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CITY PLANNING
OFFICE OF HISTORIC RESOURCES
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CALIFORNIA



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CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

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TARA J. HAMACHER
GAIL KENNARD
OZ SCOTT

----- FELY C. PINGOL
COMMISSION EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
(213) 978-1294

Date: **JAN 30 2014**

Los Angeles City Council
Room 395, City Hall
200 North Spring Street, Room 410
Los Angeles, California 90012

Attention: Sharon Gin, Legislative Assistant
Planning and Land Use Management Committee

CASE NUMBER: **CHC-2013-3539-HCM**
HUNT RESIDENCE
7 OAKMONT DRIVE

At the Cultural Heritage Commission meeting of **January 16, 2014**, the Commission moved to include the above property in the list of Historic-Cultural Monument, subject to adoption by the City Council.

As required under the provisions of Section 22.171.10 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, the Commission has solicited opinions and information from the office of the Council District in which the site is located and from any Department or Bureau of the city whose operations may be affected by the designation of such site as a Historic-Cultural Monument. Such designation in and of itself has no fiscal impact. Future applications for permits may cause minimal administrative costs.

The City Council, according to the guidelines set forth in Section 22.171 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, shall act on the proposed inclusion to the list within 90 days of the Council or Commission action, whichever first occurs. By resolution, the Council may extend the period for good cause for an additional 15 days.

The Cultural Heritage Commission would appreciate your inclusion of the subject modification to the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments upon adoption by the City Council.

The above Cultural Heritage Commission action was taken by the following vote:

Moved: Commissioner Scott
Seconded: Commissioner Kennard
Ayes: Commissioners Hamacher, Louie, and Barron

Vote: 5-0



Fely C. Pingol, Commission Executive Assistant
Cultural Heritage Commission

Attachment: Application

c: Councilmember Mike Bonin, Eleventh Council District
Robert Hanasab Trust/Soralya Hanasab Trust
Christy McAvoy
GIS

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Date: **JAN 30 2014**

Robert Hanasab Trust
Soralya Hanasab Trust
606 S. Olive Street #600
Los Angeles CA 90014

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

CASE NUMBER: **CHC-2013-3539-HCM**
HUNT RESIDENCE
7 OAKMONT DRIVE

As you will note from the attached copy of our communication to the Los Angeles City Council, the Cultural Heritage Commission has moved to include the above-referenced property in the list of Historic-Cultural monuments, subject to adoption by the City Council.

In due course, our transmittal will be given a council file number and will be referred to the Council's Planning and Land Use Management Committee for review and recommendation. If you are interested in attending the Council Committee meeting, you should call Sharon Gin at (213) 978-1074 for information as to the time and place of the Committee and City Council meetings regarding this matter. Please give Ms. Gin at least one week from the date of this letter to schedule this item on the Committee Agenda before you call her.

The above Cultural Heritage Commission action was taken by the following vote:

Moved: Commissioner Scott
Seconded: Commissioner Kennard
Ayes: Commissioners Hamacher, Louie, and Barron

Vote: **5-0**



Fely C. Pingol, Commission Executive Assistant
Cultural Heritage Commission

Attachment: Application

c: Councilmember Mike Bonin, Eleventh Council District
Christy McAvoy
GIS

- Removal of the wall between the kitchen and the butler's pantry;
- Replacement of kitchen cabinets, countertops, backsplash and appliances;
- Replacement of counter, floor and sink in the master bath;
- Removal of all interior hardware, including all lighting fixtures and door knobs;
- Partial demolition of wood shingles and roofing on east façade.

Although the property has been altered from its original state, the property still retains a high degree of integrity in its location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling and association. The one aspect of integrity that has been damaged through alteration has been removal of historic materials. However, no significant character-defining features have been altered or removed, and none of the alterations have a significant impact on the property's ability to convey its historic significance. Therefore, the Hunt Residence retains a high degree of integrity, despite the minor exterior and interior alterations to materials.

Paul Revere Williams had a prolific career, spanning from about 1915 until his retirement in 1974. Williams was born in Los Angeles in 1894. He studied at the Polytechnic High School, then Los Angeles School of Art and Design, and the University of Southern California. Williams received his architectural license in 1921, making him the only licensed African-American architect west of the Mississippi. He worked for several noted, local architects from 1914-1924. In the early 1920s, he won national awards for his small house designs. In 1931, Williams was commissioned to design a mansion for E.L. Cord, and began a prolific career designing large estates throughout Los Angeles. He became well known for his modern interpretations of the period revival styles that were popular at the time.

By the 1940s, Williams had garnered widespread acclaim for his upscale residential work and other, more diverse commissions became available. In the mid-1940s, Williams published two books on "the Small House." In developing these more modest residential designs, Williams incorporated Modern elements such as open floor plans, connection to the outdoors through integrated patio spaces and large windows, and simplified ornamentation. The Hunt Residence exhibits many of these design concepts that would later on become the foundation for Williams' small house designs of the 1940s. In 1957, Williams was inducted as the AIA's first African-American fellow.

Los Angeles has designated 15 Historic-Cultural Monuments that were designed in whole or in part by Williams. The following table identifies each of the monuments in the order of construction date.

#	LOCAL DESIGNATION	ADDRESS	RESOURCE NAME	ARCHITECT	STYLE	DATE
1	HCM 851	1006 E 28TH ST	28TH ST YMCA	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL	1926
2	HCM 200	2412 GRIFFITH AVE	SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	LATE VICTORIAN-LOMBARDY ROMANESQUE REVIVAL	1926
3	HCM 913	4791 CROMWELL AVE	BLACKBURN RESIDENCE	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL	1927
4	HCM 915	2188 PONET DR	VICTOR ROSSETTI RESIDENCE	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL	1928

5	HCM 436	146 S FULLER AVE	HOWARD/NAGIN RESIDENCE	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	ENGLISH REVIVAL	1929
6	HCM 233	1216 SUNSET PLAZA DR	SUNSET PLAZA	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	REGENCY REVIVAL	1934
7	HCM 774	1030 E. JEFFERSON BLVD.	ANGELUS FUNERAL HOME	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL, GEORGIAN, ART DECO	1934
8	HCM 893	651 N SIENA WAY	CASTERA-WARD RESIDENCE	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	FRENCH PROVINCIAL	1936
9	HCM 484	18650 DEVONSHIRE ST	OAKRIDGE ESTATE	PAUL R. WILLIAMS, ROBERT FINKELHOR	ENGLISH MANOR	1937
10	HCM 992	8431 PINELAKE DR	CRAIG RESIDENCE "PEPPERGATE RANCH"	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	RANCH	1939
11	HCM 1002	330 S ALMONT DR	HANNAH SCHWARTZ APARTMENTS/GERTRUDE AND HARRY KAYE BUILDING	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	INTERNATIONAL STYLE/STREAMLINE MODERNE	1947
12	HCM 1000	1999 W ADAMS BLVD	GOLDEN STATE MUTUAL LIFE	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	LATE MODERNE	1949
13	HCM 170	1690 S VICTORIA AVE	PAUL R. WILLIAMS RESIDENCE	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	INTERNATIONAL STYLE	1952
14	HCM 727	3281 W 6TH ST	FOUNDER'S CHURCH OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCE	PAUL R. WILLIAMS	MID-CENTURY MODERN	1959
15	HCM 570	201 CENTER WAY	AIRPORT THEME BUILDING	LUCKMAN, PEREIRA, BECKETT, WILLIAMS	MID-CENTURY MODERN	1961

The Hunt Residence is also a notable example of a custom-designed Traditional Ranch House with Regency Revival details. The design combines the irregular form and sprawling composition of the Traditional Ranch style with the more formal decorative elements of the regency Revival style. This structure represents a pivotal point in Williams' development of his Ranch House concepts because it exhibits the detail and quality of his earlier, large custom homes, while also displaying his ability to adapt them for a smaller, more informal Ranch House appropriate to the client's needs and the times.

