons and the landscape architects show the architect's hand in all matters of the project, from the concept and design of the house to the selection of interior finishes.

No expense was spared in the design and construction of the Singleton Estate. The Singletons commissioned the finest architect and landscape architects of the day to design their estate. Lavish finishes of marble, oak, and black walnut parquet floors, hand-painted wall paper, and ceramic floor tile from Heath Ceramics were selected by Neff and the Singletons. The construction cost of \$1,340,000 would amount to roughly \$8.5 million in the present day.

The designed landscape is directly reflective of the work of master landscape architect Thomas Church. A comparison of Church's schematic drawings of the estate and aerial imagery of today's landscape indisputably shows Church's design. The placement of the pool and tennis courts were planned by Church to provide the maximum amount of privacy and so as to not obstruct the view of the natural landscape from the house. Formal gardens and terraces were placed directly adjacent to the house, providing exterior living space, while the remaining acreage has the appearance of a natural landscape. The placement and appearance of the pond, at a distance from the house but within view, is a Church hallmark. The dense cluster of trees around the property's rear perimeter provides a natural boundary between the estate and neighboring properties. Church was chagrined at the infill of the natural canyon which had to occur in order for the Singleton Estate to be constructed; however, he proceeded with the commission and succeeded in creating a landscape that looked as though it had been untouched in the creation of the estate – a testament to his genius.

In addition to the research findings listed above, this revised nomination includes further investigation into the architectural style of the Singleton Estate. Upon review of growing scholarship about “New Traditional” architecture of the latter decades of the twentieth century, it is apparent that the Singleton Estate is an early and notable example of the New Traditional French style. A reaction against the starkness of modernism, the style reflects renewed interest in historicist architecture that continues through the present day.

### **1. PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION**

Proposed Monument Name: Singleton Estate (so named for first owner)

Street Address: 384 Delfern Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90077

Council District: 5

Community Name: Holmby Hills

Assessor Parcel Number: 4358-007-015

Tract: 8236

Block: 26, 27

Lot: 4, 5

Property type: Building

Additional Resources: Designed landscape, including swimming pool, tennis courts, pond, manicured gardens, mature trees.

### **4. ALTERATION HISTORY**

Historic and recent photos of the Singleton Estate as well as alteration permits from the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety indicate the building is unaltered from its original construction. Nearly all of the work items listed below, derived from building and alteration permits, date to the Singletons’ first year of occupancy in the house and likely represent minor modifications to the residence desired by the family upon living in the house.

July 1970	A second fireplace was added to the dining room
October 1970	A brick retaining wall was added to the property
April 1971	A 30’ by 16’ storage room was added at the retaining wall
July 1971	The retaining wall was extended
October 1971	A greenhouse was added to the property
December 1971	A pool equipment room was added to the estate
Unknown	Original ceramic shingle roofing was replaced with asphalt composition shingle roofing

## **7. WRITTEN STATEMENTS**

### **A. Proposed Monument Description**

*NOTE: The following property description and assessment of character-defining features was prepared using photographs (1970 and circa 2013), building and alteration permits, original drawings, and archival building specifications, since the property was not accessible during the drafting of this nomination.*

#### **Property Description**

##### *Site*

The property at 384 Delfern Drive is located at the northeast corner of Delfern Drive and North Faring Road. The seven-acre estate is surrounded by large single-family residences in the Holmby Hills neighborhood in western Los Angeles. The property is entered off of Delfern Drive via a wrought-iron gate and brick-paved drive that leads to an extensive forecourt and an attached four-car garage. The lushly-landscaped grounds, designed by landscape architects Thomas Church and Phillip Shipley, feature a tennis court, manmade pond, swimming pool, decomposed granite walkways, rolling lawns, manicured gardens and a variety of mature tree species. The two-and-a-half-story New Traditional French house is sited near the west edge of the property, surrounded by a dense cluster of large shade trees. The length of the house runs in the north-south direction, parallel to Faring Road. Completed in 1970, the residence was designed by prolific Los Angeles architect Wallace Neff for Dr. Henry E. Singleton.

