



## Preliminary Determination of Eligibility

### Gillette-Brown Ranch California

Draft Review Copy  
March 2007





**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

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16 May 2007

Reply To: NPS070424A

Woody Smeck, Superintendent  
Santa Monica National Recreation Area  
401 West Hillcrest Drive  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360-4207

Re: Section 110 Determination of Eligibility for Gillette Ranch, Santa Monica National Recreation Area, Los Angeles County, CA

Dear Mr. Smeck:

Thank you for your letter of 6 April 2007, seeking consensus on the determination of eligibility for the Gillette Ranch pursuant to Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The NPS has determined that the Gillette-Brown Ranch is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

The NPS determined the Gillette-Brown Ranch was significant under Criterion A and under Criterion C. However, the property does not retain sufficient integrity to its period of significance and is not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. The period of significance for the ranch is from 1926-1952 and the following buildings and features were evaluated:

1. Gillette Residence, 1928
2. Garage, 1929
3. Cook's House, 1928
4. Stable, 1928
5. White House, 1928
6. White House Garage, 1928
7. Brandt House
8. Brandt House Garage
9. Frisk House, 1927
10. The pond and dam, circa 1928
11. Barbeque, circa 1928 or 1929
12. Concrete Bridge, 1928 or 1929
13. Swimming Pool, 1937
14. Tennis Courts, circa 1937
15. Cistern and Reservoir ruins

I concur with this determination.

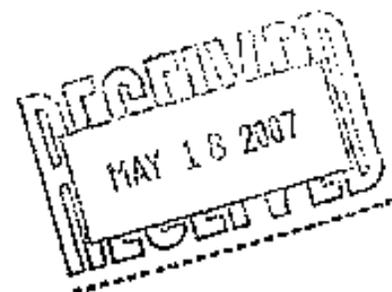
Thank you for considering historic properties as part of your project planning and I look forward to consultation on future projects. If you have any questions, please contact Amanda Blosser of my staff at (916) 654-9010 or e-mail at [ablosser@parks.ca.gov](mailto:ablosser@parks.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

*Susan K Stratton for*

Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA  
State Historic Preservation Officer

MWD:ab





United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area  
401 West Hillcrest Drive  
Thousand Oaks, California 91360-4207

H3819(SAMO)  
April 6, 2007

Mr. Milford Wayne Donaldson  
Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Parks and Recreation  
P.O. Box 942896  
Sacramento California 94296

Dear Mr. Donaldson:

In accordance with Section 110 of the NHPA, we are seeking a consensus on the preliminary determination of eligibility for the Gillette Ranch located in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, in Calabasas, Los Angeles County, California.

The document that served as the basis of that evaluation is enclosed. Entitled: *Gillette-Brown Ranch, Preliminary Determination of Eligibility*, the report contains a summary historic context, building inventory and evaluation, documentation and evaluation of the historic designed landscape, and preliminary statement of significance.

Although the property has a long history, the period of significance for this evaluation is limited to the years 1926 to 1952. These dates reflect the period when the property was purchased by King Camp Gillette—founder of the Gillette Razor Company, through ownership of the property by Hollywood movie director Clarence Brown. King Gillette and his wife hired Southern California Architect Wallace Neff to design their new home and developed the property as a gentleman's ranch. Neff designed and built three buildings, including a stable (1928), garage (1929), and large residence (1928). In addition to seven permanent buildings constructed in the first three years, the ranch had relatively extensive ornamental grounds employing several stylistic conventions associated with estate and landscape design in Southern California in the late 1920s including two formal axial gardens, a manmade pond, an entrance allée, and approximately 340 acres planted with trees, flowers, and shrubs collectively reflecting the quintessential country estate in Southern California during this era.

Gillette died shortly after the ranch was completed, and the property was sold to Hollywood director Clarence Brown in 1935. Brown hired Neff to design some changes to the residence, and added a swimming pool, tennis courts, and landing strip for small planes. He hosted parties for friends and business acquaintances including many of Hollywood's leading movie stars, and even used the property for filming his own movies. In 1952, Clarence Brown retired from the film industry and sold his Calabasas Ranch.

Based on historical research, field documentation, and evaluations, the historic structures and designed landscape associated with King Gillette and Clarence Brown are historically significant under National Register Criteria A for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to broader patterns of history, and Criteria C as the distinctive work of a master designer, possessing high artistic merit (the historic designed landscape, and historic architecture).

Although we believe the property has historical significance, and in some ways still reflects the historic character of the Gillette-Brown eras, the majority of resources that comprised the significant designed landscape and all of the Wallace Neff buildings historically associated with the property no longer possess physical integrity. Virtually all of the impacts to integrity are the result of subsequent development on the property by different owners, and in many cases, major modifications to the structures and grounds to accommodate new uses. In this regard, all of the original Wallace Neff buildings have been highly altered and, in our opinion, no longer retain integrity of material, design, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association to be individually eligible to the National Register. A few structures do remain from the historic period with integrity (for example, the bridge over the Stokes Creek drainage channel, the White House and White House Garage, and the masonry barbecue structure) but these structures are not unusual or unique enough to meet the criterion for listing as individual structures.

The landscape, which was evaluated in terms of the historic design and the stylistic components that defined it, retains fragments of the original plan and design (historic entry system, spatial organization, some views, use of natural systems) but no longer retains the distinctive gardens and ornamental plantings around the building complex, key patterns and relationships throughout the property, and the materials that comprised the distinctive style of the design.

Because of these alterations and losses, we are seeking your concurrence that the individual buildings designed and constructed by Wallace Neff and others for King Gillette and the designed landscape from the period of significance 1926-1952, are not eligible for listing in the National Register

As mentioned above, the property has a long and complex history dating to early use by the Chumash people who had a village on the site, through the era of missions, Spanish land grants, early settlers following the Homestead Act, estate development in the 1920s, to Hollywood in the 1930s, and various non-profit and private owners up to the present. Because of this history, the park and its partners recognize there are other periods of development that may be historically significant and merit further documentation. In this regard, it is the intent of the park and its partners that we will, in the future and pending available funding, undertake a more comprehensive evaluation and consolidate the findings in one or more formats such as a multiple property National Register nomination, archeological overview and assessment, a comprehensive cultural landscape report, and/or historic structures report for individual buildings based on proposals for adaptive reuse.

Please feel free to contact the following people if you have any questions about the review:

Cathy Gilbert, Lead, Cultural Landscape Program, Pacific West Region, Seattle, 206-220-4129, Dr. Elaine Jackson-Retondo, Architectural Historian, Pacific West Region, Oakland, 510-817-1428, Margie Steigerwald, Outdoor Recreation Planner, SAMO, 805-370-2373, Phil Holmes, Cultural Anthropologist, SAMO, 805-370-2335.

Sincerely,

  
Woody Smeeck  
Superintendent

for  
Enclosure



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Regional Office  
Seattle

909 First Ave  
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## PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE Memorandum

PWRO-CR

11 September, 2006

To: Superintendent, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area  
From: Historical Landscape Architect, Pacific West Region  
Subject: Review, Draft Document: *Preliminary Determination of Eligibility, Gillette-Brown Ranch*

Attached for review by the park and park partners is the draft report: ***Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for the Gillette-Brown Ranch, California***. This document includes an introduction, describing the background and context for this study; a Site History, documenting the physical development of the property for the period of significance 1926-1952; and the Analysis and Evaluation, which provides the basis for the determination of eligibility. This document was compiled by several people with professional expertise in the fields of history, cultural landscapes, historic architecture, archeology, historic preservation, GIS, and natural resources.

The preliminary findings in this report indicate that the historic designed landscape developed by Wallace Neff for King Gillette between 1926 and 1935, and maintained with few additions by Clarence Brown between 1935 and 1952, while historically significant, does not retain physical integrity to merit listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It is also the conclusion of this report, that while not eligible for listing, the property does retain features and attributes that reflect the historic character of the Gillette-Brown Ranch and preservation of these features can be incorporated in the planning process for education, interpretation, or compatible design and adaptive use.

It is important to note that this report is considered a draft document because it has not been reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). After park and partner comments are received on this draft, and incorporated as appropriate, we will submit the document to the SHPO for a consensus determination.

Also, please note that this document is not intended to serve as a comprehensive history of the property or as a thorough investigation of all resources. The Scope of Work for this report was predicated on a very limited level of investigation, and narrow period of historical development. The assessment addresses the historic buildings, and historic designed landscape. Concurrent with this evaluation, a separate assessment of archeological resources was conducted (under MRCA contact). The intent of the Preliminary Determination of Eligibility is to provide the park and partners with the baseline information required to support the planning process as it moves forward.

For all reviewers, please consider the following:

1. The photographs, maps, and tables used to support the narrative are referenced in the text and grouped in proximity to the reference. In the final document, some of these images will be integrated into the text, and full citations will be provided for each image. Some images may be eliminated. The document will be professionally edited.
2. The building inventory is the most detailed portion of this assessment. It has extensive documentation about the historic structures and is separated within the overall draft report by a blue divider. This was done to facilitate excerpting this information for planning purposes related to adaptive use of the buildings.

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3. Finally, Appendix A includes the manuscript: *Treatment Considerations for Historic Buildings at the Gillette-Brown Ranch*, which provides a condition assessment of the historic buildings. Information in this manuscript is based on a visual inspection conducted during one week in April, 2006. If physical work is to be undertaken on any of these structures, additional architectural condition assessments will be required.

In order to complete the submittal to the SHPO, we request *all comments be submitted no later than November 15, 2006*. Park partners, please direct your agency consolidated comments to:

Margie Steigerwald  
Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Santa Monica Mountains NRA  
401 W. Hillcrest Dr.  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320  
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Preliminary Determination of Eligibility  
Gillette-Brown Ranch, California



Prepared for

California State Parks  
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority  
National Park Service

2007

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Art Eck, Director, Santa Monica Mountains Fund  
Mike Malone, Interpreter, SAMO  
Tarja Sager, Biological Technician

## Photo Credits

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Clarence Brown era photographs are courtesy of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

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## Introduction

This report serves as the basis for a preliminary determination of eligibility for the Gillette-Brown Ranch located in Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, California. The report includes a site history, documentation and evaluation of historic structures, and an evaluation of the historic designed landscape associated with the development of the property between 1926 and 1952. Additionally and as part of the scope for this project, a condition assessment for the historic buildings was completed to support the planning process addressing potential adaptive use of the property. This information is included in Appendix A in this report.

The Gillette-Brown Ranch property is currently owned and cooperatively managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, the National Park Service, and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. A preliminary evaluation of cultural resources (1992) identified a potential National Register Historic District, comprised of seven contributing structures, and unspecified “elements” of both designed and vernacular rural landscapes that also may contribute to the district.<sup>1</sup> This evaluation, while useful, did not provide the level of research needed to critically assess National Register eligibility, nor did it document the full range of cultural resources to a level that meets National Register criteria and recordation requirements. Without this information, park managers and partners with responsibility for long-term stewardship of this property do not have the critical information required for future planning and preservation of significant cultural resources.

## Site Location and Description

The historic Gillette-Brown Ranch is located within the former 588-acre Soka University property.<sup>2</sup> Located in the Calabasas area of Los Angeles County and situated just east of Malibu Creek State Park and Las Virgenes Road, the landscape is characterized by relatively flat oak-ringed meadowlands, valley oak savannah, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and rolling hills on the southern and eastern portions of the site. The 588-acre Soka University property has twenty-five permanent structures built between 1927 and 1989 clustered in the core ranch area and another cluster of structures in an area called Mountain View, located just south of the ranch cluster. In addition to the historic buildings, there are several other structures on the property that are part of the original landscape plan and date to the Gillette-Brown era such as a large constructed pond, formal courtyard and terrace, bridges, circulation systems and designed entry structures (walls, gates, and formal drive).

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<sup>1</sup> Historic Resources Group, *Cultural Resources Evaluation and Analysis of Project Impacts*, Soka University of Los Angeles, September, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> The original Gillette-Brown Ranch covered 360 acres overlapping the former Soka University property. Of the 360 acres, 219 acres are within the property today. The remaining portion of the historic ranch was located on the north side of the Mulholland Highway. See description of study boundaries.

The property has a long and complex history dating to early use by the Chumash people who had a village on the site, through the era of Missions, Spanish land grants, estate development in the 1920s, to Hollywood in the 1930s, and various non-profit and private owners up to the present. The site was most recently owned by Soka University of America, and was comprised of seven original parcels patented from the United States Government to various individuals between 1899 and 1917.

This report is focused on just one era in this long history, beginning with the purchase and development of the property in 1926 by King Camp Gillette—founder of the Gillette Company. Gillette commissioned Southern California architect Wallace Neff to design his estate. Neff was, at the time, regarded as the foremost architect working in Southern California. Renowned for his use of adobe and mastery of Spanish Revival architecture, he had, by this time, designed and built the homes of several Hollywood celebrities. Gillette wanted a gentleman's ranch and used a portion of the property as a working ranch to grow hay and apples and graze cattle. In addition to seven permanent buildings constructed in the first three years, the ranch had relatively extensive ornamental grounds including two formal axial gardens, a manmade pond, an entrance allée, and approximately 340 acres planted with trees, flowers, and shrubs collectively reflecting the quintessential country estate in Southern California during this era. Although Gillette died shortly after the ranch was completed, the next owner, Hollywood director Clarence Brown, continued to develop the property after he purchased it in 1935. In 1937 he added a swimming pool and tennis courts. He also added a landing strip and hanger for small planes, hosting parties for friends and business acquaintances including many of Hollywood's leading movie stars. Brown continued to use a portion of the property as a working ranch, removing an apple orchard Gillette had planted to grow corn and hay, and even used the property for filming his own movies. In 1952, Clarence Brown retired from the film industry and sold his Calabasas Ranch.

Today the property retains many of the resources associated with the original design of the Gillette-Brown estate along with other developments undertaken by subsequent owners on ten individual parcels of land including the original Gillette property.

### **Scope and Methodology**

The scope of work for this report was developed in early 2006. The scope focuses on three tasks: defining the historical context and documenting the physical development of the ranch between 1926 and 1952; completing an inventory and evaluation of the historic structures and designed landscape associated with this era and, based on this research and evaluation, conducting an assessment of integrity and preliminary determination of eligibility for the property.

This information is essential to the current planning process as the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (park), park partners, and the public consider options for appropriate adaptive use of the property. Because of time constraints associated with the planning process and public scoping, the level of investigation for this report is *limited* and builds on existing research and available information whenever possible. In addition, and with the exception of archeological resources, the evaluation of historic structures and cultural landscape features focuses on the resources associated only with two potential periods of significance: 1926-1935 (Gillette/Neff Era), and 1935-1952 (Clarence Brown/Hollywood Era).

It is important to note, however, that during the research phase of this project, the team identified other periods of development and use that may be historically significant and merit additional documentation and evaluation. Based on other park resources documents this may take the form of a multiple property National Register nomination, archeological overview and assessment, a comprehensive cultural landscape report, and/or historic structures report for individual buildings based on proposals for adaptive reuse.

The project team for this evaluation was comprised of park and regional staff including a project historian, park planner, historical landscape architect, botanist, historical architect, GIS specialist, and architectural historian. Archeological work associated with this project was contracted under the supervision of the park Cultural Resources Specialist.

The team began project work March, 2006 with a site visit to the property. A preliminary reconnaissance helped the team identify study boundaries, sources, and priorities for historical research, existing baseline maps, resource data, and a refined work plan for completing the assessment. Three weeks were spent conducting research and compiling baseline data. In addition to archives located at Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, several regional libraries and special collections were contacted. Key among these were the Huntington Library, Los Angeles, California which holds the Wallace Neff drawings for the Gillette estate; the Whittier Fairchild photographic collection, the aerial photographs at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the collection at the University of California Los Angeles all of which hold a number of useful aerials of the property dating to the historic period; and the photographic collection at the Hoskins Library, Special Collections, University of Tennessee Knoxville which holds a portion of the Clarence Brown papers. The Los Angeles County Records Department provided documentation of building permits issued for the property dating back to the 1930s. In addition, Historic Resources Group, Hollywood, California, allowed this project team access to their research files for the cultural resources evaluation they conducted in 1992 for Soka University.

All information was synthesized and fieldwork completed in May, with the team meeting in early June to consolidate findings and coordinate materials for this report.

## **Project Boundaries**

The 588-acre Soka University property acquired by the park and partners contains 219 acres of the original 360-acre Gillette-Brown Ranch. The remaining 141 acres of the original ranch holding are located on the north side of the current Mulholland Highway, adjacent to the current entry to the property. Within the context of this report, the 588-acres of the former Soka University provides the environmental setting for the historic property. (Fig. 1)

The focus for this report however, and the boundary for the cultural resource evaluation is the 219 acres of the original ranch within the former Soka University property, and public jurisdiction. This constitutes the core development and designed landscape that historically defined the Gillette Ranch between 1926 and 1935, and the Clarence Brown Ranch between 1935 and 1955. The remaining 141 acres that was part of the original ranch (on the north side of Mulholland Highway) was primarily used for agriculture. If a National Register district is considered for the property at some future date, inclusion of these 141 acres should be considered. (Fig. 2 & Photo 1)

This report does not document or evaluate architectural or landscape resources at Mountain View.

## **Terminology**

Because the property has a relatively diverse and large number of owners over several years, building names and historic associations within the property are not always evident or consistent. For example, the Seminary, constructed by the Claretians was renamed Minuteman Hall during the Soka University era, and assigned a building number. While useful for facility management, these designations have no historic context. In order to clarify and simplify the use of multiple names for individual structures, this report uses the historic name and/or historic association for the building. In every case the [current] building numbers are noted parenthetically for reference. For example, the cottage and garage (bldgs. #10 and #11) are now referred to as the *White House* and *White House Garage* –named after the individual who occupied this residence during the period of significance. Finally because this report assesses the significance of the property through two eras—King Gillette (1926-1935) and Clarence Brown (1935-1952), the name of the property used in this report is the *Gillette-Brown Ranch*, rather than the more common Gillette Ranch.

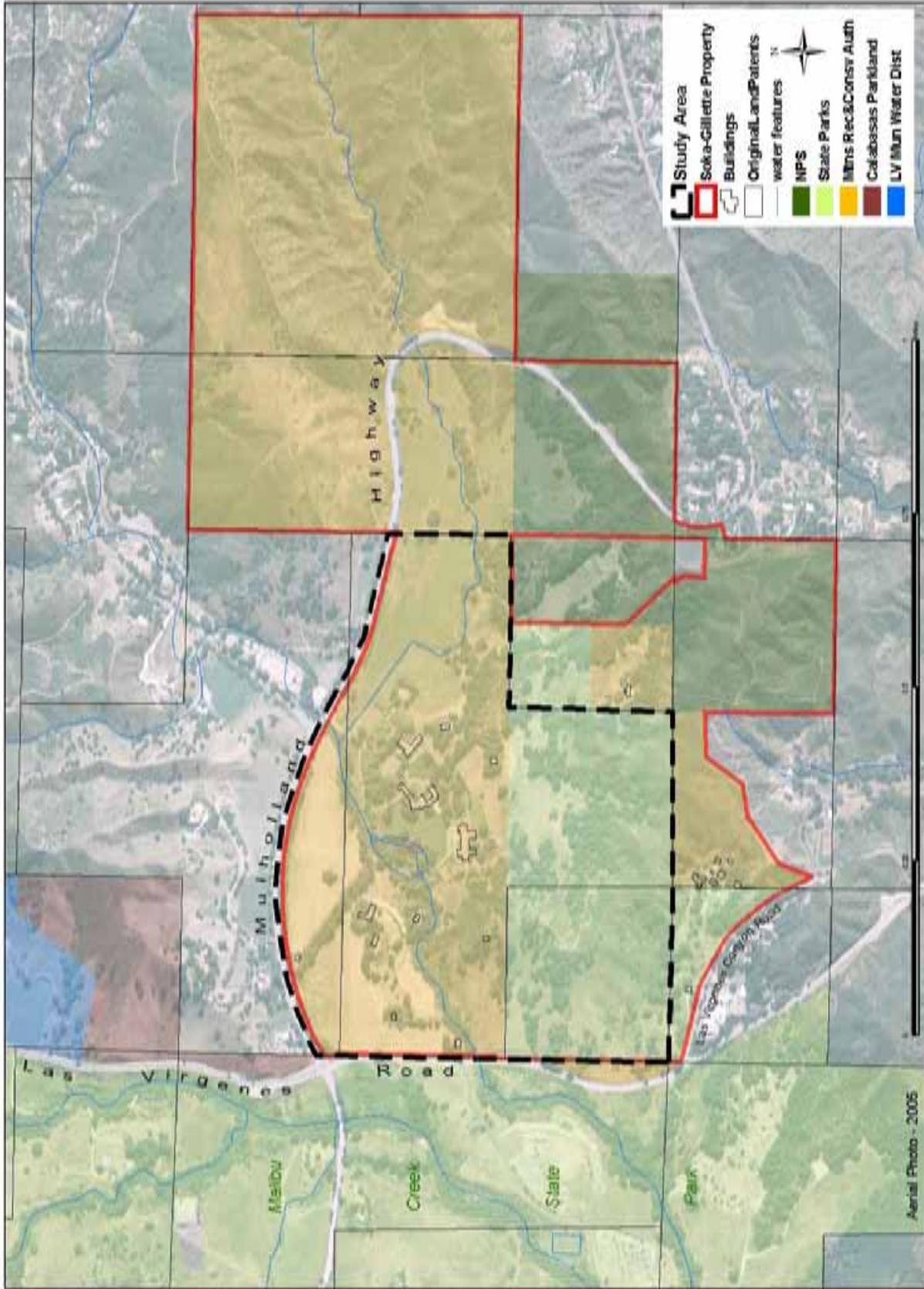


Figure 1. Study Area Boundary

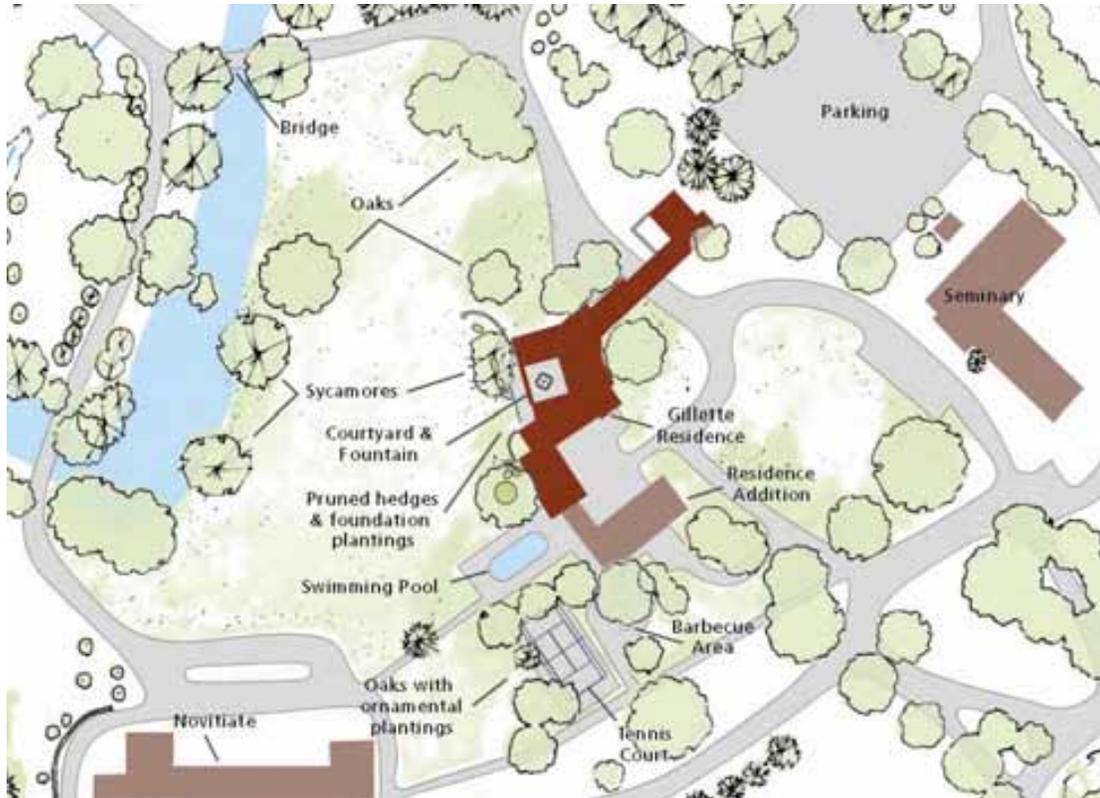


Figure 2. Detail of Existing Condition Map (2006) depicting the core area around the Gillette Residence (bldg.3). Light brown color indicates a non-historic building or addition.



Photo 1. Oblique view of detail area looking east. The Seminary building is in the middle foreground. Gillette Residence on the left. (April, 2006)

## Summary of Findings

Based on historical research, field documentation, and evaluations, the historic structures and designed landscape associated with King Gillette and Clarence Brown are historically significant under National Register Criteria A for their association with events that have made a significant contribution to broader patterns of history, and Criteria C as the distinctive work of a master designer, possessing high artistic merit (the historic designed landscape, and historic architecture).

Although the property has historical significance, and in some ways still reflects the historic character of the Gillette-Brown eras, the majority of resources that comprised the significant designed landscape and are historically associated with the property no longer possess physical integrity. Virtually all of the impacts to integrity are the result of subsequent development on the property by different owners, and in many cases, major modifications to the structures and grounds to accommodate new uses. In this regard, all of the original Wallace Neff buildings have been highly altered and no longer retain integrity of material, design, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association to be individually eligible to the National Register. A few structures do remain from the historic period with integrity (for example, the bridge over the Stokes Creek drainage channel, the White House and White House Garage, and the masonry barbeque structure) but are not unusual or unique enough to meet the criteria for listing as individual structures. The landscape, which was evaluated in terms of the historic design and the stylistic components that defined it, retains fragments of the original plan and design (historic entry system, spatial organization, some views, use of natural systems) but no longer retains the distinctive gardens and ornamental plantings around the building complex, key patterns and relationships throughout the property, and the materials that comprised the distinctive style of the design.

Because of these alterations and losses, the individual buildings designed and constructed by Wallace Neff for King Gillette and the designed landscape from the period of significance 1926-1952, are determined not eligible for listing in the National Register.

The report that follows provides the baseline information and documentation that is the basis of this preliminary determination, including a summary statement of significance on pages 215-220. A building inventory on pages 59-81 describes and evaluates each of the individual historic structures. This document also includes a cultural landscape analysis and evaluation on pages 77-89.



## **Existing Conditions**

### **Environmental Setting**

The Gillette-Brown Ranch is located on the northeast side of the Santa Monica Mountains, approximately five miles southwest of Calabasas, California in Los Angeles County. The site occupies a broad alluvial terrace on the middle reach of the Malibu Creek watershed. This terrace is formed at the point where Las Virgenes Canyon is joined by two other narrow canyons—Liberty Canyon from the northwest and Stokes Canyon from the northeast—before it widens into a small valley. (Fig.3)

The intermittent streams which drain these tributary canyons all come together within this valley and meander through its rolling terrain for a mile or more before joining Malibu Creek in the southwest portion of the valley. Malibu Creek itself enters the valley from the west through the chasm of Triunfo Canyon, which it cut through the "Craggs". The hills encircling this valley are generally steep but not very high; averaging about 1000 feet above sea level (the valley floor is about 500 feet above sea level). The valley has deep, alluvial soils with abundant water from a relatively high water table and the perennial flow of nearby Malibu Creek.

### **Access and Circulation**

The Gillette-Brown Ranch is located at the intersection of Las Virgenes Road and the Mulholland Highway. Primary vehicular access to the property is restricted off of the Mulholland Highway which runs generally east to west along the northwest boundary of the property. Las Virgenes Road follows the west property line functioning as the primary north-south corridor through Malibu Canyon between Highway 101 and the Pacific Ocean.

Vehicles enter the property, passing through a gate and opening in the wall. Immediately on the left (east side) of the entry drive is a non-historic guardhouse (1989). From this point, the historic entry drive is straight and grand, following under an allée of eucalyptus trees remaining from the historic period. (Photos 2, 3) The road bisects open fields past a cutoff road to the Stable and White House, and another cut-off road to the Novitiate building, before crossing a bridge over the pond. From here the road follows the historic curvilinear alignment around the toe of a slope and turns south up the hill to the Gillette Residence and automobile court on the southeast side of the Gillette Residence.

Secondary roads include several access roads off of the entry drive including an historic road to the Garage and Cook's House from the automobile court, and an historic road to the Stable and White House (native plant nursery). Another access road constructed when the Novitiate was built in 1960, spurs off of the entry drive, following an historic service road along the pond, before crossing the pond on a concrete dike/causeway and continuing up the slope

to a parking lot at the Novitiate. Access to the Seminary building is also tied to the main entry drive on the east side of the historic bridge and watercourse. This road routes traffic to a parking area, extending both out to Mulholland Highway, and looping east up the hill providing access to tennis courts and further south, the Seminary building. A smaller loop road between the Seminary and the Gillette Residence creates a common or campus quad between the two buildings.

## Vegetation

Natural vegetation at the property is highly influenced by climate, exposure, and terrain. The topography across the small valley is gently rolling between the hills on its eastern and southern borders. Mixed hardwood forests of oak, bay laurel, and madrone tend to grow in the drainages, in shadowed pockets on the sides of the valley, and along the base of the steeper slopes, with chaparral and scrub plant communities in the drier areas. Many valley oak and live oak trees still grow along the edges of the cultivated fields. On the higher slopes a short distance above the foot of the hills, the vegetation gives way to a dense chaparral dominated by chamise and ceanothus. Chaparral dominates on the eastern side of the valley around Stokes Canyon, where the southern exposure creates drier conditions. The hills that form the southern wall of the valley are heavily wooded almost to the summit.

Seven native plant communities have been identified on the Soka University property including 1) Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub, 2) Buck Brush Chaparral, 3) *Ceanothus crassifolius* Chaparral, 4) Valley Oak Woodland, 5) Southern Coast Live Oak Woodland, 6) Sycamore Alluvial Woodland, and 7) Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest. In addition, several non-native species have been introduced. These include grasses, introduced as a result of agriculture, eucalyptus, and a variety of ornamental plantings within the developed area and associated with the landscaped grounds.<sup>3</sup> (Photos 4, 5)

In addition to terrain, these dramatic contrasts in vegetation are influenced by the mild Mediterranean climate and rainfall pattern in the region. Only about 24 inches fall each year, and nearly all of this comes between November and April. The remaining months are consistently dry and hot. Where the soil is deeper and sheltered from the intense sun, evaporation is slow and the land can sustain more verdant growth. Where the soil is thin and exposed, however, the moisture from these sporadic rains is quickly lost, and only drought tolerant species can survive.

Ornamental vegetation on the property includes remnants from the period of significance—such as the allée of eucalyptus trees along the entry drive and scattered palm trees, Cypress trees, and assorted fruit trees. (Photos 6, 7) Although some historic plant materials have been identified using historic photographs, to date, a comprehensive list of plant materials used during the

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<sup>3</sup> *Biological Resources Inventory and Planning Recommendations for Soka University*, John P. Rieger and Associates, 1988. On file, SAMO.



Figure 3. Aerial depicting the location and physical character of the study area. (Source: Google Maps, 2006)



Photo 2. Non-historic guardhouse located just inside the entry gate. View looking southeast. (April, 2006)



Photo 3. Rows of eucalyptus trees from the original design remain along the historic entrance road to the Gillette Residence. (April, 2006)



Photo 4. Most of the native vegetation located in the developed area of the ranch has been significantly impacted by agricultural use over many years. View of the eastern portion of the property, looking northeast. (April, 2006)



Photo 5. In several areas of the 1928 site plan, existing vegetation—such as oak trees located throughout the valley, were incorporated in the design of the ornamental grounds. View looking west towards the Cook's House. (April, 2006)



Photo 6. Non-native ornamental vegetation such as palms were used in the historic design. (April, 2006)



Photo 7. While these fruit trees do not date to the historic period, some fruit trees do remain from historic orchards located in the western portion of the property. (April, 2006)

historic period has not been located. Based on the apparent age of the ornamental plants on the property today, the majority of plant materials appear to post-date the period of significance. (See Table 1, Fig.4)

Table 1

**Gillette-Brown Ranch  
Existing Conditions  
Trees and Shrubs Located in the Building Core  
May 2006**

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>
<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	Tree of Heaven
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry Tree
<i>Buxus</i> sp.	Boxwood
<i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i>	Horse-tail She Oak
<i>Catalpa</i> sp.	Catalpa
<i>Cedrus deodora</i>	Deodar Cedar
<i>Cotoneaster</i> sp.	Cotoneaster
<i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	Monterey Cypress
<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i>	Italian Cypress
<i>Eucalyptus cladocalyx</i>	Eucalyptus
<i>Eucalyptus sideroxylon</i>	Eucalyptus
<i>Feijoa sellowiana</i>	Pineapple guava
<i>Fraxinus</i> sp.	Ash
<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	Ginkgo
<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	Toyon
<i>Juglans</i> sp.	English walnut graft on <i>Juglans californica</i>
<i>Juglans californica</i>	California Walnut
<i>Ligustrum lucidum</i>	hedge around tennis court
<i>Magnolia</i> sp.	<i>Magnolia x soulangiana</i> cultivars
<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Magnolia
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	Mahonia Golden Abundance
<i>Malus</i> sp.	Crabapple
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	Oleander
<i>Photinia</i> sp.	Photinia
<i>Pinus halapense</i>	Aleppo pine
<i>Pinus muricata</i>	Bishop Pine
<i>Pittosporum</i> sp.	Pittosporum
<i>Platanus racemosa</i>	Sycamore
<i>Populus balsamifera</i>	Cottonwood
<i>Phormium tenax</i>	Giant Flax
<i>Prunus</i> spp.	almond, cherry, peach, and plum
<i>Prunus ilicifolia</i>	Hollyleaf Cherry
<i>Prunus lyoni</i>	Ornamental Cherry
<i>Pyracantha</i> sp.	Pyracantha
<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	Coast Live Oak
<i>Quercus lobata</i>	Valley Oak
<i>Raphiolepis indica</i>	Indian Hawthorne
<i>Ulmus parvifolia</i>	Chinese Elm
<i>Umbellularia californica</i>	Bay
<i>Opuntia</i> sp.	cacti spp.
<i>Washingtonia robusta</i>	Washington Fan Palm

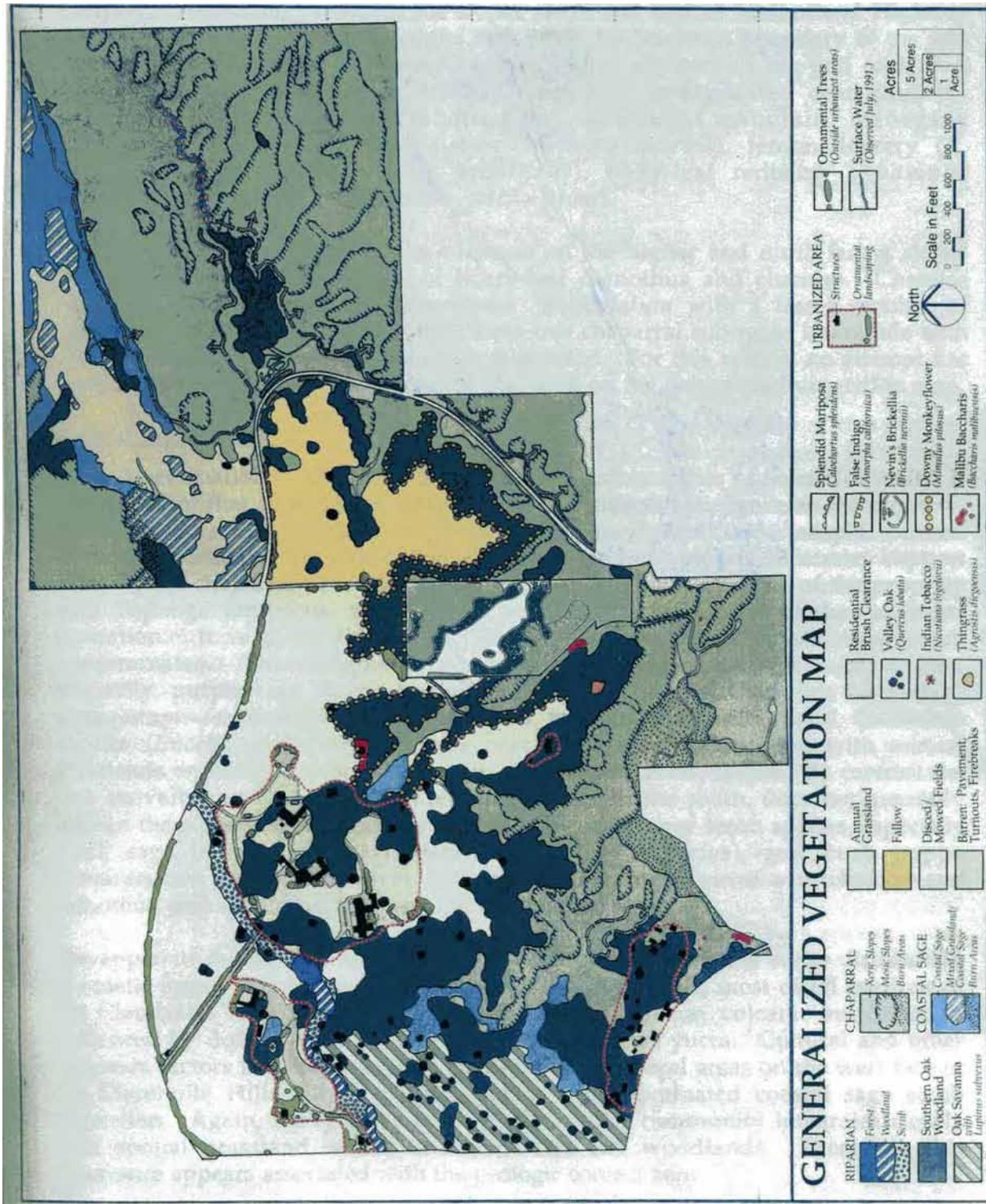


Figure 4



## **Structures**

There are over twenty primary buildings on the property, constructed between 1927 and 1989. Thirteen of these buildings are clustered in the core ranch area. Of these, nine date to the historic period (1926-1952) and are the focus of this report. Eight other structures, clustered in an area called Mountain View located within the property but south of the Gillette-Brown Ranch cluster, are not addressed in this report. In addition to the primary buildings, there are a variety of other structures on the property that date to the historic period including circulation features, a manmade pond, formal courtyard, vehicular bridges, an outdoor masonry barbeque, and designed entry structures (walls, gates, and formal drive).