DISCUSSION

The Hunt Residence historic property successfully meets two of the specified Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: 1) "embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction" and 2) is "a notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect." As a representative of the custom-Traditional Ranch style with Regency Revival details and designed by architect Paul Revere Williams, the property qualifies for designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument based on these criteria.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT ("CEQA") REVIEW

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 *"consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment."*

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 *"consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings."*

The designation of the Hunt Residence property as a Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code ("LAAC") will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of irreplaceable historic structures. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards of Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of Historic buildings in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.

BACKGROUND

On November 5, 2013, the Director of Planning of the City of Los Angeles formally initiated the consideration of the Hunt Residence as a Historic-Cultural Monument. On December 5, 2013, the Cultural Heritage Commission and Office of Historic Resources staff toured the site.

**HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT
APPLICATION**

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

IDENTIFICATION

1. NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT Hunt Residence
2. STREET ADDRESS 7 Oakmont Drive
CITY Los Angeles ZIP CODE 90049 COUNCIL DISTRICT 11
3. ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO. 4426-020-003
4. COMPLETE LEGAL DESCRIPTION: TRACT Brentwood Park
BLOCK 32 LOT(S) FR ARB. NO. 33
5. RANGE OF ADDRESSES ON PROPERTY 7 Oakmont Drive
6. PRESENT OWNER Robert Hanasab
STREET ADDRESS 7 Oakmont Drive E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____
CITY Los Angeles STATE CA ZIP CODE 90049 PHONE () _____
OWNERSHIP: PRIVATE PUBLIC _____
7. PRESENT USE Single-family residence ORIGINAL USE Single-family residence

DESCRIPTION

8. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Traditional Ranch/Regency Revival
(SEE STYLE GUIDE)
9. STATE PRESENT PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE OR STRUCTURE (SEE OPTIONAL DESCRIPTION WORK SHEET. 1 PAGE MAXIMUM)
See attached.
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT
APPLICATION

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT Hunt Residence

10. CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1940 FACTUAL: ESTIMATED:

11. ARCHITECT, DESIGNER, OR ENGINEER Paul Revere Williams

12. CONTRACTOR OR OTHER BUILDER E.P. Dentzel

13. DATES OF ENCLOSED PHOTOGRAPHS December 5, 2013
(1 8X10 BLACK AND WHITE GLOSSY AND 1 DIGITAL E-MAILED TO CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION@LACITY.ORG)

14. CONDITION: EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR DETERIORATED NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE

15. ALTERATIONS See attached.

16. THREATS TO SITE: NONE KNOWN PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT VANDALISM PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT
 ZONING OTHER _____

17. IS THE STRUCTURE: ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE MOVED UNKNOWN

SIGNIFICANCE

18. BRIEFLY STATE HISTORICAL AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: INCLUDE DATES, EVENTS, AND PERSON ASSOCIATED WITH THE SITE (SEE ALSO SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET. 750 WORDS MAXIMUM IF USING ADDITIONAL SHEETS)

See attached.

19. SOURCES (LIST BOOKS, DOCUMENTS, SURVEYS, PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH DATES) See attached.

20. DATE FORM PREPARED 12/19/2013 PREPARER'S NAME Christy Johnson McAvoy

ORGANIZATION Historic Resources Group STREET ADDRESS 12 S. Fair Oaks Avenue

CITY Pasadena STATE CA ZIP CODE 91105 PHONE (626) 793-2400

E-MAIL ADDRESS: christy@historicla.com

9. Present Physical Description of the Site or Structure

The property at 7 Oakmont Drive is located on the west side of Oakmont Drive, northwest of the intersection of Rockingham Avenue and Oakmont Drive. The residence was designed by Paul R. Williams for Mrs. Willis Hunt. The lot is bounded on the north, south, and west by single-family residences, one of which is another Paul R. Williams design completed in 1946.¹ The property contains a one-story, single-family residence constructed in 1940.² Set back from the street on a circular driveway, it is situated in the center of the lot amidst lush landscaping and a number of mature trees. The building is in the Traditional Ranch style with extensive Regency Revival influences characteristic of Williams' work at this time. The house is designed to maximize the site, create a relationship with existing mature trees on the lot and the topography, and create a clear connection between the exterior and the interior.

The Hunt Residence is of wood frame construction with an irregular plan consisting of a central, roughly rectangular element with wings projecting at angles from each of its four corners defining a series of outdoor spaces that connect to the building's interior via large windows and French doors.³ The roof is a combination of intersecting hips and gables with shallow boxed eaves, and is clad in asphalt composition shingles. The exterior walls are clad primarily in cement plaster, with brick veneer and wood shingles on the primary (east) façade. The primary entrance is asymmetrically located on the east façade and consists of a recessed six-panel wood door with a leaded-glass transom light, centered in a front-gabled brick pavilion with rake and return cornices. The door is accessed by a projecting semicircular brick porch with a flat roof supported on paired metal posts with decorative cast iron grilles, a favorite Williams motif. There is a prominent exterior brick chimney located on the primary (east) façade, and a secondary interior chimney projecting from the north portion of the roof.

Fenestration consists primarily of single and coupled rectangular double-hung, divided-light, wood sash windows in various sizes, some with louvered wood shutters. The east façade is accented by a small, oval bull's eye window and a dormer window with a segmental pediment. There is a large, fixed, divided-light, wood sash bow window flanked by partially glazed, paneled wood French doors on the central portion of the west façade, opening to a covered terrace with a bowed roof supported on attenuated metal columns with metal lattice; and a fixed, tripartite, divided-light, wood sash bow window framed by fluted wood pilasters on the end of the projecting southwest wing. The central portion of the north façade is composed of a fully-glazed, angled projecting bay consisting of a fixed, divided-light, wood sash window flanked by divided-light, wood French doors. There is an attached 3-car garage at the south end of the building, connected to the house by a covered breezeway. The garage has a hipped roof topped by an octagonal cupola, and horizontal wood plank doors. It is located on a small motor court behind a pair of painted wood plank gates with "X" braces and scalloped top rails, mounted on brick piers with perforated brick screen walls.

¹ Williams designed three houses along Oakmont Drive: 7 Oakmont (1940), 15 Oakmont (1946), and 25 Oakmont (1942); 25 Oakmont Drive has been demolished.

² City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Building Permit No. 28222, July 18, 1940.

³ Physical description is based on the original drawings from the Paul R. Williams archive courtesy of Karen Hudson, and interior and exterior photographs taken by the Office of Historic Resources on December 5, 2013.