##### *Residence - Exterior*

The Singleton House is of wood frame construction with a roughly rectangular plan. The roof is steeply pitched and hipped, and is clad in asphalt composition shingles. A dentil motif runs along the bottom of the closed eaves of the roof. The exterior walls are clad with brick veneer, painted off-white. The primary entrance is located at the center of the west façade and is fronted by a large brick-laid forecourt surrounded by manicured hedges and shade trees. The entry consists of a slightly projecting colonnade of six cast stone columns, two stories in height, supporting an unadorned entablature. Wood divided-light French doors are evenly spaced along the first and second stories of the primary elevation. Each of the second-story doors open to small balconies with decorative metal railings. The entrance at the east façade, which overlooks a large stretch of lawn and an irregularly-shaped manmade pond, is equally as formal. This façade is fronted by an expansive brick garden terrace, which is demarcated by a cast stone balustrade. The east entrance, composed of divided-light French doors, is located at the center of the façade and is distinguished by a projecting portico of four cast stone columns, two stories in height, supporting an entablature. French doors that open to a tiled balcony are situated above the main entry, at the second story. The north elevation, which overlooks the swimming pool, consists of a recessed porch supported by several cast stone columns, which are much smaller in scale than the columns at the east and west façades. Four brick chimneys of varying heights are located at each corner of the house's central volume.

Fenestration primarily consists of wood divided-light French doors along the east and west façades, hipped dormer windows at the north, south and east elevations, and wood casement windows at the

north elevation. Along the east façade, just north and south of the entrance, are two semi-circular bays lined with fixed wood windows. The bays are one story in height, and the tops of the bays form a balcony at the second story. Two pairs of wood French doors open onto each of the balconies.

*Residence - Interior*

The interior of the Singleton House is very formal and opulently decorated. Ten bedrooms, 12.5 baths, a formal dining room, family room, library, living room, kitchen and staff quarters comprise the spaces of the residence. The interior plan radiates from a central, oval-shaped foyer. The foyer, two stories tall, is reached via a marble-laid entrance hall from the west and a pair of French doors from the east. The foyer has a marble floor. The walls of the space retain wallpaper hand painted with floral and landscape motifs. A staircase with parquet steps, marble thresholds, and a decorative metal railing is located along the southwest edge of the foyer and leads to an oval-shaped mezzanine at the second floor.

The first floor consists of communal and service spaces, while private spaces comprise the second floor. At the north wing of the house is the living room. The living room is a rectangular-shaped space; finishes include parquet wood floors laid in a diamond pattern and plaster walls and ceiling with egg and dart molding. A fireplace is located along the center of the west wall, and a group of arched windows overlooking the pool is located along the north wall of the room. South of the living room, along the east side of the house, is the library. The library features walnut parquet floors, wood paneled walls and a plaster ceiling with a carved wood cornice. A fireplace is located along the north wall and a semi-circular bay with a view of the garden terrace is located on the east wall of the library. The family room is situated south of the library, also along the east side of the residence. This room has a parquet floor, plaster and wood paneled walls and a plaster ceiling lined with wood beams. Along the east wall of the family room is a semi-circular bay overlooking the garden terrace, and a fireplace is situated on the south wall.

At the south wing of the house are the kitchen and dining room. The kitchen retains rectangular and diamond-shaped vinyl floor finishes and acoustic tile ceilings.<sup>1</sup> Wood cabinetry lines the walls of the space, and a sliding glass door at its southeast corner opens to a simple brick patio. The dining room, located west of the kitchen, is an oval-shaped space. Finishes in the dining room include dark parquet floors, hand painted wall paper with floral motifs and an arched plaster ceiling with banded moldings. A fireplace is located along the north side of the dining space.

The second floor primarily consists of bedrooms and bathrooms. Finishes in the bedrooms include carpet floor finishes and plaster walls with moldings. Hexagonal blue tile from Heath Ceramics was specified for the floors of the second floor balconies and bathrooms; it appears in current photographs of the balcony (bathrooms have not been observed).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace Neff, General Specifications of Labor to be Performed and Materials to be Furnished in the Construction of a Residence for Dr. and Mrs. Henry E. Singleton, 384 Delfern Drive at Faring Road, Holmby Hills, California, June 1969, 31.

<sup>2</sup> Wallace Neff, General Specifications, 30.

### **Character-Defining Features**

#### *Site and Landscape*

- Estate setting, including multiple acres of sprawling open space
- Location and orientation of the house to afford optimum views of the estate's landscape
- Informal arrangement of mature shade trees around residence and perimeter of the property, providing privacy as well as shelter from the elements
- Manicured gardens that surround and delineate outdoor living spaces
- Decomposed granite-paved curving walkways that provide stable footing around the estate without overpowering the landscape
- Brick driveway
- Expansive paved forecourt/motor court that focalizes the entrance and provides for a formal approach to the estate
- Brick garden terrace as a livable outdoor space that affords multiple viewpoints of the estate's landscape
- The placement of the swimming pool in proximity to the house to provide for a seamless integration of indoor-outdoor living as well as shelter from the elements
- The irregular shape of the manmade pond and its placement far from the house to imitate a natural setting
- Location of the tennis court near the edge of the property and surrounded by foliage, ensuring uninterrupted views of the estate's natural scenery
- Tennis court enclosure