Currently all of these structures function in support of operations and programs for Soka University. (See Table 2, Fig. 5)



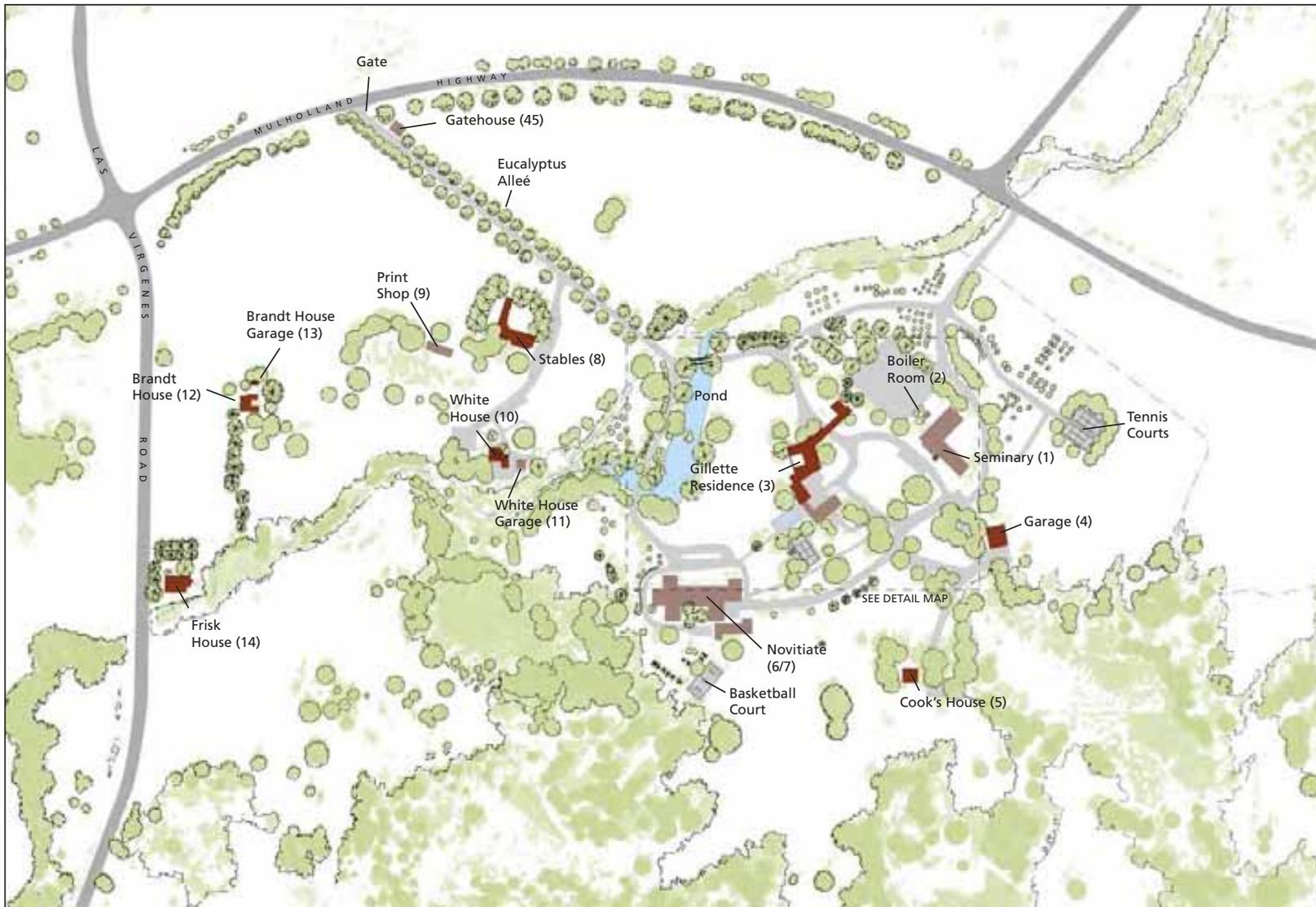
Table 2

**Buildings  
Gillette-Brown Ranch  
Identification Data**

Building Name	Addressed in this Report		Current Bldg. No.	Soka University Name (Current Primary Use)	Alternate Names (Historic Association)	Year Built	Area (Sq. Ft) 1992 EIR
	Yes	No					
Seminary		X*	1	Minuteman Hall (Assembly & Dormitory)	(Claretians)	1955	24,008
Boiler Room		X*	2	Mechanical / Laundry	(Claretians)	1955	440
Gillette Residence	X		3	Central Hall (Staff Quarters/ Reception)	Main House (Gillette/Brown/Neff)	1928	26,610
Garage	X		4	Faculty Residence (Grad Student Housing)	Garage (Gillette/Brown/Neff)	1929	3,150
Cook's House	X		5	Faculty Residence (Grad Student Housing)	Cook's House (Gillette/Brown), Meadow House (Claretians)	1928	1,845
Novitiate		X*	6/7	Wisdom Hall, (Classroom, Dining & Kitchen)	(Claretians)	1960	21,519
Stable	X		8	Stable	(Gillette/Brown/Neff)	1928	5,882
Maintenance shop		X	9	Barn, (Maintenance Shop)	Print Shop (Claretians)	Ca. 1970	2,400
White House	X		10	Dwelling – (Botanical Research Center)	White House/Cottage (Gillette/Brown)	1928	1,000
White House Garage	X		11	2 Car Garage (Seed House)	(Gillette/Brown)	1928	400
Brandt House	X		12	Dwelling (vacant)—on Las Virgenes Rd.	Gillette/Brown)		
Brandt House Garage	X		13	1 Car Garage (vacant)	(Gillette/Brown)	1927	200
Frisk House	X		14	Dwelling (vacant)— on Las Virgenes Rd.	(Gillette/Brown)	1927	2,400

\* This structure is not addressed in Analysis and Evaluation: Building Inventory and Evaluation because it was constructed after the period of significance for this DOE. This building is addressed in Appendix A: Treatment Considerations for Historic Buildings, Gillette-Brown Ranch.

Building Name	Addressed in this Report		Current Bldg. No.	Soka University Name (Current Primary Use)	Alternate Names (Historic Association)	Year Built	Area (Sq. Ft) 1992 EIR
	Yes	No					
N/A		X	15	Lost in the 1996 fire, was near DeCinces House	Cabin (Wickland)	1947	(900)
N/A		X	16	Building removed	N/A	N/A	0
Dwelling		X	17	Multi-Family Dwelling & Garage	MRCA Operations Center, Spensley, DiCinces	1959	4,939
N/A		X	18-26	Trailer Classrooms that were removed by Soka University	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A		X	27	Barn. Burned in the 1996 fire	Saddle House (Cohn)	1922	(350)
N/A		X	28	Barn, Burned in the 1996 fire	Outbuilding	n.d.	(800)
N/A		X	29-32	Trailer Classrooms that were removed by Soka University	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A		X	33	Classroom removed by Soka University	N/A	N/A	N/A
Craft Room		X	34, 35	Craft Room, Mountain View (MV)	MRCA, 34 - Outbuilding - 35 Residence (Tobias)	n.d./ 1948	(392)
N/A		X	36, 37	Buildings Removed	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dwelling		X	38	Dwelling, (Mountain View)	MRCA, Residence (Cohn)	1938	1,500
Storage Shed		X	39	Storage Shed, (Mountain View)	MRCA, Outbuilding (Unknown)	n.d.	800
Dwelling		X	40	Dwelling, (Mountain View)	MRCA	1936	1,500
Pool House		X	41, 44	Pool House / Dressing room, (Mountain View)	MRCA	1938/ 52	1,000
Garage		X	42	4 Car Garage, (Mountain View)	MRCA	n.d.	1,250
Dwelling		X	43	Dwelling, Mountain View	MRCA, (Cohn)	1936	2,000
Guardhouse		X	45	Guardhouse (entrance gate)	(Soka University)	1989	611



Site Map  
 Gillette-Brown Ranch  
 Existing Conditions  
 2006

- LEGEND**
- EUCALYPTUS
  - OAK
  - SYCAMORE
  - CONIFER
  - HISTORIC STRUCTURE
  - NON-HISTORIC STRUCTURE



Sources  
 Google Aerial Imagery, 2005  
 Microsoft Aerial Imagery, 2005  
 Field Survey, 2006

Notes  
 Tree symbols noted in the legend indicate general location and composition of the major vegetation types. Not all tree species present on the site are represented with unique symbols.  
 Building numbers correspond to Soka building numbers.

Santa Monica Mountains  
 National Recreation Area

National Park Service  
 Pacific West Region  
 Cultural Landscape Program





## Site History

### Early History

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Santa Monica Mountains were inhabited by the Chumash people, whose ancestors are thought to have occupied the region for at least 9000 years. The valley at the foot of Las Virgenes Canyon is near the eastern boundary of the Chumash territory and lies along a natural transportation corridor through the Santa Monica Mountains, with Las Virgenes Creek cutting a passage through the mountains to the north and Malibu Creek to the south all the way to the sea. Both of these facts have attracted people to the area for a long time, and traces of many different cultures overlap within the same landscape. The large and socially important village of Talepop was situated here not far from the confluence of Stokes Creek and Las Virgenes Creek and is partially within the borders of the Gillette-Brown Ranch.<sup>4</sup> Talepop benefited from the abundance of natural resources in this area but it also derived importance from its strategic location along the route connecting the interior with the coast. This position closely associated Talepop with the coastal village of Humaliwu, another important Chumash village located at the mouth of Malibu Creek on the coast of the Santa Monica Mountains. The two villages were linked by a well-trafficked trail. Humaliwu was the home of the regional chief and was a social hub in the southeastern corner of the Chumash territory. This site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>5</sup>

The first known contact between Europeans and the Chumash people occurred as early 1542, when the Spanish navigator Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo visited the coastal village of Muwu at the western end of the Santa Monica Mountains. Several more brief encounters between European explorers and Native Californians occurred over the next few centuries, but none resulted in any lasting relations until 1769, when the Spanish empire began colonization of Alta California. Talepop may have been visited by members of the Portolá expedition that year as they returned from their reconnaissance of Northern California. The village was described by several other Spanish expeditions over the ensuing years and is relatively well-documented in the early historic record. The Franciscan fathers at nearby Mission San Fernando, which was established in 1797, also kept detailed records of the inhabitants of this area, though these were mostly confined to vital statistics. Talepop lay within the influence of Mission San Fernando, which intensively recruited the village inhabitants between 1797 and about 1805.

In 1801 or 1802 the Californio ranchero Bartolomé Miguel Ortega received a provisional land grant from Governor Arrellaga for the Rancho Santa Gertrudis de las Virgenes. The precise boundaries of this original grant are

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<sup>4</sup> Chester King et al., *Archaeological Investigations at Talepop* (Ms. on file, Office of Public Archaeology, Social Process Research Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara).

<sup>5</sup> Archaeologists also believe that Talepop may be eligible for the National Register, under Criterion D.

unknown, but it clearly incorporated the lower Las Virgenes Canyon where Talepop lay. Miguel Ortega, himself a Native American of *Nahua* (Mexican) descent, was personally interested in the village's inhabitants and acted as sponsor, or *padrino*, for the baptism of many of the Talepop Chumash. Ortega's wife, Maria Rosa, was a Chumash from Santa Rosa Island. By 1805 all of the Talepop Chumash had been baptized and many may have worked on Ortega's rancho. Those Indians who worked on the rancho may have continued living at Talepop, especially if Ortega's house was not far away. In 1809 Miguel Ortega died. All of the surviving Ortega family left Las Virgenes later that year to live in the Pueblo of Los Angeles. By 1817 the rancho was widely acknowledged to be abandoned, and since the original grant was only provisional, the land was considered legally vacant according to Spanish precedent. That year the Franciscans at Mission San Fernando petitioned Governor Solá to cede them the land to use as pasturage for their cattle. It is not known what happened to the village of Talepop during this time; it may have remained occupied or been used intermittently. Baptismal records from the mission indicate that at least some Chumash from Mission San Fernando were living at Talepop as late as 1824, but the village was probably not occupied much later than this.<sup>6</sup>

In 1833 two rancheros, Domingo Carillo and Nemecio Dominguez, petitioned for the grant of Las Virgenes, despite the prior claims of the mission. They argued that the land was not needed by the mission and that it had been legally vacant since Miguel Ortega's death. The Franciscans of Mission San Fernando resisted this challenge, but had suffered a political disadvantage ever since 1821, when the Mexican revolution substituted a liberal government for the Spanish imperial authority. The new government was, at best, ambivalent to the Catholic Church. In 1834 all of the California missions were secularized by order of the Mexican governor José Figueroa. This process reorganized the mission territories into parishes with churches and congregations now administered by diocesan rather than missionary priests. The mission community—the baptized Indians—became full Mexican citizens, and the extensive mission lands were divided and distributed. Most went to influential Californios of Spanish background, although the original intent of the secularization legislation was to have the property divided among former mission Indians. The Rancho Las Virgenes was granted to Domingo Carrillo and Nemecio Dominguez later that year. A survey of the grant indicates that it was bounded on the west by Lindero Canyon, on the south by Triunfo Canyon, on the east by the San Fernando Valley, and on the north by the

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<sup>6</sup> Chester King, "Sources of Knowledge of Native Societies," Chapter 2 in *Overview of the History of American Indians in the Santa Monica Mountains* (draft manuscript), 24. A team of professional archaeologists made a preliminary investigation of the Talepop site in the early 1980s and considered it "...the most intact historic village in the interior of the Santa Monica Mountains." (King, 87) The conclusions of this survey were summarized in Chester King et al., *Archaeological Investigations at Talepop* (Ms. on file, Office of Public Archaeology, Social Process Research Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara). Also see Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, *General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (Santa Monica Mountains NRA: National Park Service, 2002), 175.

Simi Hills.<sup>7</sup> This vast area may correspond to the original Ortega grant, but this is only conjecture. Las Virgenes Canyon and the old village of Talepop lay nearly in the center of it. In 1837, the Las Virgenes grant was regranted to Nemecio's father, José Maria Dominguez, and a new survey, or *diseño*, was drawn. José Dominguez established a house on the western side of the grant in Russell Valley near the mouth of Triunfo Canyon. His son Nemecio built an adobe on Las Virgenes Creek about 1.5 miles north of Talepop.<sup>8</sup>

In 1846 the United States went to war with Mexico. The U.S. victory two years later resulted in acquisition of Alta California, which was now simply called California. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, established the terms of peace and ensured that the property rights of all Mexicans choosing to remain in the lands now possessed by the United States would be respected. However, these property rights were challenged so frequently by Anglo-American immigrants to California in the years immediately following the war that the U.S. government passed the Land Title Act in 1851. This act required all Spanish and Mexican land grants to be reviewed by a federal Land Commission. Their recommendations would then be passed to the district court for final decision. If approved, the grant would be resurveyed by a U.S. government surveyor, and the grantee would receive an official patent. Because most of the decisions made by the Land Commission were challenged in the courts, the process often took decades, and the last of the California grant titles were not fully resolved until the middle 1880s.

José Dominguez filed his claim for Las Virgenes with the U.S. Land Commission in 1852. The commission confirmed his claim within two years—in 1854—and the U.S. District Court for Southern California approved this decision in 1857. An appeal was dismissed in 1858, but for unknown reasons the grant was not actually surveyed until 1882, significantly delaying the official patent. This was finally issued in 1883 on a total of 8,878.76 acres. Although still sizeable, the total area was considerably less than the original land grant and no longer included the lower Las Virgenes Canyon and the area around Talepop. The apparent reason for the change was due to a misinterpretation of the 1837 *diseño* which José Dominguez had drawn.<sup>9</sup> As a result of this error, the United States considered the land excluded by the county part of the public domain and allowed private claimants to settle. This surplus land was surveyed and opened to homesteading in 1896. Many settlers may have already moved into the area by that time, in anticipation of the courts' decision, but their claims could not be documented formally until they filed for patent after 1896. Among these early homesteaders were Edward R. and Edward C. Stokes, who first assembled and then developed the parcel that would become the Gillette-Brown Ranch.

Edward C.'s application for homestead (no. 8168) was filed on October 29, 1896. Edward R. Stokes said that he had established residence on the site in

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<sup>7</sup> King, "Sources of Knowledge," 24.

<sup>8</sup> King, "Sources of Knowledge," 26.

<sup>9</sup> King, "Sources of Knowledge," 25.

October 1882.<sup>10</sup> By 1898, he had built a 24 by 24 foot, 4 room frame house (or houses), a barn, fencing, a well, and an orchard just north of the dirt road leading up Stokes Canyon, not far from where this road met the Las Virgenes Road.<sup>11</sup> The Las Virgenes Schoolhouse stood about 2000 feet further north up Las Virgenes Canyon. Both Edward R. and Edward C. Stokes filed formal claims for approximately 160 acres each, the standard quarter section allowed by the Homestead Act of 1862. Both claims were patented in 1899, Edward C.'s on July 11 and Edward R.'s on September 29 of that year. At that time, Edward R. Stokes was 53 years old, married and had eleven children. In 1901 Edward R. Stokes formally bought out Edward C. and acquired the combined 320 acres.<sup>12</sup> Five years later he increased his acreage by another forty acres when he patented government lot #2 in Section 7, adjacent to his original quarter section. He now owned just under 360 acres at the foot of Stokes Canyon.<sup>13</sup> This parcel would remain essentially unchanged through the subsequent ownership of King Gillette and Clarence Brown. (Fig. 6)

Little is known about Edward R. Stokes, but it appears he remained in residence at his Stokes Canyon Ranch for at least a few years after receiving patent on it. By 1907 he was living in Sawtelle, just east of Santa Monica and apparently leasing the ranch. One of his daughters married George Nash, one of the witnesses who supported both Edward R.'s and Edward C.'s homestead applications. Nash was a rancher who owned land around Calabasas not far from Stokes Canyon.<sup>14</sup> This extended Stokes family controlled a sizeable quantity of land in the Calabasas area. In 1921 Edward R. Stokes signed a lease to a partnership of three men for the right to drill for oil on his ranch. The partnership dissolved five months later when apparently no oil was found. No other activity is recorded in connection with Stokes' ranch until August 25, 1926, when Stokes sold the entire 360 acres to a millionaire businessman named King Gillette, who was looking for a rural location to build the retirement home of his dreams.

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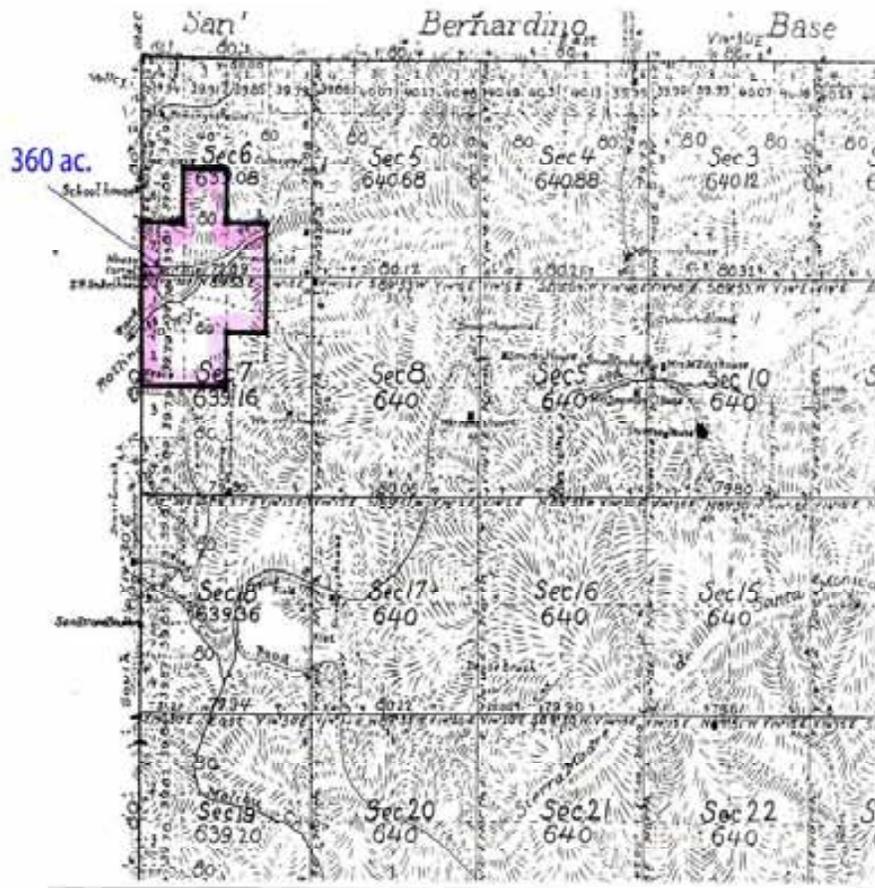
<sup>10</sup> Homestead Application no. 8639, Edward R. Stokes, Los Angeles Co., Sep 21, 1898, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

<sup>11</sup> The Stokes Ranch no longer exists, but the original ranch house belonging to Edward R. Stokes appears in aerial photographs as late as 1945 (It was demolished by 1947). Its exact location can therefore be determined. The Stokes Ranch core stood just east of the western boundary of T1S R17W and straddled the line separating Section 6 and Section 7 within that township. The 1896 survey map identified Edward R. Stokes' house in Section 7 just south of this section line. The map also shows a second, unidentified house lying in Section 6 just north of the first, which may have belonged to Edward C. Stokes. It was no longer present by 1927 when King Gillette occupied the property.

<sup>12</sup> Edward C. Stokes later appears in 1904 as a defendant before the Los Angeles deputy district attorney after participating in a horse-dealing con. He was working as a teamster on John Street at the time. "Greatest of Horse Grafts", *Los Angeles Times*, August 20, 1904.

<sup>13</sup> The exact amount was 359.37 acres since some of the sections were slightly imperfect.

<sup>14</sup> George Nash went missing in 1907 while traveling through the Stokes Canyon area. He may have been killed. "Scour Country for Rancher", *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1907.



1. 1906: Edward R. Stokes acquired final piece for 360 ac. parcel.
2. 1926 - 1935: King C. Gillette period. No change in acreage or property boundaries.
3. 1935 - 1952: Clarence Brown period. No change in acreage or property boundaries.
4. 1952 - approx. 1968: Claretians own property with no change in acreage or boundaries until 1968 (see following map for changes made in 1968).

Figure 6. Location of the Stokes Ranch in 1906, including the 360 acres.

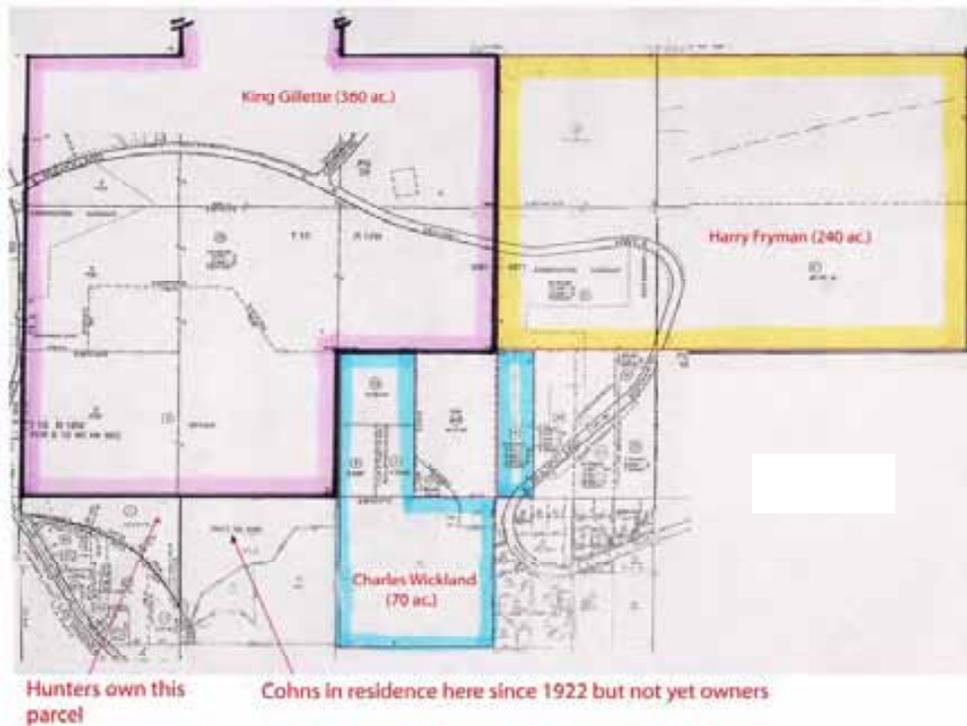


Figure 7. Property Boundaries in 1926.

## The King Gillette Ranch 1926-1935

King Camp Gillette (1855-1932) was at the time of this purchase one of the wealthiest men in America. He had made his fortune with the invention of the disposable razor blade, which the well-known company bearing his name manufactured by the tens of millions for customers around the world. Every packet of razors was wrapped in green paper printed with a portrait of Gillette himself, making his face almost as familiar as the American presidents on the national currency (after which the Gillette packaging was supposedly modeled).<sup>15</sup> When King Gillette bought the Stokes Ranch in Las Virgenes Canyon, he was looking for "...a perfect blend of Malibu without the fog and the [San Fernando] Valley without the heat." Gillette's decision to buy this particular property may have been influenced by a friend, real estate developer Charles F. Wickland, who had just purchased ten acres adjacent to the Stokes Ranch the previous year.<sup>16</sup> Wickland bought another twenty acres about the same time Gillette bought his much larger parcel. The two men's properties lay just across Malibu Canyon from the Craggs Mountain Club, an exclusive 1300 acre country club which had been established by a group of prominent Los Angeles businessmen in 1910.<sup>17</sup> (Fig. 7)

As all this activity suggests, the Santa Monica Mountains was becoming a popular place for the wealthy. This trend precedes Gillette's purchase by at least fifteen years. At first, most wealthy visitors came here for only brief excursions to amuse themselves with a taste of rustic living in remote hunting camps and later at places like the Craggs Mountain Club. Many of them built simple weekend cabins. Eventually there were several enclaves of exclusive vacation homes scattered about the area. This pattern was first noted by the *Los Angeles Times* in an article from 1907:

*Back of the Malibu Ranch in the Santa Monica Mountains lies the only government land open to entry anywhere near Los Angeles. It is rough country...Yet up in the wilderness there are homes; homes of squatters who are wresting a living from the hillsides; homes of rich men who camp there a few weeks each year to enjoy the hunting and the change from civilization back to nature.*<sup>18</sup>

The so-called squatters which the *Times* also noted were men like Edward Stokes, who had begun settling on the land as soon as the government surveyors had erroneously declared it public land (if not sooner).

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<sup>15</sup> See Appendix A for a more detailed biography of King Gillette.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Fanucchi, "Former Castle: Not Heaven on Earth but Next Best Thing", *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1968, pg. SF\_B1.

<sup>17</sup> "Clubhouse for Mountain Top" *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1910, pg. II1. Gillette is said to have been a member himself, but this has never been substantiated, and his name does not appear on the list of directors. If he frequented the club, it is more likely that he did so as a guest.

<sup>18</sup> "Wilderness is Invaded", *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1907, pg. II.1

By the 1920s, however, a new pattern was beginning to emerge as wealthy Angelenos began building more substantial homes in the Santa Monica Mountains and spending at least part of their time living on these rural estates like country gentlemen. The ability to do this required considerable wealth and job independence. More than a decade of extraordinary economic growth in Southern California had made such wealth available to a sizeable number of men. Equally important was the arrival of the automobile and development of the associated infrastructure, which made such a remote area physically accessible. The automobile allowed the possibility of living in the Santa Monica Mountains and commuting to work in Los Angeles a viable proposition. The rapid improvement of roads throughout Southern California suggests how quickly this new technology was adopted in the region and how widely it was used. In 1909, the California Legislature approved an 18 million dollar bond to pave state highways. The *Los Angeles Times* observed that the rural roads connecting Los Angeles, the San Fernando Valley and the Santa Monica Mountains were being straightened and paved as early as 1910.<sup>19</sup> In 1916 the Federal Road Act further encouraged local road projects by providing states with federal matching grants. As a result of this and other incentives, Southern California's expenditures on rural road improvements continued to increase steadily throughout the decade.<sup>20</sup>

Within the decade, there were enough good roads that one could travel easily between Los Angeles and Calabasas in a matter of hours. For the time being the roads remained essentially rural and remote to the vast majority of Southern Californians and as a result, the mountains were not in danger of large-scale development or excessive visitation. But this exclusivity, which was more a factor of chance circumstances than anything else, appealed to the economic elite of Los Angeles. As fashions among the wealthy began to change, and it became desirable to live outside the city, the Santa Monica Mountains became increasingly attractive to those with the means to move.

By the end of the decade the phenomenon of the gentleman rancher was evident throughout the area. Wealthy individuals were buying large parcels of land and ranching, not for subsistence or profit, but as a means of maintaining a rural ambience for their own entertainment and pleasure. King Gillette was among the first of these country gentlemen and helped establish the precedent, but he was soon joined by others. In nearby Cornell, for instance, the famous racing car engineer Harry Miller established his own ranch at about the same time. In the following decade many prominent members of the movie industry followed this lead and established their own ranches in the Santa Monica Mountains.

By 1927, Gillette had added two modest homes on his new property, one for his ranch foreman, Mr. A.K. Brandt, (bldg. #12); and the other for his assistant foreman, Mr. Frisk, (bldg. #14). These two buildings were located south of the original Stokes residence along Las Virgenes Road. The Frisk

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<sup>19</sup> "Rustic Clubhouse for Mountain Top", *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1910, pg. II.9

<sup>20</sup> "Three Millions for a Better Road System", *Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 1915, pg. II.1

house was a one-story building of wood-frame construction. It had a porch across the front of the building, facing the road. The Brandt House was also a one-story, wood-frame structure, but it was U-shaped in plan. The detailing on this structure indicates it may have been designed by an architect, or at least someone who had more than just utilitarian ends in mind. These details included a masonry fireplace and a tile roof which invoked a Spanish Colonial Revival character that would become the architectural style for the rest of the estate. Gillette brought Brandt and Frisk down to the new property from his Porterville ranch in the Tulare Basin.<sup>21</sup> Gillette retained most of the improvements which Stokes had made to the property and apparently kept the ranch under continuous agricultural production. Aerial photographs from the following year show that in addition to the new ranch houses, the original Stokes residence remained just off of Las Virgenes Road and another small, U-shaped structure was located about 70 feet south of the Brandt house (bldg. #12). This structure may have been associated with the Stokes period, although this is not known for sure. It is no longer extant. A large barn also stood about 125 feet east of the Brandt house. This cluster of structures at the west end of the property, together with the orchards and fields immediately surrounding them, constituted the core of the Stokes Ranch and remained the center of agricultural activities during the Gillette period.

East of this agricultural area, at the very center of the parcel, was a small knoll where Gillette himself would live. Intending to make this his principal residence, he spared no expense in building the finest home possible and commissioned architect Wallace Neff to design it.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Wallace Neff (1895-1982) was considered one of the finest architects practicing in Southern California. He helped establish one of the first vernacular styles widely adopted throughout the region, and he was sought after by some of the most prominent businessmen of the era including film industry executives and many of the leading movie stars. His graceful houses are still prized by Hollywood actors today. The grandson of Andrew McNally, famous cartographer and founder of the Rand McNally Company, Wallace Neff was born in 1895 in the small San Gabriel Valley town of La Mirada (a residential community which his grandfather had founded not long before Neff's birth). He moved briefly to the East Coast in order to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but returned to Southern California after only two years and began his architectural practice in 1919. Neff worked out of Pasadena for several years before moving his office to Hollywood in 1934, where he remained for the rest of his professional life.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Whether or not that ranch was sold at this time is not known.

<sup>22</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the following sources were used for this discussion of Neff: Diane Kanner, *Wallace Neff and the Grand Houses of the Golden State* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2005); Jeffrey Book, "Just Call it Californian", *Westways* (October, 1992); Bruce David Colen, "Architect to the Stars", *Town & Country* (March, 1991); Michael Webb, "Architects to the Stars: Hollywood Legacies of Wallace Neff, James E. Dolena, Roland E. Coate and Paul Williams", *Architectural Digest* (April, 1990); and Martin Eli Weil, "Architects: Wallace Neff", *Larchmont Chronicle* (Los Angeles), March, 1999. Also consulted were: "*Wallace Neff*,

During the 1920s Wallace Neff enjoyed a remarkable golden age at the beginning of his career. This period spanned his first commission—a house designed for his mother in Santa Barbara—through the Gillette and Doheny residences, which he completed only months before the stock market collapse of October, 1929. Neff's architecture during this period included three distinct styles: Spanish Colonial Revival, Tuscan, and French Norman. But it was the first of these at which he excelled, and the Spanish Colonial Revival Style has come to be associated with Neff more intimately than any other architectural idiom.<sup>23</sup> Neff imagined the Spanish Colonial Revival to be a style particularly well suited to Southern California, both for California's Mediterranean climate and its Spanish heritage. For Neff the Spanish Colonial Revival was not just a quaint eccentricity to please the romantic in his patrons but represented a genuine effort to discover an endemic California vernacular. When he designed a house for his own family in 1929, he chose this style, and the American Institute of Architects selected it that year as the best medium-sized residence in Southern California. Neff combined his Spanish architectural vocabulary with an Arts-and-Crafts love of detail and fine workmanship. He was probably influenced by the elder Greene brothers—doyens of the Arts-and-Crafts movement in Pasadena. The Greenes rented a studio in the same building where Neff had conducted his business before moving to Hollywood. He may have learned much of his own design ethos from their example.

The Gillette residence, while not unusual among the homes Neff built during the twenties, nevertheless epitomized his pre-war style and represented one of his finest achievements in this important period of his career. King Gillette was typical of the clients who were seeking Neff out at that time. Most were wealthy businessmen, and the country estates Neff built for them appealed to their self-image as country gentlemen. His architectural evocation of a European aristocratic tradition seemed appropriate to their status as leading men in American society.