The house's rambling interior organization is characteristic of the Traditional Ranch style, but is overlaid with more formal Regency Revival decorative elements and there is a clear hierarchy of space. The central volume contains the entrance hall, living room, and sitting room. The entrance hall has an elongated octagonal plan and resilient flooring with an inlaid pattern. The walls are clad in vertical wood siding with beaded joints and topped with a painted wood crown molding; slab doors to a closet, powder room, basement stair, and the butler's pantry are clad in the same siding to minimize their appearance. The powder room features a bow-fronted, mirrored wood dressing table flanked by attenuated wood pilasters. A wood-paneled passage leads from the entrance hall to the living room, which has wood plank flooring, plaster walls and ceiling, painted wood trim, and a run plaster cornice. The bowed west wall has a large window flanked by French doors opening to the covered terrace, beyond which is a wide elliptical lawn bounded by a low brick garden wall. The living room's rounded west corners feature arched niches with plaster shells, wood keystones, and wood shelves, and the east wall has a fireplace with a marble surround, wood mantel, paneled overmantel, and flanking pilasters. A pair of paneled wood doors with wood casing, architrave, and cornice lead to the sitting room which has built-in wood bookshelves, a corner fireplace with painted brick surround, a built-in corner cabinet, and painted wood trim. The room's north wall is formed by a fully-glazed projecting bay with French doors opening to the side yard. The master bedroom suite occupies a wing projecting from the northwest corner of the sitting room, while the guest suite occupies a wing projecting from the northeast corner of the sitting room. Both rooms have wood plank floors, plaster walls and ceilings, painted wood trim, paneled wood doors, and dressing rooms with built-in cabinetry; the master dressing room also has a built-in mirrored dressing table. French doors in the master bedroom open on one side to the large oval lawn at the rear of the house, and on the other to the more secluded north garden.

The dining room forms a separate wing projecting from the southwest corner of the entrance hall. It has wood plank flooring, plaster walls and ceiling, a run plaster cornice, and painted wood chair rail, base, and casings. French doors open to the covered west terrace and the oval lawn, and a full-height bow window overlooks the canyon to the west. South of the dining room and entrance hall is the service wing, comprised of the kitchen, service porch, and maids' bedrooms and sitting room. A covered breezeway at the southwest corner of the service wing connects to the garage. Behind the garage are a small studio and the gardener's room, with attached bathroom. The service wing and garage partially define and open onto a large service yard.

Character-defining Features

The Hunt Residence retains significant character-defining features on the interior and exterior and reflects the original design as envisioned by Paul R. Williams. Exterior character-defining features include:

- sprawling, irregular plan, asymmetrical composition, and one-story height;
- hipped and gable roofs with boxed eaves, wood cornice, and metal gutters;
- brick chimneys;
- exterior walls veneered in cement plaster, brick, and wood shingles;
- semicircular entrance portico with brick paving, decorative cast iron supports, and flat roof;
- 6-panel wood entrance door with leaded glass transom light;
- divided-light, wood sash windows, some with louvered wood shutters;

- divided-light wood French doors;
- covered east terrace with brick pavers and attenuated metal columns;
- patio on north side of residence;
- wood plank garage doors;
- cupola on garage roof;
- placement of the residence accommodating existing mature trees;
- distinct garden spaces defined by siting and organization of building; and
- brick garden walls with perforated bond openings and wood gates.

Interior character-defining features include:

- resilient and wood plank flooring;
- smooth plaster walls and ceilings;
- run plaster cornices;
- painted wood base, chair rails, crown moldings, casings, and trim;
- fireplaces with marble or brick surrounds and painted wood mantels;
- arched niches with plaster shells;
- paneled wood doors;
- built-in dressing tables, bookshelves, cabinets, and closets;
- some original plumbing fixtures; and
- visual and physical connection of interior rooms to exterior garden areas.

15. Alterations

The “Mrs. Willis Hunt Residence” is cited in a project list compiled from the architect’s files, identifying the original construction date as 1940. The same list identifies two subsequent additions/alterations to the property, both designed by Williams: a 1947 addition for Mrs. Hunt, and alterations and additions in 1966 for subsequent owner William Armistead.⁴ A comparison of the existing residence with the original plans for the proposed 1947 addition, a large projecting bay in the guest bedroom, indicates that this addition was never constructed. Drawings for the purported 1966 Armistead additions/alterations were not available. Building permits on file with the Los Angeles Department of Building & Safety do not include records of additions in 1947 or 1966. Permitted alterations to the property are limited to replacement of roofing material in 1983 and again in 2003. The Hunt Residence retains significant character-defining features on the interior and exterior. The building is in overall good condition.

Visual observation of the property and a comparison of its existing condition with the original Paul R. Williams drawings indicate that the building has undergone only minor alterations and retains a high degree of integrity. Alterations include:

- removal of the wall between the kitchen and butler’s pantry (date unknown);
- replacement of kitchen cabinets, counters, and backsplash (date unknown);
- installation of new sinks and replacement of counter and floor tile in master bath (date unknown);
- installation of laminate flooring and metal/glass shower enclosure in (labeled as bath 130 on the drawings) (date unknown);
- removal of cabinet doors in sitting room (date unknown);
- removal of interior door hardware (date unknown);
- replacement of roofing (1983 and 2003); and
- partial demolition of wood shingles and roofing on east façade by current owner (2013).⁵

No significant character-defining features have been altered or removed, and none of the alterations have a significant impact on the property’s ability to convey its historic significance.

Integrity

The Hunt Residence has undergone only minor exterior and interior alterations and retains a high degree of 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.”⁶ The National Park Service defines seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

⁴ Karen E. Hudson, *Paul R. Williams, Architect: A Legacy of Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 232. Paul R. Williams drawings for 7 Oakmont Drive, courtesy of Karen E. Hudson. Karen Hudson is the granddaughter of Paul Williams and the foremost expert on his life and work.

⁵ See letter of November 20, 2013 to the Cultural Heritage Commission regarding recent alterations to the property.

⁶ 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, p. 4.

- **Location:** The Hunt Residence remains on its original site and therefore retains integrity of location.
- **Design:** The Hunt Residence has undergone only minor exterior and interior alterations. No significant character-defining features have been substantially altered or removed, and none of the alterations have a significant impact on the building's ability to convey its historic significance as an excellent and unique example of a Traditional Ranch-style residence with Regency Revival influences, designed by master architect Paul R. Williams. The Hunt Residence therefore retains integrity of design.
- **Setting:** The Hunt Residence remains a lushly landscaped single-family residential property, in a neighborhood of similar properties. It therefore retains integrity of setting.
- **Materials:** Although there have been some minor alterations over time, the Hunt Residence retains the vast majority of its historic materials including exterior brick veneer and wood siding; wood windows and doors; decorative metal porch supports; wood flooring; plaster walls, ceilings, and run cornices; and painted wood trim and casework. It therefore retains integrity of materials.
- **Workmanship:** The Hunt Residence retains the physical evidence of period construction techniques including brick veneer, paving, and screen walls, run plaster cornices, and decorative woodwork, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- **Feeling:** As noted above, the building retains the significant physical features that convey its historic character as a custom-designed Traditional Ranch-style residence with Regency Revival influences. It therefore retains integrity of feeling.
- **Association:** The Hunt Residence retains its original design by master architect Paul R. Williams. It therefore retains integrity of association.

18. Significance

The Hunt Residence at 7 Oakmont Drive was designed by Paul Revere Williams (1894-1980) and was originally constructed in 1940 for Mrs. Willis Hunt.⁷ The builder was E.P. Dentzel, a prominent builder and developer with whom Williams worked on a number of projects throughout his career. It is eligible for designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument under the following criteria:

- it embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction; and
- it is a notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual genius influenced their age.

Architectural Significance

The Hunt Residence is an excellent example of a custom-designed Traditional Ranch House with Regency Revival details which was designed specifically for the site and to suit the needs of the client. It successfully combines the irregular form and sprawling composition of the Traditional Ranch style with more formal decorative elements of the Regency Revival style, of which Williams was an acknowledged master. The Regency Revival style, also known as Hollywood Regency, is indigenous to Los Angeles. It is seen almost exclusively in the design of both single-family and multi-family residential architecture from about the mid-1930s until about 1970. The style references in part the architecture and design that developed in Britain in the early 19th century in the years (1811-1820) when the Prince of Wales, later King George IV, served as Prince Regent during the long, final illness of his incapacitated father King George III. Like that original Regency style, the Regency Revival includes elements of Neo-Classical and French Empire design while its attenuated classical ornament and simple surfaces reflect the influence of the modern movement.