#### *Residence - exterior*

- North-south, linear orientation
- Rectangular plan
- Steeply-pitched hipped roof with boxed eaves
- Tall, slender brick chimneys demarcating the four corners of the central volume of the residence
- Hipped dormers
- Exterior brick clad walls (painted)
- Entrance colonnade on primary (west) elevation
- Entrance portico on east elevation
- Recessed porch on north elevation
- Balconies with decorative metal railings
- Wood divided-light French doors throughout the house's exterior
- Semi-circular bays at the east elevation
- Paired and grouped wood (fixed and casement) windows throughout

#### *Residence – interior*

- Formality and relationship of interior spaces, with a grand, two-story foyer leading to more intimate living spaces
- Central oval-shaped foyer, including its two-story height, curving staircase with decorative railings, mezzanine balcony with pilasters and decorative railing, classical surrounds with exaggerated pediments at interior doors

- Marble and hardwood floor finishes throughout the house
- Wood paneling and ceiling beams in some rooms of the house (family room, library)
- Hand painted wall paper throughout the house (foyer, dining room)
- Moldings around ceilings and door and window surrounds throughout the house
- Blue hexagonal tile at balcony floors

## B. Statement of Significance

### Summary

The Singleton Estate meets the following criteria for designation as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument:

- ***It is identified with historic personages.***

The Singleton Estate is significant for its association with Dr. Henry E. Singleton, co-founder and former CEO of Teledyne, Inc., one of the nation's largest conglomerates. Singleton co-founded Teledyne in 1960, during a time when the conglomerate business model was extremely popular. By the time Singleton stepped down as CEO in 1986, Teledyne had become one of the leading conglomerates in the United States, specializing in the aviation and defense industry. Dr. Singleton commissioned Wallace Neff, Thomas Church, and Phil Shipley to design the estate for himself and his family in 1969; he occupied the house until his death in 1999, a period which includes his most productive years at Teledyne.

- ***It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen, inherently valuable for study of a period, style or method of construction.***

The Singleton Estate is also an excellent and early example of the New Traditional French style, an architectural idiom that emerged in the 1970s and continues to be applied to residential designs across the country. Reflecting a renewed interest in historical styles after decades dominated by modernism, well-articulated examples of the style feature historically appropriate proportions, details, and forms while offering modern materials and conveniences. The Singleton residence embodies the character-defining features of the style, including its horizontal orientation, formal appearance, symmetry, steeply-pitched hipped roof, prominent chimneys, brick veneer, French doors, hipped dormers, and integral four-car garage.

- ***It is a notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age.***

The Singleton Estate is a significant work of master architect Wallace Neff. Neff, who practiced in Southern California from 1919 to 1975, was known for his early adaptations of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, though he designed in various Period Revival styles throughout his career. By the 1930s, Neff had become the architect of the rich and famous, with clientele including Hollywood film couples Frances Marion and Fred Thomas, and Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks; heir to the Singer Sewing

Machine Company, Arthur K. Bourne; and publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, Norman Chandler. The Singleton Estate was the last major project of Neff's prolific career and one in which he was deeply involved. Its New Traditional design gave the architect the opportunity to create a house in a style with which he was intimately familiar for a client for whom money was no object, making it an apt bookend to a long and immensely prolific career.

The Singleton Estate is eligible for its designed landscape, which is the work of master landscape architects Thomas Church and Philip Shipley. Church, who was based in San Francisco, spearheaded the design of the landscape while Shipley served as the local landscape architect, helping to relay and expand upon Church's vision for the site. Thomas Church is widely considered a "founding father" of modern landscape design; the Singleton Estate is one of his largest private residential commissions, and a rare collaboration between Church and Shipley, a significant landscape architect in his own right. The landscape is directly reflective of Church's work, as evidenced by a comparison of original drawings with today's landscape.

