



## HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE REPORT

Nicole Hernandez, MFA, City Architectural Historian

1426 Alta Vista Road

Santa Barbara, California

**Designation Status:** Added to the Historic Resources Inventory in 2014

**Assessor Parcel Number:** 029-100-002

**Constructed:** 1919

**Architect:** Wallace Neff, FAIA

**Architectural Style:** Dutch Colonial Revival

**Property Type:** Single family residence

**Original Use:** Single family residence



**Property Description:** Dutch Colonial Revival, one-and-one-half story house with an original one-car garage with service spaces, recently attached to the house by a breezeway. The detached combined garage/guest house is newer (post World War II) and not original to the parcel. The house has a steeply pitched gambrel roof with shed dormers (three on west side and two on east side). There is a tall, stucco chimney on the rear elevation. The open ends of the side facing gambrel roof are clad in wood clapboards, while the front and rear portions of the roof are covered in composition shingles. Stucco clads the walls of the first floor of the house. Fenestration is comprised of single pane wood casement windows, with the exception of the rear triptych window that has a single fixed pane flanked by two diamond shaped, leaded glass, casement windows. The distinctive, wood panel front doors is adorned with iron hardware, including iron straps and door handle.

The brick terrace, its stuccoed parapet, stucco retaining wall parallel to the north side of the house and stucco garden wall abutting the house at the northeast corner are original.

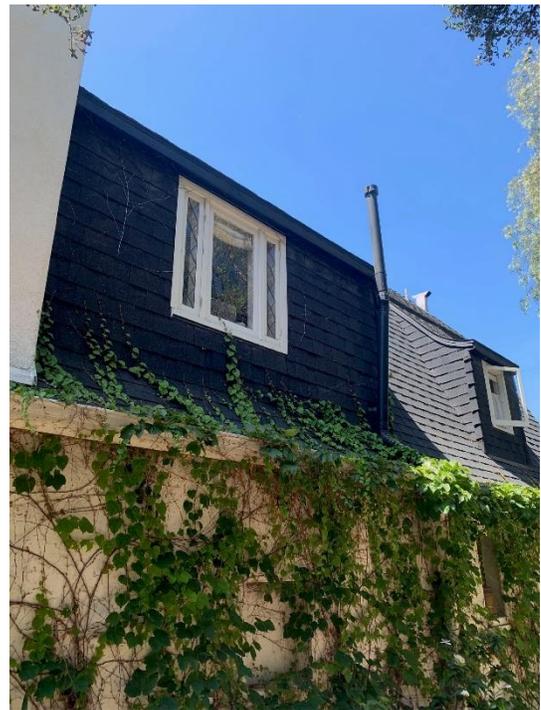


**Significance:** City of Santa Barbara establishes historical significance as provided by the Municipal Code, Section 30-157-025. Any historic building that meets one or more of the five criteria established for a City Landmark, or a City Structure of Merit can be considered significant. The structure may be significant as a Structure of Merit per the following criteria:



### **Historic Integrity**

The Dutch Colonial Revival house is in good condition. It has had some alterations most notable on the exterior is the replacement of the diamond pane leaded glass (one set remains on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor). In 1921, some of the windows were already failing due to the weight of the leaded glass as cross bracing was added to strengthen them. Because almost all the leaded glass was replaced with single pane casement windows early in the life of the building, it has become a feature significant in its own right. There are only two casement windows with the leaded glass remaining. The building conveys integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling and association so that it is able to convey its original, 1919 appearance.



**Criterion 3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, architectural style or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic or historic value, or represents a significant and distinguishable collection whose individual components may lack distinction; )**

The house at 1426 Alta Vista Road and its architect Wallace Neff were featured in a 1921 article in *California Southland* magazine entitled, “A Small California House by Wallace Neff” (see attached).

Only window that retains the diamond pane casement windows

The Dutch Colonial Revival was popular in the United States from 1895-1915. The style recreates the style used in the brief period of Dutch colonization in Albany, New Amsterdam (New York) and along the Hudson River in 1600-1840.

In the City of Santa Barbara, the Dutch Colonial Revival was unique and there are only a few examples. This was partially due to the popularity of the Mediterranean, Craftsman, and Spanish Colonial Revival Styles in Santa Barbara at this time. It was, however, still a key part of Santa Barbara’s

architectural repertoire, and examples can be found in the Lower Riviera neighborhood.