Work began on the Gillette residence in 1928 and proceeded through 1929. It has not yet been determined who did the landscape design for the property, but one of Neff's favorite landscape designers at the time was A.E. Hanson. Hanson was trained as a plantsman and like many of his peers, enhanced his knowledge of gardens through two tours through Europe in 1927 and 1931. He also worked with architect George Washington Smith on several garden designs in the Andalusian style, melding Moorish and Italian motifs into American gardens. In this way, Hanson was a good match with Neff. He had already worked with Neff on his King Vidor commission in 1925 and would work with Neff on his own house in 1929. Given this background,

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*Architecture of Southern California: A Selection of Photographs, Plans, and Scale Drawings*, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964); Alson Clark, *Wallace Neff, Architect of California's Golden Age* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1986); and [n.a.], *Wallace Neff, 1895-1982: The Romance of Regional Architecture* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1989).

<sup>23</sup> Harris Allen, "Adventures in Architecture", *Pacific Coast Architect* 32.3 (September, 1927).

it seems possible if not likely that he also worked with Neff on the Gillette project.

The house that Wallace Neff designed for King Gillette was in his favorite Spanish Colonial Revival Style. The walls of the house were constructed of adoblar brick tied together with reinforced concrete bond beams and plastered over. Adoblar was a product that Neff's contractor and business partner, Frederick Ruppel, developed. A fired masonry brick, adoblar was a product that approximated the traditional Spanish adobe in both size and texture, but was more durable. The adoblar used for the Gillette residence was made from clay excavated on site and fired in kilns on the Gillette property as well as on the neighboring Hunter Ranch (later the Mountain View parcel).<sup>24</sup>

The Gillette residence had twenty-five rooms and was built in an irregular, linear shape, somewhat resembling a "W". The more open side of the plan contained an automobile court from which one entered the house. (Now that the dormitory wing, added in 1961, closes off the automobile court on all but one side, the openness of the original plan is no longer evident). On the west side of the residence—on the opposite side of the automobile court—a semi-enclosed courtyard with a low fountain in the middle opened to an unobstructed view of the lower ranch and distant Craggs. Neff conceived this courtyard as the pivot point around which the rest of the house plan revolved. From the fountain in the center, Neff drew axial lines outward providing the framework for the rest of the floor plan. A brief notation on the architectural drawings makes this intent explicit. It reads "Note: House will be staked out from this point. Start all dimensions from heavy center lines and work both ways." The heavy lines referred to two axes, one of which bisected the entry vestibule and provided a passageway into the house from the automobile court. The other line passed from the living room through the courtyard and framed the principal view around which this interior space was oriented. Only the service wing did not use this symmetry and did not line up with these axial lines.<sup>25</sup>

The fountain was, quite literally, the heart of the main residence, but not the focus. Neff made the actual fountain quite small, with the parapet only inches above the floor of the courtyard. The apparent intent of the feature was to unify the house plan and connect each architectural part to the surrounding landscape and to the scenery beyond. This had the overall effect of integrating the landscape design and the buildings and structural features into a single, unified design. (Photo 8)

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<sup>24</sup> The clay was reputedly taken from the pond when that feature was excavated. The ruins of a firing kiln were discovered and reported in a 1976 report by Jeffery Bingham. It has not yet been determined whether these are associated with the Neff-Ruppel construction site. (Phil Holmes, personal conversation, May 23, 2006). Also see Bingham, Jeffery C., *Survey of Cultural Resources in Malibu State Park*; California Department of Parks and Recreation, 1976.

<sup>25</sup> Although this appears incidental to the logic of the core residence, it may have been an intentional device for separating the two functional spaces.

The site plan for the Gillette estate conformed to many of the landscape design principles common to Southern California during the 1920s. Many of the most successful and influential landscape designers in Southern California had grown accustomed to working for wealthy clients who were well-traveled, familiar with a wide diversity of cultural traditions, and able to afford the sort of garden which had once been available only to Old World royalty and landed gentry.<sup>26</sup> As a result, designers had the opportunity to work on a grand scale using an eclectic plant and material palette. A major influence in their work was the English picturesque. In America, this style was easily adapted to fit within the complexities of the natural landscape and became a highly influential garden style during the latter half of the nineteenth century (used extensively by the Olmsted firm in Brookline Massachusetts). By the early twentieth century, the picturesque or natural style was still at the height of popularity in this country. But in Southern California, with the influence of its Mexican and Spanish tradition, the picturesque was a garden style that was most often mixed with elements of other garden styles including Italian, Spanish, and especially Old World Moorish styles that featured the use of enclosed courtyards and fountains, the limited use of exotic plant materials, and formal gardens with strong symmetry.

Interest in creating a regional style based on sources from the Spanish Colonial period had given prominence to the mission-style courtyard garden with its axial formalism. This legacy received considerable attention with the Spanish Colonial Revival of the 1920s and early 1930s. But even where the Spanish Colonial Revival was purposely chosen—as it was at the Gillette Ranch—its inherent formalism was strongly mitigated by the far greater influence of English naturalism. In Neff's design for the Gillette Ranch, the results of this influence included a more sparing use of exotics and greater reliance on native plantings and existing natural features; and the application of traditional elements of the picturesque style, such as a sloping lawn, a water feature to increase the sense of space, and the definition of vistas through curving lines, massing vegetation, and shadowed borders. The formal garden was preserved in this eclectic synthesis, but it was developed and inserted somewhat awkwardly into the otherwise informal plan. As with other gardens from this era, the two formal gardens designed for the Gillette Ranch were located adjacent to the main residence and echoed the building's rigid architectural forms through the use of formal paths and structured planting beds.

For many landscape designs of the early nineteenth century, the intent was to create the impression of a formal estate situated within a vast and largely rural territory (regardless how small the estate really was). The entry drive was designed to maximize this illusion by winding through the landscape before approaching the residence itself. This also dramatized the contrast

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<sup>26</sup> David Gebhard, "Introduction" in *An Arcadian Landscape: The Gardens of A.E. Hanson, 1920-1932*, pp. vii-xiv (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1985).

between the informality of the grounds and the more structured formalism of the residence. The drive usually culminated at the main facade of the house.<sup>27</sup>

Nearly all of these elements are evident in the 1928 landscape design for the Gillette Ranch. The house looks out to the northwest from the central vantage of the courtyard across a broad, gently sloping lawn. The designer retained the mature live oaks which were already growing here.<sup>28</sup> Scattered at wide intervals, they create an open, park-like setting. At the foot of the hill, Stokes Creek was dammed to create a long, narrow pond running the full width of this view. The result was a near-perfect echo of the classic English landscape garden and had much the same emotional effect on anyone experiencing it from this perspective. The plan clearly reinforced one's impression of vast space with no visible barriers or abrupt transitions. (Photo 9) At the same time, profound distinctions between foreground, middleground and background appear to have been carefully, and consciously, defined. The relatively manicured landscape immediately surrounding the house evoked both the leisure and wealth of its owner. Beyond this and separated by the waters of the pond, lay the working landscape of the ranch. Cultivated fields would have been just visible behind Wallace Neff's picturesque stable building (bldg. #8). And in the far distance were the brush-covered hills of the Goat Buttes, wild and seemingly untouched by all human activity (though, ironically, this is precisely where the sophisticated members of the Crags Mountain Club came to play in their rustic haven). The original design allowed the eye of a spectator—seated comfortably within the courtyard—to travel freely from one landscape to the next, deriving vicarious pleasure from the contrasts between each separate zone.

The landscape design for the Gillette estate also included a long entry drive typical of the English country estate. This required realignment of the original approach to the ranch. During the Stokes period access to the property was from a short driveway on Las Virgenes Road adjacent to the original Stokes ranch house (about 160 feet south of the present intersection of Las Virgenes Road and Mulholland Highway). The new entry was aligned obliquely across the property in a southeasterly line from Mulholland Highway east of Las Virgenes Road toward the main residence. (Photo 10) This alignment created a visually dramatic entrance to the estate. The experience of traveling down this long, straight drive was enhanced by rows of eucalyptus trees planted on both sides of the road to form a formal allée. (Photo 11) The new alignment also reinforced the separation and distinction between the working ranch and the residential core by redirecting visitors around the working facilities and directly to the residence itself. This separation of functions is consistent with the way that Neff manipulated views from the main residence and may have been an intentional part of the overall site plan as well. Another entry was

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<sup>27</sup> David Gebhard, "Introduction" in *An Arcadian Landscape: The Gardens of A.E. Hanson, 1920-1932*, pp. vii-xiv (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1985).

<sup>28</sup> Neff carefully noted these trees on a site plan he drew to accompany his architectural plans.

created to provide access to the working part of the ranch. This new drive left Las Virgenes Road at right angles and crossed a small orchard between the Frisk and Brandt houses. Although considerably shorter, this drive was also planted with an allée of trees much like the main entry drive. The old road to the original Stokes Ranch was removed.

After the main entry drive reached the pond below the Gillette residence, the alignment turned left and crossed Stokes Creek on an arched concrete bridge. From here the drive followed the contour of the hill around the slope and approached the house from the north side. As it approached the residence, it passed through a Moorish-style arch, which separated the service wing of the house from the main residence before ending in a automobile court below the principal facade. (Photo 12) Although the main entrance was here, this side of the building appeared relatively simple, for Neff exaggerated the surface of the imposing exterior wall by leaving its fenestration relatively small in comparison with the intervening blank spaces which dominated. He may have had in mind the stark facades of traditional Moorish residences, which stood directly on a city street or other public space. He had already emulated this style in other commissions.<sup>29</sup>

It is difficult to imagine the feeling of the original automobile court now, because the space has been so dramatically altered by subsequent additions. Neff's design was well-defined but open. Every level of the house could be accessed directly from this point. The main door opened into the entry vestibule and from there to the principal public rooms of the building. A broad staircase to the left of the front door led up to the more private second story, opening into the bedroom designed for Atlanta Gillette. Another stairway led from the arcade along the south side of the automobile court down to the lower yard at the rear of the house. This allowed guests to circumvent the residence altogether and go directly from their car to outdoor parties which would have been held here. A large barbeque structure was situated in this lower area.<sup>30</sup> On the east side of the automobile court, opposite the main facade, the landscape sloped away creating a broad and spacious vista (The view in this direction was later blocked by the Seminary building). In the foreground, directly adjacent to the automobile court, were two formal gardens laid-out at oblique angles to one another. These small gardens contrasted sharply with the more informal, picturesque landscape on the west side of the residence. In this regard the landscape design for the estate created two relatively different stylistic expressions: the sweeping picturesque landscape on the west, and the formal gardens reflecting the architectural character of the buildings designed by Neff. Historic aerial

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<sup>29</sup> Dianne Kanner notes his frequent use of this precedent, and his aversion to large windows or other openings on the main facade.

<sup>30</sup> Most of the rear yard was filled by the 1961 dormitory wing, eliminating not only much of this public space but the original circulation pattern as well.



Photo 8. View of the courtyard on the west side of the Gillette Residence showing the fountain and open views to the mountains. (Clarence Brown era photograph)



Photo 9. Designed with a sweeping lawn and manmade pond, the landscape plan for the Gillette property reflected many of the design principles of the naturalistic style popular in early 20th century America. (Clarence Brown era photograph)



Photo 10.



Photo 11.



Photo 12. Three photographs showing the entry drive and arrival to the residence. Top left: view of the entrance gate off of Mulholland; Top right: eucalyptus trees aligned on both sides of the entry road; and bottom: arched entrance leading to the automobile court. Illustrations depict mature vegetation because all of these photographs are from the Clarence Brown era.

photographs of the property reveal that the axial lines radiating from the fountain on Neff's plans parallel the main axis of the both gardens.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the main residence, Neff also designed two other buildings. One was the Garage (bldg. #4) completed in 1929 and sited just east of the main residence. The Garage was a simple but elegant one-story structure with adoblar walls and tile roof. It featured interesting details, like a roof ridge which rose slightly at either gable end to create a graceful, swale-like curvature, and a tall, narrow chimney finished in white stucco with a tile cap. The Garage combined both living quarters for ranch workers and space for vehicles. The other building which Neff designed was the Stable (bldg. #8). This structure was sited just off the main entry drive on the level valley west of the pond. It consisted of a round, three-story tower flanked by two one-story wings. The southern wing contained the residences and included a pergola of eucalyptus boughs on the back. The west wing served as the stable. The tower contained the harness room on the ground level, a hayloft above this, and an open balcony on the top level. Much of the Stable was also built of adoblar brick, and a low wall of the same material was constructed around the perimeter of an open yard between the two wings, creating an enclosed yard. (Photos 13,14)

Other structures built during the principal construction period included the iron gates and masonry walls at the foot of the entry drive on Mulholland Highway, and a large masonry barbeque structure. This structure was located in the rear yard behind the main residence. A local man recalled helping his father lay the mortar as the house was being completed.<sup>32</sup>

Two other buildings were constructed during the Gillette era prior to Wallace Neff's commission; the Cook's House (bldg. #5) and the White House and White House Garage (bldgs. #10 and #11). Both were one-story, single-family residences built sometime in late 1927 or early 1928. While not designed by Wallace Neff, both the Cook's House and the White House exhibited several elements reminiscent of the architectural conventions employed by Neff. It is possible that these buildings may have been designed by someone in Neff's office. This attribution seems especially likely for the White House, which retains much of its original detail. (Photos 15, 16)

During the entire period of construction, King and Alanta Gillette were touring Europe with Katherine Wickland, Charles Wickland's wife. When they returned, not only was the vast estate finished, but Neff had furnished the residence, hired a staff, and arranged to have dinner waiting. Gillette was

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<sup>31</sup> Both gardens are visible on historic aerials through 1960. It is possible that the gardens were not maintained after Clarence Brown sold the property. This conclusion is based on interpretation of the aerial images which show the gardens disappearing from view after construction of the Seminary east of the residence.

<sup>32</sup> This was Walter Knapp, mentioned by Tim Dowling in *Inventor of the Disposable Culture*, King Camp Gillette, 1855-1932, pg. 87. Walter may have been the son of Frank Knapp, a locally recognized stone mason associated with the area.

deeply impressed with the work Neff had done, but had barely moved into his new estate when his good fortune suddenly changed. On October 29, 1929 the stock market crashed, and much of his wealth, held in stocks and real estate, evaporated. In 1930 King Gillette sold nearly all of his Gillette Company stock and barely made enough to cover his debts. Somehow, he was able to hold onto the Calabasas estate and several others, including a winter retreat at Palm Springs. Soon, however, an even greater problem afflicted him. Always troubled by intestinal disorders and high blood pressure, King Gillette became seriously ill in 1932. On July 9 of that year he died in his bed at Calabasas. Atlanta Gillette kept the property for another three years before she was able to sell. During this time she may have stayed in one of the separate cottages on the property, as this was the intention she expressed in a letter written to her sister.<sup>33</sup> By September of 1932 Atlanta was staying with her son and her friend Katherine Wickland on Catalina Island, no doubt eager to get away from the estate her deceased husband had built.<sup>34</sup> (Fig. 8)

### **The Clarence Brown Era 1935-1952**

On May 20, 1935, (recorded September 7) Atlanta Gillette sold the entirety of the Gillette estate at Calabasas to MGM film director Clarence Brown, including a pipe organ, billiard table, and the livestock and farm implements.<sup>35</sup> The selling price was \$38,250.00 plus two parcels on subdivisions elsewhere in Los Angeles County.<sup>36</sup> Brown was represented by the Lou Rose Realty Company of Beverly Hills. Several contemporary sources mention a selling price of \$500,000.<sup>37</sup> This is almost certainly an exaggeration, but it may reflect the additional value represented by the property in Hollywood traded by Brown. (Fig. 9) Clarence Brown purchased the Gillette Ranch at the height of his film-directing career. He had been with MGM Studios for eleven years and had already proven his value through numerous works. One of his finest films, *Anna Christie*, had already been made (five years earlier). That year alone he directed two acclaimed films—*Anna Karenina*, starring Greta Garbo, and *Ah Wilderness*. Much of the latter was filmed at his new Calabasas estate. Brown seems to have made very few substantial changes to the original Gillette Ranch. This is not surprising, since he used the property in much the same way as King Gillette had intended. The western half remained a working ranch, operated by a resident foreman and laborers, while the Gillette Residence became Brown's private residence

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<sup>33</sup> Personal correspondence, Atlanta Gillette to her sister Nettie Gaines Storm, July 2, 1932.

<sup>34</sup> "Society Leaders Bring Color to Varied Entertainments Marking Summer Season", *Los Angeles Times*, September 11, 1932, pg. B5.

<sup>35</sup> See Appendix B for a more detailed biography of Clarence Brown.

<sup>36</sup> These parcels may have been in Hollywood. They are described thus: The first parcel was Lot 24, Tract 5717 of Maps, Book 64, Pg. 45, of Los Angeles County. The second parcel was the north 33 ft. of Lot 9 and south 33 ft. of Lot 10 in Block 2 of re-subdivision of Blocks 10 and 11 of Hollywood Ocean View Tract in 2-78 of Maps. There is a photo of the elderly Atlanta Gillette in the yard of a house on Winona Boulevard in Hollywood. Her sister, Elizabeth Gaines Storm lived next door, according to personal communication with Storm decedent Katie Andrews. Atlanta went there to live after leaving Calabasas in 1935. The house must no longer exist, since none of the current structures along Winona Boulevard predate 1963.

<sup>37</sup> For example, "Film Chiefs Buy Ranches", *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1935.



Photo 13. Stable building, view looking southwest. (April 2006)



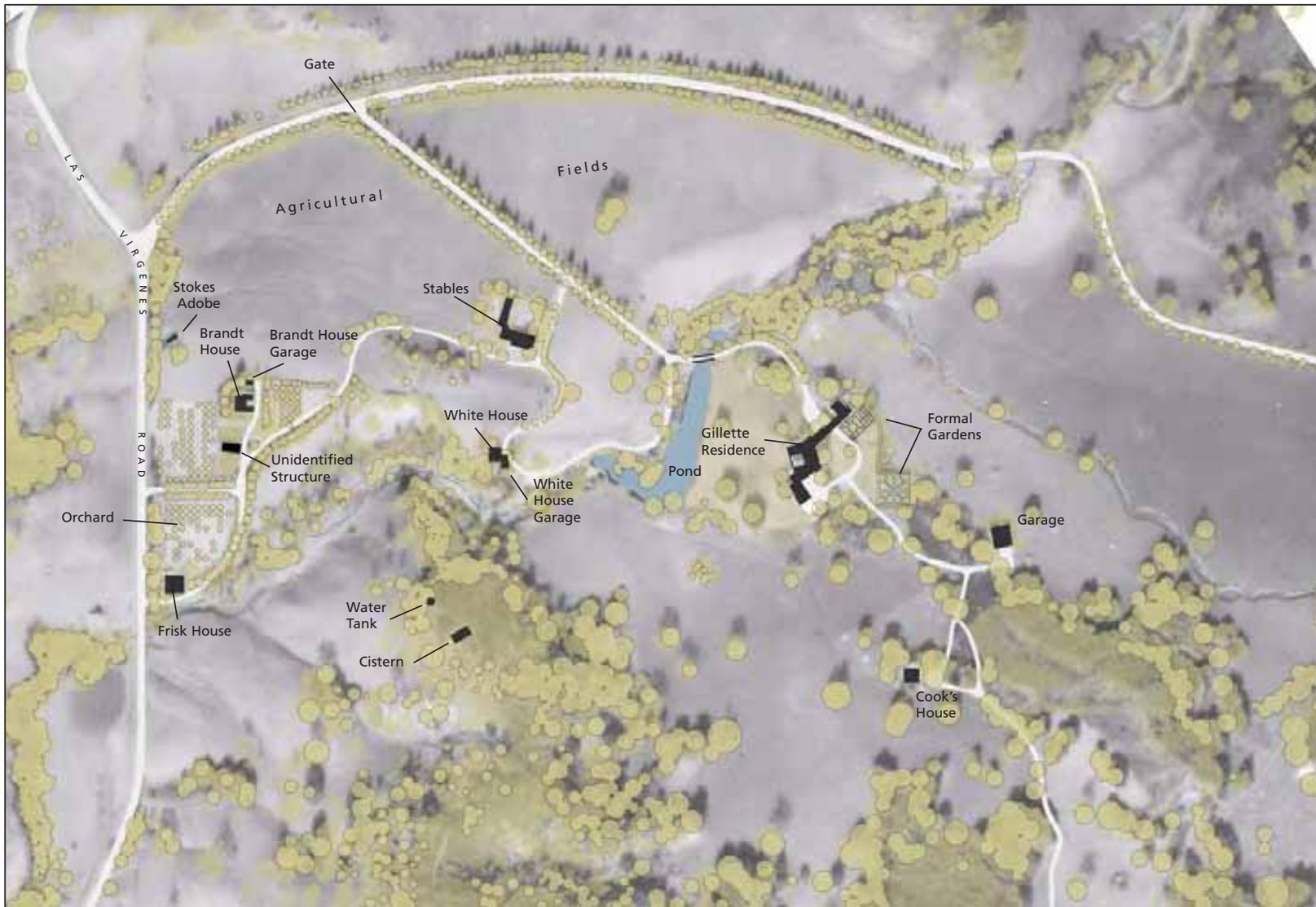
Photo 14. Historic View of the back of the stable building which was used for apartments. (Clarence Brown era photo)



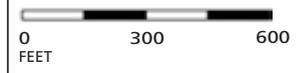
Photo 15. Historic view of Cook's House. Photo of the building during the Clarence Brown era.



Photo 16. Contemporary view of the White House. (April, 2006)



Site Map  
 Gillette-Brown Ranch  
 Historic Conditions  
 1935



Sources  
 1935 Aerial photo, Whittier Fairchild  
 Historic Photo Collection  
 University of Tennessee Historic Photo  
 Collection  
 Google Aerial Imagery, 2005  
 Microsoft Aerial Imagery, 2005  
 Field Survey, 2006

Notes  
 The historic conditions map was  
 constructed using historic aerial photos  
 and historic photos.

Santa Monica Mountains  
 National Recreation Area

National Park Service  
 Pacific West Region  
 Cultural Landscape Program





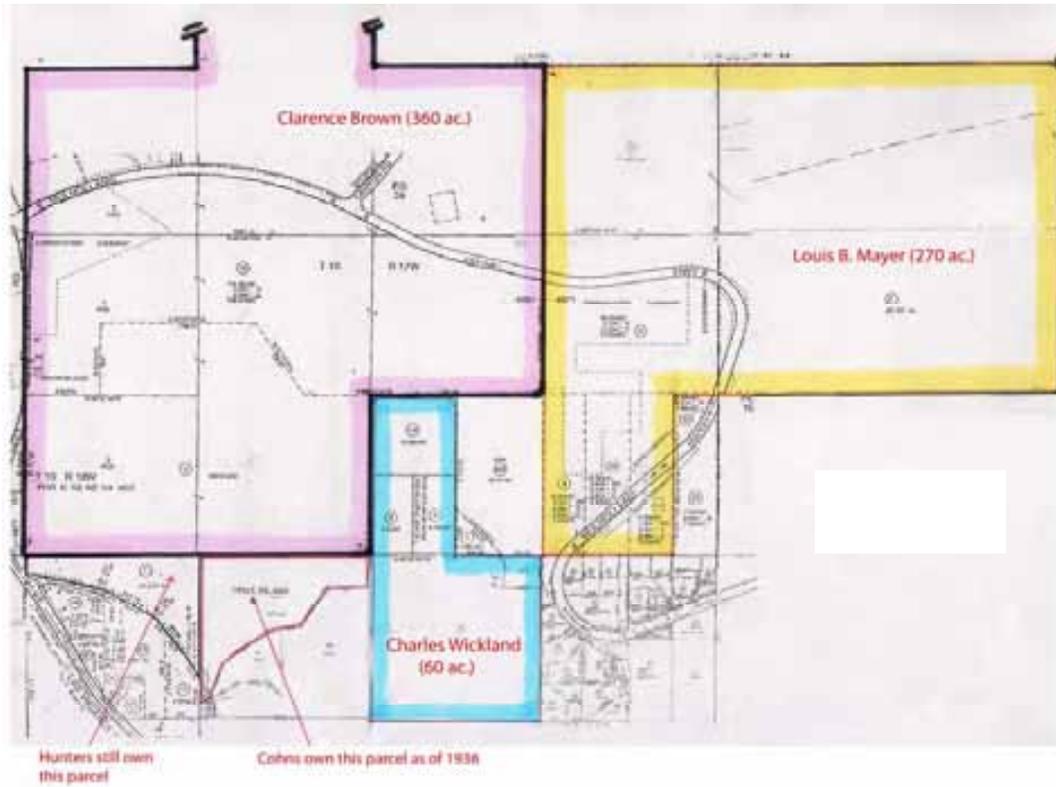


Figure 9. Property Boundaries three years after Clarence Brown purchased the entire 360 acre Gillette Ranch.



and was used for hosting his numerous friends and associates in the film industry. He entertained large parties on a regular basis, inviting as many as 250 guests at a time, most of whom were leading actors and filmmakers.<sup>38</sup>

Brown did make some changes to the grounds and buildings during his occupancy on the property. The first recorded modification was to the interior of the main residence. In 1936, Brown hired Viennese architect Paul Laszio to redesign and redecorate several rooms.<sup>39</sup> As historic photographs indicate, a number of interior decorations were added creating a very personal stamp on the property. This work was primarily limited to the main residence, and few of these modifications were structural in nature.

In 1937 Clarence Brown commissioned Wallace Neff to redesign the interior of the main residence to accommodate a projection room. This was the most significant change Brown ever made to this building. The projection room was cut into the space occupied by the pantry between the breakfast room and the dining room and elevated so that the machinery could project through apertures in the upper half of the north wall of the living room. Movies were shown against a screen on the south wall. At the same time, Neff also proposed modifying the inside end of the courtyard. He designed glass infill panels between the arched openings that framed the outer side of this patio to create an enclosed, but transparent loggia. Glass doors were designed for two of the arches permitting continued access to the courtyard. This enclosure and the addition of two doorways—one from the entrance vestibule to the loggia and the other from the loggia to the dining room—would have resulted in an interior corridor that connected the principal rooms of the residence. The modified circulation would have diverted passage away from the living room while a movie was running. None of these modifications were actually made, although the curvature of the original passageway between the living room and the dining room was reversed, so that it cut into the pantry rather than projecting into the courtyard patio and now mirrored the curved passageway between the living room and breakfast room. One now entered the dining room through a doorway in the east rather than the north wall. The latter opening was then closed by fully extending the wall on that side. These alterations did not negatively impact the interior or exterior spaces and actually strengthened the symmetry of the courtyard and secondary axis of the living room.

Shortly after these changes, Brown turned his attention to the landscape. In 1937, Brown contracted with the Los Angeles firm, Paddock Engineering, to install a swimming pool. The pool measured twenty-five feet by seventy-one feet and was completed in April of that year.<sup>40</sup> Around the same time Brown

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<sup>38</sup> Isabel Sheldon, "Off the Record," *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 1936.

<sup>39</sup> He later commissioned Laszio to design "an unusual front for his business building being erected on Wilshire Boulevard. See "Vienna Architect Decides to Open Hollywood Offices," *Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 1936, pg. A7.

<sup>40</sup> Paddock Engineering developed a local reputation for innovative design in swimming pools. Two years later they were commissioned by Warren Shobert and Arthur Edeson to build the Lake Enchanto swimming pool in Cornell, Calif. (The ruins of the Lake Enchanto pool still

also built tennis courts located between the new pool and the barbeque area. Altogether, this cluster of recreational structures—the pool, barbeque, and tennis courts, created another focus of use and activity area for guests on the property. (Fig. 10 & Photos 17,18)

In 1938 Brown reportedly discovered a mineral well on his property. The water was analyzed by the county chemist, who issued a seven page report corroborating its unique properties. Brown considered turning his ranch into a health resort, but apparently the idea never went anywhere.<sup>41</sup> No physical modifications are known to have been made in connection with this discovery.

In 1939 Brown constructed a small airport. The runway consisted of graded dirt and ran parallel to the present Mulholland Highway just opposite Stokes Canyon Road north of the main residence. (Photo 19) A small navigational beacon was installed at that time.<sup>42</sup> Also in 1939 Brown installed milk pasteurizing equipment. This may have been done to upgrade an existing creamery operation to comply with state dairy regulations, which had gradually been introduced since the early 1920s. The Brown ranch was reported to have possessed "ultramodern farm implements."<sup>43</sup> The concrete floor currently extant in part of the Stable is not original and may have been added at this time to accommodate a grade A creamery.

In 1948 Brown remodeled part of his estate for guests. This was described in detail in an article in the *Los Angeles Times*.

*Air-borne visitors to the ranch of Mr. and Mrs. Brown find a miniature airport with hangar and wind sock. A few steps away is the guest wing of the house, recently restyled in casual Modern. At hand are a swimming pool and tennis courts. And beneath ancient oaks is a barbecue set in flagstone paving and equipped with smoke oven, a grill and spit, warming ovens and a refrigerator...The guest house was a special project of Brown's. That part which adjoins the main house exterior was left untouched to match the Andalusian Spanish theme and soft pink color. But the end facing the airfield was painted a dove gray with white trim. An entire living room wall was then fitted with plate glass for a picture view of the field. The dining room, dark*

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remain in relatively good condition on the Peter Strauss Ranch, which is currently managed by the National Park Service. At 640,000 gallons, the Lake Enchanto pool was thought to be the largest of its kind west of the Rockies and was one of the first swimming pools to be constructed using gunite (sprayed) concrete, a technology Wallace Neff was currently experimenting with. Neff used this technology for his modular "airform" design, which he developed in the early 1940s as a solution to the demand for affordable housing.

<sup>41</sup> Read Kendall, "Odd and Interesting," *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 1938, pg. C4.

<sup>42</sup> "Beacon Installed," *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1939, pg. 9.

<sup>43</sup> "Farmer Brown," *Los Angeles Times*, November 25, 1939, pg. A7.

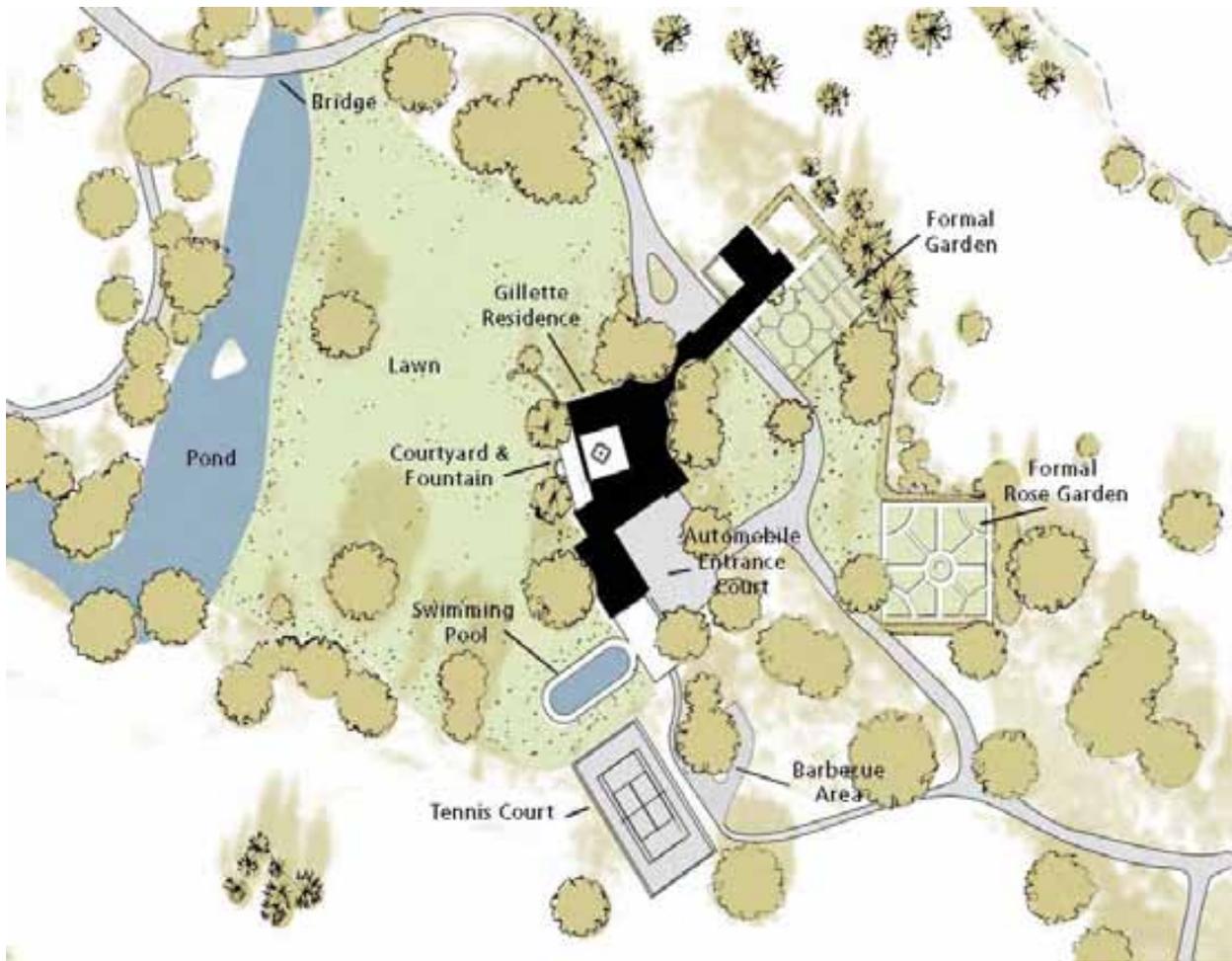


Figure 10. Detail of the historic base map (1954) depicting the relationship between the new tennis court and swimming pool built during the Clarence Brown era. Located near the barbeque area on the southwest side of the automobile court, these structures remain today.



Left: Photo 17. Photograph of swimming pool area and small patio.  
 Right: Photo 18. Tennis courts. Both images from Clarence Brown era.



Photo 19. Landing strip built by Clarence Brown was located north of the main residence. The hangar building would have been located to the south. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 20. Overview of the grounds around the main residence Circa 1938, showing the swimming pool and tennis court sited below the automobile court. (Clarence Brown era photo)

*and dreary with only two small windows, was elongated by 10 feet and also given a view window.*<sup>44</sup>

The article goes on to describe the interior decoration and color schemes developed by decorator Ralph Van Hoorebeke. The references to a "guest house" suggest that this was a free-standing structure, but in fact it refers to the old service wing. The modification of the dining room mentioned in the article did not affect the external footprint of the building but appears to have been accomplished by removing an interior wall and extending the dining room into an old pantry space. (Photo 20)

In 1949 Brown added an 800 square foot, corrugated aluminum airplane hangar. The exact location is not known, but it was probably at one end of the runway. Work was completed by the end of November. The *Los Angeles Times* article from the previous year suggests that a hangar already existed. If that is true, this may have been a replacement for an earlier structure. Today nothing remains of either hangar or runway, and there is no record of when they were demolished, but this probably occurred early in the Claretian period between 1955 and 1960.

In 1952 Clarence Brown retired from the film industry. After putting the Calabasas estate up for sale, he moved to Palm Desert. (Fig. 11)

## **Subsequent Owners and Developments 1952 to Present**

### **The Claretian Period: 1952-1977**

Clarence Brown sold the Calabasas estate to a Catholic religious order that intended to use the property as a novitiate and seminary. The Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary—more commonly known as the Claretians—were founded in 1850 by Anthony Claret, a Spanish priest and "apostolic missionary," who became very popular in Spain and later Cuba for his service to the working class and to poor children. Anthony Claret was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church in 1950. The Claretians, his followers, developed into a small order of ordained priests devoted to service according to Claret's example. They work in inner city missions and in developing countries around the world. The order first came to Los Angeles by way of Mexico in 1907 and established a seminary and headquarters at Dominguez, near Long Beach, where they still reside.