### **Historical Background**

#### *Holmby Hills and Site Development*

Holmby Hills was developed in 1925 by Arthur Letts, founder of the Broadway Department Store, and brothers Dr. Edwin Janss and Harold Janss of the Janss Investment Company (Harold Janss was Letts' son-in-law). The tract, part of the former Wolfskill Ranch, comprised 400 acres north and south of present-day Sunset Boulevard.<sup>3</sup> The estate community was said to be "one of the most elaborately designed [projects] in the history of modern community development," with improvements totaling over \$1,000,000.<sup>4</sup> Enhancements to the tract included the installation of ornamental street lamps, underground utilities, paved concrete streets and a large public park.<sup>5</sup> Residences, the majority designed by noted architects, were said to have cost between \$25,000 and \$100,000 each.<sup>6</sup> A number of the city's most prominent business and social leaders acquired properties during the neighborhood's initial development. Although development of Holmby Hills began in the mid-1920s, progress slowed during the Great Depression and did not pick up again until after World War II. By the 1960s, most of the neighborhood had been developed, its lots occupied by large single-family residences.

384 Delfern Drive is located on Lots 4 and 5 of Blocks 26 and 27 in Tract No. 8236. The tract, with the rest of Holmby Hills, was subdivided in 1925 by the Holmby Corporation and the Janss Investment Company. The lots were two of only a few parcels left undeveloped in the late 1960s, presumably because of their challenging topography (a sizeable canyon separated the two lots) that hindered the development of a grand residence like those in the immediate vicinity. Dr. and Mrs. Singleton acquired the lots circa 1968. It took two years and thousands of dollars to fill and grade the site in preparation for the construction of their estate. By 1970, the house, designed by master architect Wallace Neff, was

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<sup>3</sup> GPA Consulting, Inc., *Historic Resources Survey Report: Bel Air – Beverly Crest Community Plan Area* (Los Angeles: Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources, 2013), 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> "Million to Be Spent on New Tract: Holmby Hills Improvements and Residences Planned to Cost \$2,000,000," *Los Angeles Times*, 19 June 1925, F7.

<sup>5</sup> "Boulevard Paving to Aid Tract: Letting Highway Contract Will Assist Improvement of Holmby Hills," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 December 1925, E10.

<sup>6</sup> "Million to Be Spent on New Tract: Holmby Hills Improvements and Residences Planned to Cost \$2,000,000," F7.

complete, and the Singleton family began occupying it shortly thereafter. The complex landscape, created by noted landscape architects Thomas Church and Philip Shipley, and including rolling stretches of lawn, a number of mature shade trees, paved walkways, tennis courts and a swimming pool, was not complete until 1972.

#### *Henry E. Singleton*

Henry Earl Singleton was born in 1916 to rancher John B. Singleton and Victoria Singleton in Haslet, Texas.<sup>7</sup> He attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering in 1940, and his PhD in 1950. During his time at MIT, Singleton programmed the first student computer, and in 1939, he won the Putnam Medal as the top mathematics student in the United States. Upon graduation, Singleton moved to Los Angeles to work as a research engineer at Hughes Aircraft and North American Aviation. Shortly after, Charles Bates "Tex" Thornton of Litton Industries recruited Singleton, where, in the late 1950s, he devised the inertial guidance systems still used today in commercial and military aircraft. Under his leadership as general manager, Litton's Electronic Systems Group grew to be the company's largest division with over \$80 million in revenue by 1960.<sup>8</sup>

In 1960, Singleton and his colleague, George Kozmetzky, who ran Litton's Electronics Components Group, left Litton to form Teledyne, a Los Angeles-based conglomerate. Between 1961 and 1969, Singleton established Teledyne as one of the leading conglomerates in the country, purchasing 130 companies in industries ranging from insurance to aviation.<sup>9</sup> In the next decade, Singleton shifted Teledyne's focus from the direct acquisition of companies to investing in the stock of technical firms. At its peak, Teledyne had revenue of almost \$5 billion, with a variety of businesses including insurance, unmanned aircraft, specialty metals and swimming pool heaters.<sup>10</sup> In 1986, Henry Singleton retired as CEO of Teledyne, and in 1991, he relinquished his title as chairman to focus on his extensive cattle ranching operations in New Mexico, Arizona and California, becoming one of the largest landowners in the country.<sup>11</sup>

In 1969, Dr. Singleton and his wife, Caroline, commissioned Wallace Neff to design a residence for them in Holmby Hills. A decade prior, the Singletons had commissioned Richard Neutra to design a residence on Mulholland Drive. Unsatisfied with the house's lack of privacy and modest size, the family hired Neff to create a residence they felt was more fitting to their lifestyle. Dr. and Mrs. Singleton and their children moved to the estate in the Holmby Hills in 1970.<sup>12</sup> In August of 1999, Henry Singleton died at his Holmby Hills home.<sup>13</sup> The family put the house up for sale in 2008, soon after the death of his wife, Caroline Singleton.