The Dutch Colonial Revival Style at first sought to loosely reflect, then ultimately to precisely recreate, the Colonial styling. The homes are highly symmetrical and differ significantly from many of the other popular architectural styles throughout the City of Santa Barbara. This structure, constructed in 1919 has the following character-defining features of the Dutch Colonial Revival style:

- **Roof:** Side Gambrel Roof covered in composite shingles encompassing the second floor with shed dormers
- **Wall Materials:** stucco on the first floor
- **Chimneys:** Tall stucco chimney.
- **Windows:** predominantly wood frame, single light, casement, on the second floor, one picture window retains its flanking, diamond paned, leaded glass, casement windows.
- **Door Details:** Wood plank doors with iron hardware

**Architect Wallace Neff (1895-1982):** More detail about Wallace Neff can be found in the attached excerpt from the book *Wallace Neff, Architect of the Golden Age*. Known as one of the greatest residential architects of Southern California in the 1920s through the 1940s, this was the first house Wallace Neff designed in Santa Barbara. The MIT trained architect began practicing architecture after World War I. Neff studied architecture under one of the most noted architects in the United States, Ralph Adams Cram in Massachusetts before returning to his birthplace of California to work as a shipyard draftsman. He designed the house at 1426 Alta Vista Road as a weekend retreat for his mother. It was completed in conjunction with local noted architect William Edwards. The architects took full advantage of the view of the ocean from the hillside, Lower Riviera property, placing the house at the highest point and providing the generous brick terrace for outdoor living. Neff's work was routinely acknowledged in professional and popular journals and magazines. He immediately drew critical acclaim for his



Above: 1505 Alameda Padre Serra. Designed by Wallace Neff in 1921

unique approach to Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean (Italian) imagery. During his more than five decades of practice, Neff was adept at incorporating changing national tastes in architecture. He thus was able to design successfully in several styles, including French Norman, English Tudor, California ranch and modernist, but continued to apply Mediterranean themes throughout his career. As stated by Kelly Weimert in the article. “Meet the Architect of California’s Golden Age Wallace Neff”. Neff’s unique architectural voice became increasingly popular, catching the eyes of many elite and famous clientele, including Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks who commissioned Neff to redesign their mansion, dubbed Pickfair, which became among Neff’s most famous works.

The architect moved to Pasadena to make it easier to serve his growing list of wealthy clients, designing mansions throughout the neighborhoods of Beverly Hills, San Marino, Chapman Woods, and other exclusive areas in lower East Pasadena. Today, Neff’s mansions are still in demand among celebrities, with the likes of Bob Newhart, Madonna, Diane Keaton, Brad Pitt, and Jennifer Aniston having purchased his homes. In addition to mansions, Neff was also famous for designing the Bubble House, a dome-shaped structure comprised of reinforced concrete cast over an inflatable balloon. Neff’s Bubble House design was intended as a form of inexpensive housing and while it didn’t gain much recognition or traction in the U.S., the design was used as a model for large housing projects in Brazil, West Africa, and Egypt during the 1940s and 1950s.

**Conclusion:** Because the house, constructed in 1919, embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Dutch Colonial Revival style that is unique in Santa Barbara and represents the work of master architect Wallace Neff, the house qualifies to be a historic resource under Criterion 3.