In August of 1952, the Claretian Order (the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Rome) purchased the central portion of Clarence Brown's ranch, totaling 120 acres and comprising the area on which all previous development occurred.<sup>45</sup> Shortly after, the Claretians deeded this parcel to the Dominguez Seminary. The remaining 240 acres—bordering the north and

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<sup>44</sup> Virginia Edwards, "Air Age Hospitality," *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1948, pg. H5. The article includes photographs by Edward Lester Smith, originals of which are available at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

<sup>45</sup> This sale was recorded on October 28, 1952.

south ends of this parcel—were purchased in March, 1953, by a Los Angeles corporation listed as Cala Ranch.<sup>46</sup> The mailing address given for Cala Ranch is the same as that for the Claretian Missionaries, suggesting that the order set up a corporation for the purpose of purchasing this land. Why this was necessary is unclear. In any case, one year later—on March 4, 1954—both Cala Ranch and Dominguez Seminary deeded the entirety of their holdings at Calabasas to the Claretian Theological Seminary of Claretville, thereby restoring the original 360 acre parcel which King Gillette originally purchased from Edward R. Stokes in 1926. The fact that these grants were made on the same day makes it clear that Cala Ranch and Dominguez Seminary were acting in concert.<sup>47</sup>

In 1962 the Claretian Theological Seminary deeded a southerly portion of the estate to Immaculate Heart Claretian Novitiate. The novitiate was an early stage of preparation for young men entering the Claretian Order. Novices did not take full clerical vows during the year they spent here and could leave at any time. Following this year, they moved on to more advanced education, and vows at the seminary. Seminarians were not ordained as priests until they had finished four years in the seminary and an additional four years of graduate study in an accredited university. The approximately 101-acre parcel given to the Immaculate Heart Novitiate corresponded to the current assessor's parcel number 4455-033-003. It was surveyed in such a way that it included approximately nineteen acres of the original Claretian central parcel but excluded all of the historic Gillette-Brown buildings. The Novitiate building, which was constructed in 1960, lay within this southerly portion and was thus incorporated into the novitiate rather than the seminary.<sup>48</sup> The property deeds suggest that the novitiate and the seminary were financially and operationally distinct at Claretville, though the exact nature and extent of this distinction is unclear and would have to be determined from the Claretians' own records. The Novitiate (bldg. #6 & #7) was the only major building lying within the legal boundaries of the novitiate parcel. It does not appear to have been designed for residential use, so the novices must have lived somewhere else, probably in a sequestered portion of the Seminary building (bldg. #1). They would have only attended classes and perhaps worshipped at the chapel in the Novitiate. Although not a very large building, the Novitiate would have been sufficient to provide for all the educational and administrative needs of the novices, whose numbers remained low over the year it operated. The far more numerous seminarians would have spent most of their time around the central quadrangle formed by the Seminary building and the Gillette Residence (bldg. #3).

Probably about the same time as they divided the property between the seminary and novitiate, the Claretians reduced the size of their original 360

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<sup>46</sup> This sale was recorded April 8, 1953. Cala Ranch gave its address as 1119 Westchester P., Los Angeles 19, Calif.

<sup>47</sup> Both deeds were recorded on August 31, 1954 at 8AM; that is, simultaneously.

<sup>48</sup> The names "Wisdom Hall" and "Minuteman Hall" are not original to the Claretian period but were adopted by Soka University of America, a later owner of the property.



Site Map #3  
 Gillette Ranch  
 Historic Conditions,  
 1954



Sources  
 1954 Aerial photo, University of California, Santa Barbara Historic Photo Collection  
 University of Tennessee Historic Photo Collection  
 Google Aerial Imagery, 2005  
 Microsoft Aerial Imagery, 2005  
 Field Survey, 2006

Notes  
 The historic conditions map was constructed using historic aerial photos and historic photos from the Clarence Brown period.

Santa Monica Mountains  
 National Recreation Area

National Park Service  
 Pacific West Region  
 Cultural Landscape Program





acre parcel by approximately 150 acres. No record of this action could be found, but it had definitely happened by 1968.<sup>49</sup> The missing property represents all of the original Stokes Ranch lying north of Mulholland Highway, which was completed sometime after 1954 and intersected the northern half of Stokes' parcel.<sup>50</sup> With 101 acres going to the novitiate, this left just over 118 acres for the Claretian Theological Seminary. The reduced lot corresponds to the current assessor's parcel number 4455-033-026. Claretville now comprised two distinct parcels (4455-033-026 and 4455-033-003), jointly owned by the Claretian Order and totaling approximately 219 acres. (Figs. 12, 13)

During their twenty-five year tenancy, the Claretians made a number of significant changes to the property. These changes are summarized below.

The first permitted construction undertaken after the Claretians occupied the Brown ranch was a 570 square foot shower room. This was built of cement block with a tile roof. The foundation was laid in November of 1952, and the structure was complete by February, 1953. Design and construction were done by the Claretians themselves (no architect or contractor was hired). This simple building was probably constructed first in order to accommodate the needs of the community as they moved onto the premises. The building may survive as building #2, the boiler room adjacent to the Seminary building.<sup>51</sup>

Between October and November of 1953, the Claretians constructed a large chicken coop, measuring 1,460 square feet. The structure was open on the sides and roofed with aluminum panels. While the structure itself is not significant—and no vestiges of it survive—its early introduction suggests that the Claretians continued to use a portion of the property as a ranch.

The first major addition to the property occurred the following year, when the Claretians built the Seminary building, a three-story, 25,000 square foot dormitory with chapel and classrooms. The foundation was laid in June of 1954 and the building completed by February, 1955. The architects were Barker & Ott, a Los Angeles firm that specialized in building churches and schools for the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles.<sup>52</sup> This dormitory was now the largest structure on the property, and its imposing presence significantly redefined the spatial organization of the original building cluster and landscape designed by Wallace Neff. Facing the Gillette Residence from the east, the new dormitory created an enclosed, collegiate-style quadrangle in

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<sup>49</sup> The earliest reference to the reduced size of the property occurs in Kenneth Fanucchi, "Former Castle: Not Heaven on Earth but Next Best Thing", *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1968, pg. SF\_B1.

<sup>50</sup> Property deeds were granted to the City of Los Angeles for the highway easement in 1954. Work would have begun shortly thereafter.

<sup>51</sup> A site inspection in April 2006 did not reveal any evidence suggesting the building had ever been used for another purpose.

<sup>52</sup> Francis J. Weber, *A Remarkable Legacy: The Story of Secondary Schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles* (Mission Hills, Calif.: Saint Francis Historical Society, 2001).

the large space between the two buildings. This eliminated the original view and severely compressed the sense of space within and around the automobile court. (Photo 21)

The next phase of construction began in 1960, when the Claretians hired Barker and Ott to design the Novitiate building (bldg. # 6) and related service building (bldg. #7). The Novitiate building measured 14,500 square feet and housed a library and chapel. Building #7 was originally detached and measured 3,100 square feet. It was described as a service building and held laundry facilities. Prior to constructing these buildings, the Claretians applied for a grading permit to move 2,500 cubic yards of untested fill. This almost certainly refers to the road or causeway which had to be constructed leading up to the new novitiate center. This road intersects the pond created by Wallace Neff and required construction of a large berm which now separates the pond into two sections. The fill for this berm may have been taken from the building site that was excavated for the new buildings. The foundations for the Novitiate and service buildings were laid in August of 1960. The buildings were complete by March of 1961. (Photo 22)

At about the same time that the Novitiate buildings were under construction, the Claretians had a large addition built onto the south wing of the Gillette Residence. This addition measured 4,593 square feet and included a lounge and dormitories. Barker and Ott were commissioned to do this work as well. This addition transformed the relatively open plan of the original design into a much more enclosed space, further exacerbating the compression caused by the addition of the Seminary building. External circulation from the automobile court to the back of the house was lost, as was much of the backyard. All construction was complete by March of 1961.

In May of 1963 the Claretians had to repair fire damage to one of the buildings. This was described as a single-family dwelling with garage and was probably the Brandt House (bldgs. #12 & #13). A site inspection revealed that parts of this building were, in fact, burned and modifications made after that event.

In November of 1970 a new hay barn was constructed. This building measured thirty by eighty feet and may be building #9. According to the building permit, it was a replacement for an earlier structure which was destroyed in a fire. No record of the earlier building could be found.

The Gillette-Brown Ranch was in many ways a poor choice for the Claretians. The secluded ranch was more appropriate for cloistered monastics than missionary fathers with a vocation to the active life. The contradiction grew increasingly apparent as young novices prepared in the sheltered environment of Claretville would abandon their vocation after leaving the seminary to undertake missionary work in the outside world. The ordination rate for students studying at the seminary was less than seven percent. By the 1960s a change occurred within the order, encouraged by the liberalizing

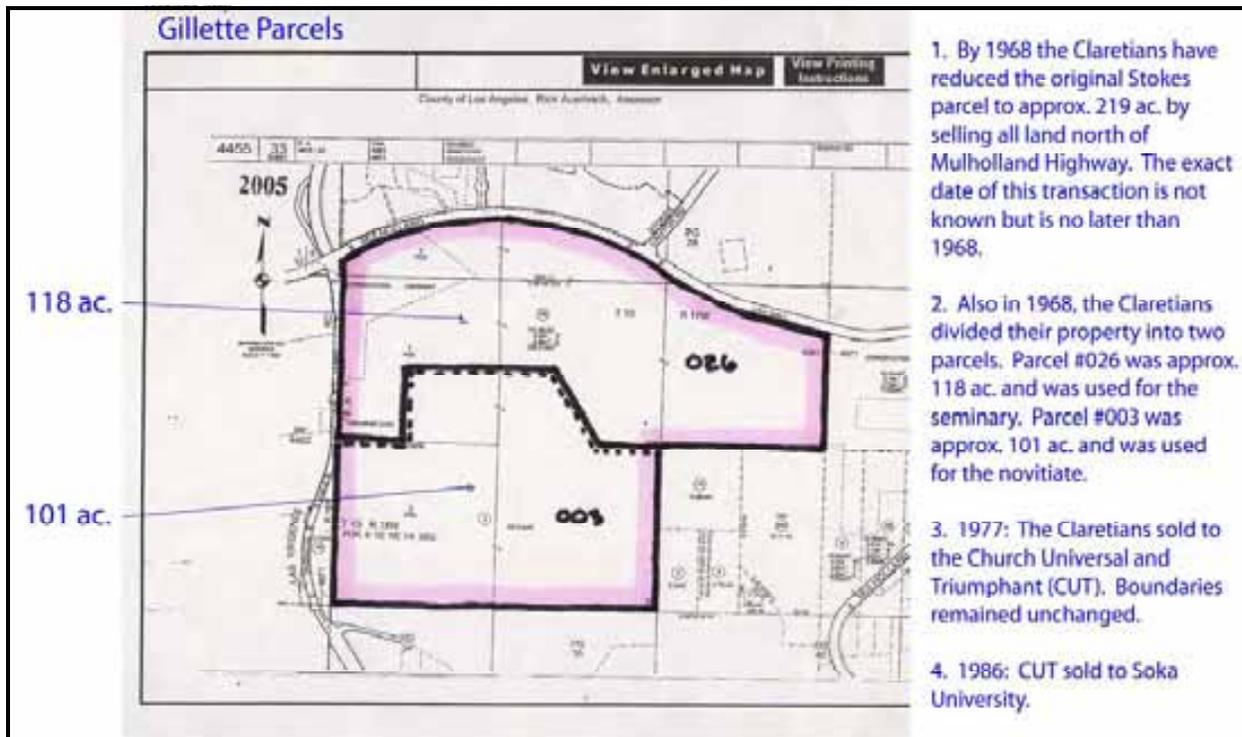
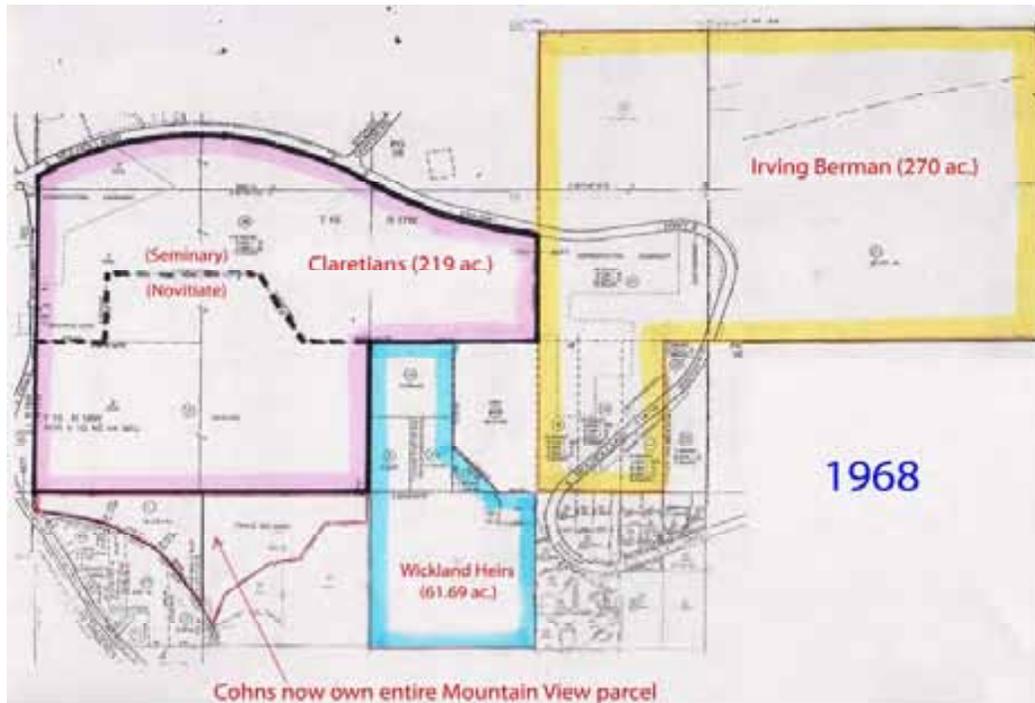


Figure 12. (Top) Figure 13. (Bottom)



influence of Vatican II. The order stopped accepting young novices altogether and began taking only older men who had already had life experience. Classes were no longer taught at Claretville itself. Instead, seminarians would commute to schools like Loyola University in Los Angeles, where they would be exposed to the diversity in which they would later work. Claretville became simply their residence. As a result of these changes, the community's ordination rate climbed to twenty-five percent but its total population continued to drop.<sup>53</sup>

The Claretians also began opening Claretville itself up to the outside world. In 1968 they agreed to host a private day camp for disabled children called Harmony Center. Harmony had been established as a non-profit organization in 1965 by the Mondscheins of Calabasas, parents of a disabled child. The organization had spent four years moving from one location to another until they finally approached the Claretian fathers, who recognized that Harmony's mission was consistent with their own. They also recognized that the dramatic decline in novices over the previous decade left them with more room on their spacious property than they knew what to do with.<sup>54</sup> The Claretians allowed the Mondscheins to occupy one wing of the Gillette Residence for their school.<sup>55</sup> Harmony Center remained here for the next ten years. In 1978 the center bought the 30-acre Mountain View parcel just south of Claretville from the Cohns. Harmony Center operated out of Mountain View until 1986 when it sold the property to Soka University.

An article printed in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1968 includes photographs of the Gillette Residence, swimming pool and tennis courts, and the pond. The article also notes how the Claretians were using the property at the time and mentions a few of the modifications they had made:

*The fathers utilize portions of the house for a chapel. There are workshops in the basement...An annex contains administrative offices. Residences for the order have been constructed around the mansion. Other acreage is used to feed a herd of branga beef (cross between brahmas and angus).<sup>56</sup>*

The "residences constructed around the mansion" is obviously a reference to the Seminary building.

In the fall of 1971 Thomas Aquinas College opened at Claretville. This was a four-year Catholic liberal arts college offering a bachelor of arts in the humanities. Education was conducted exclusively in small seminars led by tutors and followed a Great Books curriculum modeled after the program

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<sup>53</sup> Mal Terence, "Once-Cloistered Students at Seminary Join Outside World", *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 1966, pg. SF5.

<sup>54</sup> "Center Provides Learning Key to Troubled Youths", *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1969, pg. SF\_B1.

<sup>55</sup> See photograph showing Harmony Center sign at Gillette .

<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Fanucchi, "Former Castle: Not Heaven on Earth", *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1968, pg. SF\_B1.

originally started at Columbia University in 1921. Student enrollment was co-educational and kept intentionally small.<sup>57</sup>

Thomas Aquinas College was originally incorporated in 1968 and opened in leased space on the Dominican College campus in San Rafael, California. But the following year Dominican College terminated the lease. Thomas Aquinas College then arranged to lease space at Claretville through the assistance of Los Angeles' Archbishop. This lease was signed on June 1, 1971, and classes began at Claretville on September 11, with thirty-three students enrolled.<sup>58</sup>

Thomas Aquinas College was aware from the very beginning that Claretville was only a temporary expedient and that a larger campus would eventually be needed. Toward that end, the college retained a real estate agent who actively sought some other property which the college could buy. In 1975 the agent located what everybody agreed would make an ideal campus. This was the 131 acre Ferndale Ranch on the edge of Los Padres National Forest at Santa Paula. It included a 9000 square foot hacienda which had been built by Wallace Neff in 1929 as a summer house for the Doheny family of Los Angeles. By an amazing coincidence this house was an exact contemporary of the Gillette estate which the college and the remaining Claretians currently occupied.<sup>59</sup> The college bought it with the aid of a wealthy benefactor for two million dollars. When the hacienda was remodeled to accommodate its new tenants, the firm hired to do the work, Albert C. Martin and Associates, hired Wallace Neff to review their plans.

By 1977 the number of Claretian seminarians living at Claretville had dwindled to 12, a dramatic decline from the pre-Vatican II days of the seminary, when as many as 140 novices and seminarians lived on the premises.<sup>60</sup> They occupied a single wing of the Gillette Residence. The order had been trying to sell Claretville since 1972, if not earlier, since they could hardly justify maintaining the vast campus with so few members. The earliest evidence that the property was for sale came in 1974, when the California State Department of Parks and Recreation was publicly excoriated for not including Claretville on its priority acquisition list following passage that year of a Park Bonds Act.<sup>61</sup> Neighboring Malibu Creek State Park was acquired at that time (1974), with funds from the bond act. A host of prospective buyers kept local residents anxious about the future of the land. Judging from the response to the state park public hearing in 1974, many wanted the property

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<sup>57</sup> Martha Willman, "Teachers, Tests, Majors Abolished at New College", *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1971, pg. SF\_C1.

<sup>58</sup> "A Brief History of Thomas Aquinas College" from the College's webpage at <http://www.thomasaquinas.edu/about/history/index.htm> (Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> Martha Willman, "Seminary Seeks to Shed Cloistered Image", *Los Angeles Times*, January 23, 1972, pg. SF\_B1.

<sup>60</sup> Jack Birkinshaw, "Seminary May Be Park, Not Cemetery", *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1977, pg. SF\_C1.

<sup>61</sup> Skip Ferderber, "Los Lions Restored to State Park Priority List", *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1974, pg. WS8.

to be preserved as parkland. Why the State Parks did not buy it was never publicly stated, but perhaps the price asked by the Claretians was too high. Alternative proposals to public purchase included development of subdivisions, a cemetery, and even a Czechoslovakian theme park. Local residents opposed all these ideas.<sup>62</sup> The property was finally sold in 1977 to the Church Universal and Triumphant. Shortly after the sale, Thomas Aquinas College moved to its new property at Santa Paula, and the remaining Claretians moved back to their main community at the Dominguez Seminary.

### **The Church Universal and Triumphant: 1977-1986**

In the fall of 1977, after moving between a variety of Southern California locations including Santa Barbara and Pasadena, Elizabeth Clair Prophet's Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT) established its headquarters on the Gillette-Brown Ranch at Calabasas.<sup>63</sup> The Church bought the entire 219 acres comprising Claretville from the Claretian Theological Seminary and Immaculate Heart Claretian Novitiate in September of that year for \$5.6 million and renamed the place Camelot. CUT established its Summit University here as well as administrative offices, an elementary school, a high school, and residences for an unspecified number of church members. CUT occupied the property until 1986. During these nine years, the church made numerous changes to the buildings and grounds. The chief motivation for virtually all of the structural work completed by the church was the need to accommodate an increasing number of members. Most of the modifications were made without application for permits as evidenced in 1981, when Gregory Mull, an architect and former member of the church, submitted a list of building code violations to Los Angeles County. After investigating, the county identified several specific violations and required CUT to apply retroactively for permits and bring the violations into compliance with current codes wherever possible. As a result of this investigation, a record was generated documenting some of the more significant physical changes to the buildings made during this era.

Several modifications were made to the Gillette Residence. First, the "porch-tower" was converted to an office (This may refer to the third story of the tower, directly above Mr. Gillette's bedroom). Secondly, the open patio on the west side of the residence and part of the first floor interior were converted to a student bookstore. The documentation does not say whether the exterior courtyard was enclosed as a result. The mural of *Los Borrachos* was probably painted over at this time and the original fountain removed. Finally, Gregory Mull mentioned a hidden staircase that was installed in order to connect Elizabeth Prophet's living quarters with her office. This is not mentioned in the building inspector's documentation, but if such a

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<sup>62</sup>See, for example, Gerald Faris, "He Dreams of Czech Farm Idyll in Hills", *Los Angeles Times*, November 23, 1975, pg. WS1; and Jack Birkinshaw, "Calabasas Residents Fight Mountain Cemetery Plan", *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 1976, pg. SF\_B1.

modification was made, it probably connected one floor of the tower with another and may have been part of the office conversion mentioned above.

The Stable was converted to offices and a work space. Gregory Mull claimed that people were living there as well. The stable was described as the graphics building by the county inspector. It was probably used by CUT to house the Summit Lighthouse publishing facilities.

The original Gillette Garage (bldg. #4) was converted to a high school. This required adding new non-bearing partitions. CUT also maintained an elementary school, which was located nearby, probably in the Cook's House (bldg. #5).<sup>64</sup> Many of the changes to these buildings and other original structures severely impacted the architectural integrity of the Neff buildings remaining on the property. Seismic retrofitting was done on the Garage at this time as well. This work involved tying the rafters to the masonry walls.

Extensive modifications were also made to the interior of the Seminary building. Three rooms were consolidated into one large classroom with the removal of non-bearing metal stud walls. The permit describes this work as occurring in the chapel building on the first floor, south wing. Wall dividers and new doors were also installed in the hallways on the second and third floors. The building inspector notes that Summit University was located in the Seminary building.

A permit was taken out for construction of a pole barn consisting of 2400 square feet with truss roof, metal roofing, and siding. The identity of this building is not known, although the permit may have been for work done on the hay barn (bldg. #9), which roughly matches the description.

There were between six and eight simple tree houses consisting of a plywood platform laid over a 2 x 4 frame (with no walls or roof). A door was cut into the steel water tank on the hillside southwest of the Novitiate building. A spiral staircase was attached to the inside wall of this tank and the structure was converted into a dormitory. These modifications no longer exist. Documentation also suggests that vegetation around the buildings was not maintained during this period and that exotic vegetation was allowed to overgrow on the property.

In 1981, the Church Universal and Triumphant purchased a 12,500 acre ranch from magazine publisher Malcolm S. Forbes in Livingston, Montana. In 1986, CUT sold its 219-acre Calabasas property to Soka University in Japan and moved to Montana.

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<sup>64</sup> There is some contradiction between the inspector's permits and the building permits concerning the location of these schools. The former appear to describe the elementary school in Building #4 and the high school in Building #5, whereas the latter suggest the reverse. Since the building permit description is more explicit, it seems reasonable to follow its suggestion and locate the high school in Building #4 (the Gillette garage).

## The Soka University Era: 1986-2007

In 1984, Soka University of America (SUA) was incorporated as a California nonprofit public benefit corporation. In 1985 and 1986, Soka University in Japan purchased two properties as possible sites for a four-year liberal arts college. The first property, purchased in 1985, was 149 acres located in the San Dieguito River valley at the northern edge of San Diego County. The proposed campus would be accredited as a four-year liberal arts college with an enrollment of approximately 1000 students. But the city's zoning restrictions and the California Coastal Commission's concerns over building within the flood plain of the San Dieguito River prevented the University from developing this property and eventually persuaded them to look elsewhere.<sup>65</sup>

The second site purchased by Soka University in Japan for a potential American campus was 249 acres in Calabasas. This property included the majority of the Stokes parcel then owned by the Church Universal and Triumphant and all of the Mountain View parcels owned by Harmony Center. The property was then named Soka University of Los Angeles (SULA). Four years later SUA purchased the entirety of the Mayer parcel from Leonard Ross and all of the Wickland parcel, which was owned by the Spensely and DeCinces families. In 1992, Soka University of Japan donated its 249 acres of Calabasas property to Soka University of America. SUA now owned 588 contiguous acres in the Stokes Canyon area of Calabasas. (Fig. 14)

Soka University of America (SUA) initially operated a small ESL (English as a Second Language) school at its Calabasas campus, enrolling just under 100 students, but later announced its plans to expand the facility over the next 25 years to an enrollment of as many as 5000 students. SUA began making plans to expand the campus infrastructure to accommodate living quarters and classrooms for this increase but ran into opposition from some of the local residents and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.<sup>66</sup>

Since 1974, the California State Department of Parks and Recreation, which administers the state parks, had made it a priority to acquire the Gillette-Brown Ranch. The National Park Service was also interested, and both agencies hoped to eventually establish a joint headquarters and visitors center at the site. Some local residents generally favored the parks' proposal because they wanted to maintain the rural character of the area. Other residents and local businesses supported the University.<sup>67</sup>

In 1992, an environmental impact and assessment study on the expansion was undertaken by Soka University. Still, this did little to assuage all of the

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<sup>65</sup> Nancy Ray, "Plans to Build Buddhist College Snarled by Open Space Struggle", *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1985.

<sup>66</sup> The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is a state agency which was created by the California State Legislature in 1979 to implement the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan and assist the work of local, state and federal park agencies.

<sup>67</sup> Civil rights leader Rosa Parks submitted a letter of support for the University which was read at a public meeting on the expansion.

concerns of local residents or satisfy the Conservancy, which had by now committed itself to acquiring the entire property for parkland.

In 1992, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), a joint-powers authority associated with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, resorted to its powers of eminent domain to condemn the core parcel comprising Soka University of America and thereby halted SUA's plans for expansion. The University appealed the eminent domain action, and the ensuing legal debate stretched out for the remainder of the decade. Soka University was effectively prevented from developing any of its plans for expansion at the Calabasas property and began looking for alternative sites to build its campus.

Despite the controversy, Soka University continued to advance its educational projects and community programs including establishing a research center for public policy in the Pacific Basin, a public guest lecture series, establishing a native plant nursery and garden and providing public tours of the historic buildings.

In 1991, the Pacific Basin Research Center was inaugurated at Soka University of America for the purpose of studying public policy interactions in the Pacific Basin. A public lecture series on the subject of Human Rights was started in 1992.<sup>68</sup> Also, during this period, SUA began hosting community programs, sponsored by the Friends of Soka University. These included monthly historical tours through the Gillette Residence; environmental programs; and children's nature activities.

In 1993, Soka University opened the Japanese Language Center, which offered non-credit classes in conversational Japanese, Russian, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese, among others.

In 1994, the SUA Graduate School opened, offering masters degrees in education with a concentration in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). That same year, SUA received accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Also in 1994, SUA dedicated its Botanical Research Center and Nursery (BRCN) and the John and Juliana Gensley Native Plant Demonstration Garden. The BRCN was formed to propagate native California plants for habitat restoration on campus, conduct scientific research on native plants and provide a resource for students and the public to learn about native plants. The Center's seed bank of more than 200 plant species was the most diverse collection in the Santa Monica Mountains.

During this time, a settlement agreement for the eminent domain lawsuit and Soka University's land use plan was reached with the assistance of former Congressman Anthony Beilenson and Los Angeles Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. This resulted in approval of a 650-student university project by the Los Angeles County and California Coastal Commissions. However, a

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<sup>68</sup> Speakers included: Mrs. Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, Dr. Richard Leakey, Arun Ghandi, and Dr. Benjamin Spock.

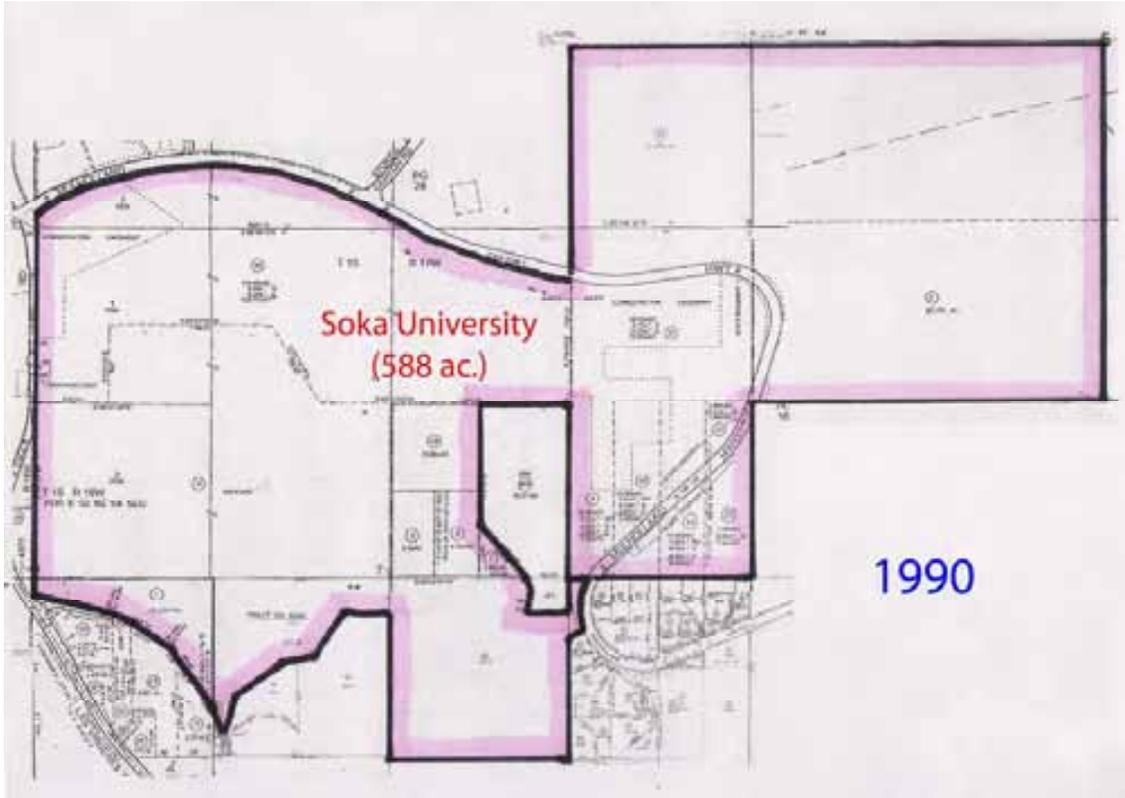


Figure 14.



subsequent lawsuit by environmental groups overturned the approvals, leaving Soka University with the existing facilities at the Calabasas campus.

In 2001, SUA opened a new campus in Aliso Viejo (Orange County), which won community support. At the same time, it entered into discussions with Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky on selling the Calabasas campus to the parks. In 2004 an agreement was finally reached.<sup>69</sup> SUA sold the Calabasas property for \$35 million to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). A coalition of buyers purchased the property to be used as parkland under a cooperative use and management agreement.<sup>70</sup> Of the 588 acres sold by Soka University, 406 acres was controlled by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA); 102 acres was controlled by the California State Parks system; and the National Park Service, through its Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SAMO), controlled 80 acres. Soka University continues to lease the property through December of 2007.

Very few significant changes were made to the property during the Soka University of America era. In 1987, new construction was limited to a 700 square-foot addition to Wisdom Hall (the Novitiate) that connected the main building with the old laundry room, which was later converted to a kitchen; and in 1989, a guardhouse was built (bldg. #45). Besides these projects, the majority of work done involved either cleanup, maintenance of the grounds and some interior remodeling. For example, between 1992 and 1994 SUA re-opened the porch and restored Building 10 (the White House).

The grounds maintenance crew at the University was primarily involved in clean-up and restoration. As an example, the tree houses left by CUT were all taken down. A small pole barn of approximately 400 square feet was removed; this structure was located near Building #5 and may have been built by CUT or the Claretians. Overgrown vegetation was trimmed and/or cleared. The pond was drained and cleaned out, and many invasive exotics were removed from the property. These included giant reed (*Arundo donax*), which remains a significant presence in some of the riparian habitat.

Much of the interior remodeling was done shortly after Soka University in Japan first acquired the property in order to bring the facilities up to code for use as student residences and classrooms. The following list enumerates most of this work and is based on building permits on file with the Department of Building and Safety.

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<sup>69</sup> Jason Felch, "Prime Site to Become Parkland" *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 2005.

<sup>70</sup> The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy provided \$10 million toward the sale price; the California Department of Parks and Recreation provided \$7.1 million; the California Coastal Conservancy contributed \$5.5 million; the Wildlife Conservation Board provided \$5 million; and the National Park Service and the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission each gave \$2.5 million. The remainder of the purchase price was funded by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, Los Angeles County, the cities of Agoura Hills and Calabasas, the Mountains Restoration Trust, and private individuals.

In 1986, Building #3 (the Gillette Residence) was remodeled. New plumbing was installed to accommodate multiple student residents. The fountain in the courtyard was replaced. Apparently, the original fountain had been destroyed when CUT remodeled this area into a bookstore. Concrete wheelchair ramps were also constructed outside this building and Building #1 (The Seminary). Also this year, the assembly room in Building #1 was remodeled.

In 1987, Building #2 (the boiler room) was remodeled into a laundry room. Further unspecified remodeling was conducted on Building #1 (The Seminary).

In 1991, a sliding partition was added to the stage in Building #1 (The Seminary). Also that year additional loft storage space was added to Building #9 (the hay barn).

In 1992, Building #6 (Novitiate) received minor unspecified interior renovations. This included enclosing the gift shop.

In 1994, following an earthquake, at least one masonry chimney had to be repaired. The damaged building was identified only as "residential."

In 2000, existing roof tiles were repaired on Building #1, Building #4, and Building #6.

Some of the older structures on the property were lost during the SUA's tenancy. Many of these were destroyed in wildfires. The most recent and devastating of these fires occurred in 1996 and completely surrounded the property, burning up to the edge of the cultivated landscape. Buildings #14 and #12-13, the old Gillette foremen's residences, were uninhabitable. They have not been occupied since CUT vacated them in 1986. SUA continued to grow alfalfa in the fields on both sides of the entry drive until the mid-1990s. This was consistent with the historic use of these areas. Currently, these fields are being used on a lease basis by the Las Virgenes Water District (LVWD) to disperse excess grey water from the district's water treatment facilities during the summer months.

## Analysis and Evaluation

### Introduction

The analysis of cultural landscape characteristics for the Gillette-Brown Ranch addresses the natural processes and cultural features that historically influenced the physical character of the designed landscape. Six cultural landscape characteristics are documented for the property including *Overall Spatial Organization*—describing the design intent, stylistic expressions, and physical character of the designed landscape, *Response to Natural Systems*—describing the use and adaptation of natural resources in support of the design and within which the designed landscape developed, *Buildings and Structures*—describing the architectural character and physical integrity of the remaining historic structures, *Vegetation Related to Land Use* —describing natural plant communities and the use of ornamental materials, *Circulation Systems*—describing access to and movement through the designed landscape, and *Historic Views*—describing the integrity of historic viewsheds.

The evaluation of these characteristics focuses on the degree to which the features that were present historically and influenced the design remain today. In all cases, the historical significance of the feature is tied directly to the role of that feature in the historic designed landscape during the primary period of significance 1928-1952. The evaluation of cultural landscape characteristics is based on criteria established by the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>71</sup> With the exception of historic buildings, individual and discrete features remaining on the property today are not evaluated unless the role of that feature was documented and critical in the historic design.

In some cases, landscape characteristics that do not survive with integrity to the period of significance as defined in this assessment may continue to contribute to the historic character of the property. When appropriate, these resources are noted in the summary sections of the evaluation, and addressed in the summary statement of significance.

Historic aerial photographs and historic photographs of the property were used to analyze changes to the designed landscape over time. These photographs are on file at Santa Monica Mountains NRA.<sup>72</sup> Many of the historic photographs are from the Clarence Brown papers at the Hoskin's Library, Special Collections, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Wallace Neff's original architectural drawings of the Gillette Estate from the Huntington Library were the basis for the building evaluation, providing design drawings

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<sup>71</sup> See National Register Bulletin no. 18, *How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes*, and National Register Bulletin no. 30, *Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation of Rural Historic Districts*.

<sup>72</sup> Aerials used for this analysis included images from the years 1928, 1935, 1938, 1940, 1944, 1945, 1947, 1954, 1956, 1960, and 1989.

and floor plans. These drawings also allowed existing building components and attributes to be assessed at a relatively detailed scale. The landscape evaluation is based on the review of the academic and popular literature related to the development of landscape architecture and garden design in America. This information was applied to the specific historical context, themes, period of history, and regional setting for this design.