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<sup>7</sup> United States Census, 1920.

<sup>8</sup> William N. Thorndike, Jr., "An Unconventional Conglomerate: Henry Singleton and Teledyne," *Journal of Applied Corporate Finance*, 26 no. 4 (2014): 81.

<sup>9</sup> Thorndike, Jr., 82.

<sup>10</sup> "Henry Singleton, Teledyne Co-founder," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 4 September 1999, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Thorndike, Jr., 84-86.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, *Wallace Neff: Architect of California's Golden Age*, 219.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Pollack, "Henry E. Singleton, a Founder of Teledyne, Is Dead at 82," *New York Times*, 3 September 1999.

*New Traditional French Style*

The Singleton residence is an excellent and early example of the New Traditional French style, an architectural mode that appeared in the designs of grand estates and mansions in the 1970s and '80s. The style's precedent, French Revival architecture, was prevalent in Los Angeles during the city's population boom in the 1920s. Applied to single- and multi-family residences through the 1940s, Period Revival styles were largely replaced with more modern architectural modes in the postwar era. A renewed interest in earlier architectural traditions appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s, nurtured by increasing boredom with the aesthetic starkness of Modernism as well as historic nostalgia brought upon by the U.S. Bicentennial.

Architectural responses to modernism in the latter decades of the twentieth century included New Formalism, predominantly an institutional style which applied simplified historical motifs to formal, symmetrical buildings; and Post Modernism, which integrated exaggerated and proportionally inaccurate historicist details to buildings in frequently colorful and whimsical ways. New Traditional architecture, in contrast, adopted historicist Period Revival styles almost to the letter. Virginia McAlester, advisor emeritus to the National Trust for Historic Preservation and author of *A Field Guide to American Houses*, writes that "in the deftest of hands, it is difficult to distinguish a New Traditional from an earlier construction simply by looking at the exterior. The location and size of the house and the garage both provide clues, as do slightly inventive details."<sup>14</sup>

In the design of their residence, the Singletons chose perhaps the deftest interpreter of historic architectural styles: Wallace Neff, at the tail end of a long career but still in practice. The house's historically accurate proportions, forms, and detailing, as well as its integration of modern features such as an integral and prominently placed four-car garage and sliding glass patio doors, are exemplary of New Traditional French architecture. Its horizontal orientation, loose symmetry, steeply-pitched hipped roof, slender chimneys, brick cladding, French doors and dormers are also evocative of the style. Built in 1970, the Singleton Estate is an early and master architect-designed example of an architectural style that continues to be used to the present day.

*Wallace Neff*

Wallace Neff had a prolific career in Southern California, primarily designing single-family residences from 1919 until 1975. He was perhaps best known for his interpretations of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, helping to develop what is often referred to a California's "indigenous" style. Wallace Neff was born in 1895 in La Mirada, California, on a ranch owned by his maternal grandfather, Andrew McNally (co-founder of the mapmaking firm Rand McNally). He was born to Edwin and Nannie Neff, who had recently migrated to California from Chicago. In 1909, the family moved to Europe, where Neff attended boarding school in Switzerland, studied drawing and painting in Munich, and apprenticed with a German architectural office. Upon returning to America, Neff enrolled in the architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In 1917, when America entered World War I, Neff was forced to move back to California, assigned to duty with the Shipping Board of the U.S. Army in a shipyard in Wilmington. During his time in Wilmington, Neff grew fond of shipbuilding, and he took a

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<sup>14</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2013), 684-685, 717.

course in naval architecture at the University of Southern California.<sup>15</sup> After the war, Wallace chose not to go back to MIT, but rather to find work in California. While designing a vacation home for his mother in Santa Barbara, Neff became acquainted with noted Santa Barbara architect George Washington Smith. Neff greatly admired the work of Smith, who was known for his Spanish-style designs. Neff apprenticed with Smith without pay until he could no longer afford to do so. Upon returning to Pasadena, Neff found work as a designer of speculative houses in the Hollywood office of the Frank Meline Company. In 1922, Neff received his architecture license and left the company to start his own firm.<sup>16</sup>

Wallace Neff set up his practice in Pasadena in 1922, just as the “California style,” rooted in the state’s Spanish and indigenous past, was beginning to mature. He became a reputable architect over a short period of time, establishing himself through early works such as the Ojai Valley Country Club and stables for E.D. Libbey of Toledo, for which he received an Honor Award from the Southern California chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1923. That same year, he received another AIA Honor Award for a Spanish-style house he had designed for Mr. and Mrs. Henry Walker on California Boulevard in Pasadena.<sup>17</sup> Neff developed his own unique manner of design through manipulating the proportions and massing of traditional Mediterranean and indigenous architecture. His fresh take on traditional styles were so well received that speculative builders began building imitation-Neff houses across Los Angeles. In 1923, just as his career had begun to take off, Neff married Louise Up de Graff. Together, they had three children, one girl and two boys.<sup>18</sup>