The style first appeared in the mid-1930s as a stripped-down version of the Neo-Classical revival that exhibited both the influence of the Moderne style and the simplified yet exaggerated qualities of Hollywood film sets. Paul R. Williams was an enthusiast of the style and one of the primary contributors to its early development. Williams was particularly known for finely crafted details on the interior and exterior of his residences; the original drawings for the Hunt Residence reflect this attention to detail. Regency Revival buildings are characterized by theatrical arched entrances with an exaggerated vertical emphasis, usually positioned in projecting pavilions with high, steep roofs; symmetrical, largely blank primary façades; and eccentrically detailed, unconventionally proportioned Classical columns and ornamentation juxtaposed against large expanses of blank wall. Regency Revival elements at the Hunt Residence include the semicircular entrance portico, the east terrace with attenuated columns and decorative metal lattice-work, bow windows, and other Classical details on the interior and exterior.

⁷ City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Building Permit No. 28222, July 18, 1940.

The Ranch House as known today is an architectural type of single-family, single-story residence of informal composition.⁸ It combines indoor living spaces and outdoor garden spaces in a unified design. The Ranch House form can range from compact rectangular volumes with simple gabled or hip roofs, to splayed multi-winged houses that sprawl over a site. It often used an open floor plan that combined living room, dining room, and kitchen into one space. Custom examples were often designed by well-known architects and ranged from approximately 1,500 to 3,500 square feet in size. The Ranch type can be expressed in a number of varying styles, including traditional rustic ranch, Colonial, Regency, Oriental, Spanish, Contemporary, and others. Regional examples utilized different traditional features. Examples in New England utilized Cape Cod Salt Box features; mass produced tracts in California in the 1940s and 1950s used Colonial features such as oval windows and hipped roofs; and tracts in the Midwest utilized red brick, white wood trim on gable ends, and shutters evoking Colonial Williamsburg.⁹ Depending on the style, materials used include board, board and batten, brick, stucco, or adobe, with shingled or tiled roofs.

The Ranch House began to develop as a residential type as early as the late 1920s, and increased in popularity in the 1930s. It was an invention of its times, responding to a number of cultural, demographic, and economic trends, seen especially in Southern California. It began as a residential type for custom home designs, and later was adapted by architects, including Paul R. Williams, for large scale mass-produced housing tracts in the newly developing suburbs, especially after World War II. The Ranch became one of the most influential housing types of the twentieth century. Cliff May was one of the leading proponents of the Ranch House, and perhaps the most influential popularizer of the style.¹⁰ By the end of his career, which spanned from the 1930s to the 1980s, May's designs could be seen throughout the United States and in several countries. Cliff May designed numerous custom and tract Ranch Houses in Southern California, including two Ranch House neighborhoods that were developed by May in nearby Sullivan Canyon in the western portion of Brentwood.

Southern California was a primary point of origin (along with Northern California and Texas) for several reasons. The Southern California region had historical examples of vernacular, utilitarian ranch structures from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which served as partial models; these include both adobe and wood structures. The region experienced growing population trends, especially around World War II; this demand for housing encouraged architects and builders to experiment with new housing types, of which the Ranch proved enormously popular. New construction technologies, materials, and construction management techniques were developed which reshaped the residential building industry. The Southern California region encouraged the acceptance of new ideas, creating a favorable atmosphere for architects to try new ideas in architecture. This atmosphere encouraged more casual, informal lifestyles which suited the region's suburbanization; home owners (especially families) wanted to live close to nature, and discarded many of the trappings of formality that had been common earlier.

⁸ Information about the development of the Ranch House and Paul Williams' relationship to the Ranch House provided by Alan Hess, written communication to Historic Resources Group, December 17, 2013. Architect and historian Alan Hess is the architecture critic of the *San Jose Mercury News*. He has written nineteen books on Modern architecture and urbanism in the mid-twentieth century and is an expert on the development of the Ranch House.

⁹ Alan Hess, *The Ranch House*. New York: Harry Abrams, Inc. 2004, p 37, 41, 73, 76.

¹⁰ Daniel P. Gregory, *Cliff May: The Modern Ranch House*. New York: Rizzoli, 2008, 20.

The Hunt Residence and the Ranch House

The Hunt Residence is an excellent example of the Ranch House type because of its informally composed volumes; one-story height; splayed, irregular wings; relationship to the outdoor areas and site; and its suburban character. It uses the Regency style for ornamental features. The Ranch House began to evolve as a distinct housing type in the late 1920s (a relatively short period before the Hunt Residence was constructed), and architects like Williams experimented with different concepts throughout the 1930s. The Hunt Residence is therefore an example of this early, transitional period of the Ranch House that served as a pre-cursor to the post-World War II version that proliferated in Southern California. The Hunt Residence uses a more traditional, formal floor plan with individually contained rooms (living room, dining room, entry hall, sitting room, etc.) rather than the open floor plan which became a defining Ranch feature. However, the notably large windows in the living room and dining room are distinctly lighter in their framing; in a period before the widespread production of single-pane aluminium sliding doors, these window walls (still intact) flanked by French doors break down the boundary between indoors and outdoors. Such windows are found in other Ranch Houses of the period, including Cliff May's own house in Riviera Ranch (1939).

The Hunt Residence contains elements and interior ornamentation which relate to Williams' larger, formal mansions from the 1920s and early 1930s. Nonetheless, the low profile, irregular forms, and informality of the Hunt Residence, tying the house to its site, identify it as a Ranch House, relating it to Williams' later Abdun-Nur and Ball-Arnaz Ranch Houses. It represents an important stage of Williams' changing ideas about the Ranch House. The informality expresses new informal suburban lifestyles in Southern California, while also specifically addressing the needs of Mrs. Hunt, a widow who was downsizing and wanted an easy, comfortable floor plan. The approach to the house up the curving drive draws attention to the position of the house at the crown of the property. The low profile of the front façade is markedly different from the impressive formal façades of Williams' mansions, such as the E. L. Cord house (1931). The house's four wings (each a different size and shape) are angled to create informal courts between them. Each main room has its own access to a different outdoor area.

The Hunt Residence represents a pivotal point in Williams' development of his Ranch House concepts. It exhibits the detail and quality of his earlier, large custom homes, but displays his ability to adapt them for a smaller, more informal Ranch House appropriate to the client's needs and the times. In adapting his skills to more contemporary situations, the Hunt Residence also plays a role in his design path toward smaller mass produced houses that would be affordable to a wider public. Williams thus explored the possibilities of the Ranch House in a custom house with a good budget and specific client needs. Williams used many of the concepts explored in the Hunt Residence in his future designs for mass produced houses in the 1940s. The Regency ornamental details of the Hunt Residence of 1940 are also seen in the El Reno Apartments of 1939 as he sought to bring a level of design found in custom houses to mass produced houses.

Notable Work of a Master Architect

Paul R. Williams Biography

The Hunt Residence is significant as a notable work of master architect Paul Revere Williams. Williams had a prolific career, spanning from about 1915 until his retirement in 1974. Williams was born in Los Angeles in 1894, after his parents had migrated west from Tennessee. Orphaned at the age of four, Williams was raised by a foster mother. Williams studied at the Polytechnic High School and enrolled in the architecture course. He was advised by one of his teachers to rethink his choice of career, as white clients would not consider working with an African-American architect. Williams later referred to this as the "black discouragement," but in his case it strengthened his resolve. As architectural historian David Gebhard wrote, "No longer was architecture an assumed profession born of a love of drawing, it became a well-thought-out commitment."¹¹

Williams went on to study at the Los Angeles School of Art and Design, the Los Angeles branch of the New York Beaux Arts Institute of Design, and the University of Southern California, where he studied architectural engineering for three years (1916-1919).¹² However, before Williams began his formal study of architecture, he began working in the field. From 1914-1917, Williams worked for noted Pasadena architect Reginald Johnson, and from 1917-1921 he worked for Hollywood architect Arthur Kelly.¹³ In 1915, he registered as a building designer and began executing designs for speculative developers. Williams received his architecture license in 1921, becoming the only licensed African-American architect west of the Mississippi. After receiving his license, Williams worked for John C. Austin from 1921 until 1924, where he became the Chief Draftsman.