**Work Cited:**

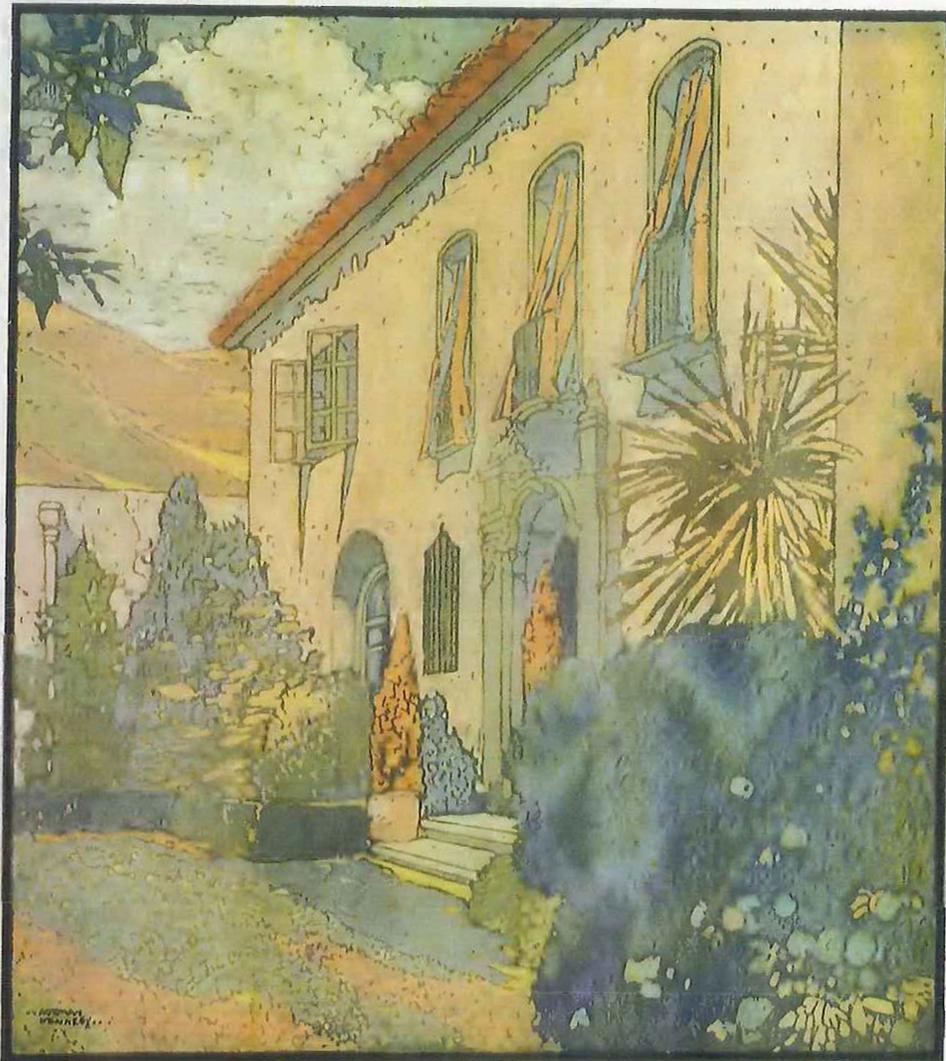
Clark, Alison. *Wallace Neff, Architect of California’s Golden Age*. Santa Barbara: Hennesey + Gills. 1986

Ritz, Jessica. “A Spotlight Shines on Wallace Neff, an Architect Loved by Celebrities and AD (architectural Digest).” July 8, 2020. [www.ArchitecturalDigest.com](http://www.ArchitecturalDigest.com). Accessed August 11, 2021.

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# CALIFORNIA SOUTHLAND



*A Gold Medal House - Reginald Johnson, Architect*

*Rendered into Color by Norman Kennedy*

1921

THE USE OF NATIVE FLORA

By D. W. COOLIDGE

PEOPLE generally have no conception of the wealth and beauty of our California flora. One could have a most beautiful garden if planted to carefully selected natives alone. Not to mention all the many beautiful native conifers, no large planting is complete that does not include a number of specimens of our matchless California Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and Incense Cedar (*Libocedrus decurrens*); and the borders can be wholly planted with evergreen shrubs and trees. Does anyone know of more beautiful and glossy foliage than that possessed by our native wild cherry (*Prunus terrifolia*) the island type, and (*Prunus ilicifolia*) of our mainland? And our charming mountain lilacs (*Ceanothus*) for either foliage or flowers can hardly be surpassed by any exotics.

A matter of great interest to botanists is the fact that upon Catalina and the Channel Islands most distinct species and varieties of shrubs and trees are found. Among the more notable are *Ceanothus arboreus* and *C. arboreus hybridus*, both of these plants having much larger foliage and trusses of beautiful blue flowers than their mainland cousins. Yet *C. thyrsiflorus*, *C. spinosus* and many other mainland species are of equal value to the border.

Again referring to the so-called Mountain lilac (*Ceanothus*) it is a peculiar fact that while these shrubs are only indigenous to the Pacific Coast, it remained for the French horticulturists to produce some most beautiful hybrids of many gradations of color, deep blue, lavender, mauve, rose pink and white. These hybrids flower practically all through the summer months and should be seen much more frequently in our gardens.