During the first few years of his practice, Neff’s clientele were primarily established families of Pasadena, who often had personal ties to the Neff family.<sup>19</sup> However, this soon changed with commissions by the Hollywood couple Frances Marion and Fred Thomson, and the New York heir to the Singer Sewing Machine Company, Arthur K. Bourne. Both houses gained wide recognition and established Neff as an architect for the wealthy and famous. In 1926, architectural historian and University of Illinois professor Rexford Newcomb published *Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States*, a compilation of various works of architects, focusing on the California regional school. Neff was featured alongside distinguished architects such as Reginald Johnson and George Washington Smith, though he had practiced for only half as long.<sup>20</sup>

With the Great Depression came a decline in the widespread popularity of romantic regional architecture, which many saw as derivative and historicist, in favor of modernism. Neff struggled through the early years of the Depression; he sold his Pasadena office and moved to Hollywood where he rented office space and an apartment. During this time, Neff developed a fondness for the French style, which he applied to a number of commissions in the 1930s, including the Fredric March House in Beverly Hills (1934), the Joan Bennett House in Holmby Hills (1938), and the Robert F. Garner, Jr. House

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<sup>15</sup> Alson Clark, “Wallace Neff and the Culture of Los Angeles,” in *Wallace Neff: 1895-1982*, ed. Andrea A.P. Belloli (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1989), 15-19.

<sup>16</sup> Diane Kanner, “Wallace Neff: Architect to the Stars” (master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1996), 55.

<sup>17</sup> Kanner, “Wallace Neff: Architect to the Stars,” 65-67.

<sup>18</sup> Clark, *Wallace Neff: Architect of California’s Golden Age*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Diane Kanner, *Wallace Neff and the Grand Houses of the Golden State* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2005), 73.

<sup>20</sup> Clark, *Wallace Neff: Architect of California’s Golden Age*, 24.

in San Marino (1938). Hollywood celebrities Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks hired Neff to carry out several alterations, additions and redecoration of their Pickfair estate, which helped to keep him afloat during the Depression.<sup>21</sup>

Neff, like his Grandfather McNally, was a natural-born inventor. This inherent talent led Neff to the creation of what he considered to be his most valuable architectural contribution: the Bubble House, or Airform Construction, in 1941. Neff described the Bubble House as an economical bomb- and fire-resistant form of mass-produced housing that could be built for defense workers and war-evacuated populations.<sup>22</sup> The Bubble House was first employed in a development for defense workers in Falls Church, Virginia. Although the Bubble House had limited success in postwar America (he built two in the Pasadena area, one of which was for his brother, Andrew Neff), the structure received widespread recognition throughout Europe, South America and Africa. Entire Bubble House villages were constructed in western Africa, Brazil, Pakistan, Mexico, Jordan and the Virgin Islands. Near the end of Neff's life, he resided in the Bubble House he had built for his brother decades earlier.<sup>23</sup>

With the 1950s came new challenges for Neff, as clientele sought modernist estates and Ranch style houses. Struggling to find work in the residential sector, he entered several competitions to design buildings for college campuses, with some success. In 1948, he won competitions to design two residence halls and a gymnasium at Loyal University, and in 1950, he was chosen to design a gymnasium and an addition to the student union at the Pomona College in Claremont.<sup>24</sup> As Neff regained confidence in his architectural abilities, he again began to attract residential commissions, designing in the postwar style architectural historian David Gebhard called "soft modernism."<sup>25</sup> His one-story houses achieved a closer connection to the land than his grand 1920s residences; he made extensive use of indoor-outdoor plans, open floor plans and large, floor to ceiling windows. Examples of this stylistic shift include Neff's Groucho Marx House in Beverly Hills (1956), the Harpo Marx Houses in Rancho Mirage (1956) and the Edgar Richards House in Palm Springs (1956). In 1954, the Southern California chapter of the AIA presented Neff with an honor award for the Myrtle Hornstein House, and in 1956, he was nominated a Fellow of the AIA.<sup>26</sup>

The 1960s marked a return to the California style Neff had become so well known for decades earlier. The Roy Eaton House (1962) and the Robert K. Straus House (1969), both Spanish Colonial Revival in style, represent this shift. In 1969, Neff received his last major commission from Dr. Henry E. Singleton for a large estate in Holmby Hills.<sup>27</sup> Dr. and Mrs. Singleton had initially attempted to buy the house Neff

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<sup>21</sup> Clark, *Wallace Neff: Architect of California's Golden Age*, 26-27.