Throughout his career, Williams entered architectural competitions. In 1914, he won first prize for his design of a civic center for Pasadena. In 1915, he was awarded first honorable mention at the Chicago Emancipation Celebration, and in 1916 he placed third for the Sperling Prize, a nationwide competition held in New York. In the early 1920s, he won three consecutive competitions for the design of small homes. His specialty in this area of design became the foundation for his own practice, which he began in 1922 while still working for Austin. His first commission as a sole practitioner was a residence for former USC classmate Louis Cass. During this early period he designed numerous residences for Flintridge, developer Frank P. Flint's new residential subdivision in the Pasadena foothills. Williams' first substantial commission (with a construction cost of approximately \$400,000) was the 1931 E.L. Cord mansion in Beverly Hills, which was completed in 1931. The Cord mansion led to numerous other large-scale residential commissions for Williams in the early 1930s. His work was particularly popular with the Hollywood celebrities and wealthy socialites who were relocating to the western suburbs of Bel-Air, Beverly Hills, and Brentwood during the 1920s and 1930s. Williams' client list included such luminaries as Jay Paley, Otto Preminger, Lon Chaney, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. In later years as the scope and geography of his work began to expand, Williams designed other residences for Lucille Ball, Frank Sinatra, Walter Winchell, and Zsa Zsa Gabor. Early clients often returned to Williams as their success grew to commission larger homes or commercial buildings.¹⁴

Williams became well-known for his modern interpretations of the period revival styles that were popular at the time, including examples of the Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival,

¹¹ David Gebhard, "A Gentle Man with a Dream," preface to Karen E. Hudson *Paul R. Williams, Architect: A Legacy of Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 11-12.

¹² Williams received USC's alumni merit award in 1966.

¹³ Wesley Howard Henderson, *Two Case Studies of African-American Architects' Careers in Los Angeles, 1890-1945: Paul R. Williams, FAIA and James H. Garrott, AIA* (Dissertation: University of California, Los Angeles, 1992), 84.

¹⁴ Gebhard in *Paul R. Williams, Architect: A Legacy of Style*, 14.

Spanish Colonial Revival, and French Country styles. Although he had gained prominence as an architect for wealthy clients with unlimited budgets, throughout his career Williams designed homes for people of all backgrounds and economic means. He was known for his perfectionism and attention to detail that did not waiver regardless of the size of the commission. Architect Ralph A. Vaughn, who worked for Williams in the mid-1930s, noted that by that time owning a Paul Williams home was a sign of prestige. When a Williams home was put on the market it was advertised as a "Paul Williams original." Details such as window trim were designed specifically for each home and were not repeated in other commissions.¹⁵

By the 1940s Williams had garnered widespread acclaim for his upscale residential work and other, more diverse commissions became available. While he continued to design expansive private residences, in the middle years of his career Williams turned his attention to other housing types, publishing two books on "the Small House" in the mid-1940s. In developing these more modest residential designs, Williams incorporated Modern elements, such as open floor plans, connection to the outdoors through integrated patio spaces and large windows, and simplified ornamentation, into traditional building forms. He argued in favor of one-story houses, both for the practicality of eliminating stair climbing and for the benefit of having rooms that opened directly onto terraces and gardens; and promoted exteriors with "simpler lines depending more upon good proportion and pleasing color schemes rather than upon ornamentation and intricate detail...Many things can be done, too, with the exterior facing of the walls, roof materials and color combinations."¹⁶ A trademark of Williams was situating the primary living spaces at the rear of the house facing the garden. The Hunt Residence exhibited many of the design concepts that would become the foundation for Williams' small house designs in the 1940s.

Residential design remained the focus of his practice through the 1930s. By this time, Williams was well-regarded and able to be selective about his commissions. Beginning in the 1930s, he received numerous commissions for prominent commercial and institutional work. Some examples of his work include the Angelus Funeral Home (1934), the Saks Fifth Avenue building in Beverly Hills (1939), the Arrowhead Springs Hotel (1940), and the Pearl Harbor Memorial in Honolulu (1953). In the late 1930s, Williams was hired by a group of South American businessmen to do a multi-million dollar project in Colombia. Williams designed a hotel, office buildings, a club, and numerous homes in the city of Medellin. He also worked as an architect for the United States Navy during World War II and served on multiple municipal and state commissions. Williams co-designed the first federally-funded public housing project of the postwar era, Langston Terrace in Washington, D. C., with fellow African-American architect Hilyard Robinson. Williams later went on to design the Pueblo del Rio housing project in southeast Los Angeles in the early 1940s. Throughout his career, despite traveling to distant locations and working on numerous large-scale commissions, Williams retained the attention to detail and client-based focus that defined his earlier work.¹⁷

Williams' architectural success led to other influential posts. He served on national commissions under Presidents Coolidge, Roosevelt, and Eisenhower. He campaigned with presidential candidate Nelson Rockefeller in the 1960s, speaking on architecture and civil rights across the country. In California, he served on statewide commissions for Governors

¹⁵ Stanley O. Williford, "Paul Williams: A Life by Design," *Travel & Art*, August/September, 1978, 12.

¹⁶ Williams, *New Homes For Today*, 7.

¹⁷ Historic Resources Group interview with Karen Hudson, December 16, 2013.

Earl Warren and Goodwin Knight, and was president of the Los Angeles Municipal Art Commission for 11 years. Williams was an influential member of the African-American community in Los Angeles. He designed the First AME Church, and the headquarters for Golden State Mutual Life, the largest African-American-owned insurance company in the western United States, and the 28th Street YMCA in South Los Angeles.

In 1952, the American Institute of Architects established the College of Fellows, an honor awarded to members who have made significant contributions to the profession. The Fellowship program was developed to elevate those architects who have made a significant contribution to architecture and society and who have achieved a standard of excellence in the profession. In 1957, Williams became the first African-American member of the College of Fellows. Williams retired in 1974 and filed for emeritus status with the AIA. He died in Los Angeles in 1980 at the age of 85.

*Paul R. Williams and the Evolution of the Ranch House*¹⁸

The decades from the 1920s through the 1960s were a dynamic period of change in Southern California architecture and urbanism. The development of the Ranch House and the career of Paul R. Williams, mirror this dynamism. Paul R. Williams was one of several noted Southern California architects, including his mentor Reginald Johnson, Wallace Neff, Gordon Kaufmann, and Roland Coate, noted in the 1920s and 1930s for their large custom home designs using traditional styles. Unlike some of his contemporaries, however, Williams actively responded to changing conditions in the building industry and client taste and as a result continued working through the 1970s while many of his contemporaries stopped practicing after the war. The 1930s introduced Modern architecture to the public; it also brought the need and the means for large scale housing production that would become prevalent after World War II.

While he also carried on a wide-ranging architecture practice that included church, office, hotel, and institutional, housing was a prominent part of his work. He was involved in a number of public and defense housing projects, including Pueblo Del Rio, Los Angeles (1940) and Carver Park, Henderson, NV (1943.) These projects exhibited the flat roofs, simplified ornament, and planar compositions of contemporary Modern architecture. From at least the mid-1930s, Williams was also interested in mass-produced housing. This was still a new industry, and the precise techniques and methods to achieve it were still in flux.