Due to the limited scope of research for this report and the focus on providing critical information about the historic buildings and key landscape features for planning, some structures and landscape characteristics from the period are not fully assessed in this report. These features are noted in the analysis, and may require additional information prior to further site development.

## Spatial Organization

Spatial organization describes the designed landscape of the Gillette-Brown Ranch as it was planned and implemented by Wallace Neff and others between 1928 and 1952. It describes the antecedents, landscape patterns, and relationships among critical features that collectively define the integrity of the historic designed landscape.

### Gillette era

Initially, the spatial organization of the Gillette Ranch incorporated and then expanded early land use patterns established by the Stokes, including agricultural use of the valley landscape. With Gillette's purchase of the property in 1926, agricultural use became a basic component of the estate landscape, enhancing the rural character of a gentleman's ranch.

Within this early framework, and by far, the greatest influence on the spatial organization of the landscape was development of the design and overall site plan for the grounds of Gillette's new estate under the direction of Southern California architect, Wallace Neff.

Incorporating the pre-existing agricultural landscape, Neff's site plan defined three broad use areas for the property: the agricultural landscape or **working ranch** located in the north and western portions of the property including the agricultural fields, orchards, worker's houses, stable, and informal ranch roads; the **core area** including the articulated gardens and primary buildings—the Gillette Residence, the Garage, and Cook's House, sited on approximately 20 acres in the central portion of the property; and the surrounding more **natural landscape** that provided an environmental setting for the designed grounds of the estate. (Photo 23)

### Historic Landscape Design

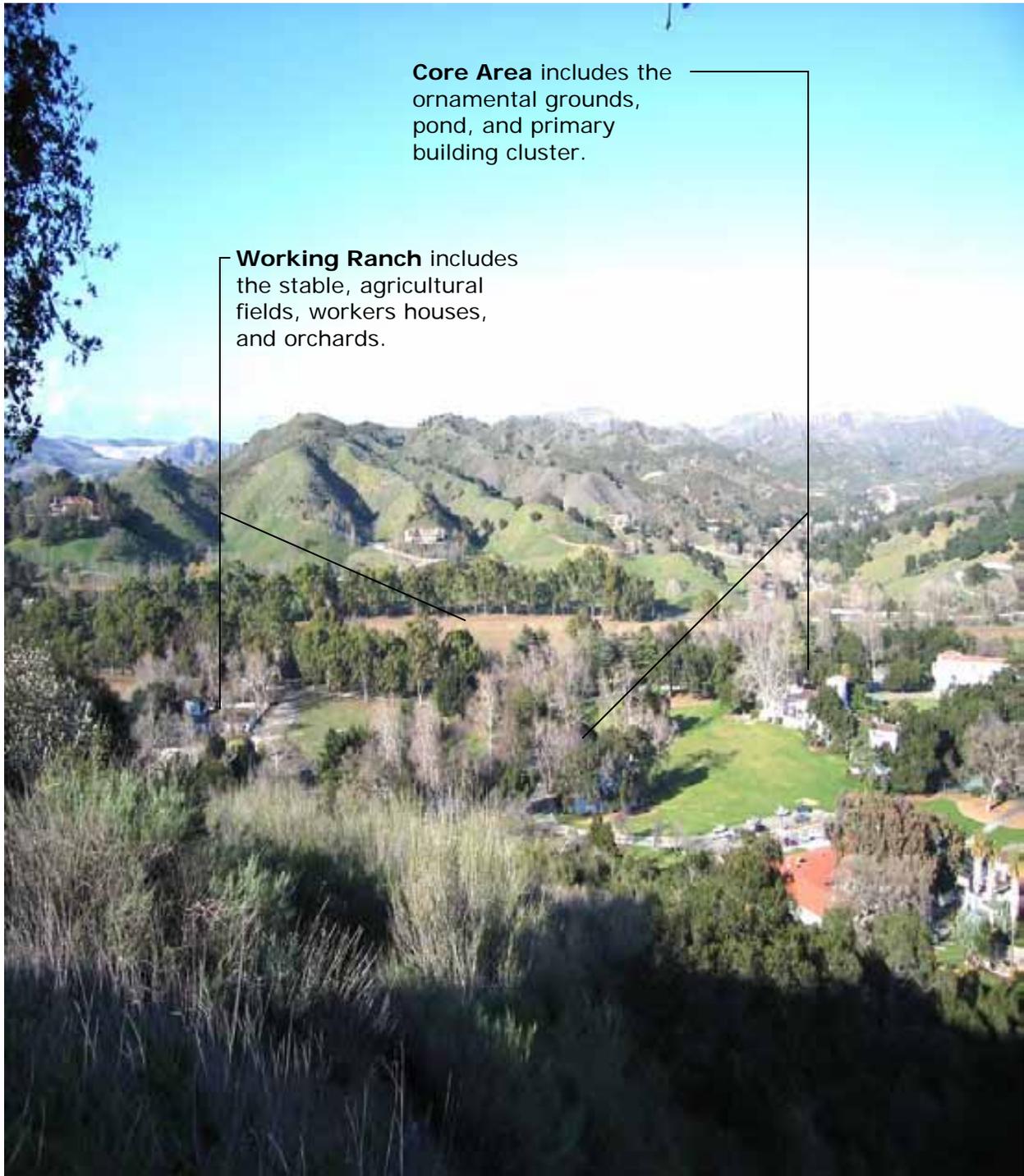
The antecedents for the design Neff created for the Gillette Ranch were well established by the end of the 1920s. Large estate gardens designed and built by architects and landscape practitioners during this era in Southern California were predicated on the use of several key design concepts or principles, largely imported from Europe—especially Spain, Italy, France, and England. Three of these design principles—the integration of the buildings and grounds, an articulated vehicular entry and access, and use of stylized garden spaces, were clearly employed by Wallace Neff and are evident in the designed landscape at the Gillette-Brown Ranch. This design established the framework for overall use and the spatial organization of the estate.

The first design principle—the integration of building and grounds—was reflected in the lay-out and relationship between the Gillette Residence, and several articulated gardens, creating an illusion of space and grandeur. Neff

designed and constructed the Gillette Residence on a small knoll, rising in the middle portion of the property. The knoll was graded to create a building space, and the residence designed to step down the sloping topography, creating a relatively low profile as the building wrapped around the hill on the north and west sides. (Photos 24, 25) Surrounded by garden(s) and the relatively large agricultural landscape, the view from the garden terrace on the west side of the residence provided commanding views of the grounds and the mountains west. The terrace on the west side of the residence became the spatial transition from private formal space to the more pastoral landscape, and finally to the distant hills and borrowed "wilderness".

The second landscape design principle influencing spatial organization focused on vehicular access to the property and the arrival sequence to the main residence. Traditional estate design of this era provided for a grand entry to the main residence, creating both a transition and dramatic sense of arrival. In many cases this arrival routed visitors along a curvilinear alignment giving the sense of driving through the pastoral countryside. At the Gillette-Brown Ranch, this concept was perfectly executed. The designed entrance to the estate was past a wall and gated road that extended almost a quarter of a mile along a eucalyptus allée. With the double row of trees, this road bisected the agricultural fields and was somewhat formal if not grand in this setting. Further, from an experiential perspective, it contrasted the working agricultural landscape with a highly articulated and manicured series of spaces leading to the main house, giving visitors the impression of wealth and taste found in a gentleman's ranch. At the end of the allée, the entry drive crossed a concrete bridge and a manmade pond as it approached the residence following a curvilinear road routing along the contours, eventually passing through an arched opening at the residence, and ending at the automobile court. This entry remained in place during the Clarence Brown era, and is still used as the primary entry to the property today. (Photos 26, 27)

The third landscape design principle used at the Gillette Ranch and influencing the historic organization and use of spaces was the development of distinct gardens and garden areas. Certainly the overall site plan for the Gillette Ranch was designed as a unified whole, but the design also contained distinct and distinctive gardens reflecting several of the stylistic conventions associated with estate design in Southern California in the late 1920s. Three garden styles were incorporated in the design of the property. One clear expression was the English pastoral tradition as expressed in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century including the use of sweeping lawns, shrub and woodland borders to contain and focus views, and a relatively large water feature constructed to appear as a natural feature. Located on the west side of the residence, the pond was created by capturing water from an east-west running creek. Beyond the diversion, a natural boggy area was excavated to supply clay for fabricating the adoblar building materials used on all of the Neff buildings. The bottom of this area was later paved with concrete and a dam constructed at the west end to contain and control the flow of water. Spatially, the pond



**Core Area** includes the ornamental grounds, pond, and primary building cluster.

**Working Ranch** includes the stable, agricultural fields, workers houses, and orchards.

Photo 23. View of the Gillette-Brown Ranch today. In addition to the Working Ranch and the Core Area, the **Natural Landscape** surrounding the property—although altered over many years, remains important and provides the environmental context and setting for the developed areas of the property. View looking northeast. (April, 2006)



Photo 26. The wall and iron gate located on Mulholland [today] created an elegant architectural demarcation between the public and private estate. Beyond the gate, the entry road narrowed and carried traffic to the residence. Clarence Brown era photograph.



Photo 27. Just past the entry gate the alignment of the road cut across the agricultural fields. A double row of eucalyptus trees focused views to the Gillette Residence (center of photograph). Although the road would curve before reaching the house, this view to the residence was purposeful and designed to create a specific arrival experience. Clarence Brown era photograph.



Photo 24. Historic view of the Gillette Residence sited on the knoll. Clarence Brown era photograph.



Photo 25. The siting of the residence, wrapping around the knoll remains today as does the sweeping lawn that historically provided a pastoral setting for the estate. (April, 2006)

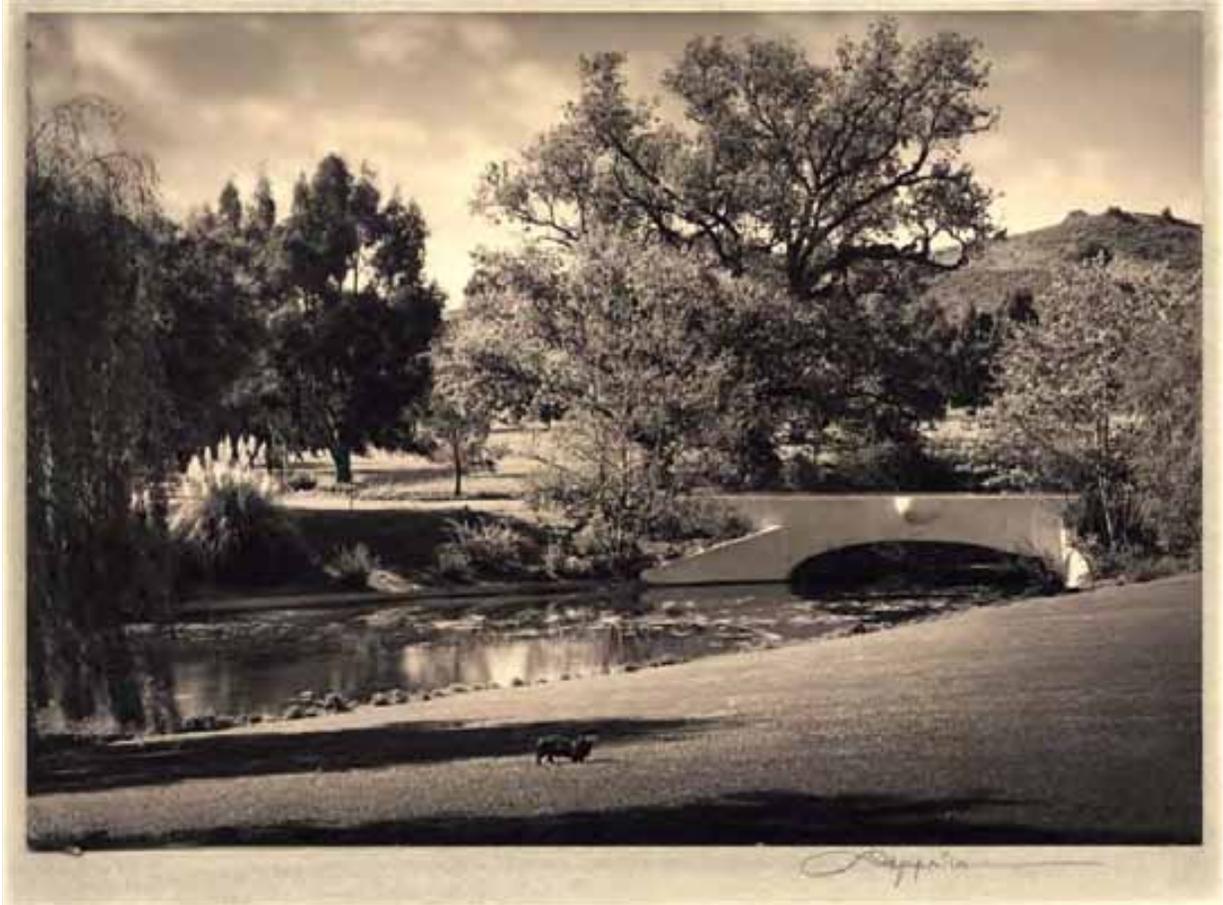


Photo 28. Historic view of the concrete bridge on the east side of the pond. Clarence Brown era photograph.



Photo 29. Contemporary view of the current dam structure on the outlet or west side of the pond. (April, 2006)

defined the edge between the agricultural landscape to the north, and the sweeping lawn and pastoral landscape on the west side of the residence, focusing and containing views. Collectively, the sweeping lawn, the pond, and the wooded border framing distant views defined the west garden space. (Photos 28, 29)

A second garden style was more Italianate in character. This style was expressed most clearly in the two formal axial gardens on the east side of the residence. The design of these gardens included a central pond with radiating paths, formal plantings, and clipped hedges. Located approximately 150 feet apart, the two formal gardens were linked by a hedge defining the boundary between the developed grounds and the agricultural fields. (Photo 30)

The third garden style expressed in the site plan was Spanish or Moorish garden tradition, and was exquisitely expressed in the high style and articulated design of the western courtyard at the residence. This garden style is expressed in the balanced symmetry, semi-enclosed tile foundation, and central fountain which became the focal point for the larger axial structure of the entire residence. Spatially the courtyard created the transition between the house interior and the larger designed landscape, especially the ornamental plantings around the residence, and the pond and sweeping lawn to the north and west. The axial brick and tile surface, stepped terraces, central water runnels and the fountain, surrounded by glazed tiles, potted plants, and masonry benches all reflect the character defining components of a traditional Moorish garden and Mission Revival Style garden. (Photo 31)

All three of these garden styles and spaces were retained with only slight modifications through the Clarence Brown era, and into the mid-1950s. The majority of changes Clarence Brown made to the property were relatively contained. Recreational uses were added on the west side of the residence with the construction of a tennis court and a swimming pool. Located near the barbeque and patio below the automobile court, the main access was down steps by the automobile court. Brown continued agricultural use of a portion of the large fields, but also installed a landing strip for small planes in the open field east of the house. Brown also made a number of changes to the interior of the residence, some of which were designed by Neff (e.g. the projection room), and most of which appear to be compatible with the original character of the building.

Dramatic changes to the spatial organization began in the mid-1950s, and continued in varying degrees, up to the present. Several of these changes profoundly affected the original design including construction of two significant buildings and a large addition to the Gillette Residence, enclosing the automobile court, installation of new roads and circulation systems, loss of the two formal gardens near the residence, various alterations to the historic buildings, including the courtyard, the removal and replacement of

ornamental vegetation, and a significant change in use, from private estate, to institution, to religious compound, and university campus.

## Summary

The spatial organization and historic designed landscape comprising the Gillette-Brown Ranch between 1926 and 1952 remain today in fragments. Individual components of the historic designed landscape are discernable in places, and compromised or completely lost in other areas. Clearly the change in use of the property from a private estate to instructional use has had the greatest impact on the structures and grounds. This is evidenced by the fact that from the time of the initial implementation of the site plan in 1928, until the mid-1950s, the original landscape design by Wallace Neff remained largely intact.

Changes that were made beginning in the mid-1950s, first by the Claretians and then by subsequent land owners, profoundly altered several important characteristics of the original design. Key among the changes impacting the integrity of design are the loss of agriculture in the northwest portion of the property, the incremental loss of ornamental plantings in the formal gardens and around the residence over several years, alterations to circulation in order to accommodate new uses, and modification of the Stokes Creek drainage channel and pond. In addition, virtually every building in the core area was modified. A new wing was added to the Gillette Residence enclosing the automobile court, the Seminary building and associated infrastructure was constructed in 1955, eliminating the formal gardens on the southeast side of the residence, and the Novitiate building was constructed in 1960, including the access road across the pond, and parking lot near the building. All of these changes occurred within the core 20 acres of the designed building cluster. Although the Novitiate building is relatively low in profile and the other additions are materially sympathetic with the original buildings, the scale and siting of these structures dramatically alters the original design intent and site plan for the property.

The overall and cumulative affect of these changes is that the design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association defining the historical significance of this designed historic landscape are greatly altered. Although the location and the setting of the property continue to evoke a historic character, the physical integrity defining significance has been lost. As a result of these impacts, ***the designed landscape as a whole is not eligible for listing in the National Register.***

Components of spatial organization that *contribute to the historic character* of the Gillette-Brown Ranch include the following:



Photo 30. The courtyard was designed with several components that reflected Moorish gardens focusing on the fountain and tile work. (Clarence Brown era photograph)



Photo 31. One of the two formal gardens installed as part of the original design, and present through the mid-1950s. (Clarence Brown era photograph)



## **Working Ranch Area** (including large open agricultural fields in the north)

### **Buildings and Structures**

- Stable
- White House and White House Garage
- Brandt House and Brandt House Garage
- Frisk House
- Water Wells (abandoned)

### **Circulation Features**

- Ranch roads around the Stable and print shop (bldg. #9)
- Access road from the main entry to the White House and White House Garage

### **Vegetation**

- Remnant orchard trees
- Arbor and plantings on south side of the stable
- Scattered eucalyptus, sycamore, and oak trees

## **Core Area**

### **Buildings and Structures**

- Gillette Residence
- Garage
- Cook's House
- Swimming Pool (Brown era)
- Barbeque with associated walls and patio
- Tennis courts (Brown era)
- Pond/Pond
- Bridge (concrete)

### **Circulation**

- Entry drive and associated wall and entrance gate
- Road to Cook's House

### **Vegetation**

- Eucalyptus allée along entry drive
- Oak trees (in lawn area and around house)
- Large trees around residence such as pine, palm, cypress, and cedar

### **Views**

- View looking west from the terrace/courtyard on the west side to the residence
- Successional views along entry drive to the fields, bridge, and house

### **Natural Landscape**

- Remaining native plant communities and associations
- Riparian corridors on east and west sides of the core area
- Valley Oak community and associations



## Response to Natural Systems

Three natural systems historically influenced the historic designed landscape and overall site plan for the Gillette estate. These include the relatively large tracts of open land and alluvial soils for agriculture; the available water resources from creek drainages and tributaries fingering across the valley landscape, and the natural vegetation and plant communities and associations, especially the valley oak woodland, and coast live oak associations that were incorporated into the landscape plan.

When Gillette purchased the property in 1926, the natural landscape had already been substantially modified as a result of agricultural use dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>73</sup> Rolling topography and the relatively open areas in the northern portion of the property provided large tracts of arable lands for crops and grazing livestock. An analysis of aerial photographs indicate that it is possible portions of these fields were further supplemented or enhanced during the historic period to provide the maximum amount of uninterrupted croplands. Based on an analysis of soil profiles and channel configurations for the creeks and intermittent streams, it appears that this may have been accomplished by grading and moving the soil to the very edges of the creek channels and, in some cases, creating artificially steep banks within these drainage channels. This changed the natural morphology of the stream bank and most likely also altered the character of riparian vegetation along these creek corridors.<sup>74</sup>

The Stokes Creek drainage channel was further modified when the design of the artificial pond was implemented just northwest of the Gillette Residence. Although a critical feature of the landscape design, the pond itself may have been located in association with a low point or natural widening of the channel.<sup>75</sup> In any event, the pond was created by excavating this area, paving the bottom with concrete, and diverting water from the creek into the basin. Water was impounded by a sizable dam structure on the west side of the pond, and from there, water flowed back into the drainage channel. Based on aerial photographs sometime between 1954 and 1956, the Stokes Creek drainage channel was rerouted into an artificial channel that took the water north and then west back to the intake for the pond.

At least in part, because of all these changes to the water course, the riparian communities and associations along the corridor are also different than they were during the period of significance. While not integral to the historic designed landscape, a change in the extent and composition of these

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<sup>73</sup> Evidence also suggests that American Indian groups in this area may have practiced some type of agriculture prior to settlement by Mexicans and Americans.

<sup>74</sup> See *Preliminary Geotechnical Investigation*, for Summit Architects, Inc., WO 3453-VN August 17, 1994 by GeoSoils, Inc., pgs. A-16, 1-16.

<sup>75</sup> As noted in other sections of this report, documentation suggests that the pond was the excavation area where the builders fabricated the adoblar for construction of the residence in 1928/29.

riparian communities affects the historic character of the corridor both visually and physically in terms of the number of introduced and exotic species.

Natural plant communities and associations on the property were also integrated into the development of the landscape plan. Wallace Neff noted on his design drawings for the Gillette property that a number of mature oak trees were to remain during implementation of the design for the grounds, using these materials to frame specific views and create edges. This was especially evident on the west side of the residence where the lawn sloped down the hill and the large trees were left along the sides of the sweeping lawn, separating the ornamental grounds from the working landscape, and framing views from the courtyard west to the mountains.

### **Summary**

During the historic period on the property the three primary natural systems—water systems, topography, and vegetation, influenced the physical attributes and character of the designed landscape. Although the creek channel providing water for the pond has been moved into a new channel and rerouted since the period of significance, this change—cutting across the eastern field, did not adversely affect the capacity of the pond to retain water. In a similar way, native vegetation has been altered since the period of significance, but many of the plant associations that were important during the historic period remain. If anything, vegetation has grown and in some cases enclosed areas that were historically more open (such as the distant view west from the courtyard.). Finally, the topographic character and open agricultural fields around which the site was designed in 1928, while not in crop production, also remain today.

Because these natural systems are still evident as they were adapted and as they were used in the historic designed landscape, natural systems **contribute to the historic character** of the landscape. This is especially true of the natural vegetation outside the 20-acre developed area, including the building core and the working ranch portion of the property.





## Structures

Historic structures associated with the Gillette-Brown Ranch include buildings, walls, fences and gates, the swimming pool, masonry barbeque, bridges, water collection structures, and the constructed pond. All of these resources are concentrated on the 20 acres of designed landscape that form the core developed area of the property.

## Buildings

Of the 13 buildings located in the core area of the Gillette-Brown Ranch, nine were constructed within the period of significance. Of these three were designed by Wallace Neff. The remaining six buildings, built by others, include the two small houses and garage on the west end of the property along Las Virgines Road, the Cook's House, and the White House and White House Garage currently used for the Botanical Research Center at Soka University. All of these buildings were designed and constructed before 1930, and are included in the building inventory and evaluation (see below).

The nine historic buildings on the grounds are architecturally similar in character reflecting varying degrees of a Mission Revival Style, including the use of adobe, adoblar, and stylized stucco exteriors and red tile roofs. Clearly the *Gillette Residence* is the most substantial historic building, with two main stories, a three-story tower, a sprawling S-shape footprint covering more than 26,600 square feet, and sited to present commanding views to the rest of the property. Other buildings by Neff include the *Garage*, designed in 1928 and built in 1929. Located southeast of the main residence and built to house several automobiles, it also provided space for ranch workers. The last building designed by Neff was the *Stable* located across a small flat valley from the main house, the stable included a 3-story cylindrical hay loft and harness room, with two, one-story wings. The White House and White House Garage, located just west of the Gillette Residence and just south of the stables, was built in 1928 and provided housing for ranch hands during both the Gillette era and the Brown era. The architect is unknown but, based on the design and detail elements, may have been a junior designer or draftsman from Neff's office. The *Cook House* located on another hill south of the residence, was also built in 1928 as a one-story bungalow with a tile roof, fireplace, and large front porch. Finally, the two houses and garage located west of the residence along Las Virgines Road were built in 1927 to provide housing for the ranch foreman and his assistant working for Gillette. Both of these buildings are modest one story Spanish Colonial Style buildings, wood frame with stucco exteriors.

The following **building inventory and evaluation** provides descriptions and evaluations for each of these buildings. Detailed historical information about the three buildings designed by Wallace Neff is based on the original architectural drawings of the Gillette estate on file in the Huntington Library. Documentation of changes and/or modifications to the buildings during the

Brown era is based on an analysis of the historic photographs from the Clarence Brown Collection at the University of Tennessee. Modifications to the buildings since the period of significance are based on building permit history, personal communication with individuals connected with the property over the years, and site investigations conducted as part of this report in April of 2006.

In the following building inventory, buildings are referenced by their historic names. Building numbers used in this inventory are the numbers assigned by Soka University and in current use. Photographs used for the building inventory are independent of this report and tied specifically to each building. All photographs in the building inventory are grouped at the end of the individual descriptions for each building.

Treatment considerations for these buildings are documented in Appendix A, *Treatment Considerations for Historic Buildings, Gillette-Brown Ranch*.

## **Gillette Residence**

**Date of Construction:** 1928

**Architect:** Wallace Neff

**Building No.** 3

### **Description**

The Gillette Residence is sited on a small knoll overlooking an expanse of lawn and a manmade pond. The long entry drive to the house begins at the entrance to the property passing through a main gate and over two bridges that span the pond and drainage channel. The drive curves toward the house and passes through a pointed archway that separates the main house from the caretaker wing and ends in the automobile court where the main entry to the house is located. Designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, popular in California between 1915 and 1930, the residence is constructed of unreinforced masonry units referred to as adoblar. On the exterior, the adoblar is finished with stucco painted white. (Note that the drawings show reinforced concrete bond beams at the sill and plate of the exterior bearing walls)

The building is a one and two story residence with a three story tower element. The main portion of the house is organized around a central courtyard. In its current configuration, the original main portion of the house and a later large addition form an S-shape in plan, with the original courtyard open toward the west and the automobile court open toward the east. The original long single story service wing with the arched automobile passageway is connected to the main portion of the house at an obtuse angle. Multi-level barrel clay tiled gable roofs enclose the large sprawling house. Tall stylized stucco finished chimneys, which are also capped with tiled hipped roofs, extend above the rooflines. (Photos 1- 4; Fig. 1)

A somewhat closed face with large expanses of wall and a modest fenestration pattern of doors and windows characterize the public side of the residence. (Photo 5) The large expanses of wall on the public side of the building are characteristic of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture and are related to the closed public fronts of Islamic and Moorish residential architecture. The private westward facing elevation exhibits large door and window openings as well as spatial and visual connections between the interior and exterior. (Photo 6)

The main entrance hall is accessed through a large single door aligned on an axis that passes through the center of the courtyard. (Photo 7) The courtyard is the central organizing space of the building as well as the primary circulation element on the ground floor. A set of single lite double doors with a decorative metal gate located on the wall opposite the entrance provides an immediate visual connection to the exterior courtyard upon entry (Photo 8). A billiard room flanks the entrance hall on the left and a library is located

to the right. Entrance to a partially open interior stairway to the second level is centrally located in the entrance hall wall on the left. (Fig. 2)

The central courtyard is surrounded on three sides by the public spaces of the house including the entrance hall, library, living room, dining room, and solarium. Each of these spaces has at least one doorway that leads into the courtyard. The courtyard itself is divided into three spaces—a covered arcaded transitional space located between the courtyard and the living room, the main courtyard, and a terrace with stairs that lead to the yard below. The terrace is delineated from the courtyard by another arcade and a two-step level change. A low wall with a decorative fretwork rail defines the edge of the terrace.

The main bedroom suite is located on the second level, which exists only above the entrance hall, billiard room, and library wing. The third floor of the tower element is accessed through the main bedroom suite. The original single story east wing located perpendicular to the entrance wing housed guests and is now connected to the ell-shaped wood frame wing that was added in 1961. The northeast wing houses the service wing; both the original wing and the 1961 addition have been adapted for use as a residence hall.

Character-defining features for the original exterior included the overall original spatial layout and spatial adjacencies, overall massing, barrel clay tiled roof, stylized chimneys, original roof forms, smooth stucco wall finish, original fenestration patterns, windows and doors, balconets with decorative box metal grates, tile work, and the original central courtyard design, including the water feature.

Character-defining features on the original interior included local room specific symmetry, spatial adjacencies, and connections, stylized Neff signature fireplaces, room specific ceiling treatments that included exposed wood rafters, wood panels and in some instances vaulted ceilings, tiled floors, raised panel wood paneling, and original hardware (Photos 9-15).

## **Evaluation**

The integrity of the main house is compromised on both the interior and exterior in terms of design, craftsmanship, setting, and association. Some of the changes have impacted particular features that occur throughout the building such as the roofs and some other alterations although confined to specific areas have occurred in primary spaces and impact the overall integrity of the building.

## **Gillette Residence**

**Date of Construction:** 1928

**Architect:** Wallace Neff

**Building No.** 3

### **Description**

The Gillette Residence is sited on a small knoll overlooking an expanse of lawn and a manmade pond. The long entry drive to the house begins at the entrance to the property passing through a main gate and over two bridges that span the pond and drainage channel. The drive curves toward the house and passes through a pointed archway that separates the main house from the caretaker wing and ends in the automobile court where the main entry to the house is located. Designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, popular in California between 1915 and 1930, the residence is constructed of unreinforced masonry units referred to as adoblar. On the exterior, the adoblar is finished with stucco painted white. (Note that the drawings show reinforced concrete bond beams at the sill and plate of the exterior bearing walls)

The building is a one and two story residence with a three story tower element. The main portion of the house is organized around a central courtyard. In its current configuration, the original main portion of the house and a later large addition form an S-shape in plan, with the original courtyard open toward the west and the automobile court open toward the east. The original long single story service wing with the arched automobile passageway is connected to the main portion of the house at an obtuse angle. Multi-level barrel clay tiled gable roofs enclose the large sprawling house. Tall stylized stucco finished chimneys, which are also capped with tiled hipped roofs, extend above the rooflines. (Photos 1- 4; Fig. 1)

A somewhat closed face with large expanses of wall and a modest fenestration pattern of doors and windows characterize the public side of the residence. (Photo 5) The large expanses of wall on the public side of the building are characteristic of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture and are related to the closed public fronts of Islamic and Moorish residential architecture. The private westward facing elevation exhibits large door and window openings as well as spatial and visual connections between the interior and exterior. (Photo 6)

The main entrance hall is accessed through a large single door aligned on an axis that passes through the center of the courtyard. (Photo 7) The courtyard is the central organizing space of the building as well as the primary circulation element on the ground floor. A set of single lite double doors with a decorative metal gate located on the wall opposite the entrance provides an immediate visual connection to the exterior courtyard upon entry (Photo 8). A billiard room flanks the entrance hall on the left and a library is located

to the right. Entrance to a partially open interior stairway to the second level is centrally located in the entrance hall wall on the left. (Fig. 2)

The central courtyard is surrounded on three sides by the public spaces of the house including the entrance hall, library, living room, dining room, and solarium. Each of these spaces has at least one doorway that leads into the courtyard. The courtyard itself is divided into three spaces—a covered arcaded transitional space located between the courtyard and the living room, the main courtyard, and a terrace with stairs that lead to the yard below. The terrace is delineated from the courtyard by another arcade and a two-step level change. A low wall with a decorative fretwork rail defines the edge of the terrace.

The main bedroom suite is located on the second level, which exists only above the entrance hall, billiard room, and library wing. The third floor of the tower element is accessed through the main bedroom suite. The original single story east wing located perpendicular to the entrance wing housed guests and is now connected to the ell-shaped wood frame wing that was added in 1961. The northeast wing houses the service wing; both the original wing and the 1961 addition have been adapted for use as a residence hall.

Character-defining features for the original exterior included the overall original spatial layout and spatial adjacencies, overall massing, barrel clay tiled roof, stylized chimneys, original roof forms, smooth stucco wall finish, original fenestration patterns, windows and doors, balconets with decorative box metal grates, tile work, and the original central courtyard design, including the water feature.

Character-defining features on the original interior included local room specific symmetry, spatial adjacencies, and connections, stylized Neff signature fireplaces, room specific ceiling treatments that included exposed wood rafters, wood panels and in some instances vaulted ceilings, tiled floors, raised panel wood paneling, and original hardware (Photos 9-15).

## **Evaluation**

The integrity of the main house is compromised on both the interior and exterior in terms of design, craftsmanship, setting, and association. Some of the changes have impacted particular features that occur throughout the building such as the roofs and some other alterations although confined to specific areas have occurred in primary spaces and impact the overall integrity of the building.



