



May 14, 2014

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**RE: Singleton Residence, 384 Delfern Drive, Holmby Hills**

Dear Ms. Essex and Mr. Harvey:

On behalf of the Los Angeles Conservancy, I am writing to share information on the architectural and historic significance of the Singleton House, located at 384 Delfern Drive in the Holmby Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles. We provide this additional information to help ensure that potential buyers are apprised of the building's historic significance, requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and economic and regulatory incentives available to encourage its preservation.

The Singleton House, completed in 1970, was commissioned by Henry Singleton, an American electrical engineer and business executive who made significant contributions to aircraft inertial guidance. He co-founded Teledyne, Inc. and served as its chief executive officer for three decades.

The approximately 15,520 square foot house, designed by master architect Wallace Neff in the French Provincial style with eclectic detailing, was Neff's last major work and the largest he ever built. His career spanned more than five decades, from 1921 to 1975, and his work ranged from



elegant residential designs for the famous and wealthy, institutional and religious structures, and pioneering forms of affordable housing. Neff's career and designs have been profiled in several publications and were the subject of a 1989 exhibit "Wallace Neff 1895-1982: The Romance of Regional Architecture" presented by the Virginia Steele Scott Gallery at The Huntington Library.

Neff worked in a variety of architectural styles throughout his career and established his own manner of design, working to capture the uniqueness of California as a place by using traditional influences in innovative ways. His creative approach included an eclectic use of detailing, design elements borrowed from other styles, and embellished traditional forms to add a romanticized quality.

Dr. and Mrs. Singleton commissioned Neff to design the house after they were unsuccessful at negotiating the purchase of the nearby 1938 house Neff had designed for actress Joan Bennet. Neff responded by designing a contemporary version of the Bennett house on a grander scale. The resulting house, which was the largest of Neff's career, features a symmetrically balanced French Provincial design sporting a tall hipped roof and attenuated chimneys rising high above the roofline—a Neff trademark. Neff's design includes prominent eclectic elements in the form of Colonial Revival porticos featuring Egyptian-inspired open lotus columns. The house's major and minor axes cross at the double-height oval central stair hall, the woodwork of which was modeled on that of the Petit Trianon at Versailles.

Neff was deeply involved in the construction of the house, which took two years. He chose the materials which cover the floors and walls of the important rooms, including the marble of the hall floors and the walnut paneling which lines the walls of the library.

The whitewashed brick exterior is accented by windows and French doors sporting louvered shutters and several wrought iron balconies at the second floor. The house's north elevation opens onto a spacious, brick-paved motor court, while the south elevation opens onto a brick-paved terrace overlooking the gardens.

The seven-plus acre property is characterized by mature trees and meandering paths leading from the house to the greenhouse, a pond, and tennis court enclosed by a latticed trellis. Neff worked closely with landscape architect Thomas D. Church on the project, which included the transplanting of full-grown sycamore trees chosen in the upper arroyo above Pasadena.



The Conservancy believes that the Singleton House qualifies as a historical resource for the purposes of future project review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) should there be a future lot subdivision, demolition and/or major alteration to the residence. CEQA provides a process by which to evaluate a proposed project and the consideration of a range of preservation alternatives.

Any future owner can take advantage of a variety of construction and/or financial incentives, including the Mills Act property tax abatement program and code flexibility under the California Historical Building Code. The Conservancy also maintains a Professional Services Directory of building professionals familiar with historic rehabilitation and restoration work that can provide guidance and expertise to potential buyers. The directory is available at our website at <https://www.laconservancy.org/resources/find-professional>.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and view the property to discuss the home's historically significant features and historic preservation related incentives that would be available to the future owners.

**About the Los Angeles Conservancy:**

The Los Angeles Conservancy is the largest local historic preservation organization in the United States, with nearly 6,500 members throughout the Los Angeles area. Established in 1978, the Conservancy works to preserve and revitalize the significant architectural and cultural heritage of Los Angeles County through advocacy and education.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (213) 430-4203 or [afine@laconservancy.org](mailto:afine@laconservancy.org) should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Adrian Scott Fine  
Director of Advocacy