In 1936, for example, he designed floor plans and elevations for Lea Steel Houses, a pre-fabricated all-steel construction system. Though this system did not dominate the industry, Williams' involvement shows his interest in modern ideas and their application to architecture, particularly residential architecture that reduced costs to be affordable to the average person. An example of the Lea Steel House was built as the 15-unit El Reno apartments (1939) in Reno, NV. Though entirely modern in their fabrication and materials, Williams designed these units in a homey, Colonial or Regency style.¹⁹ While some Modern architects insisted on removing any reference to historical styles from their architecture, Williams (like Cliff May and Wallace Neff) believed in combining modern and traditional elements.

¹⁸ Information about the development of the Ranch House and Paul Williams' relationship to the Ranch House provided by Alan Hess, written communication to Historic Resources Group, December 17, 2013.

¹⁹ For El Reno apartments, see *Book of Small Houses* (1938), *Architectural Forum* (July 1938), and *Architectural Forum* (Nov. 1939.)

However intriguing the all-steel factory-fabricated housing system, the mass production technique that came to dominate the building industry after World War II involved a system where construction was broken down into its component parts (foundation, walls, roofing, etc.) and then built like an assembly line on site. From the 1930s through the 1960s, Williams also designed a number of housing tracts that used similar techniques. These include the Del Rio housing development, Tucson, AZ (1946-48, with A. Quincy Jones), and the Berkley Square tract in Las Vegas (1949-1955), a 148-unit contemporary Ranch House tract financed by Californian African-Americans for the African-American community in Las Vegas. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009. Williams was also involved in at least nine other tract developments between 1938 and 1962.²⁰

While he had an evident interest in mass produced housing, Williams continued to design custom homes. From the evidence, he used his custom designed houses to explore ideas that he applied to his mass produced designs. His use of Regency elements, for example, appeared in his Lea Steel House projects. Also, his designs for newly-developed suburban areas in the Los Angeles area (such as Rolling Hills, Flintridge, Westwood, Mandeville Canyon, and Brentwood) led him to integrate suburban landscaping, siting, and informality into his houses. Though he continued to design large formal mansions throughout his career, he also designed relatively smaller houses as the demand for them grew. Designing smaller houses for suburban sites for clients who wanted less formality, Williams explored the Ranch House as it was developing as a type.

Throughout the 1930s, many architects contributed to the evolution of the Ranch House as a new, suburban housing type (not as the historic utilitarian structures built for working ranches.) Many of the best known architects in Southern California, known for their excellent traditional home designs, also designed Ranches as the type became popular among clients. These include Lulah Maria Riggs, Allen Siple, Cliff May, John Byers, and Paul Williams. Many of these were traditional Ranch Houses, using rustic vernacular features such as board and batten walls.

Paul Williams' role in the spread of the Ranch House is broader than designing custom houses in the style. As noted above, he became interested in applying modern construction techniques to the style to create mass produced Ranch tracts. He also had a theoretical interest in the small, affordable house (including Ranch Houses), which he expressed in two books on the subject: *The Small Home of Tomorrow* (1945) and *New Homes for Today* (1946); Cliff May's *Sunset Western Ranch Houses* was published in 1946. Besides meeting the needs of individual clients in custom homes, he wanted to disseminate his ideas more broadly. Among Ranch House architects of his generation, Cliff May was the only other architect who combined all of these interests in designing, building, writing about, and disseminating the idea of the Ranch House.

Williams continued to be interested in evolving the Ranch House into the 1960s, even as his office continued to grow in size and scope. While he continued to design large custom homes in traditional styles, he adopted Modern styles as well. He had been interested in this

²⁰ According to local newspapers, these include Longridge Estates, Sherman Oaks (1938), Broadway Village, Whittier (1947), Layne Manor, Whittier (1949), Paramount Grove, Downey (1949), Los Altos Park, Long Beach (1950), Royal Oaks, Sherman Oaks (1950), Greenacres, North Hollywood (1953), Royal Woods, Los Angeles (1953), and Seaview, Palos Verdes (1959-1962).

since the 1930s, when he contributed to the Hollywood Regency style, which abstracted traditional elements, as seen in the Jay Platt pool house (1934). In commercial buildings such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Beverly Hills (1939), and the remodeling of the Beverly Hills Hotel (1947-51), Williams began incorporating Late Moderne elements. Like Cliff May and Wallace Neff who had started their design careers using traditional styles, Williams' Ranch designs can be seen to evolve from traditional Ranch designs (seen in the 1940 T.R. Craig ranch residence in Chatsworth, and the 1947 Abdun-Nur house) to more simplified, contemporary, Modern Ranch designs (the 1954 Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz house).²¹ Williams' broad interest in the Ranch type and its mass produced permutations indicates his influence on younger architects with similar inclinations (such as his one-time partner A. Quincy Jones, who went on to design notable mass produced homes for builder Joseph Eichler and others.)

Williams' response to mass production methods, new suburban lifestyles, and modern styles represent his adaptability to the influx of Modern concepts. This is not always acknowledged in his work, partly because of his early embrace of traditional architecture, and partly because of his contributions to the Hollywood Regency style (a simplified abstraction of traditional styles) and the Late Moderne style (using abstract volumes and shapes related to Modern art). Both were Modern in character, but were overshadowed by a more spare, structurally expressive Modern architecture in Southern California (typified by the Case Study program of *Arts+Architecture* magazine) that arrived in the late 1940s.

Instead, his work followed an evolutionary, not a revolutionary tactic, in moving toward Modernism. Other architects of his generation failed to make this transition. Because of the dominance of the more austere version of Modernism, it is easy today to overlook the modern aspects of the Hunt Residence and Williams' Ranch Houses, which do reflect Williams' sensitivity to the changing times and the real progressive steps embodied in Williams blending of traditional Colonial and Regency elements into the more casual form of the Ranch House. These elements can be seen in the metal filigree arches on the back porch of the Hunt Residence, as well as in other elements throughout the house. In addition, his Ranch House designs directly addressed the modernizing planning of suburbia, the major trend in American urbanism in the mid-twentieth century.

Additional Context

Brentwood Park Subdivision and Block 32

7 Oakmont Drive is located in the Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles. Brentwood was first developed in 1906 by the Western Pacific Development Company, which purchased 350 acres from the Santa Monica Land and Water Company to develop an exclusive residential tract called Brentwood Park. The tract extended north from San Vicente Boulevard and was bounded by present-day Cliffwood Avenue to the east and present-day Burlingame and Rockingham Avenues to the west, culminating at the northern terminus of present-day Bristol Avenue. While most of the lots within the Brentwood Park tract were rectangular in plan and featured ample acreage and expansive street frontages, the tract also included one large, irregularly-shaped lot north of the terminus of Bristol Avenue, a portion of which comprises the subject property. This parcel, designated as Block 32 on the

²¹ *California Arts & Architecture*, 1940.

Brentwood Park tract map, was included in the tract but was not initially subdivided for development.