AT Robinson's, the Art Needlework Department has instituted a system of class work which is so popular that it is to be passed on to patrons out-of-town. This month the busy workers gathered around the tables on the second floor are interested in the new, knitted slip of a sweater, sleeves covering the elbows. Directions are herewith given and any questions asked of CALIFORNIA SOUTHLAND, Pasadena, will be answered by personal letter or in the October number.

Instructions for Knitting Slipover

**Body:** With No. 4 needles cast on 100 sts. Knit 15 ribs plain. Narrow evenly across to 73 sts. With No. 7 needles begin pattern st. on wrong side of work as follows: 1st row: Purl. 2nd row: K 1, yarn over needle, \*K 3 pass the first st. of the 3rd over the other 2. Yarn over needle. Repeat from \* ending row k 3, and pass 1st st. over the other 2. 3rd row: Purl. 4th row: \* K 3, pass the 1st st. over

A SMALL CALIFORNIA HOUSE By W. S. NEFF



SITTING ROOM OF HOUSE WHOSE PLAN IS GIVEN BELOW. DESIGNED BY C. W. NEFF OF NEFF & EDWARDS, ARCHITECTS

the other 2, yarn over needle. Repeat from \* Repeat from 1st to 4th row inclusive for all the work. Knit pattern st. for 10 inches. Cast on 30 sts. at each end of work for sleeves. Work pattern st. for 5 inches. Knit 55 sts. and take off onto safety pins. Bind off 23 sts. for back of neck and on remaining 55 sts. knit as follows: Knit pattern st. and increase 1 st. at neck edge 14 times. Take off onto safety pins and work other side to this point. Cast on 6 sts. at center and join sides. Work until sleeves measures 11 inches across. Bind off 30 sts. at each end for sleeves. Knit pattern st. for 10 inches to match back. Increase evenly across to 108 sts. With No. 4 needles knit 18 ribs plain and bind off.

**CUFF:** Pick up sts. at bottom of sleeve. Knit 2 ribs plain. Finish edge with picot also around neck.

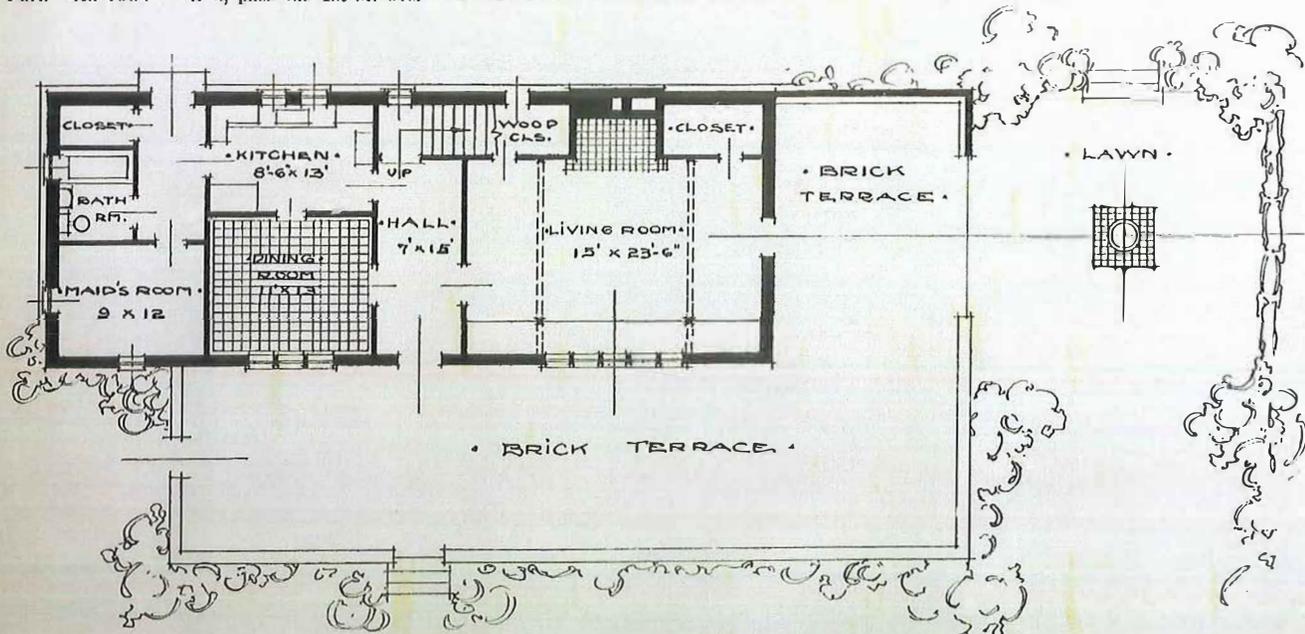
Sew up, having left side of plain ribs open to lace up with cord and tassels. Cast on 5 sts. and knit plain strip to put around neck. Finish with tassels. Bear Brand Yarn at Robinsons.