Photo 1.  
Plan view looking  
southwest

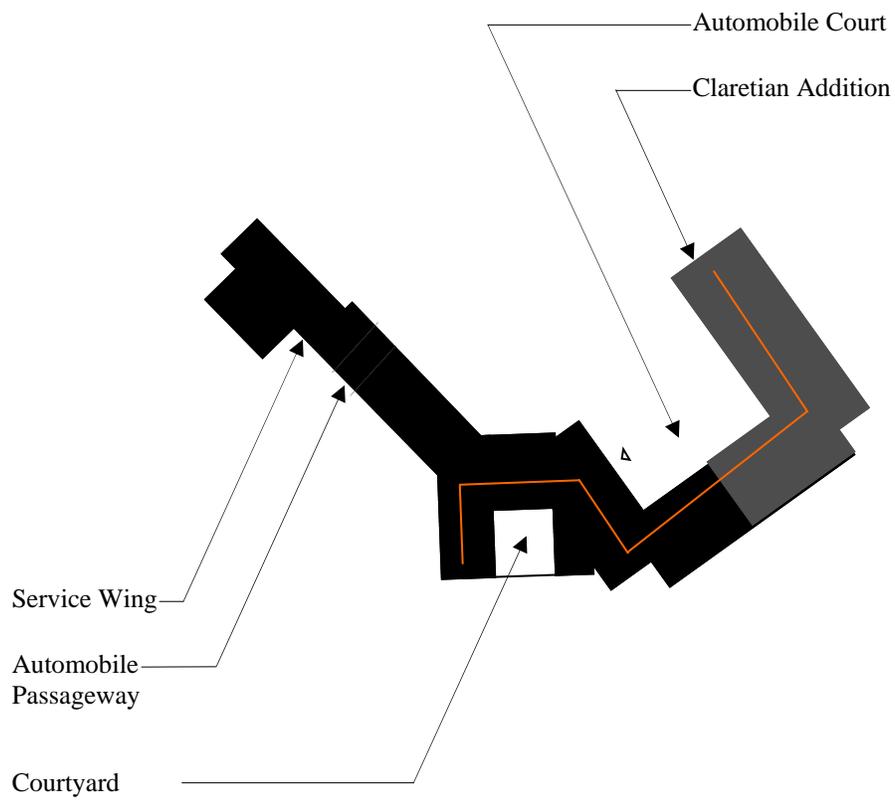


Figure 1



Photos 2 & 3. Views of rooflines and chimney. (May 2006)



Photo 4. View of automobile passageway looking west. (May 2006)



Photo 5. King Gillette Residence, public / northwest elevation, n.d. (Gillette era photo)



Photo 6. King Gillette Residence, private / east elevation. (May 2006)



Photo 7. Main entrance. (April 2006)



Photo 8. Door opposite main entrance, looking into patio courtyard. (April 2006)

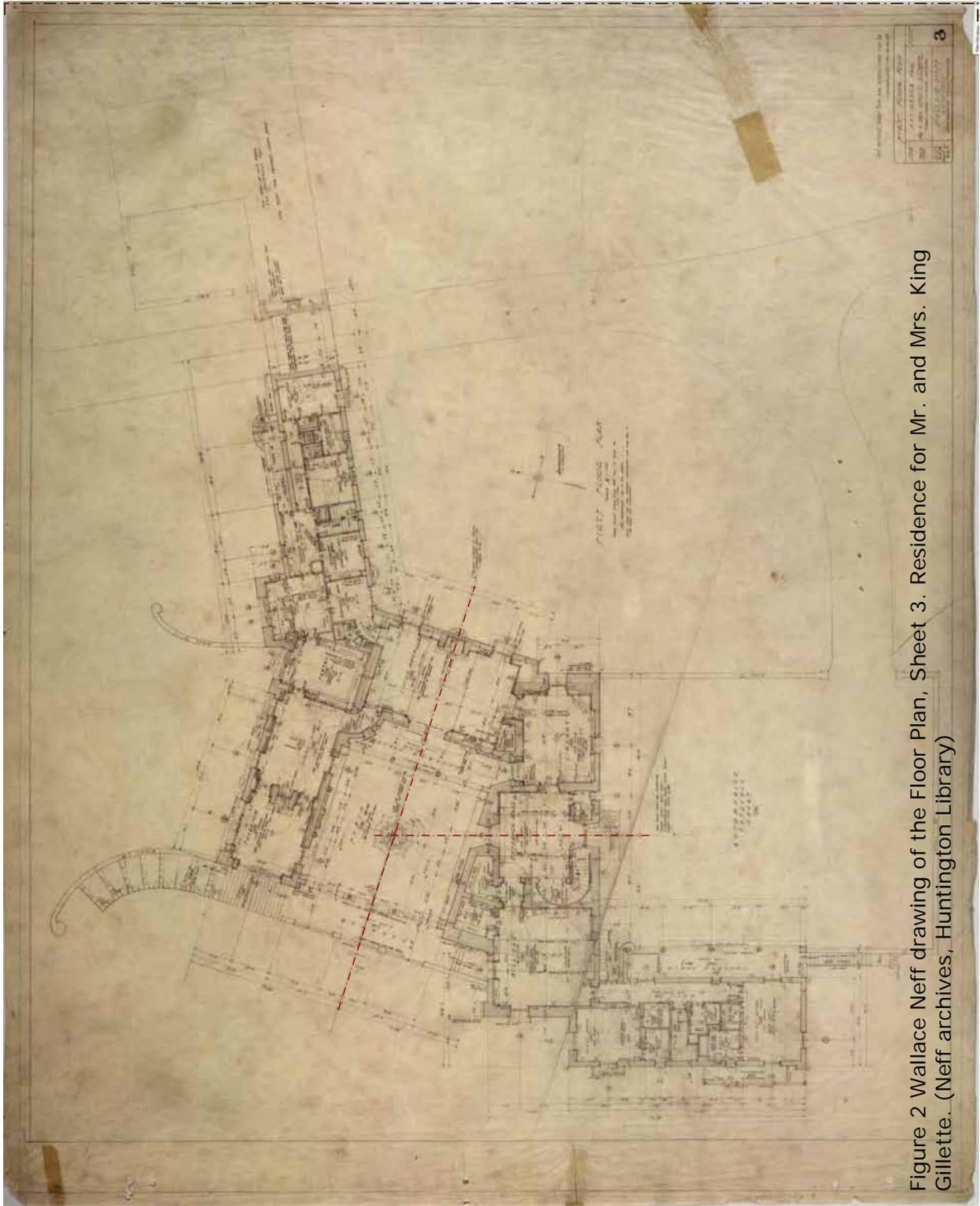


Figure 2 Wallace Neff drawing of the Floor Plan, Sheet 3. Residence for Mr. and Mrs. King Gillette. (Neff archives, Huntington Library)

Character-Defining Features



Photo 9. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 10. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 11. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 12. (Gillette era photo)

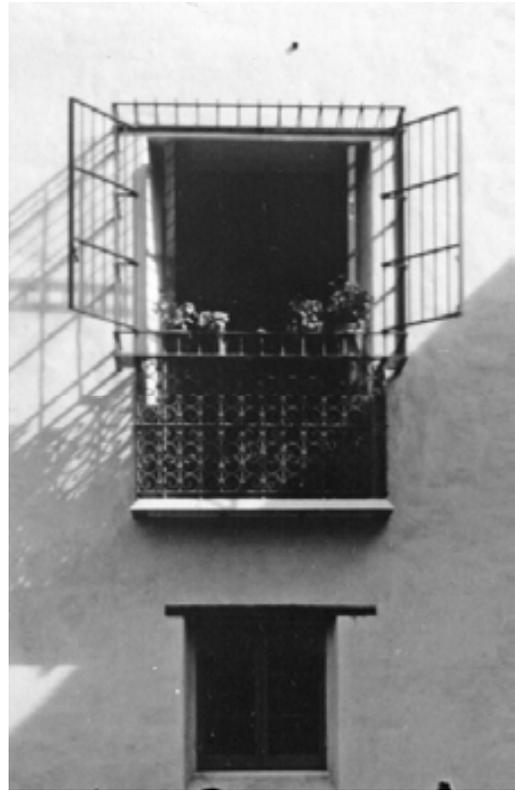


Photo 14. (Gillette Era photo)

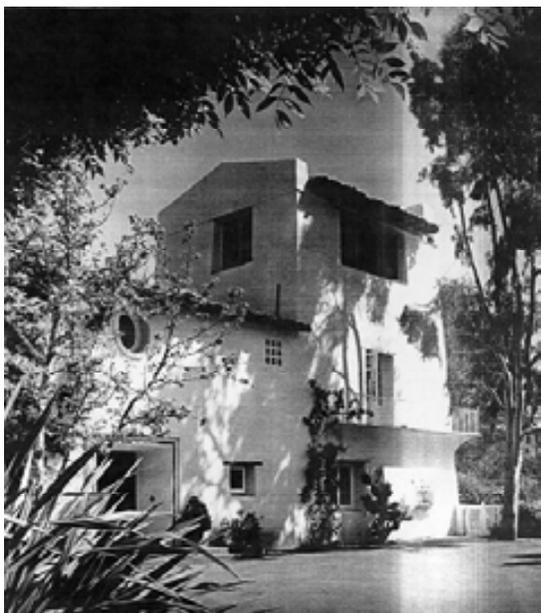


Photo 13. (Clarence Brown Era)



Photo 15. (Clarence Brown Era)

## Character-Defining Features

## **Exterior Features and Areas**

### **Roofs**

Complex multilevel clay tile roof forms are one of the character defining features of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. Neff stylized the roof forms at the Gillette house with subtle details at the eaves and ridge. A raised ridge board designed with a gentle upward curve toward the gable end and capped with barrel tiles creates a subtle swale in the roof form. The pronounced ridge also created a physical and visual separation between the two planes of the gable roofs. (Photos 16-21; Figures 3-4)

Concealed copper gutters were designed to carry rainwater to round cast iron downspouts that penetrate the walls in discrete locations. The lack of an external gutter system attached to or integral with the eave allowed greater flexibility in the design of the eave condition. Neff used specific eave details in different locations. Mock rafter tails were used at the service wing. In other locations a combed edge was created by the extension of the trough tiles approximately six inches or more beyond the cap tiles at the eave. The shadow cast by the eave detail is distinctive and is evident in other residences designed by Neff. In yet other locations, all of the tiles were flush at the eave. The clay-tile roof plains were pierced by tall stucco finished chimneys that flare at the top and are capped with clay tile gable roofs.

While tiled roof surfaces are still present at the residence and all but one of the chimneys are still extant, many of the character defining details have been impacted. The prominent profile of the raised ridge board has been lost to varying degrees in most areas. This most likely is the result of roof repairs and replacement. The concealed copper gutter and cast iron downspout system have been abandoned; external painted aluminum gutters have been attached to the eaves and the combed edge eave details abandoned.

### **Windows and Decorative Vents**

Most of the windows on the upper level of the main house have been replaced with modern fixed or double hung aluminum and vinyl windows that are not in character with the original windows or overall style of the building. The impact of these changes will be discussed in further detail for some of the effected areas. (Photos 22-24)

The 3 x 3 decorative vents that were located in 3 locations when the house was constructed have been replaced with square single lite fixed windows in all locations.

In historic photos from the Clarence Brown era, the metal decorative box grilles at many of the windows, the fretwork rail at the courtyard, and the

wood lintels above doors and windows appear to have been painted a dark color and stood out against the stark whiteness of the walls; all now are painted white and blend in with the wall surface.

All of the impacts to the windows are reversible with greater and lesser effort.

### **Automobile Court**

One of the most significant impacts to the residence has occurred in the automobile court. As designed by Wallace Neff, a 3-story tower visually anchored the sprawling residence on the eastern side of the building. As the apex of the building in both height and in plan, the tower was the dominant foreground element of the building from the automobile approach. (Photos 25-26) The tower wing and a single story arcaded wing formed the original automobile court. A low wall further defined the court on two and one half sides. These elements were designed to progressively step down in height as they wrapped around the space and the solidity of the walls that demarcated one space from another diminished as you moved from the three story face of the tower and two-story wing punctuated with small openings to the single story wing with arcade that connected to the low wall.

Every level of the house, with the exception the tower's third level, was accessible from the automobile court. The main entrance was centrally located in the long two story wing; a private stairway located in the crux between the two story and single story wings provided direct access to the private bedroom area; and the pathway through the arcade passed behind the low wall and down a flight of exterior stairs to the rear yard and sub-level of the single story wing.

In 1961, the Claretians built a large ell-shaped addition that enclosed the automobile court on two sides, resulting in a U-shaped space. The new wing terminated the spatial adjacency, visual connection, and circulation between the automobile court and the rear yard and the stepped massing of the enclosure was lost. The Claretian addition extends beyond the plain of the corner tower and significantly diminishes the formal prominence of the tower element. (Photos 27-28)

Other impacts also have occurred in this area. The changes include the addition of an entry portico, decorative metal gate, and brick bollards at the main entrance, the replacement of divided lite casement windows on the upper level with fixed single-lite and 1 over 1 double-hung windows. The same type of window also was used to replace one of the characteristic 3 x 3 decorative vents and an oval window that was centrally located above the entrance. The Mashrabiya, a wood lattice boxed screen that provided privacy to the bedroom nearest to the stairs has been removed. One of the effects of the wholesale replacement of the windows is the loss of an external legibility

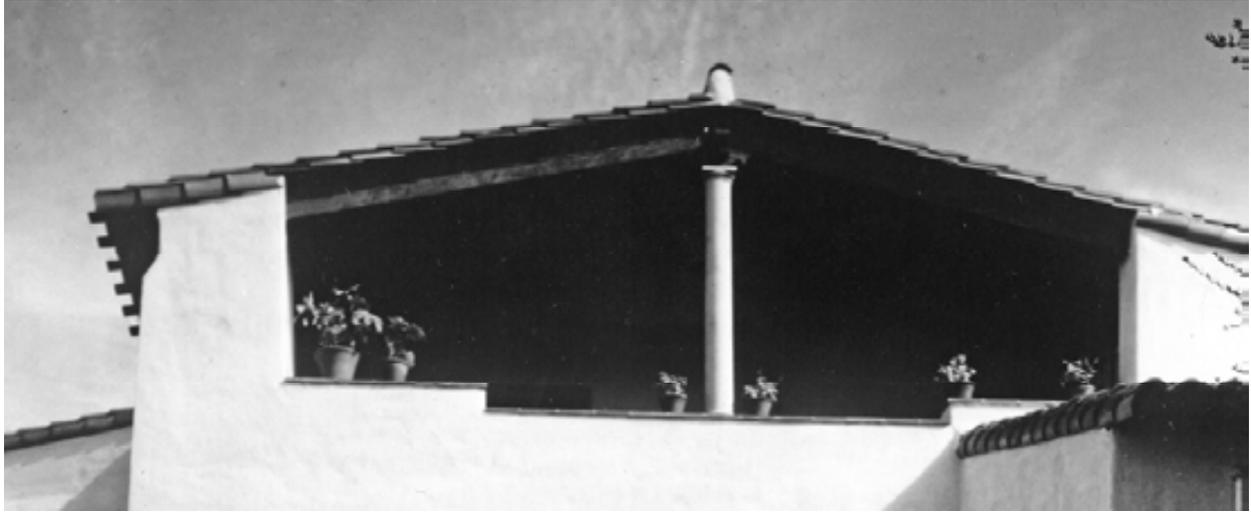


Photo No. 16. View of roof details. (Gillette era photo)



Photo 17. Roof detail.

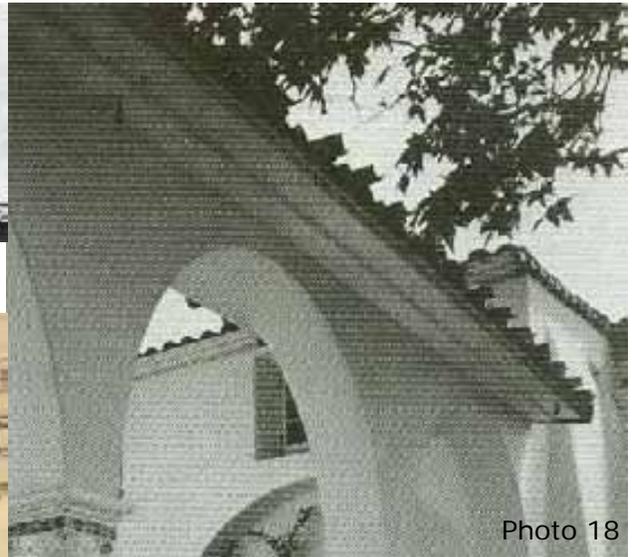


Photo 18

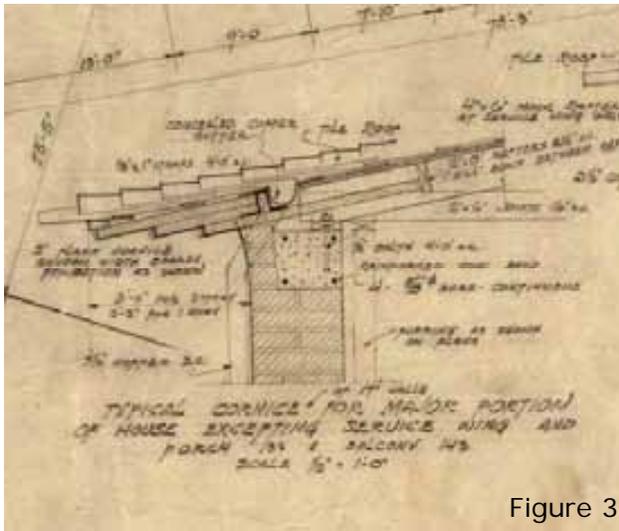


Figure 3

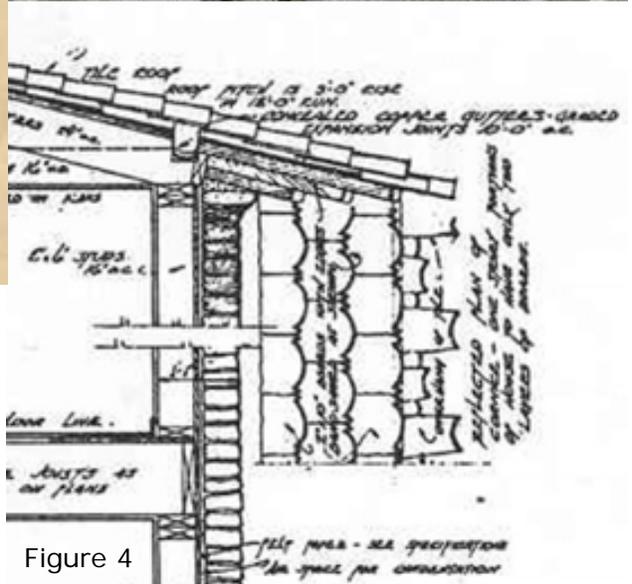


Figure 4

Construction detail from the King Vidor construction documents, (right). Construction detail of eave from Gillette drawings, (above). The eaves are detailed the same, however, the Vidor drawing offers more clarity and better representation of the detail. (Wallace Neff Archives, Huntington Library)



Photo 19



Photo 20



Photo 21

Views of same roof details. (April 2006)



Photo 22

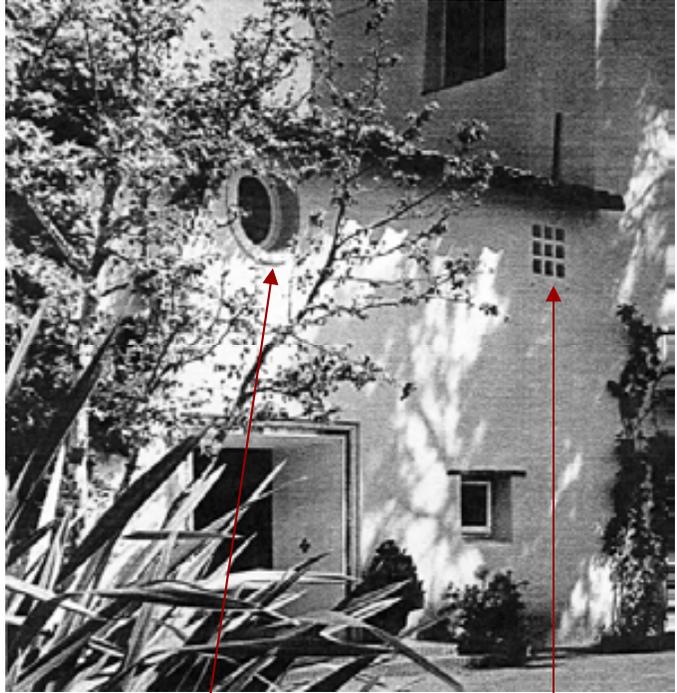


Photo 23



Photo 24



Photo 25



Photo 26

Historic View of swimming pool and patio area.  
(Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 27



Photo 28

View of swimming pool. (1990s)



Photo 29



Photo 30



Photo 31

Views of automobile court. (April 2006)

of the functions and distinction of public and private spaces that was originally prominent in elevation. (Photos 29-31)

Lastly, the view from the automobile court looking away from the building has been compromised by the presence of the Seminary building and associated parking area, which now block the view.

### **Courtyard**

The integrity of the courtyard has been significantly impacted by alterations, in this case, the removal of historic fabric and inaccurate reconstruction and replication. The courtyard was the space about which all of the primary public spaces of the house were arranged and it was designed to function as both an exterior room and as circulation space. A low tiled fountain styled after Islamic garden fountains originally marked the center of the courtyard. The center point of the courtyard and fountain served as the benchmark for the layout of the house and was labeled on the Neff architectural drawings as the point from which the house was to be staked. In some of the Clarence Brown era photos, a small pointed finial like object sits at the center point of the fountain. (Photo 32, Fig. 5)

The overall original layout of the house was irregular in plan; however, local symmetry and axial alignments organized the internal order of individual rooms and the relationship of one room to another as well as the formal gardens to the house. The center point of the fountain anchored these spatial interrelationships on the ground level. Two primary axes were aligned to the center point of the courtyard fountain—the entry axis and the living room axis; some of the axial alignments, while deliberate, also were understated. This was particularly true for the entrance hall, which was set at an angle that splayed away from the courtyard. The living room axis was the strongest and most defined originally passing through the center of the fireplace and through the small center Corinthian column that serves as the door stile for two large solid doors that separated the living room from the courtyard when in the closed position. The axis was further reinforced in the ground plane of the courtyard through a water channel or runnel that flowed from the fountain to a small semicircular pool at the first level change, and then on to the edge of the courtyard and down into another larger but low-profile semicircular pool structure approximately eight feet below the courtyard, just above the ground plane. A narrow tiled portion of the supporting wall below the courtyard created a vertical visual connection between the lower and upper pools of water. While crucial to the axial alignments of the spaces the central fountain did not create a visual barrier or focus in the center of the courtyard. The view and focus was across the courtyard and out to the distant landscape.

The original water feature consisted of four components, the main pool located in the center of the courtyard, a small semicircular pool located at the first step down to the terrace and a larger semicircular pool located at

grade and at the foot of the courtyard end wall; a narrow water channel, physically connected all three elements. Each component was surfaced with decorative tiles. The original water feature was likely removed during the Church Universal and Triumphant era, when the courtyard was used as a bookstore. The current fountain in the courtyard and the pool below at grade do not reflect the same forms nor do they serve the same function as the original water feature. The base of the current courtyard fountain is at least 4 times the height of the original and with a prominent sculptural fount in the larger basin the visual focus is within the courtyard, rather than the historic view out to the landscape and mountains beyond. The front wall below the courtyard now exhibits extensive tile work that is part of a lower fountain. Compared to the original simple semicircular pool and rectangular panel of tile work, the new ground level fountain is much more elaborate and ostentatious. The fountain now dominates this portion of the elevation as a focal point visible from afar. (Photos 33-38)

Additional courtyard elements have been changed over the years. Small semicircular planters that were historically located at the base of each engaged and freestanding column are no longer extant. The planters were reportedly removed due to moisture penetration below. In the area where the planters formerly existed, new hand-painted tiles have been laid. The new tiles are crude imitations of the originals and the new mortar joints do not match the existing in width or material; thus the infill tiled areas are quite noticeable. A built-in bench visible in Clarence Brown era photos at the far end of the exterior wall of the automobile court is no longer extant (Evidence of the bolted connections is visible in the pavers). Changes also have occurred in the stair area that leads down to the yard. At some point, the stucco wall and railing that defines the edge of the courtyard terrace was extended by 1 bay (for a total of 4). The new bay exhibits the same detailing as the original wall, including the flat clay tile cap and decorative fretwork. The stucco wall portion that terminates the new bay measures approximately 7.5 feet above grade. A decorative iron enclosure and gate are attached to the end wall. An additional section of the new decorative fencing was installed on the top portion of the original curved and stepped retaining wall that negotiated the grade difference between the side and rear yards near the house. (Photos 39-42)

Although the low stucco wall and ironwork addition were constructed to match existing, the newer construction compromised the formal integrity and exterior circulation of the house. The original three bays of the low wall mirrored and reinforced the rhythm of the two arcades in the courtyard and thus reinforced the axis of the space that continues through the living room. The addition of the fourth bay skewed the symmetry and axial lay-out of the courtyard elevation.

As originally designed and constructed, the stair that led from the courtyard to the rear yard provided informal circulation from the house through the courtyard to the rear yard. The redesigned wall and ironwork enclosure



Photo 32. Courtyard.  
(Brown era photo)



Figure 5. Neff drawing depicting the axial lay-out from courtyard. (Neff Archive, Huntington Library.)



Photo 33. View of original courtyard fountain.  
(Gillette era photo)



Photo 34. View of new courtyard fountain.(April 2006)



Photo 35. (Gillette era photo)



Photo 36. (April 2006)

View of original courtyard (top) and current configuration. (bottom)



Photo 37. View of original pool at grade.  
(Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 38. View of current pool showing elevated structure.  
(April 2006)



Photo 39. (April 2006)

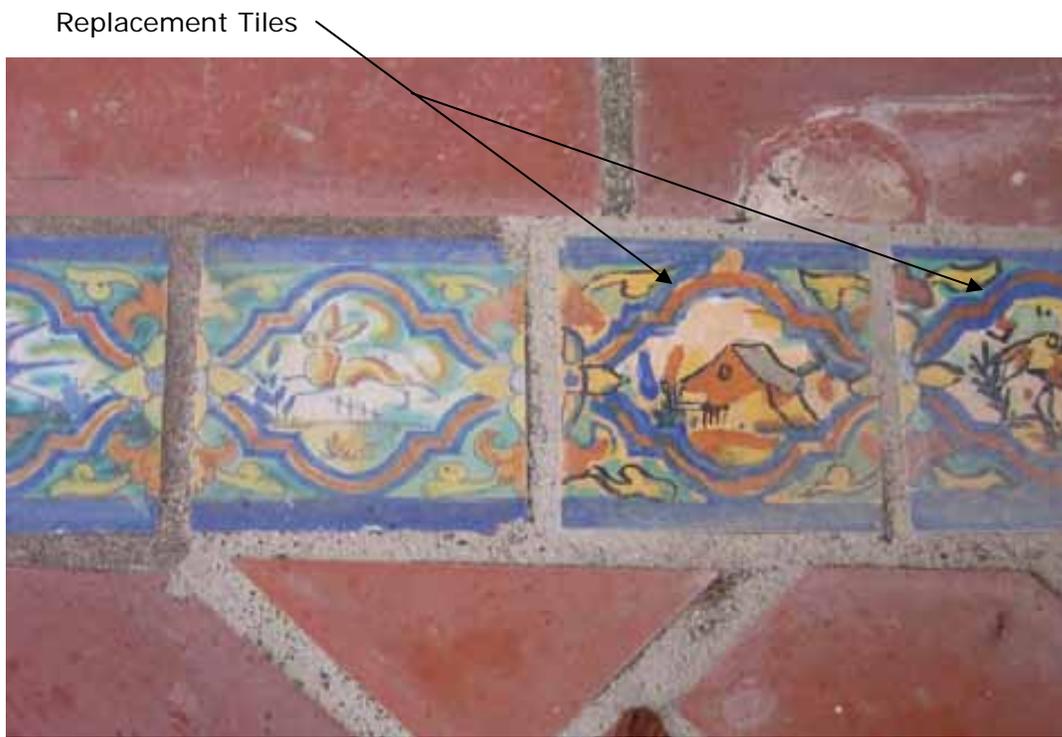


Photo 40. (April 2006)



Photo 41. Claretville era photo of courtyard, west elevation.



Photo 42. Present day view of courtyard, west elevation. (April, 2006)

formalize and diminish the access. The addition of fencing on top of the original retaining wall transformed the transitional element into a barrier. It is unclear when the low wall was extended, however a historic Claretville era photograph shows the original open configuration; thereby placing the alteration outside the Gillette and Brown eras. (Photos 43-44)

The casement windows on the second level of the north patio elevation have been replaced with fixed vinyl covered windows that are not in keeping with the original character of the residence.

### **Other Impacts to the Integrity on the Exterior**

On the west side of the building, the covered porch adjacent to the bedroom suite is now enclosed with a combination of inoperable and casement windows. In the area below the porch, the ground has been regraded, retaining walls and a pathway constructed; and the lower window near grade level converted to a door. These changes occurred over time, including some executed during the Brown era that were later modified.

Two historic photographs show the upper level porch in two states. The earlier of the two photos from the Gillette era shows the porch in its original open configuration. The later Brown era photo shows the porch enclosed with operable casement windows across the entire front and side of the porch. All of the windows were recently replaced and today, the four large center windows on the front are inoperable. The pair of windows on either side of the center windows as well as the windows in the side wall remain operable.

The date of the site work and retaining walls is uncertain. However, a Claretville era photo shows grade conditions like the original design and the small window still present in the lower level (Photos 45-48), thereby placing the alterations outside the Gillette and Brown eras.

Several changes have impacted the service wing as well. During the Brown era the caretaker's residence was transformed into a guest house. A Los Angeles Times article described the changes, which included transformation of the main living room exterior wall from a mass with two individual sets of French doors to a virtual glass wall and the enlargement of another window in the dining room wall. While not mentioned in the article, it appears that the porch on the south east corner of the wing was filled in at this time and a blind arch with centrally located French doors was added on the east end. Today, the guest wing exists as a modified version of the Clarence Brown era changes. The northwest porch is now enclosed. The blind arch on the south portion of the east elevation is no longer extant; and the French doors have been removed, the opening width reduced, and a utility door installed. On the north side of the guest wing, the gated passageway that led to the drying yard/service automobile court is now filled in and stuccoed over to match existing wall. The four brick steps leading up to the gate are still extant and

evidence of the former opening is apparent on the surface of the wall. (Photos 49-53)

On the east elevation of the main house, the chimney at the living room has been removed. The chimney originally projected beyond the outside face of the wall and the roof was notched around the chimney. The area where the chimney was removed is now flush with the rest of the wall and the eave continues straight across.

### **Interior Spaces and Features**

Only two of the principal rooms in the main house retain a high degree of integrity. Various impacts to integrity are common throughout the house. Original light fixtures and most of the original hardware have been removed from the residence. All of the bathrooms have been modernized and no original plumbing fixtures are extant. (Photos 54-58) All but one of the five original fireplaces in the main house have been removed or walled over; gone are the double-sided fireplace between the dining room and solarium, the fireplace in the living room that terminated the primary axis of the lower level, the fireplace in the west bedroom, and the corner fireplace in the east bedroom. (Photos 59-61) It is possible that the double sided fireplace still exists within a chase that was created when a new heating and ventilation system was added. When the fireplace in the living room was removed, the entire chimney was destroyed as well; virtually no evidence of the fireplace remains. The fireplace in Mrs. Gillette's room was designed and constructed so that the signature tapered chimney transitioned into a vaulted ceiling. The integration of the chimney design with the ceiling and the vaulted ceiling form were exclusive to this space. The vaulted ceiling is no longer extant and was likely removed at the same time the fireplace was demolished. (Photos 62-63) It is possible that a portion of the original vaulted ceiling still exists above the drop ceiling. Removal of original hardware and lighting fixtures has greatly impacted the feel of the place; and the removal of the fireplaces is most unfortunate. The fireplaces with the stylized tapered chimney on the interior and the scroll sided hearths were character defining features of the interior spaces; their removal greatly impacts the integrity of the interior spaces in terms of material, design, association, and craftsmanship.

Most of the character-defining exposed wood-framed ceilings have also been impacted to varying degrees. On the upper level, the wood paneled ceiling in the west bedroom is still extant; however, it has been painted over with white paint. (Photos 64-65) As mentioned above, the ceiling in the east bedroom has been lowered and the original ceiling either demolished or covered-up by the new ceiling. On the lower level, most of the exposed wood framing elements of the living room ceiling are still extant and visible; however, a large rectangular boxed in duct that runs the entire length of the room between the tie beams and the rafters destroys the effect of the open vaulted ceiling. (Photos 66-68) Rectangular modern light fixtures mounted between the rafters have also impacted the living room ceiling. The



Photo 43. Wall extension at terrace stairs. (April, 2006)



Photo 44. Gated enclosure at terrace stairs. (April, 2006)



Photo 45.

View of porch adjacent to Mrs. Gillette's Bedroom (based on Neff drawing), the French doors and balconnette below the porch lead to the billiard room. Note the open porch and the small window near grade. (Gillette era photo)



Photo 46.

Present day view of the same area. Note the enclosed porch, the retaining walls, and the conversion of the low window to a door. (April, 2000)



Photo 47. This historic Brown era photo shows the porch enclosed with operable windows.



Photo 48. This historic Claretville era photo shows the original configuration at the lower level. (n.d.)

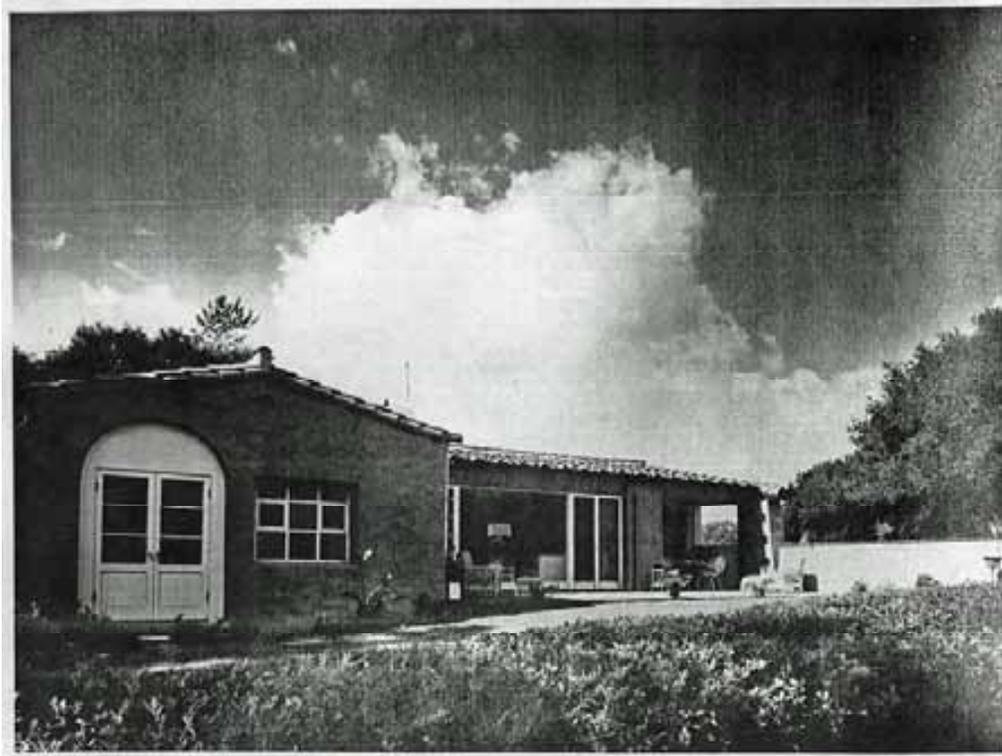


Photo 49. The service or guest wing of the Gillette Residence, view looking west. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 50. A contemporary view of the service or guest wing of the Gillette Residence, view looking west. (April 2006)



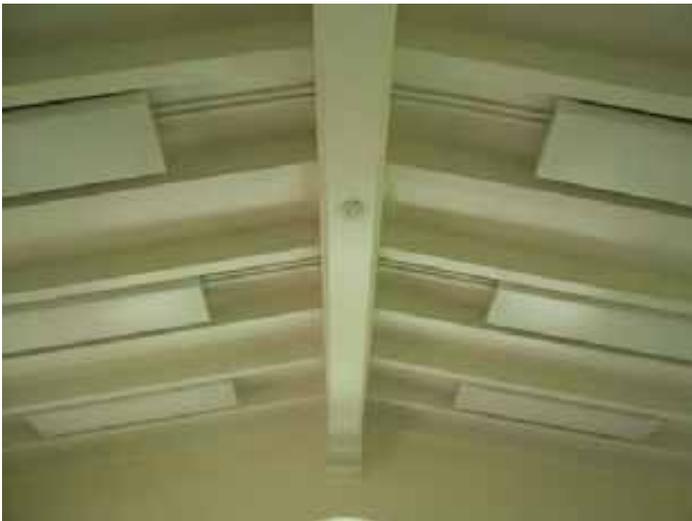
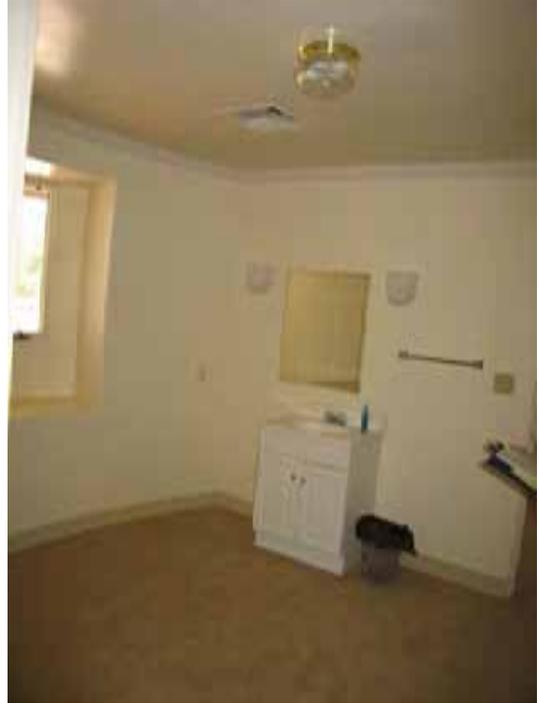
Photo 51. Automobile passageway, looking east. (Gillette era photo)



Photo 52. Automobile passageway, looking east. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 53. Detail view of infill at former gate into the drying yard. (April 2006)



Photos 54-58. (April, 2006)



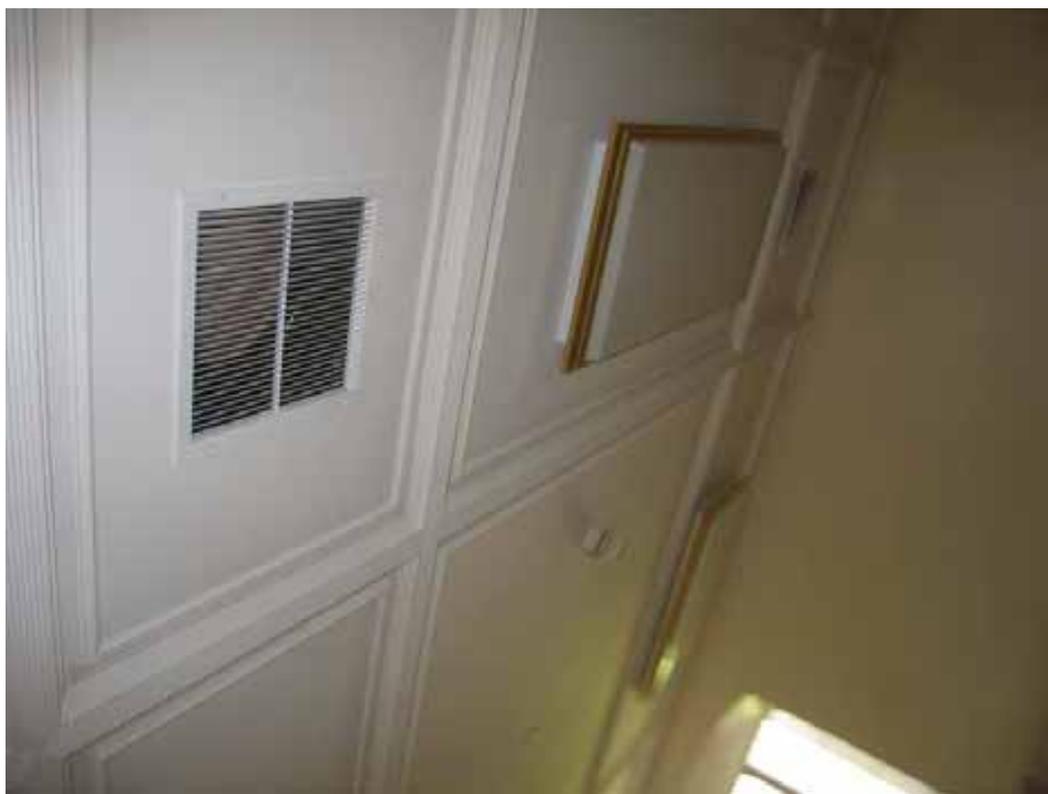
Photos 59-61. (April, 2006)



Photo 62. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 63. (April, 2006)



Photos 64-65. (April, 2006)



Photo 66. (Top) (Clarence Brown era photo), Photos 67-68. (April, 2006)



Photos 69-71. (April, 2006)

exposed wood ceiling in the dining room has been greatly impacted. Only remnants of the ceiling are visible today. Some elements have been removed and others have been covered over with wall board or plaster. The few elements that are visible have been painted over with white paint. (Photos 69-71) This modification combined with the replacement of French doors with large single-lite fixed glass windows completely destroys the historic feeling of the dining room. The ceiling in the solarium and the entry way appear to be intact. (Photos 72-75) The exposed wood ceilings were character defining features of the interior spaces. Modifications to the ceilings and the addition of modern uncharacteristic lighting have greatly impacted the integrity of the spaces in terms of material, design, association, and craftsmanship.