A review of tract maps, historical photographs and contemporary *Los Angeles Times* articles indicate that the parcel may have initially been developed by amateur botanist Herbert C. Oakley as part of his 29-acre botanical estate, which was called "Oakmont." A 1916 *Los Angeles Times* article references the construction of Oakley's mansion "in the heart of the Oakmont subdivision just back of Brentwood Park."²² Located at present-day 25 Oakmont Drive, the mansion was situated in the approximate center of Block 32. Constructed by the Milwaukee Building Company, the three-story, Spanish-style residence was set atop a hill overlooking the canyon and was surrounded by acres of imported plants and trees. When Oakley went on to spearhead the development of the California Botanic Garden in Mandeville Canyon in 1927, it was intended that his estate would serve as the nucleus of the Botanic Garden.²³ However, the garden and its investors could not survive the devastating financial effects of the Depression, and the park closed permanently in 1935. Oakley, who had invested heavily in the project, left his Oakmont estate in the mid-1930s and the property was subsequently listed for sale.

Tract maps demonstrate that over time, Block 32 was subdivided in a piecemeal fashion and lacked a cohesive overall development scheme. Small subdivisions consisting of several lots apiece were developed throughout Block 32 as early as the 1920s, and this trend continued throughout most of the 20th century with subdivisions of varying size. Most of the area's development occurred following Oakley's departure from the property and his subsequent death in 1940. Building permit records indicate that by 1940, the land comprising 7 Oakmont Drive and the surrounding neighborhood was still in the process of subdivision after being assessed in 1939. Oakmont Drive, the site of the subject property, had not yet been officially dedicated by the summer of 1940, when Mrs. Willis G. Hunt filed a building permit for a single-family residence to be constructed at the site of present-day 7 Oakmont Drive.

Oakmont Drive had a noteworthy collection of Paul Williams' residences from the 1940s. The Hunt Residence came first in 1940, followed by 25 Oakmont in 1942 and 15 Oakmont in 1946. 25 Oakmont was recently demolished.

Nelle Payton Hunt

Nelle Payton Hunt commissioned the construction of 7 Oakmont Drive. Nelle Payton Hunt was the widow of Willis G. Hunt, a prominent paper company executive who died in March, 1940. Hunt had relocated from Maine to Los Angeles in 1888 and founded the Pioneer Paper Company the following year. He remained president until his retirement in 1928, when Pioneer was merged with another paper concern. Hunt and his wife were also active in civic and social affairs – Willis Hunt belonged to the prestigious California and Jonathan Clubs – and the couple resided for many years in Berkeley Square in an expansive home designed by noted architect Gene Verge.

Following Willis Hunt's death in 1940, Nelle Hunt moved out of the Berkeley Square home and relocated to Beverly Hills for several months. By July of that same year, possibly with

²² "Will Command Sweeping View: Oakmont Mansion to be Set in the Highlands," *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1916.

²³ "Plans Completed to Give Los Angeles World's Greatest Botanical Park," *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1927.

the assistance of Paul Williams,²⁴ she had selected a lot to her liking in the recently-subdivided Block 32 of Brentwood Park for a new permanent residence.²⁵ Nelle Hunt commissioned Williams to design a one-story, single-family residence with attached garage – a marked departure from her former Berkeley Square mansion. According to records in the architect's project files, Hunt later asked Williams to design an addition to the home in 1946 that does not appear to have been completed. She remained in the home until her death in 1955. In 1956, the property was sold to William Armistead, who commissioned Williams to make improvements to the property in 1966. The Armistead family owned the property until 2002. There were two other owners before it was acquired by the current owner in 2008 who intends to demolish the residence.

E.P. Dentzel

For the construction of the Hunt Residence, Williams worked with builder E.P. Dentzel. Edward Paul Dentzel, known as "E. P.", was a prominent building contractor and developer who played a significant role in the early development of Beverly Hills and the surrounding area. Born in 1881 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Dentzel was the son of a second-generation German carousel artisan who had come to the United States in 1864 to install the first carousel at an American amusement park in Philadelphia. Edward Dentzel and his brother, William, both worked in the family carousel business and continued to maintain the operation following their father Gustav's death in 1908. The Dentzel Carousel Company specialized in carousels featuring elaborate, hand-carved wooden horses, and the company became well-known for the quality of their design and construction.²⁶ In the years following his father's death, Edward Dentzel traveled widely to supervise the construction of carousels across the country. In 1909, Dentzel relocated to San Diego to oversee the installation of an amusement concession for the Panama-California Exposition, which was held in 1915-1916.²⁷ Dentzel later returned to Philadelphia, where he met and married Emma Schaefer in 1920. Once more, Dentzel relocated west to Santa Monica with his wife, where he supervised the installation of several carousels and concessions created by the family for oceanside amusement parks in Venice, Ocean Park, and Santa Monica.

Shortly thereafter, the carousels were destroyed by fires. Edward Dentzel made plans to again return to Philadelphia, but his wife, Emma, who had fallen in love with California, refused to leave. Instead, she proposed Dentzel try his hand at real estate development, suggesting that he "buy some property, build a house and see if he could sell it."²⁸ It was not long before Dentzel sold his first home, and in the midst of the population boom of the 1920s he found a ready market for real estate development work. Dentzel likely benefitted from his background in craftsmanship and construction, and he concentrated his early development efforts in upscale areas where such qualities would be especially appreciated by potential residents. He was one of the earliest builders to purchase and develop property

²⁴ Historic Resources Group interview with Karen Hudson, December 16, 2013.

²⁵ Building permit records reflect some initial confusion over street numbering due to the pending property assessment. Initially, the property was listed as 641 Oakmont Drive – the same initial street number as its neighbor, present-day 15 Oakmont Drive, before being corrected to 633 Oakmont Drive. Eventually, the street was re-numbered and the property became known by its present-day address of 7 Oakmont Drive.

²⁶ "Page 2 of Dentzel Carousel History," <http://www.dentzel.com/coloringbook/story/story2.htm> (accessed December 2013). For additional biographical information on E. P. Dentzel, see also "E. P. Dentzel, Ex-Mayor of Beverly Hills, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 1961.

²⁷ Ancestry.com records were consulted to confirm some details of Dentzel's relocations.

²⁸ "Council Kids: How do former mayors live on after they're gone?" *Beverly Hills Weekly*, March 1-March 7, 2012, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/83279156/Council-Kids-How-do-former-mayors-live-on-after-they-re-gone-Beverly-Hills-Weekly-Issue-648> (accessed December 2013).

in Beverly Hills, and in the early 1920s Dentzel embarked on a largely speculative campaign of development in the city, purchasing tracts of land which he would then subdivide and develop with houses he constructed. Among his developments were small groupings of houses on North Alpine Drive, North Beverly Drive, and Greenway Drive. The quality of Dentzel's craftsmanship defined the character of his homes, which were frequently purchased by prominent well-to-do Angelenos and celebrities, including Ruth Fairbanks, mother of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and actress Marion Nixon. By the mid-1920s, only several years after he entered the real estate business, real estate agents were touting E. P. Dentzel's association with a property in the same manner in which they advertised prominent architects, declaring that "Dentzel-built means best."²⁹

Dentzel's growing reputation attracted the attention of the architecture community, and he embarked upon enduring collaborations with several prominent Southern California architects, including Robert Derrah and Paul Revere Williams. While Dentzel worked with Derrah on a number of residential projects in Beverly Hills,³⁰ his professional association with Williams extended beyond residential work. Although Dentzel did serve as contractor for Williams on many of his upscale residential designs,³¹ he continued to work with Williams as the scope of work for both men evolved during the 1940s. During the World War II era, both men turned their attention to large-scale housing projects, and in 1942 Dentzel served as contractor for Williams' Hacienda Village public housing project in Watts. Dentzel later partnered with George H. Whyte, Jr. to serve as contractor for the Imperial Courts complex, which was constructed in 1944, under the firm of Dentzel & Whyte.