THIS quaint little English home is on a hillside overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

The architecture is typical "Half Timber" construction; and, as in the oldest English examples, the framing timbers extend the full thickness of the walls. Throughout the construction, an endeavor was made to reduce the architecture to its simplest form; mouldings, cornices and all forms of ornamentation were omitted, leaving merely an organic structure where each member has a definite purpose in the construction. To anybody not acquainted with this type of work, it is surprising how restful and at ease the mind becomes on entering the house.

The living room is beautiful in its simplicity. Turquoise blue curtains, old grey woodwork and oriental rugs give the room a delightful mingling of old style and comfort.

One of the features of the house is the fireplace, where huge eucalyptus logs are burned and the best meals cooked. The wood closet is next to the fireplace, and is filled from the outside, thereby avoiding carrying the wood through the house.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN AND PLOT FOR A SMALL LOT. ENGLISH HOUSE DESCRIBED ON THIS PAGE AND THE NEXT BY C. W. NEFF, ARCHITECT

The kitchen, although very small, is compact and convenient. The white gas range and large black and white checked linoleum make the room very effective. The kitchen has rightly been said to be the most important room in the house. In looking through some of our well designed houses of today, it is evident that the kitchen does not receive due consideration, in many instances it is the least considered of all the rooms. This kitchen was designed for a very small family, and is 8 feet 6 inches wide and 13 feet long. In the planning a special effort was made to group together articles of furniture used in preparing food and dishes before meals and those used in disposing, clearing and storing after meals. The result is efficiency and convenience. An even temperature is maintained in the room by means of a forced draft up through the hood over the gas range. This draft carries with it all the odors from food being prepared, and keeps the air in the kitchen pure and fresh. "Eliminate all dust catchers possible," is the new sanitary cry. To accomplish this, all mouldings, cornices and trim were eliminated and the entire room gleams with enamel paint on the woodwork, walls and ceiling. The kitchen and screen porch floors are covered with inlaid black and white checked linoleum. This makes a very easy floor on the feet and, after a coat of shellac, is very easily kept clean.



KITCHEN OF THE NITE HOUSE, WHOSE PLAN IS ON THE PRECEDING PAGE. NEED & EDWARDS, ARCHITECTS, HOOPER LAMORIN BUILDING, LOS ANGELES

**STOCKING THE JAM PANTRY** By H. H. PECK

AT this season of the year the thought comes to us who, because of a little or no service in the kitchen, must exert our own efforts to fill our cellars with what we believe to be necessary for the winter's consumption—why exhaust ourselves spending hours a day over a stove during our hottest season? Here in our very midst are the El Molino Canning Co. and Braden's Preserving Co., who put up delicious preserved figs, marmalades, jam, jellies, etc., as well as canned vegetables in endless variety? Why not lay in our winter's supply from these kitchens which specialize along these lines? Braden's products are to be found at all grocers, while anything from the El Molino Canning Co. can be had by phoning Colo. 756 or visiting the cannery at 2651 Vine St., or ordering anything through *California Southland*.

AMONG the interesting exhibits of new and unusual things in the booth of "Stowell & Sinsabaugh, Advertising" at the recent Trades Exposition in Los Angeles, were some jars of jams, jellies and spiced fruits. In those sparkling glasses of delicious California conserves lies lurking a tale of a dozen years of accomplishment in the life of a woman who is a practical little dreamer.