Some of the other major impacts to the interior of the house are room specific. The symmetry and axial lay-out of the living room were further impacted by the building out of the north end wall so that it protrudes into the space. (Photo 76, Fig. 6) On the south end wall, the original Juliet balcony, which was a character-defining feature of the space, is no longer extant and all evidence of its existence plastered over. What had been a symmetrical highly formal and grand space with vaulted exposed wood ceilings, a centrally located fireplace and Juliet balcony, now exists as a rather static shell with remnants of its former character. (Photos 77-78)

The main interior stairway to the upper level also has been impacted by modifications. The main stairway was designed as open vertical circulation. From the entrance hall a low stepped wall provided a glimpse of the stairway beyond. The stepped low wall capped with flat tiles was characteristic of Neff residential design during this period of his career. The stairway continued up without vertical separation between the stairway and upper level. Today, the stairway is closed off from the upstairs by a glazed wall; at the entry, the stepped low wall is now plastered over and the stairway visually closed off at that level. The vertical separation was likely added during the Claretian era for fire safety purposes. The first few curved treads of the stairway still open into the entrance hall; however, the enclosure at the upper and mid-level impact the integrity of the interior space and circulation. (Photos 79-82) On the upper level, the interior stair from the east bedroom to the tower no longer remains and as a result, there is no interior access to the tower.

Only the billiard room and the library seem to retain a significant portion of their historic fabric, including an original fireplace in the library and wood paneling and built-in shelves in both rooms. (Photos 83-86) Unfortunately, the integrity of these spaces is counterbalanced by extensive modifications and removal of historic fabric in the living room, dining room, bedroom suite, kitchen, and to a lesser degree the solarium that significantly impact the overall integrity of the house, in terms of association, design, feeling, materials, setting, and its workmanship. As a result of all these changes, the Gillette Residence has lost integrity and is not eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places.





Photo 72. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 73. (April, 2006)



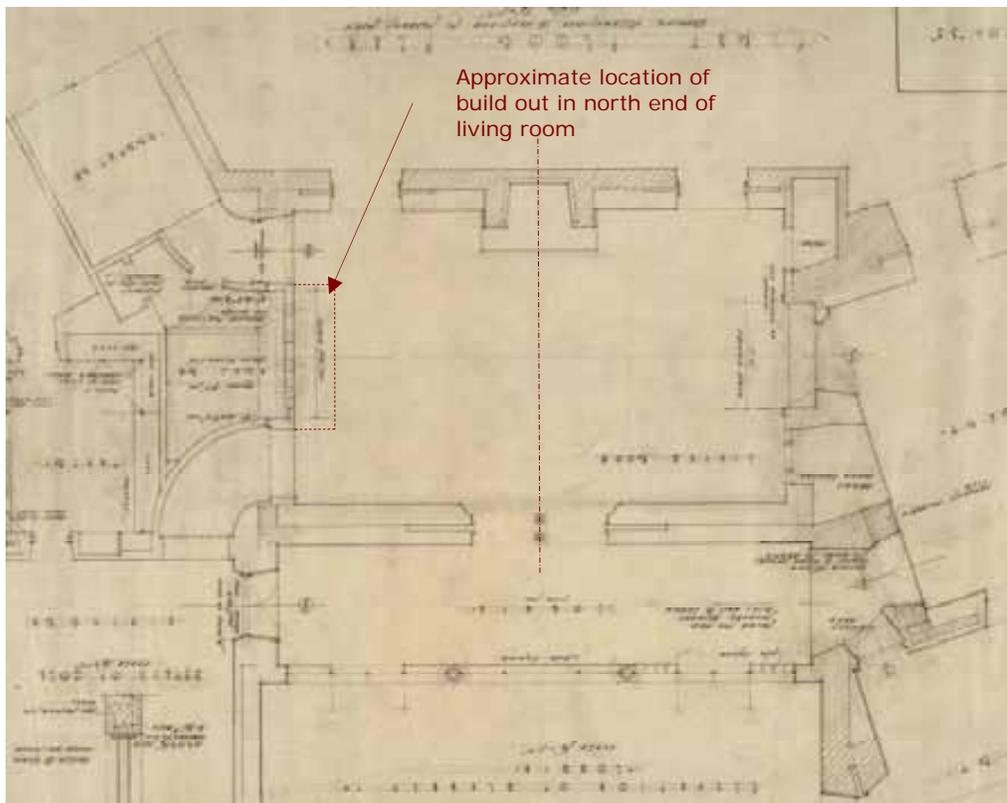
Photo 74. (April, 2006)



Photo 75. (April, 2006)



Photo 76. (April, 2006)



Approximate location of  
build out in north end of  
living room

Figure 6.



Photo 78. (April, 2006)



Photo 77. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 79. Top (Clarence Brown era) Photo 80. Bottom (April, 2006)



Photos 81-82. (April, 2006)



Photo 83. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 84. (April, 2006)



Photo 85. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photo 86. (April, 2006)

## **Garage**

**Date of Construction:** 1929

**Architect:** Wallace Neff

**Building No.** 4

### **Description**

The Garage is located up the slope south of the Gillette Residence. It is a single story building, constructed of adoblar bricks and finished with stucco. The gable roof features deep boxed-in eaves and barrel clay tiles. Double casement wood windows are deeply set in the north, east, and west elevations. Rough-hewn lintels above the windows are painted a dark brown. Two engaged posts with brackets divide the south elevation into three bays. The posts support a beam that runs the length of the building. The beam serves both as a lintel for the large openings and as a beam to support the roof structure. Each bay contains a five panel multi-lite window and door assembly with a transom window above each panel. The building is square in plan with wing walls on the south corners. The building has a shallow entry porch on the north side.

### **Evaluation**

The Garage has been heavily modified both functionally and physically. Originally designed to function as a garage, it now serves as a communal residence hall. An open entry porch on the northeast corner of the building has been enclosed and now serves as a television room. The ceiling of the entry porch appears to be relatively new. The chimney that penetrated the roof on the north side and the fireplace on the interior have been removed. All three garage doors on the south elevation have been removed and a window system installed. Originally this elevation did not have any windows and the dual function of the building was legible through the difference in fenestration between the north and south elevations. The parking bays are still discernible on the exterior through the exposed structure. Very little of the original interior configuration is still extant. The thick wall that separated the garage from the original residence and the entry lobby are the only evidence of the original internal spatial arrangement.

The integrity of the garage has been impacted in terms of design, setting, workmanship, and feeling. As a result, the Garage is not eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

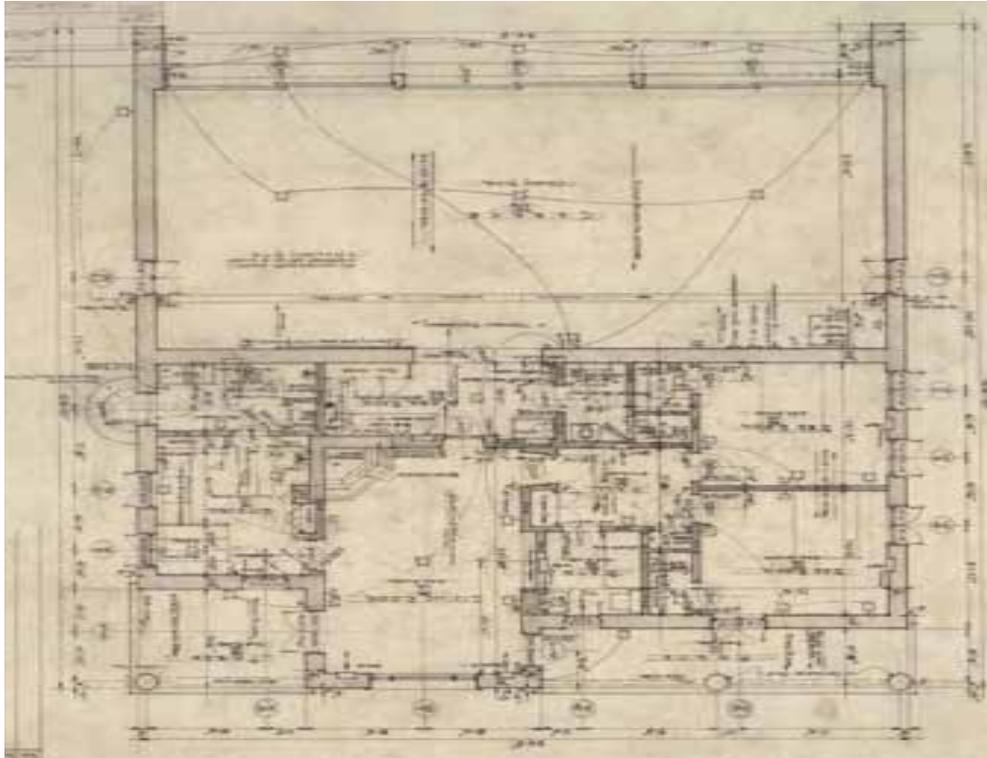




Garage, historic view of south elevation. (Clarence Brown era)



Garage, view of south elevation. (April 2006)



Wallace Neff drawing of the Garage Floor Plan. (Neff Archives, Huntington Library)

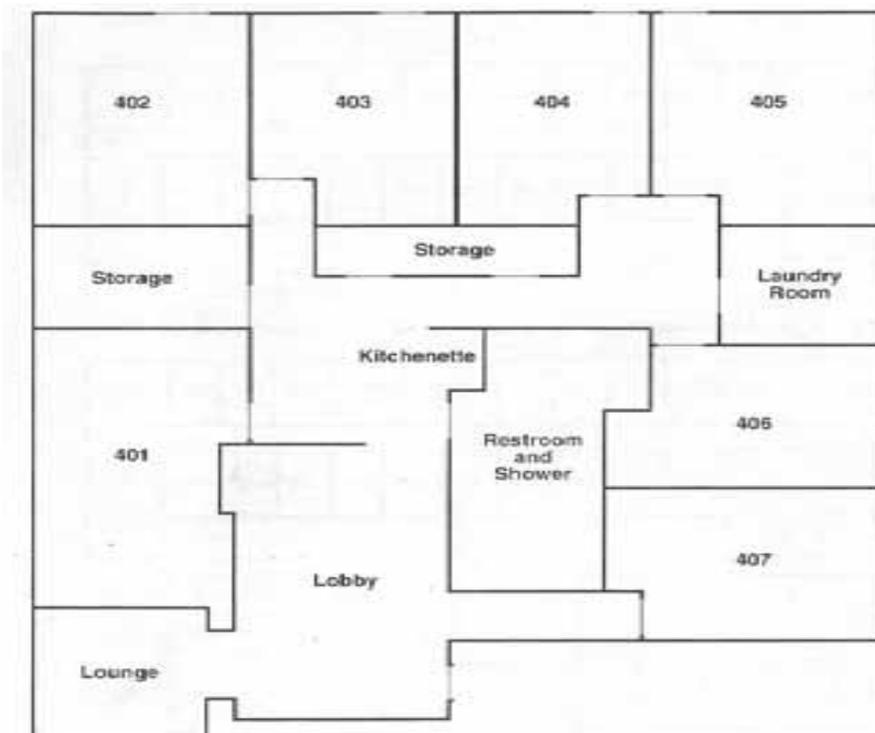


Diagram of the current floor plan of the Garage.

## **Cook's House**

**Date of Construction:** 1928

**Architect:** Unknown

**Building No.** 5

### **Description**

The Cook's House is located west of the Garage and further up the slope, sitting on a low rise with the main elevation facing the Gillette Residence down the slope. The Cook's House is a single story wood-frame building, with a gable roof over the original main portion of the building. The rectangular plan includes what was originally a deep porch area that runs the entire length of the building on the main elevation. This porch area is now fully enclosed and captured as interior space. The wide stucco covered posts that defined the exterior edge of the porch are still visible from both the exterior and interior. A slight change in roof pitch over the porch area creates an overall roof form similar to a saltbox house. Exterior finishes include rough stucco walls and barrel clay roof tiles. The gable roof features shallow eaves with exposed rafter tails; a rain gutter now runs along the front of the rafter tail ends. Modern casement windows set near the exterior face of the wall are used throughout the building and are grouped in pairs and triplets. On the main elevation, three of the four bays are filled across with the triple window groupings; stucco covered infill exists below each set of windows. The fourth bay contains a modern door set off center in the bay. The Cook's House is currently used as a residence hall.

### **Evaluation**

The Cook's house has been heavily modified to accommodate its current function as a communal residence hall. Historic photos from the Brown era show the front porch with low raised panel walls across each bay. Each bay is open above. The photos also show a deep overhang on the front of the porch and a side entry door. Today, the porch is fully enclosed and the captured space divided into three spaces including a lounge/kitchenette, the entrance to the house, and part of a bedroom. One, perhaps two doors were located on the east elevation of the house. Today, there are no doors located on that elevation. The new fenestration pattern, windows, and door are not compatible with the original design of the building. The chimney that penetrated the roof on the south side as well as the fireplace have been removed. With the exception of the porch bays, none of the original interior configuration is extant or legible.

The integrity of the Cook's House has been impacted in terms of association, design, feeling, materials, and workmanship. As a result of these impacts, the Cook's House is not eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

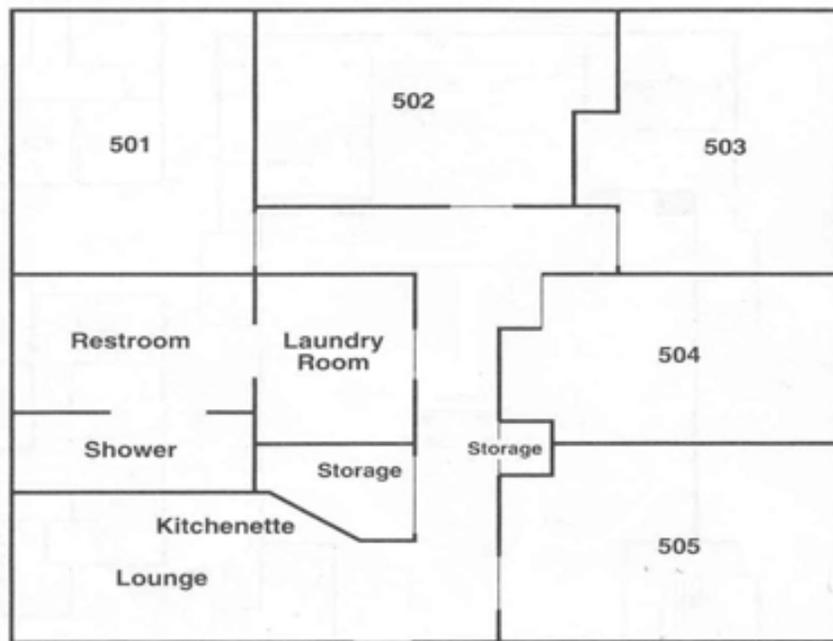




Cook's House, historic view east elevation. (Clarence Brown era)



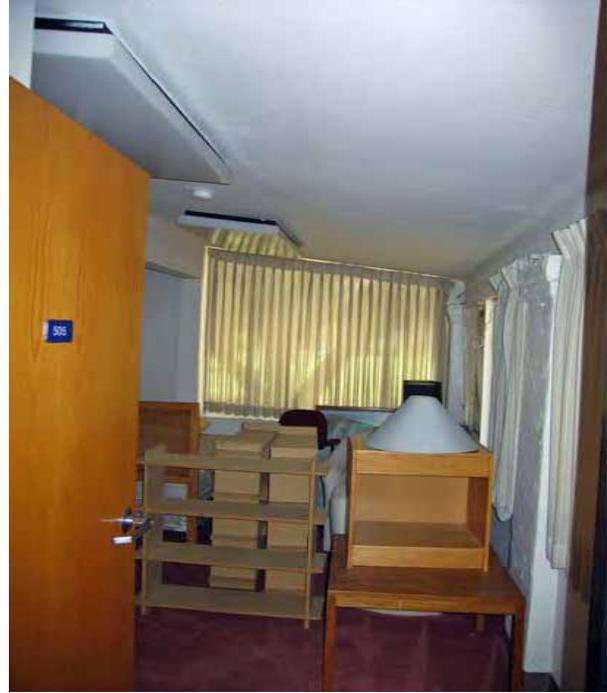
Cook's House, historic view of front porch. (Clarence Brown era)



Cook's House, current floor plan.



Cook's House, current view looking south.



Right: Interior view of former porch area now functioning as part of a bedroom. (April 2006)  
Left: Cook's House, interior view of former porch area now functioning as entrance. (April 2006)



Right: Interior view down main hallway. (April 2006)  
Left: Interior view of former porch area now functioning as lounge/kitchenette. (April 2006)



## **Stable**

**Date of Construction:** 1928

**Architect:** Wallace Neff

**Building No.** 8

### **Description**

The Stable building is located west of the Gillette Residence. The adoblar and wood-framed building is L-shaped in plan and has a round 2-story center tower element flanked by single-story wings. A wood-frame single-story addition at the back side of the tower connects the two wings. The main portions of the building are finished in stucco and painted white. The upper portion of the rear addition is wood. The conical roof of the tower and the gable roof of the wings are covered in rolled roofing material; and the hipped roof of the addition exhibits remnants of the barrel clay tile roof. Most of the original door and window openings feature exposed wood lintels that extend 6-8 inches beyond each jamb. A low stucco covered wall encloses the area in front of the building. The original large opening in the wall, where tractors and other vehicles could enter the area has been filled-in with a low concrete wall painted white to match the original enclosure.

The south side of the east wing features a quarry tile patio and wood trellis of tree boughs supported by stout round concrete columns. The trellis runs along approximately two thirds the length of the wing. The six columns are spaced at approximately 11-1/2 feet on center and correlate to the original interior spatial divisions. One of the windows on this side of the east wing has been converted to a doorway and another doorway is boarded over on the interior with a piece of plywood. On the north side of the wing, each of the five bays are enclosed with a four panel multi-lite window and door assembly with a transom window above each panel. A very shallow overhang extends beyond the face of the wall. The system is very similar to the infill system used at the Garage (Bldg. #4). The area enclosed by the infill window system exists as one large undivided space.

The tower element features a recessed entry through a centrally located door made of wide vertical boards with a large square window on the top. A set of arched double doors with 1 over 3 divided lites is located directly above the ground level entry; this door is deeply set into the wall. The remnant ends of rough half-round wood beams are located below the threshold of this door. The beams originally supported/formed a small platform. One large timber extends beyond the face of the elevation above the arched double doors and was likely used as a hoist beam to lift hay bales. An exterior concrete stairway located to the right of the entry and running parallel to the one-story wing leads to an upper level side entry to the tower. A square window set near the face of the wall is located in the front wall that encloses the space under the stair; and another window is located on the back wall of the side entry. The backside of the tower features a round window at the second

level. Decorative vents of alternating patterns are present in multiple locations at the top of the tower. The exposed rafter tails of the shallow overhang are capped by a continuous round copper gutter.

The east face of the north wing features three doorway openings and one window. Two of the doorways were formed through modifications to original window openings that resulted in larger openings in the wall. The original exposed wood lintels are still extant and only span approximately 3/4 of the existing opening width. These two openings are board-up on the interior with plywood panels. The original doorway which is located between the modified openings, features French doors with 2 over 5 divided lites. The only remaining window opening on this elevation of the wing is small and located near the end of the building. The north elevation of the north wing features a pedestrian doorway located a bit off center to the left. The door is flanked by a double casement wood window; each leaf of the case window features 1 over 3 divided lites. A small stucco finished shelf is located to the right of the doorway.

## **Evaluation**

The original spatial divisions and adjacencies are legible in the building today, yet modifications to the interior over the years have impacted the integrity to some degree. The deep arcaded area that was located on the north side of the east wing has been filled with the multi-lite and door assembly and the dirt floor has been covered with a poured concrete slab. This now enclosed area exists as one large space, although there is evidence that partitions divided the large space into two to three smaller spaces at some time. The original exterior wall on this side of the east wing is still extant as well as the five doorways that lead to the rooms for the ranch hands. The floor in the former housing area was wood plank on floor rafters and it was set a step above grade. Remnants of the wood flooring system are still extant as is the shared water closet and bathing facility.

Most of the impact to the interior of the building has occurred in and near the central tower element. Due to the debris and other items in the space as well as lack of light, it was difficult to see and capture all of the changes and details in this area. However, sufficient information was gathered to describe the general condition of this area. Portions of the walls in the east wing near the tower element have been hacked away to create a rough passageway to the addition at the rear; there also is wood framing of an unfinished project in this area. Another large opening has been rough cut into the tower wall to create an opening between the east wing and the tower. The opening has no structural support at the head. This opening changes the original interior flow of space. The east wing boarding area for the ranch hands originally was spatially separate from the animal related functions of the stable. A large pass through opening was also cut into the rear wall area of the tower.

The interior of the north wing exists as one large space. Wood framing of an

unfinished partition exists in the area nearest to the tower element. The original dirt floor is now covered with poured concrete.

In its current condition, the Stable building is not eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places.





View of the enclosed yard and west wing (top) and south wing (bottom). (April, 2006)



Center tower with the conical roof. Top, view looking north. Bottom, view looking west. (April, 2006)



Top: View of one story north wing looking east. Bottom: View looking west.  
(April, 2006)



Historic views of Stable. Top: View looking west. (Gillette era photo)  
Bottom: View looking northeast showing two wings and tower. Circa 1938.



Area behind (south of) the tower. (April, 2006)



Stable interior. (April, 2006)



Stable interior. (April, 2006)



Stable interior. (April, 2006)

## **White House and White House Garage**

**Date of Construction:** 1928

**Architect:** Unknown

**Building Nos.** 10 and 11

### **Description**

The White House is a small single story residence located a short distance west of the Gillette Residence and just south of the stable. This residence was built in 1928 and housed ranch hands during both the Gillette and Brown tenures at the site. The rectangular footprint of the wood-frame building includes a front open porch that spans a little more than half the length of the building. On the east end, a shallow bay projects beyond the main mass. Barrel clay tiles finish the gable roof over the main portion of the building as well as the lower projecting gable at the east end. Shallow eaves feature exposed rafter tails and the ceiling of the porch features exposed rafters. Three chimneys penetrate the roof edge; one is located at the southeast or rear corner, another at the northeast corner and a tapered chimney is nearly centered on the west gable end of the building. All three chimneys and the exterior walls feature rusticated Monterey finish stucco painted white. The original wood double-hung and four-lite casement windows are set close to the face of the exterior wall. Rounded jambs abut the square-finished sills and heads of the windows. Although an earlier survey of the building indicates that a rear porch in the northwest corner of the building has been filled-in, it is unclear that a porch was ever located in this area.

A short barrel tile capped wall with an arched opening connects the house to a free standing single story, single bay garage (bldg. #11). The simple wood frame building has a stucco exterior finish like the house and a shed roof finished with barrel clay tiles. The orientation of the garage appears to have been redefined for its current use as a nursery. The long south wall of the garage now features two sets of large double doors that fill the entire length of the elevation. The wood doors have 3 over 3 divided lite tops and closed bottoms. The original garage door was likely located in the east end of the building, which now exhibits a narrow set of double vertical board doors with a small shed barrel tile roof above.

### **Evaluation**

The detailing present in this modest residence suggests that it may have been designed by an architect, perhaps by a junior designer or draftsman from Wallace Neff's office. The interior of the house appears to have a high degree of integrity that includes original layout, wood floors, a barrel vaulted plaster ceiling, tapered fireplace in the living room, plaster walls throughout, plaster cove ceilings, built-in cabinets, wood base boards, and original kitchen cabinets and fixtures. Overall the building retains integrity in terms of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. However, due the

change in use, both the house and garage have lost integrity of setting as the vegetation and landscape have been significantly altered since the period of significance.

Although the White House and White house Garage retain a high degree of integrity they are not considered unique architectural expressions and do not appear to be individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.



Building 10. View of north front elevation. (April, 2006)



Building 10. View of porch area, looking west. (April 2006)



Building 10 & Building 11. View looking west. (April 2006)



Building 11. Oblique view, looking southwest. (April 2006)



Building 10 & Building 11. Rear elevation, looking north. (April 2006)



Building 10. West elevation with tapered chimney. (April 2006)



Building 10. Living room interior view. (April 2006)



Building 10. Interior view from living room looking toward dining room. (April 2006)

## **Brandt House & Brandt Garage**

**Date of Construction:** 1927

**Architect:** Unknown

**Building Nos.** 12 and 13

### **Description**

The Brandt House is one of two small single story residences facing Las Virgenes Road. The residence was built in 1927, for Mr. Brandt, the ranch foreman who had moved from the Gillette's Porterville Ranch to the Calabazas site. The foreman's residence is a modest one story Spanish Colonial Revival building. The footprint of the wood-frame building forms a shallow U-shape with the open end facing away from Las Virgenes Road. The main portion of the building has a gable roof that intersects with the shed roofs of the rear wings in a somewhat odd fashion resulting in a complex intersection of roofs near the large center chimney. The roof is finished with rolled roofing and the shallow overhangs feature exposed rafter tails. Three chimneys penetrate the roof planes; each stucco chimney is detailed with a flared top.

A wood post and bracket at the northwest corner of the building as well as horizontal wood siding infill indicate that a porch once existed at this corner. Another porch likely existed on the northeast corner.

A wood casement window with double vertical lites is deeply inset on the western main elevation; the jambs are chamfered. The French door main entrance is recessed in an entry alcove that was formed when the corner of the porch was enclosed on the northwest end; a second set of French doors was added to the infill area on the front. The western elevation features a deeply set wood casement window with double vertical lites and chamfered stucco jambs. Other elevations feature slightly inset casement windows with rounded stucco jambs. A few windows retain a projecting stucco hood and shelf sill treatment. A wood double hung window was added to the building on the north elevation within then horizontal siding infill.

A low stucco finished wall connects the residence and a free-standing single story, single bay garage, Building 13. The simple wood frame building has a stucco exterior and the gable roof finished with rolled roofing features exposed rafter tails at the shallow overhang. The garage door has been unfilled with a stucco-finished panel and a single panel door and wood double hung window are centered on the elevation.

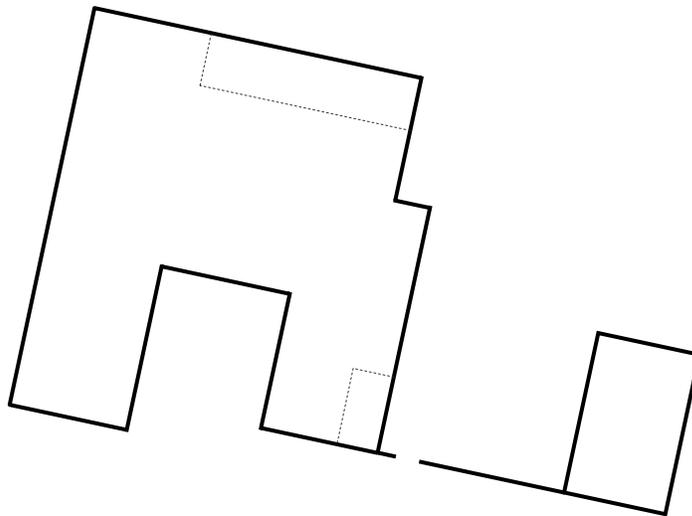
### **Evaluation**

The detailing present in this modest residence indicates that it may have been built from a pattern book or perhaps architect designed. Most of the character-defining features on the exterior are still present. It is unclear

when the modification to the porch areas occurred, however, even if they were modified after the Brown era, the wood infill is discernible from the original construction; it is reversible and therefore, the impact is minimized. The building retains integrity on the exterior in terms of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. Unfortunately, the residence is not in use and is in poor condition due to water penetration through the roof. The damage is throughout the building and greatly impacts the integrity, on the interior, in terms of design, materials, and workmanship. Evidence of rodent infestation also is apparent. As a result of these impacts, the Brandt House and garage are not individually eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places.



Building 12. Oblique view looking southwest. (April, 2006)



Sketch plan of Brandt House, Brandt House Garage and connecting wall. Dashed line indicates locations of porches now enclosed.



Front elevation looking east. Note horizontal siding infill on left. (April 2006)



Oblique view looking southeast. Note corner post and siding infill (April 2006)



Top: Brandt House rear (north) wing looking southwest. Note stucco vent and plywood infill. (April, 2006)



Left: Window detail north elevation. Note hood and sill. (April, 2006)



Brandt House interior views. (April, 2006)

## **Frisk House**

**Date of Construction:** 1927

**Architect:** Unknown

**Building No.** 14

### **Description**

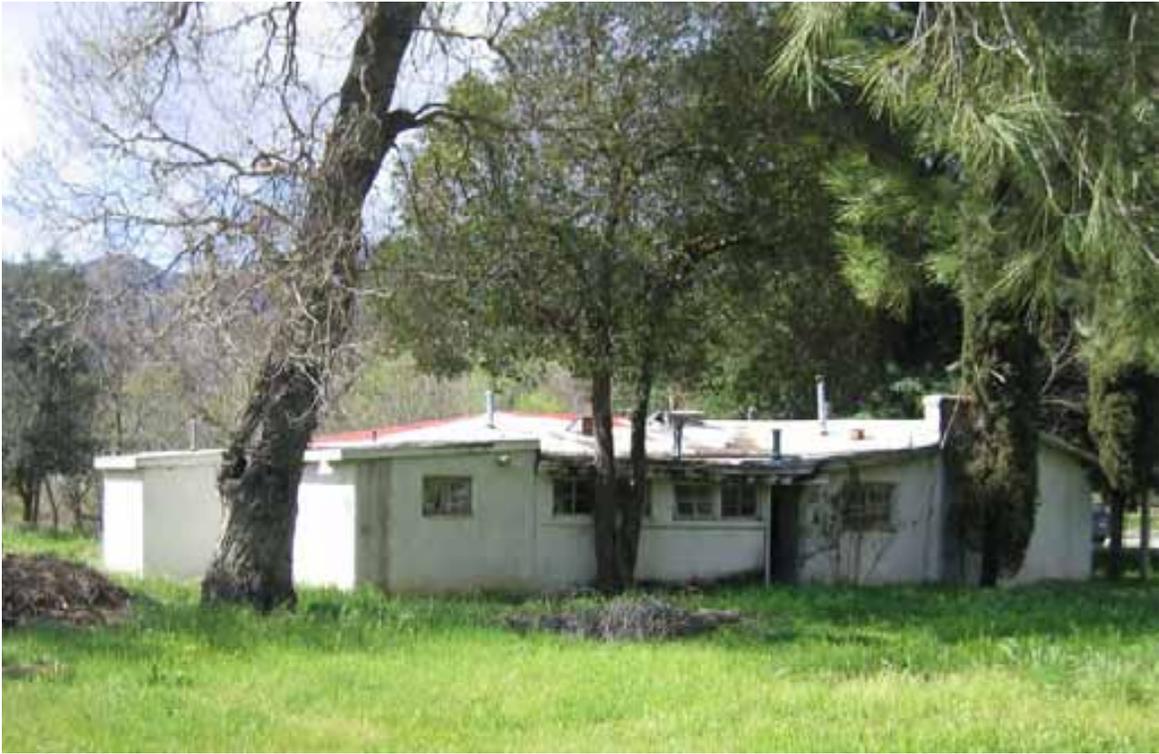
The Frisk House is a modest single story vernacular residence with some Spanish Colonial Revival detailing facing Las Virgenes Road. The residence was built in 1927, for the assistant ranch foreman, Mr. Frisk. Today, the wood-frame building exhibits several additions that have resulted in an irregular plan and unresolved low-pitch roof intersections. All of the additions seem to have occurred on the east of the building. There is evidence that a porch, like the one on the west side of the building, once existed on the east side of the building as well. A simple porch that runs the entire length of the west elevation is defined by simple wood posts and roof. The roof planes are finished with roll roofing; two chimneys with flared tops extend above the roof line. The exterior walls and chimneys are finished in stucco painted white. Wood double casement windows and doors in the original portion of the building are deeply set in the wall with curved jambs. The additions to the east of the original house have aluminum sliding windows set close to the face of the exterior wall.

### **Evaluation**

The Frisk House has been highly modified through the additions on the east end of the building. An earlier survey of the building indicates that the additions were made in 1963. Many of the exterior character-defining features of the original building remain, however the overall integrity of the building has been significantly impacted in terms of association, design, setting, workmanship, and feeling. Unfortunately, the residence is not in use and is in poor condition due to water penetration through the roof. The damage is throughout the building and greatly impacts interior condition and integrity in terms of design, materials, and workmanship. The building also has suffered fire damage on the interior in the southwest corner.

Because of all these impacts, the Frisk House is not individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.





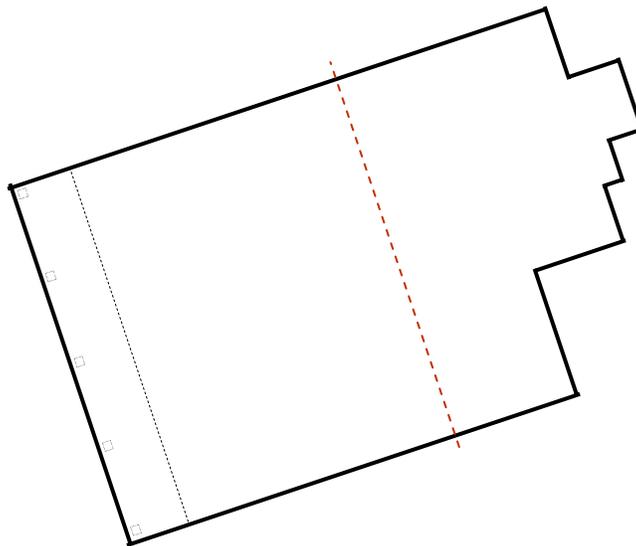
Frisk House, view looking south. (April, 2006)



Frisk House, view looking east. (April, 2006)



Building 14. View looking north. (April 2006)



Building 14. Sketch plan. Red dashed line indicates the extent of the original house.



Building 14. View of porch area on west elevation. (April 2006)



Building 14. View of porch area on west elevation. (April 2006)



Frisk House Interior Views.  
(April, 2006)

Top: View of fireplace in living  
room.

Left: View of fire damage at  
southwest corner of building.