Although Edward Dentzel's later career is not fully documented, it is believed that he retired from his active involvement in real estate development in the mid-1940s, following the construction of Hacienda Village and Imperial Courts. It is likely that he did so in order to focus increasingly on public service in his adopted hometown of Beverly Hills. Dentzel, who had been active in Beverly Hills city politics and had served on the City Council since 1933, was elected Mayor of Beverly Hills in 1945. Although Dentzel served only one term because he opted not to seek re-election, his term as mayor was well-received, in part because of his background in property development. The *Beverly Hills Citizen* published an editorial in 1946 encouraging residents to vote for Dentzel should he seek re-election: "[Dentzel] is familiar with large construction projects, having carried on many during the war. He knows costs and he knows material," the editorial said. "He knows the fiscal setup of Beverly Hills and he is familiar with all those things like zoning, protection of our restrictions and the other things that we in Beverly Hills have come to cherish and hold priceless. To lose the value of his experience at a time like this would be a major mistake and a stupid one on the part of Beverly Hills voters."³²

Although he refrained from seeking public office again, Dentzel remained an active and involved resident of Beverly Hills until his death in 1961. Over the course of his lifetime, Dentzel's role in the development of Beverly Hills was significant, spanning nearly four decades and including the construction of over 100 homes across the city.³³ The quality of his work defined the architecture of Beverly Hills and confirmed the reputation of the city

²⁹ Classified ad for a "Dentzel-built bungalow," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1926.

³⁰ "Council Kids."

³¹ "Hacienda Village, Los Angeles, CA" <http://www.paulwilliamsproject.org/gallery/hacienda-village-los-angeles-ca/> (accessed December 2013).

³² "Council Kids."

³³ "Council Kids."

as a desirable place to live. Dentzel's collaboration with some of Southern California's most prominent architects, including Paul Revere Williams, extended his influence beyond the limits of Beverly Hills and demonstrates his significance as both a builder and a developer.³⁴

Conclusion

The Hunt Residence at 7 Oakmont Drive is eligible for designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument. It is an excellent, intact, and notable example of a Traditional Ranch style residence with Regency Revival details by master architect Paul Revere Williams. The builder, E.P. Dentzel, was a prominent Southern California builder and developer, and his involvement in the project speaks to the high quality of the project. The Hunt Residence was designed specifically for the site and to suit the needs of Mrs. Hunt, while reflecting Williams' aesthetic and the development of his design theories in the middle years of his career. Extraordinary care was taken in the siting of the residence on the lot, and it exhibits the quality of design and detail for which Williams is known.

Paul R. Williams was born and raised in Los Angeles, received his education and training at local institutions, and the vast majority of his work is located in Southern California. Williams is inextricably linked with the architectural development of Los Angeles in the early to mid-20th century and therefore his work has a particular significance to this city. As an African-American, Williams was a pioneer in the field of architecture. The "improbability of Williams' success and its apparent singularity during a time when the majority of American society severely discriminated against African-Americans"³⁵ speaks to both his talent and perseverance. In 1923 Williams became the first African-American member of the American Institute of Architects, and in 1957 he was inducted as the AIA's first African-American fellow.

Over the course of Paul Williams' career, Los Angeles changed from a smaller provincial city to an internationally recognized trendsetter in commerce, entertainment, technology, lifestyle, and architecture. The architectural practice run by Paul Williams was one of Los Angeles' major firms, significant for the design of many building types, including public buildings, housing, churches, and hotels. Williams is also significant for the way in which he responded to, mirrored, and adapted his designs to major cultural, technological and demographic trends in Los Angeles. This aspect is seen particularly in the evolution of his approach to housing. From the large mansions for the notable Hollywood and society elite of the 1920s and 1930s, he diversified by applying his talents to public, mass produced, and smaller housing for the average person. In this context, his adoption and creative adaptation of the Ranch House as it was emerging in Southern California as a type in the 1930s is an important part of the significance of his multi-faceted career. The Mrs. Willis Hunt Residence is a key part of that story as Williams applied his design skills, honed in large traditional mansions, to the creation of smaller, high quality, less formal houses appropriate to the changing times. It is an example of how Williams kept his designs up to date by addressing contemporary architectural issues. The Ranch style played a significant role in the development of Southern California. Because of their relatively small size (in terms of today's real estate market), Ranch Houses in today's key upscale areas are extremely

³⁴ E.P. Dentzel's son, Carl, served on the Los Angeles Municipal Arts Commission and the Cultural Heritage Board with Paul Williams. The two worked together on many municipal arts programs.

³⁵ Wesley Howard Henderson, *Two Case Studies of African-American Architects' Careers in Los Angeles, 1890-1945: Paul R. Williams, FAIA and James H. Garrott, AIA* (Dissertation: University of California, Los Angeles, 1992), 73.

vulnerable to demolition for larger houses. This threatens the historic record that Ranch Houses represent.

Despite Williams' significant contributions to the Los Angeles architectural landscape, his extraordinary architectural skill, and his importance as a pioneering African-American architect there is no comprehensive record of extant examples of Williams' work. Without proper identification, documentation, and recognition, the work of this important architect will continue to be lost. According to Karen Hudson, Williams designed approximately 50-60 residences in Brentwood and Westwood.³⁶ His work on the Westside of Los Angeles has not been fully documented to date, and a number of these properties have been demolished. There are fifteen properties designed by Williams that have been designated Historic-Cultural Monuments. Of these, eight are single-family residential, two are multi-family residential, and five are institutional or commercial. The residential works primarily represent prominent commissions from the 1920s and 1930s.³⁷ However, Williams had a long, prolific career that spanned more than five decades and there are many facets to his work. To recognize only the largest or most glamorous commissions would be an injustice to Williams' work and career. Historic resources designated for their association with Williams should reflect the depth and breadth of his ground-breaking architectural practice. The Hunt Residence represents an important aspect of Williams' work that has not yet been fully recognized.

³⁶ Historic Resources Group interview with Karen Hudson, December 16, 2013.

³⁷ There is only one other designated HCM by Paul Williams that is a single-story residence from this period.

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November 5, 2013

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CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

CASE NUMBER: **CHC-2013-3539-HCM**
7 OAKMONT DRIVE

Per Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 22.171.10 (a), I, as Director of Planning, hereby initiate consideration of the above-referenced property as a proposed Historic-Cultural Monument worthy of preservation. The property appears to be a significant example of the work of noted African American architect Paul R. Williams.

Enclosed is a copy of Section 22.171 through Section 22.171.18 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code so that you may be apprised of the procedures followed by the Cultural Heritage Commission in considering and declaring properties as Historic-Cultural Monuments. Please note that Section 22.171.12 provides for a temporary stay of demolition permits when the matter is under consideration by the City for designation as an historical or cultural monument, and that no site, building or structure on the property shall be demolished, substantially altered or removed, regardless of whether a permit exists, pending final determination of potential Monument status. Also, the owner of any site, building, or structure under consideration is required to notify this Commission in writing whenever application is made for a permit to demolish, substantially alter or remove any such site, building or structure.

The Cultural Heritage Commission will conduct an inspection tour of the above-referenced property on **November 21, 2013** between the hours of 12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Please note that because of the nature of the site visit, it is not always possible to pinpoint an exact arrival time to your property. Please contact Lambert Giessinger, with the Office of Historic Resources, at (213) 978-1183, to further discuss specifics of the inspection tour and designation process. After the inspection tour, the matter will be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting for final review by the Commission and, if declared, will be heard by the City Council's Planning and Land Use Management Committee, which will make a recommendation to the City council to confirm or deny the Commission's action.

MICHAEL J. LOGRANDE
Director of Planning

Attachments: Cultural Heritage Commission Ordinance
ZIMAS Parcel Profile Report

c: Councilmember Mike Bonin, Eleventh Council District
Department of Building and Safety
GIS