Dorcia A. Conley is the woman in question. In 1908, she, with her husband, stopped off in Los Angeles while enroute to San Francisco from the East. Their tickets to the northern city remained unused, for Mrs. Conley discovered fruit going to waste on her cousin's ranch, and—thrifty-wise—began to make it into the most unusual conserves anybody ever tasted.

Not content with putting up the peaches, figs, grapes and other domesticated fruits, she experimented with the wild things growing over the foothills. Gooseberries, elderberries and wild grapes found themselves made into the most wonderful accompaniments of wild game, meats, and so forth.

Even as the man who makes a good mousetrap, so is the woman who makes good things to eat. Mrs. Conley was first discovered by neighbors and friends—then her fame spread far. The Pullman companies and big hotels, both in the East and West, put in large orders for her spiced figs—which she very early began to specialize in—and for other California delicacies. Then a leading dealer of Los Angeles contracted for an immense supply of her conserves, and aided her in establishing larger kitchens and locating in a more convenient spot for the hauling and shipping of her products.

Early this summer, Mrs. Conley had a large plant put at her disposal, where her work of making exceptional conserves to fill the ever-increasing demand, goes on.

Dorcia A. Conley is too level-headed even to get away from the HOME flavor of her conserves—ever to commercialize the art with which she has so well succeeded. The motto with which she started is still in force; it reads, "Quality exceeds quantity."

The quantity is demanded, however, and bigger things than ever are ahead for Mrs. Conley. Her big kitchens are humming with the preparation of thousands and tens of thousands of kits and glasses of deliciousness, her advertising agency is preparing a national campaign of publicity, and in Mrs. Conley, Los Angeles will soon sponsor another one of the big business women of the nation.

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# MRS. E. D. NEFF HOUSE

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 1919



WALLACE NEFF built his first house in 1919 in Santa Barbara as a weekend retreat for his mother. It was done in conjunction with William Edwards, who went on to become a successful Santa Barbara architect. The partners took full advantage of the view from the small hillside property, placing the house at the highest point and providing an especially generous terrace for outdoor living.

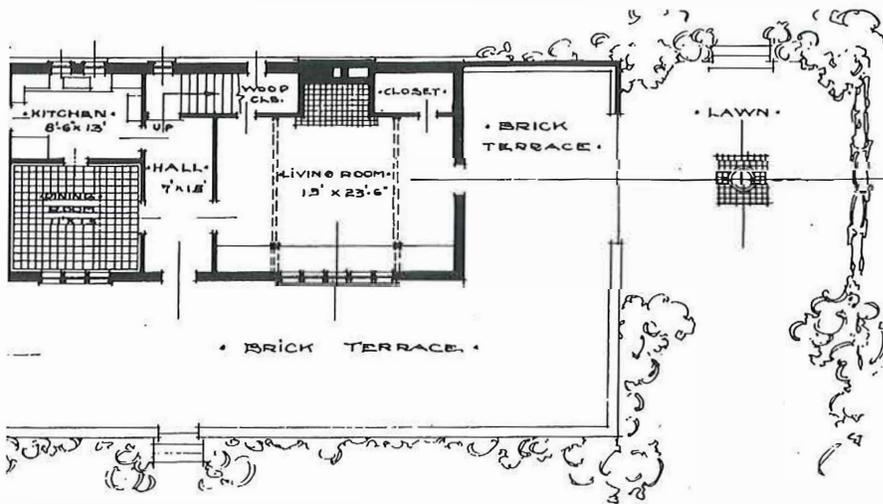
The magazine *California Southland*, which published the house in 1921, had this to say:

Throughout the construction an endeavor was made to reduce the architecture to its simplest form; moldings, cornices, and all forms of ornamentation were omitted, leaving merely an organic structure where each member has a definite purpose in the construction."

The rear wall of the living room continues into the exterior space to shield the brick terrace from the street, a curiously modern touch for 1919. At the other end of the house stood a separate cubistic unadorned garage.

*California Southland* called the living room "beautiful in its simplicity" and noted the fireplace "where huge eucalyptus logs are burned and the best meals are cooked." In an interview late in life,<sup>1</sup> Neff recalled that the design of the little house evolved around this fireplace, which was so characteristic of many he designed through his long career. The rest of the living room shows knowledge of and admiration for the work of the turn-of-the-century English arts-and-crafts architects.