<sup>22</sup> Clark, *Wallace Neff: Architect of California's Golden Age*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Jan Furey Muntz, "Bubble for Defense," in *Wallace Neff: 1895-1982*, ed. Andrea A.P. Belloli (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1989), 75-83.

<sup>24</sup> Kanner, *Wallace Neff and the Grand Houses of the Golden State*, 202.

<sup>25</sup> David Gebhard, "William Wurster and His California Contemporaries: The Idea of Regionalism and Soft Modernism," in *An Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster*, ed. Marc Treib (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 164, quoted in Diane Kanner, *Wallace Neff and the Grand Houses of the Golden State* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2005), 202.

<sup>26</sup> Kanner, *Wallace Neff and the Grand Houses of the Golden State*, 202.

<sup>27</sup> Clark, *Wallace Neff: Architect of California's Golden Age*, 30.

designed for Joan Bennett in 1938; however, negotiations fell through.<sup>28</sup> The Singletons hired Neff to design a house in the same French style as the Bennett house, but on a much grander scale and with modern conveniences. The family's inclination toward French Revival architecture represented a renewed interest in historicist styles that emerged in the 1970s. Neff's previous experience with French Revival architecture allowed him to create a historically appropriate design, while simultaneously integrating modern features. At the Singletons' request, Neff specified the most lavish of materials, including Italian marble, hand-painted wall paper, walnut wood paneling, and Heath Ceramics tile.<sup>29</sup> Construction costs totaled over \$1.3 million.<sup>30</sup> Neff, knowing this would be his last major project, was involved in every detail of the house's design, from finding mature shade trees for the gardens to selecting terracotta urns for the terrace. Wallace Neff died on June 9, 1982, little more than ten years after the completion of the Singleton residence.

*Thomas D. Church and Philip A. Shipley*

The estate at 384 Delfern Drive features a landscape designed by noted landscape architects Thomas Church and Philip Shipley. Thomas D. Church was born in 1902 in Boston, Massachusetts. Shortly after his birth, his parents moved to the Ojai Valley in Southern California. Upon his parents' divorce, Thomas and his sister, Margaret, moved to Oakland, California with their mother, Wilda. In 1922, Church received a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from UC Berkeley, and in 1926, he graduated from Harvard University with a master's degree in city planning and landscape architecture. In 1930, Church moved to San Francisco to establish his own practice. Church's style was largely shaped by a visit to Europe in 1937 with his wife Betsy. There, he met Alvar Aalto whose designs inspired Church to create more informal and relaxed landscape plans. Site planning became increasingly important in his work. Veering from the orthodox formalism of traditional designed landscapes, he stressed the importance of multiple vantage points, so that views not only from the house were pleasing to the onlooker. Church's career took off upon his return home; in the following decades, he designed over 2,000 private gardens in California and 24 other states.<sup>31</sup> Church, known to be the pioneer of modern landscape architecture and the 'California Style', died in San Francisco in September of 1978. He was 76 years old.<sup>32</sup>

Philip A. Shipley was born in 1913 in Santa Paula, California, to warehouse broker Frank H. Shipley and Eliza Shipley.<sup>33</sup> After graduating from UC Berkeley with a degree in landscape architecture in 1933, he moved to Southern California to set up his own practice. Known for his simple yet unusual landscape plans, Shipley designed for the wealthy and famous, from Presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, to celebrities such as Frank Sinatra, Clark Gable, Walt Disney and Lew Wasserman. In addition to residential commissions, Shipley was hired to design several commercial and research complexes including Palm Springs' Eldorado Country Club, Las Vegas' Tropicana, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory

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<sup>28</sup> Kanner, *Wallace Neff and the Grand Houses of the Golden State*, 219.

<sup>29</sup> Wallace Neff, General Specifications of Labor to Be Performed and Materials to Be Furnished in the Construction of a Residence for Dr. and Mrs. Henry E. Singleton, 384 Delfern Drive at Faring Road, Holmby Hills, California, June 1969, 10, 24, and 29.

<sup>30</sup> Accounting for inflation, this roughly equals \$7.5 million in 2015.

<sup>31</sup> "He Changed the Landscape," Stanford Alumni, Stanford University, [http://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article\\_id=37793](http://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=37793) (accessed 24 February 2015).