1. References throughout the text to interviews with Neff refer to three interviews which the author conducted in 1978.



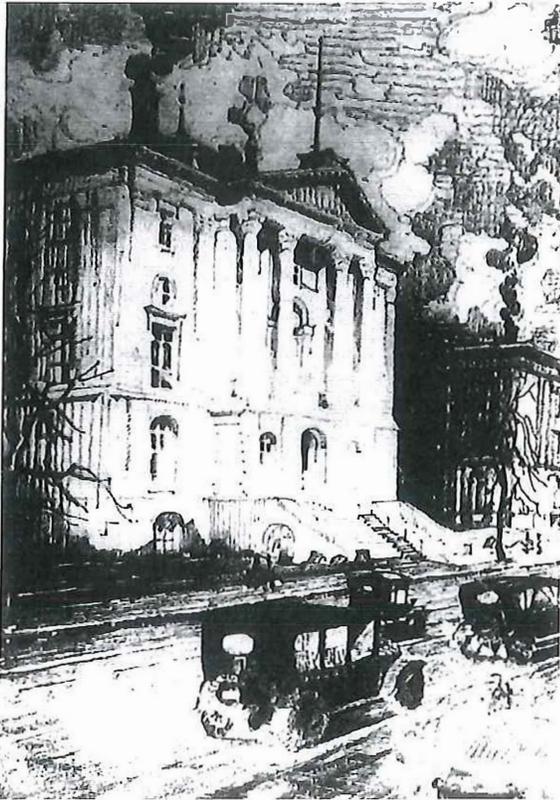
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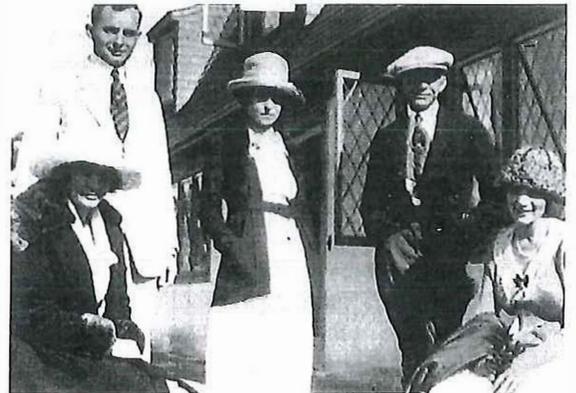
*One of nine drawings by Neff executed in 1917 and published in the MIT yearbook Technique in 1918.*

with his class if the United States had not entered World War I in the spring of 1917. Never intensely political and almost never belligerent, he did not rush to get into the service. He had lived in Germany and had friends there with whom he corresponded. Some correspondence which has survived was from Peter Paul Muller, his old art teacher, and also from Muller's daughter, who wrote frequently.<sup>21</sup> Throughout his life women found Neff attractive and apparently Fräulein Muller was no exception. She complimented him on his proficiency in German (the correspondence was carried on in that language) and assumed that he was as anxious as she was that Germany should soon emerge victorious from the war. Neff, who found it difficult to disagree with people, let that assumption remain unchallenged; but the correspondence ceased a year after his return to California.

Neff left MIT and returned home after the end of the spring semester of 1917. Not relishing the idea of being drafted into the army, he looked for employment in the defense industry. He found a job at the Fulton Shipbuilding Company in Wilmington, a seaport city about forty miles from Altadena. The company was making wooden ships (to save steel, which was in short supply) to carry cargo to Europe. Neff was employed as a mold loftier and also as an estimator. He made the long commute back and forth to Altadena each day on an "Indian" motorcycle, stopping on the way home at the campus of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles to take classes in naval architecture.<sup>22</sup>

He stated in the Pasadena Community Book<sup>23</sup> that he continued this employment until 1920. Neff never gave much thought to autobiography, so this date is probably wrong. Later he said that this employment ceased in the middle of 1919, a more reasonable date seeing that the war was over and by the end of the year he had a commission.<sup>24</sup>

His first client was his mother. When asked years later why he became an architect, he answered facetiously that his mother had virtually forced him to take up that profession.<sup>25</sup> Nannie Neff was an independent-minded woman who never employed a



*Wallace Neff's first house in Santa Barbara in 1919. Right to left: are: Miss Ruth Hoyt, later to be Mrs. Leroy Sanders; Wallace Neff's brother, Andrew, his sister, Della, Thaddeus L. Up de Graff and Mr. Up de Graff's sister, Louise Up de Graff, who was later to become the wife of Wallace Neff.*

chauffeur when other wealthy women did; she drove her own car all over California. Her closest friend was her Altadena neighbor Kate Crane Gartz, an heiress to the Crane plumbing fortune.

Nannie Neff had purchased a lot in Santa Barbara and wanted to build a weekend cottage. While her son's design for the little house was well arranged to provide for contemporary California living, it also reflected his years in Europe and revealed a knowledge of and admiration for the English Arts and Crafts movement. Like his mentor Cram, like virtually the entire American architectural profession of the time, Neff used history as a source of inspiration in design. During the decades of the forties and fifties, when the modern movement gained wide philosophical acceptance, history was supposed to have been abolished. Eclectic architects, who refused to accept this sweeping modernist assumption, were ignored. But within the last decade or two the post-modernists have reinstated history and eclecticism has lost its pejorative connotation.

Today the eclecticism of the early twentieth century is viewed with growing respect. In 1971, Richard Pratt described the famous Chicago practitioner David Adler as the "last of the great eclectic architects."<sup>27</sup> Pratt assumed, of course, that this approach to architecture had been permanently discarded. But by 1979, Vincent Scully declared "the whole thing had turned right around... the present architectural stance is based upon an inclusive rather than an exclusive view of architectural truth, and it values eclecticism."<sup>28</sup> Scully was writing a foreword to Howard Barnstone's invaluable study of the work of the Houston architect John F. Staub. He went on to hope that Barnstone's book would "encourage the critical reevaluation of many other eclectic architects in the years to come." Such reevaluation has continued.

Henry-Russell Hitchcock spoke in 1929 of "an eclecticism of style intelligently restrained by rationalism" rather than "the dark night of the triumph of an eclecticism of taste" through which the country had passed in the post-Civil War period.<sup>29</sup> Neff was educated and began his practice during an era when "eclecticism of style intelligently restrained by

rationalism" was the dominant force in American domestic architecture. As Barnstone wrote in his book on Staub:

To use the term eclectic to describe a period of architectural history is somewhat misleading, since eclectic activity—selecting elements from preexisting sources and applying them in a new context, is a constant factor in architectural production at any time. Instead we want to propose the notion of an eclectic sensibility, a general intellectual disposition in forming an architect's approach to borrowing.<sup>30</sup>

While Neff was building his first house, the architectural historian Fiske Kimball was writing:

To sum up current tendencies in the design of the country house, we need only emphasize its fundamental character of simplicity. There are no rooms not in everyday use, there is no ornament, even no 'architecture' and fundamental expression for which even the parvenu learns to strive—is that of unpretentious decency and comfort.<sup>31</sup>

By the second decade of the twentieth century, American architects had become skilled in the design of what the architectural press referred to as the "country house," but which, like as not, referred as well to the suburban house. The distinguished East Coast architect and writer, Aymar Embury II, stated in a 1923 issue of *Architectural Forum*:

The past year has seen no outstanding achievements... there has been a steady and continuous progress toward both better knowledge of traditional styles and a more sympathetic adaptation of their elements to modern uses.... The ability in many American offices to blend and combine apparently irreconcilable historic elements has been due more to a very thorough knowledge of the elements themselves than to any other fact.

Writers who favored eclecticism detected a slow but steady evolutionary progress perhaps even more satisfactory because it was, as Embury put it, unconscious:

The main difficulty twenty years ago was regarded as that and so little... Charles Klauder executed a number of antiquities, with an architect alike on closer examination exact adherence not the rule.<sup>32</sup>

Embury proposed would gradually lead to a culture comparable in the final development, perhaps uncertainty into what pronounced national school."

In hoping for this school, the proposed architecture did nothing regional movement of these movements critics discussed in how many regional merit each possess the new century, no

One of the most in Philadelphia, were evolving a re the local Pennsylvania Kimball and others of Frank Lloyd Wright movement was of to be ranked as a re

One of the most was found in California out the state's unique Its early houses had or even from pattern stylistic reference. Turning to eclectic architecture that Fiske Kimball even no 'architecture' the architects whom