<sup>32</sup> "Architect, College Planner Thomas Church, 76, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 September 1978, F4.

<sup>33</sup> United States Census, 1920.

campus and TRW headquarters in El Segundo and Universal Studios. Philip Shipley died in 2001 at the age of 88.<sup>34</sup>

The landscape at 384 Delfern Drive is the product of collaboration between Thomas Church and Philip Shipley. Church, who had been the Singletons' initial choice as landscape architect, was leaving on a six-month-trip to Rome. Church recommended they commission Shipley to see the design through construction, as he was a local landscape architect and had proven experience designing the landscapes of large private estates. Between 1971 and 1973, through a series of meetings and mail correspondence, Shipley and Church worked together on the design of the forecourt, terrace, gardens, swimming pool and paved walkways.<sup>35</sup> Church's influences on the landscape design are clear. Brick terraces, appropriately scaled to the house, the siting and orientation of the house to provide for maximum views, the use of mature trees to provide a sense of time and place, and the creation of livable outdoor spaces, sheltered from the elements, are evocative of Church's designs and apparent at the Singleton House.<sup>36</sup> Church was able to relay his ideas for aspects such as the siting and shape of the swimming pool and the design of the garden terrace through "conversation plans" he drew that Shipley would then present to Neff and Singletons, and modify as necessary.<sup>37</sup> Together, Church and Shipley created a cohesive and seemingly effortless landscape design that was appropriate to the lifestyle of the Singleton family and could hold its own against the immense scale of Wallace Neff's mansion. The natural appearance of the landscape belies the tremendous feat that went into its creation – the infill of a canyon, and years of design, correspondence and planning – and serves as a testament to the genius of its creators.

### Period of Significance

Because the Singleton House is eligible under multiple contexts and eligibility criteria, there are two periods of significance.

The period of significance for the residence's association with Dr. Henry E. Singleton is defined as 1970 to 1999. The beginning of the period of significance, 1970, is the date of construction of the estate and the beginning of Singleton's occupation. The year 1999 was chosen as the culmination of the period of significance because it was the year Dr. Singleton died.

The period of significance for the estate as an excellent example of the New Traditional French style, as a significant work of master architect Wallace Neff, and as a significant landscape designed by master landscape architects Thomas Church and Philip Shipley, has been defined as 1970-1972, the period of construction of the house and landscape from start to completion.

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<sup>34</sup> "Philip A. Shipley; Did Landscape Design for Presidents, Celebrities," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 August 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Correspondence between Thomas Church, Philip Shipley, Wallace Neff and Henry Singleton, 1970-1973.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas D. Church, *Gardens are for People*, preface and forward by Grace Hall and Michael Laurie, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> *Thomas Church, Landscape Architect: Designing a Modern California Landscape*, ed. Marc Treib (San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2003), 150.

### **Integrity**

In addition to meeting multiple eligibility criteria, the Singleton Estate is unaltered and retains a high degree of physical and associative integrity. Historic integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance and is defined as the “authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s prehistoric or historic period.”<sup>38</sup> The aspects of integrity, as defined by the National Park Service, are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

- **Location:** The Singleton Estate remains on its original site and therefore retains integrity of location.
- **Design:** The residence is unaltered, and therefore its character-defining features remain intact. It is still able to convey its historic significance as a French Revival-style house designed by master architect Wallace Neff. The sprawling picturesque landscape, designed by noted landscape architects Thomas Church and Philip Shipley, also remains unaltered, and its original design intent is apparent. Thus, the Singleton Estate retains integrity of design.
- **Setting:** The Singleton Estate remains sited among seven acres of lush landscape. It therefore retains integrity of setting.
- **Materials:** With the exception of its original ceramic shingle roofing being replaced with composition shingle roofing, all of the house’s original materials remain intact. Thus, the Singleton House retains integrity of materials.
- **Workmanship:** The Singleton House retains its physical features from the time it was constructed, including brick veneer, cast stone entrance colonnade and portico, wood French doors and brick paving. Its landscape remains as originally designed and executed. Thus, the estate retains integrity of workmanship from its historic period.
- **Feeling:** The building retains its essential character-defining features and appearance from its historical period. It therefore retains integrity of feeling.
- **Association:** Though no longer occupied by the Singleton family, the estate appears almost exactly the way it did when occupied by former CEO and co-founder of the major conglomerate Teledyne, Henry Singleton. Thus, it retains integrity of association.

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<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (Washington D.C.: National Park Service, 1997), 4.

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