## Other Structures

### The Pond and Dam

A component of the overall landscape plan for the Gillette Ranch in 1928 included the development of a more naturalistic design for the grounds on the west side of the property. Borrowing from the traditions of the country estate gardens of Europe, a relatively large pond was constructed on the north side of the knoll below the west courtyard and terrace of the main residence. The "L"-shaped pond created a series of designed views from the house, and created a physical boundary between the agricultural fields and working ranch, and the more manicured grounds. The pond was excavated concurrent with the construction of the Gillette residence. The bottom of the pond was lined with concrete, and a small island left in the middle of the larger section. Water to fill the pond came by diverting water flowing east to west in the Stokes Creek drainage channel. Water was retained by dam structure on the west end. An outlet on the west side below the dam allowed water to flow back into the water channel before leaving the property. (Photos 32-37)

Patterns of drainage and flood events affecting the property over several years may have caused both inundations and scouring of the pond. Aerials indicate that the pond was empty of water between 1940 and 1945/46. Perhaps as a way to control the natural channel migrations and the flow of water, sometime between 1954 and 1956, the Stokes Creek drainage channel was rerouted on the east side of the pond, into an artificial channel that carried the flow north, and then west towards the pond.<sup>76</sup>

The pond itself was dramatically altered in 1960 with construction of the access road to the Novitiate building. This road included the construction of a dike and road across the pond, significantly altering the original shape and design of the structure.

Today, historic views to the pond from the Gillette Residence remain, and the general shape and character of the pond also remain. Although no historical research or investigation of the dam structure was undertaken for this report, based on historic photographs, the structure appears to be unchanged from the period of significance. In spite of these consistencies, structural changes to the original design of the pond with the addition of the road to the Novitiate have adversely affected the integrity of the original design and structure. As a result, the pond is not considered a contributing structure.

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<sup>76</sup> The 1954 aerial photograph shows the natural channel feeding into the pond, and the 1956 aerial shows the new channel. Also see *Preliminary Geotechnical Investigations* for Soka University and Summit Architects Inc., W.O. 3453-VN August 17, 1994. On File, SAMO.

## **Barbeque**

Located below the automobile court, the barbeque structure was built either in 1928 or 1929 by Frank Knapp. The structure is constructed of stacked stone, with a serpentine wall, 18"-20" in height that connects the barbeque and a fireplace structure around a large circular paved patio area. A similar wall surrounds a large tree in the central portion of this area.

Although not researched for this report, when compared to historic photographs of this structure from the period of significance, this area and structure appear to retain integrity of materials, design, association, feeling, setting, and workmanship. (Photos. 38-41)

## **Bridges**

Two bridges are currently located on the property. One is known to be from the period of significance and the other bridge appears to be more recent. Both are located along the entry drive and provide passage over Stokes Creek and the pond structure. (Photos 42, 43)

### **Concrete Bridge**

Designed in 1928 or 1929 and constructed as part of the entry drive, the bridge crossed the Stokes drainage channel at the point where the pond expanded west. Although not researched as part of this report and based only on historic photographs, the structure appears to retain its historic configuration and character.

### **Modern Bridge**

Not researched as part of this report, this more contemporary bridge may have been constructed around 1960 when the new access road to the Novitiate was built.

## **Swimming Pool**

In 1937 Brown contracted with a Los Angeles firm, Paddock Engineering, to install a swimming pool. Located below the automobile court west of the residence, the pool measured twenty-five feet by seventy-one feet and was completed in April of that year. Based on historic photographs, the swimming pool appears to retain its historic character.

## **Tennis Courts**

Not researched as part of this report, Clarence Brown built tennis courts next to the swimming pool and barbeque on the west side of the residence sometime around 1937. Based on historic photographs, the tennis courts appear to retain their historic character. (Photo 44)

## Cistern and Reservoir

Not researched as part of this report, these two structures remain today as ruins. They appear on the 1928 aerial photograph located southwest of the core building cluster. Additional research is needed to determine how these structures functioned and how long they provided water for the occupants of the property.

## Summary

Today, nine of the buildings constructed during the period of significance and clustered in the core area of the property remain—including the three buildings designed and constructed by Wallace Neff. Over several years however, a variety of design changes, interior losses and redevelopment, reconfiguration of exterior elevations, loss of materials, and the general loss of character-defining elements throughout have adversely affected the architectural integrity of these structures to varying degrees. Based on the historic drawings, and field documentation conducted during this report, only two of the original buildings retain architectural integrity—the White House and White House Garage. However, although integrity remains, neither building is architecturally unique to be individually listed in the National Register. In addition, while the location, general shape, and footprint of the remaining historic buildings documented in this report have not changed, the historic cluster arrangement of the core building complex designed and constructed by Wallace Neff has been adversely affected by the construction of the Seminary building (1955) and the Novitiate building (1960).

Because of these changes, none of the remaining historic buildings meet National Register criteria and are ***not individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places***. Although not individually eligible for listing in the National Register, these buildings contribute to the historic character of the property.

Other historic structures including the concrete bridge, pond, barbeque and patio (Gillette era) and the swimming pool and tennis courts (Brown era) all appear to reflect their design and also contribute to the historic character of the property.

Structures that *contribute to the historic character* of the Gillette-Brown Ranch include the following:

- Gillette Residence
- Garage
- Cook's House
- Stable
- White House and White House Garage

- Brandt House and Brandt House Garage
- Frisk House
- Water Wells (abandoned)
- Swimming Pool (Brown era)
- Barbeque with associated walls and patio
- Tennis courts (Brown era)
- Pond and Dam
- Bridge (concrete)
- Cistern and Reservoir ruins

Structures that *do not contribute to the historic character* of the Gillette-Brown Ranch

- Seminary building
- Novitiate building
- Causeway/road across pond
- New structures in maintenance area
- Newer tennis courts east of Seminary building
- Modern bridge across drainage



Photo 32. Portion of the dam structure (foreground) and the causeway or road crossing the water, built in the 1960s (top of image). (April, 2006)



Photo 33. Island located in the middle of the pond. (April, 2006)



Photos 34-37. The various structural components of the dam located on the west side of the pond. (April, 2006).



Photos 38-41. Barbeque area below the automobile court reportedly built by Frank Knapp for Gillette in 1928 or 1929. (April, 2006).



Photo 42. View of the historic concrete bridge as it appears today. (April, 2006)



Photo 43. Located north of the concrete bridge this more modern bridge post-dates the period of significance. (April, 2006)



Photo 44. Historic view showing the swimming pool and tennis court built by Clarence Brown located near the barbeque area on the west side of the automobile court. (Clarence Brown era photograph)



Photo 45. Possible remnant foundation of Building 15, which was destroyed by wildfire in 1996. (April, 2006)



## Vegetation

### Ornamental Vegetation

The landscaped grounds and individual gardens designed for King Gillette in 1928 incorporated a mixed plant palette that was both stylistic and symbolically European, and on the other side, representative of a more naturalistic garden style popular at the time. Following the principles of landscape design in Southern California in the 1920s, ornamental plantings for the Gillette estate were expressive of both these styles.

Planting concepts expressive of the naturalistic style focused on techniques to enhance or create the indigenous character and pastoral country setting for the estate. This concept was articulated on the west side of the residence, and while meant to appear as natural, was in fact, contrived and planned as part of the design. As noted on Wallace Neff's site drawings for the Gillette property, specific trees—particularly large existing oak trees were to be preserved and incorporated into the design. Located on the margins of the open slope west of the new courtyard and terrace these trees were left to help frame views to the mountains, and enhanced the landscape character of a mature landscape, creating a picturesque and pastoral setting for the residence. (Photo 46) Other than the valley oak trees and a few other native species—such as California Oak, Western sycamore, and Bay tree—the planting design for areas around the Spanish Revival style buildings, used imported vegetation such as eucalyptus, palm trees, and acacia explicitly to suggest the character of a coastal Mediterranean landscape. This stylistic trend is evident in the use of vines around doorways and transition points, yucca and more succulent plantings massed in beds at the entry and corners of structures reflecting a lush maintained garden, and eucalyptus trees planted in rows along the approach road (now Mulholland Highway) and the main entry drive, creating a formal structure with a rich planting of annuals and perennials along the sides of the road, filling-out the ground plane. Eucalyptus trees also appear along the ranch road. Based on historic photographs, the majority of introduced plant materials used at the estate were concentrated at the entry and along the sides of the entrance road, in foundation plantings around the residence, and the two relatively large formal gardens located east of the house. Photographic documentation from the Brown era depicts one of these two gardens with rose standards in planting beds circling a central water pond. Turf grass in between the beds created walkways within the garden. Both gardens appear to be enclosed on at least one side with a four to five-foot clipped hedge (Figs. 15 & 16). The garden closer to the service wing is also very formal in plan view, given its proximity and the lay-out of the beds; it is possible that a portion of it may have served as a kitchen garden, where herbs and some vegetables were grown. (Photos 47-51)

Both of these formal gardens and the majority of introduced plant materials established during the period of significance appear to have been replaced,

lost, or removed with the change in land use, function, and change in maintenance practices for the grounds. For example the mixed ornamental plantings at the entrance to the estate are greatly reduced and materially different than during the historic period. In another case, the footprint for both formal gardens were still visible on the ground plane after construction of the Seminary in 1955 (although the plant materials were no longer there), but by 1960, both gardens are no longer evident.

In this regard, most of the ornamental plant materials selected for the estate were a means to an end, chosen in part because they evoked a regional association or because they reinforced a specific architectural style or character (e.g. Mediterranean). In some ways, individual plants were not very important unless they were associated with a specific garden, or highlighted as specimens and used as the backdrop or setting for an architectural structure such as the pool, entryway, courtyard, or walkway. Shrubs and smaller herbaceous materials were often planted as groupings or massing at key points such as entrances, corners, seating areas, and transition points. Historic photographs suggest that the plantings used at the property during both eras were relatively consistent with these principles. (Fig. 52)

### **Agriculture**

Aerial photographs and written documentation indicate that Gillette used approximately 320 acres of his estate for agricultural purposes including growing hay, grazing livestock, and fruit production. With several drainages providing water, the large fields in the northern portion of the property may have been used by previous ranchers, but certainly they were enlarged during the Gillette era. In addition to field crops, there was also a relatively large apple orchard located along Las Virgenes Road in front of the Brandt and Frisk houses. These orchards are clearly shown in 1935 when Clarence Brown purchased the property, but by 1945 they were greatly diminished in size, and finally by 1947, the orchards had been completely removed and the land converted to use for growing crops. Only remnant trees survive today. At least one of these new fields remained in agricultural use into the 1960s.

The aerials also indicate that the agricultural fields continued to be used for crops into the mid-1950s.

### **Summary**

Based on the documentation of existing conditions and an analysis of historic photographs depicting the grounds and gardens of the Gillette-Brown Ranch through the period of significance, virtually all of the historic ornamental plant materials associated with the property have either been lost or replaced with other materials in the last fifty years. With the exception of large trees on the property such as the eucalyptus allée, scattered oak and sycamore

trees, palm, and isolated cypress, cedar, and pine, no individual plants are believed to date to the period of significance.

The eucalyptus trees along the entry drive and Mulholland Highway are evident in the earliest aerial photographs of the property and considered important to defining the historic character of the property. In addition, while the formal gardens no longer remain, other characteristics of the original plantings do remain including the sweeping lawn and oak trees along the margins, sycamore trees around the pond and associated riparian vegetation along the drainages (although these communities are significantly altered), and the open vegetative character of the fields to the north. In general however, the intent and use of specific materials is not evident in the plantings that remain today.

Vegetation that *contributes to the historic character* of the Gillette-Brown Ranch includes:

- Eucalyptus trees along the Mulholland Highway and the eucalyptus allée along the entry drive
- remnant orchard trees
- Arbor plantings on south side of the stable
- Oak trees (associated with long lawn area and around house)
- Large non-native trees around residence such as pine, palm, cypress, and cedar located throughout the property
- Remaining native plant communities and associations
- Riparian corridors (native species) on east and west sides of the core area

Vegetation that *does not contribute to the historic character of the* Gillette-Brown Ranch includes:

- Introduced plant materials around the foundations of the Seminary and Novitiate buildings
- Small-scale ornamental vegetation located around the historic buildings
- Ornamental trees on the south side of the pond
- Invasive vegetation in creek channels



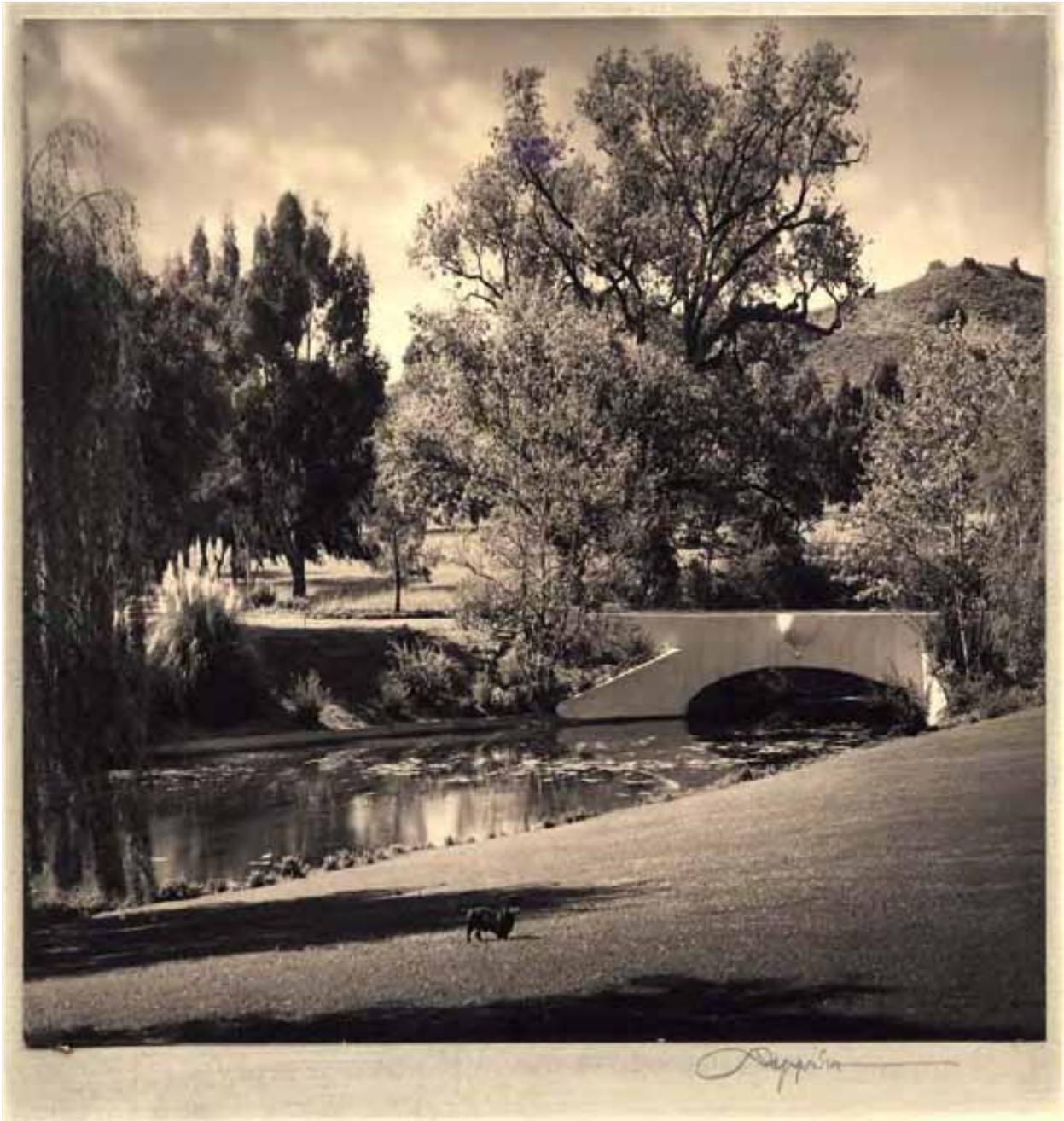


Photo 46. The essential components of naturalistic design as practiced in America in the early 20th century—including the use of water features, sweeping lawns, and the pastoral character of the landscape, were fully implemented at the Gillette-Brown Ranch between 1926 and 1952. (Clarence Brown era photo)



Photos 49 and 50.  
Vines were commonly used to frame entrances and passageways. The Stable (top) had vines along each column climbing over a trellis structure, providing shade. The arched passage (left) leading to the automobile court and arrival to the residence also had vines. (Clarence Brown era)



Photo 51. Many plant materials used in the historic design were selected to create a Mediterranean character. Many of these materials were concentrated in the living areas massed along foundations or grouped at corners, or in the formal garden areas around the residence. (Clarence Brown era photo).

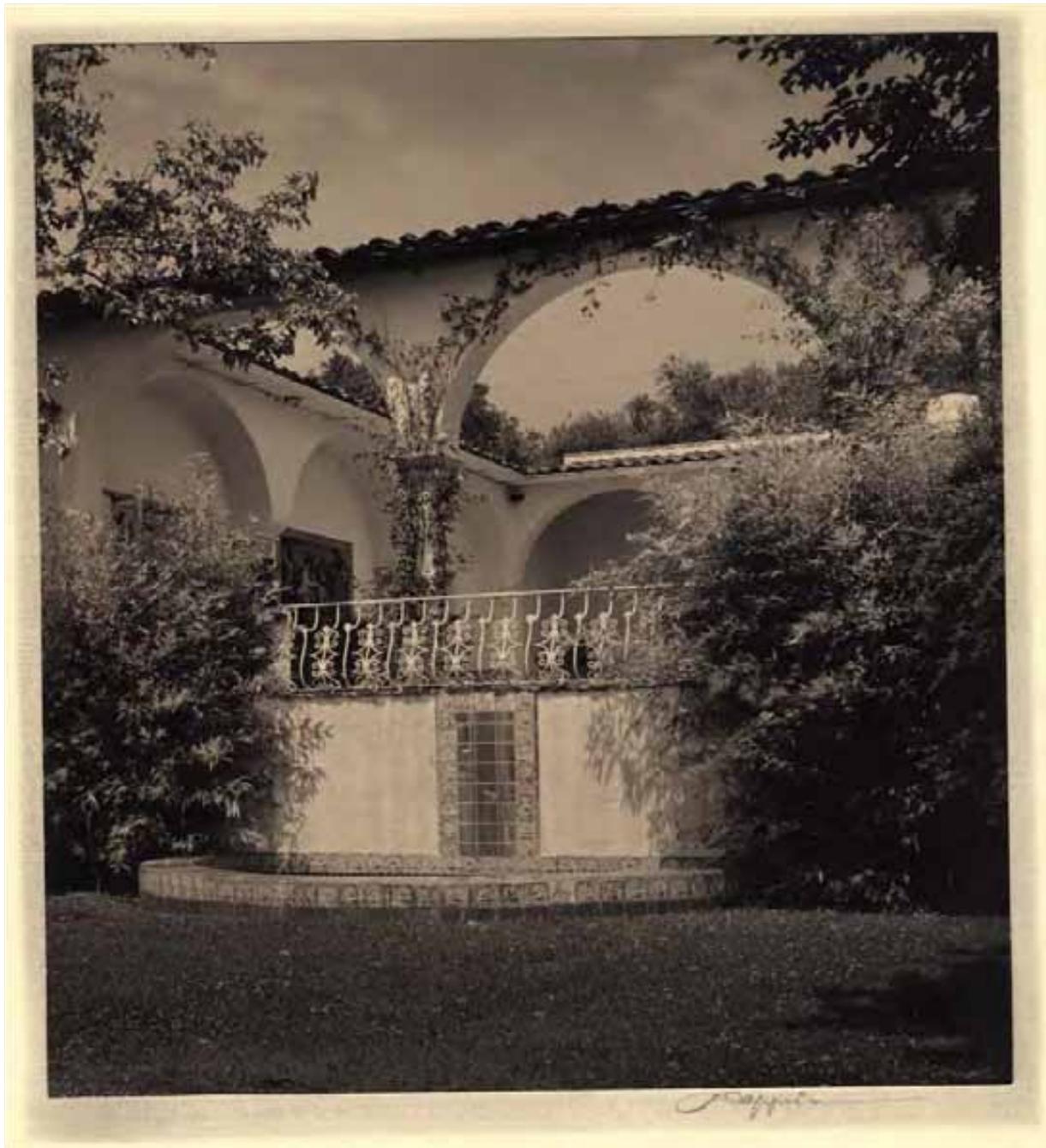
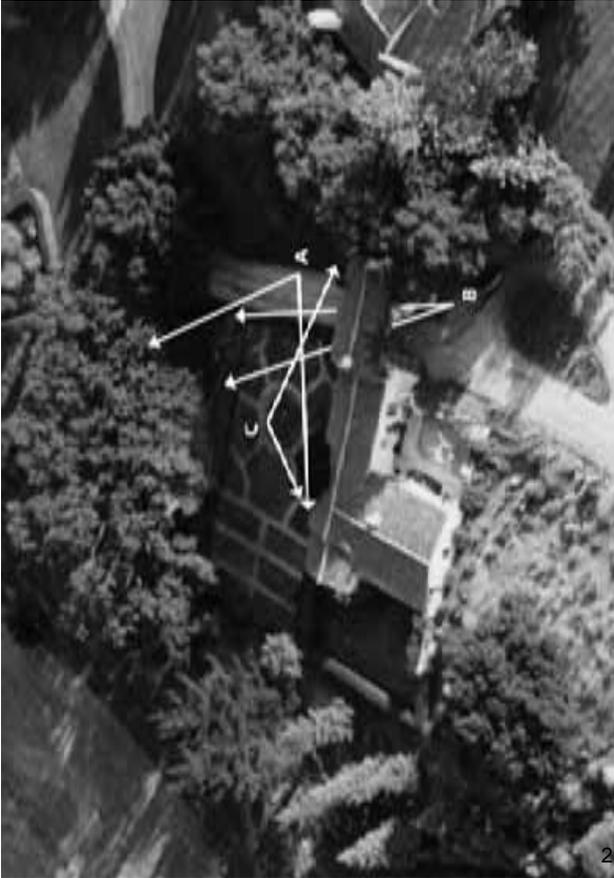
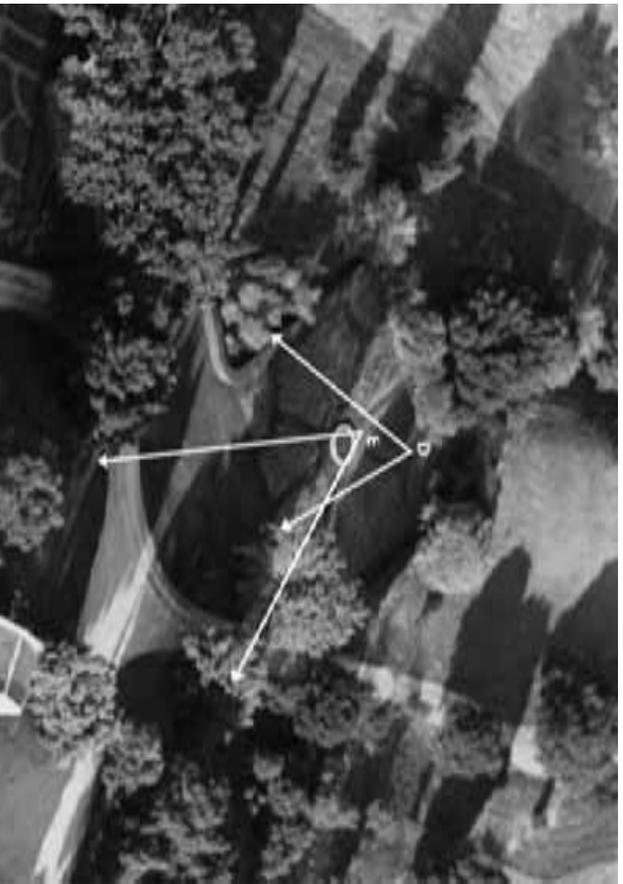


Photo 52. Vegetation was also used in the design to frame views. This is particularly evident in the area around the courtyard and fountain terrace. This area was very formal and architectural, yet the vegetation was used both to soften the edges and control views out. (Clarence Brown era photo)

Gillette-Brown Ranch  
Formal Gardens

Aerial view of one of the formal gardens behind the main residence. Because of the location and the layout, it is possible this garden was used for growing vegetables and herbs. It is hard to identify any of the vegetation in the photos, but the back of the garden are clearly planted in rows. The photos show this garden from different angles. Photographs are from the Clarence Brown era.





### Rose Garden

This formal garden features a central circular water feature, rose standards in the outer planting beds and turf grass in between functions as the pathways. The hedge on the lower left edge of the garden (in the aerial photo) extends along the perimeter of the developed grounds to connect with to the other formal garden. A small patio sitting area with a curved bench and two chairs is under the oak on the lower left of the aerial photo. (This area is visible in photo A above.) These photos in general help to show the location and character (if not the type) of vegetation around the main house. Photographs are from the Clarence Brown era.



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## Circulation Systems

Circulation systems provide the structuring framework for access and movement through the designed landscape. Because the level of detail undertaken in this assessment focuses on the overall design, documentation of circulation systems is limited to vehicular roads designed during the period of significance.

Historically, a significant portion of the circulation network providing access to the property, as well as informal roads associated with the working ranch, were in place when Gillette purchased Edward R. Stoke's property in 1926. Las Virgenes Road was the primary access road running north and south, and was the western property boundary. A portion of the northern property boundary was created by the road known today as Mulholland Highway, and by 1928, this route replaced Las Virgenes Road as the main access road to the property.

### Entry Drive

The formal entry to the Gillette Ranch incorporated several design principles associated with estate gardens of the period. By design, the road created a formal passage and transition from the more rural landscape of the working ranch, to the highly articulated grounds around the residence. The overall effect was a dramatic sense of arrival. (see Spatial Organization) In this regard, the entry drive and associated structures collectively, are considered a designed circulation system displaying a purposeful progression of experiences and physical characteristics.

As designed, the entry drive entered the property from the north, passing through a relatively short free-standing masonry wall and iron gate. These structures created the point of entry to the property. From there the road continued in a straight alignment between the agricultural fields. An allée of eucalyptus trees created a corridor along this segment of the road for some distance.<sup>77</sup>

The entry drive crossed the arched concrete bridge over Stokes Creek and jogged east around the north edge of the lawn before heading south towards the house. Aligned following the topography, the road angled up the knoll to the main house, passing through the arch between the service wing and the main living area of the house into the automobile court. From this point, the road continued up the slope of the knoll to the Garage and the Cook's House.

This entry drive remained the primary access road to the residence and other buildings through the Clarence Brown era, and continues to function in this capacity today. Although resurfaced more than once, and perhaps widened

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<sup>77</sup> The eucalyptus trees extended far beyond the entry drive, lining the sides of the Mulholland Highway, and several interior roads effectively unifying the design for all roads and access routes.

with curbs added over the years, the historic character of this road including the alignment and eucalyptus alleé remains with a high degree of integrity.

### **Other Roads**

During the historic period, secondary access to the property was from Las Virgenes Road. Two roads provided access to ranch operations. One of the access roads entered the property approximately halfway between the Brandt House and Frisk House. The other road was located at the Frisk House. Both of these short roads connected to a longer service road, curving east to the stable, eventually connecting to the main entry drive. Most of the subsequent roads developed at the ranch were work-related roads. Most were narrow and not hard surfaced, and were aligned to facilitate easy movement between ranch operations. The majority of these roads were located in the area around the stables. As part of the designed landscape, the edges of several of these roads were planted with trees creating a more "formal" character including the road to the White House and White House Garage. Over the years and especially in the mid-1950s the number of roads in this area increased significantly. All however, appear utilitarian or rural in character with dirt surfaces, narrow profile, no shoulders, and a functional alignment connecting farm-related buildings.

Sometime around 1947, Clarence Brown constructed a spur road from the main entry drive, leading east to the airstrip he built in 1938. The road extended north past the airstrip all the way to Mulholland Highway. This road remained in use until Brown sold the property.

The approach to the ranch from the Mulholland Highway also changed over the years. Mulholland Road was realigned in the mid-1950s and by 1960, it was straightened at the canyon jog. For reasons unknown, the eucalyptus trees were removed on the north side of the road.<sup>78</sup>

Since the period of significance, several roads have been added to the site, affecting historic circulation patterns. Most significant of these changes are the addition of roads related to the construction of the Seminary building (1955) and the Novitiate building (1960). In the case of the Seminary, a new parking area behind the building, and a loop road adjacent to the automobile court on the southwest side of the Seminary were added. The road especially affected the design of the historic arrival by creating an interior "common" area where the historic formal garden was located. In 1960, a dormitory wing was added to the original Gillette Residence, enclosing the automobile court on three sides and significantly altering the original design for the front entry, as well as pedestrian circulation to the swimming pool, tennis courts, and barbeque area below.

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<sup>78</sup> It appears from the aerials that the trees along the north side of the highway were removed by 1956.

Also a notable deviation from the original design was the addition of a major road as a result of constructing the Novitiate. In this case, the new road branched off of the existing entry drive where it met the pond, and cut across the historic pond via a new dike/causeway, effecting the original arrival, the pond, and historic viewsheds. The road then turned south around the lawn at the toe of a slope, up to the new building and a parking lot. Behind the Novitiate, another road cut up the hill to connect with the loop in front of the Seminary building.

Finally, a spur road was added on the east side of the Seminary building when new tennis courts were built on the property.<sup>79</sup> Additional roads linked the parking areas with these facilities.

### **Summary**

The historic entry drive including the wall and gate at the property entrance and the eucalyptus allée retain the attributes and character of the original entry drive designed by Neff in 1928. Although widened and resurfaced over the years, this road retains integrity in the alignment, physical attributes, and function as the primary entry drive to the Gillette Residence.

While other roads, especially in the area around the maintenance building and work areas are contemporary, they are visually and materially compatible with the functional and utilitarian character of historic roads in this area.

The access road to the Stable, White House, and White House Garage also has physical integrity. Again, while this road has been resurfaced and perhaps widened since the period of significance, it retains the character and alignment of the original design.

Roads that *contribute to the historic character* of the Gillette-Brown Ranch include:

- Entry drive (as a system) including the wall and historic gate, eucalyptus allée, bridge, and general width and alignment
- Spur road to Stable and White House.
- Informal (unpaved) farm roads in maintenance area

Roads that *do not contribute to the historic character* of the Gillette-Brown Ranch include:

- Seminary loop road
- Access road and parking lot at the Novitiate
- Spur road to parking area and contemporary tennis courts east of Seminary

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<sup>79</sup> These tennis courts clearly show on the 1989 aerials but do not show in the last set of aerials from 1960.



## Historic Views and Viewsheds

Historically, views out from the Gillette Residence to the surrounding landscape were important factors in the siting of the residence and development of the grounds and formal plantings. Three views appear to have been purposefully created or framed to amplify the overall design. These include

- The designed progression of views along the entry drive, up to the residence,
- The views from the west courtyard and terrace over the large sloping lawn and the pond to the mountains beyond, and
- The views within and associated with the formal gardens located east of the Gillette Residence.

Views along the entry drive were historically designed to present a grand setting for the estate, and a transition between the rural character of a working ranch, to the formal grounds and high style of the building complex located at the top of the knoll. This arrival orientation was typical of estate design in the 1920s and 1930s where views along the entry presented a progression through three different landscapes. A principle unifying component of the entry drive was the allée of Eucalyptus trees, which began on the approach to the estate along Mulholland, and continued from the entry gate to the bridge over the creek. This allée created a formal cadence for views out to the fields and working landscape, and also provided a sense of enclosure along the road. Although the road has been resurfaced since the period of significance, the fields are open in character (although no crops are grown), the allée of Eucalyptus trees remain and views along the road as it travels a long straight section, appear much as they did during the period of significance. As one crosses the concrete bridge towards the Gillette Residence, the views up the grass slope to the north façade of the residence also remain remarkably similar to those in the historic period as most of the structural changes to the property have occurred behind the arched automobile entry.

Views from the exterior courtyard on the west side of the residence were also highly structured in the historic design. As noted in the site history and building inventory sections of this report, the courtyard (and specifically the fountain) was the loci around which Wallace Neff designed the axial foundations for the design of the house and associated gardens. Views from the northwest side of the courtyard opened across a sweeping lawn that sloped down the knoll to the west. This view was framed by the edges of the lawn, the large oak trees and vegetation along the margins, and the pond containing the viewshed north. This view captured the pastoral character and the more naturalistic components of the landscape design on this side of the estate. Today, this view is still evident but has been significantly compromised with the addition of a road and causeway over the pond, and construction of the Novitiate, access road and parking lot on the south side of the historic viewshed.

Views associated with the two formal gardens focused inward and were contained by the form of the garden and the clipped hedge surrounding and enclosing both gardens. These views were obviously lost when the gardens were removed (or disappeared) in the mid-1950s.

### **Summary**

Historic views remaining from the Neff design include the sequence of views along the entry road from the property boundary to the arched passage at the Gillette Residence, and portions of the designed view from the courtyard. These views allow the visitor to take-in several aspects of the historic spatial organization and use areas including the working ranch on the north and west portion of the property, the naturalistic character on the slope of the knoll, and the grand approach to the residence up the hill from the north. These views contribute to defining the historic character of the Gillette-Brown Ranch.

The views from the courtyard however, have been compromised and only a narrow portion of this view as designed, remains.

## Summary Statement of Significance

This report addresses the designed landscape comprising the historic Gillette-Brown Ranch situated at the foot of Las Virgenes Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains, approximately five miles southwest of Calabasas, California. The study area covers approximately 219 acres of the original 360-acre ranch and includes historic structures, the remains of a historic designed landscape, and archaeological resources representing historic, pre-historic and proto-historic periods. The focus of this evaluation is on a period of significance extending from 1926 to 1952. During the 26 years comprising this period, many of the most distinctive architectural and landscape elements were introduced, and the physical character of the property was established.

King Gillette and Clarence Brown were early representatives of a trend that would eventually become prevalent throughout the Santa Monica Mountains, as wealthy Los Angeles businessmen and movie industry professionals settled here or built weekend retreats in the remote countryside. In doing so, they helped define an important and lasting character in the regional geography of Southern California.

Both this pattern of settlement and the culture of the "gentleman rancher" are related to other historically important themes associated with the region. These include the concentration of wealth in Southern California during the first half of the twentieth century and the cultivation of a self-consciously privileged or elite way of life associated with it; the development of the automobile and its effect on personal habits and lifestyles; and, lastly, the role of the movie industry in Southern California's economy and its contribution to the formation of a distinctive regional culture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. All of these themes contributed important and lasting characteristics to the regional culture and physical landscape of Southern California.

The dramatic concentrations of wealth that occurred in Southern California between 1880 and 1929 gave impetus to the development of a regional culture that appropriately embodied it. Searching for a means to express their social status, many of these American nouveaux riches emulated the lifestyles of Europe's traditional aristocracy. The country estate was a particularly-visible manifestation of this phenomenon, recalling the landed gentry of Europe. These wealthy Americans were often well-traveled and familiar with the architectural and landscape styles of Europe's upper classes and would hire designers to reproduce them on American soil. King Gillette represented one of the earliest examples of this practice in the Santa Monica Mountains. His architect, Wallace Neff, designed a sprawling but elegant Spanish Colonial Revival residence, which invoked the romanticized Spanish heritage of Southern California. Neff situated the residence within an expansive landscape modeled after the English picturesque garden tradition and other European garden antecedents, making clear allusions to the landed gentry of Europe. For the brief period in which Gillette resided at his Santa Monica Mountains estate, he lived, to all appearances, like a country

gentleman after the fashion of the privileged classes in Europe. Like the typical country estate, Gillette's richly-appointed mansion overlooked the working landscape of a surrounding ranch. Sightlines and viewsheds were carefully oriented to give the impression of vast space and to exaggerate the apparent size of the property. To one side of the house were two formal gardens, with symmetrical parterres and carefully-groomed hedges, recalling a Beaux-arts tradition and the stylistic elements of both Spanish and Italian gardens of the past. The combination of Spanish, English and other continental styles provided a synthesis that was uniquely Californian, as was the fact that its owner was an entrepreneurial inventor who had risen to wealth from the obscurity of a Chicago working-class neighborhood. But everything about the estate was a conscious allusion to the lifestyles and culture associated with traditional aristocracy and meant to place the owner within the lineage of Old World privilege.

The automobile began making its appearance during the first decade of the twentieth century but did not enjoy widespread distribution or use until after 1914, the year Henry Ford opened his first factory production line. The new machines were immediately popular in Southern California, even before 1914, and they quickly made it possible for a leisure-oriented lifestyle to extend into once remote locations like the Santa Monica Mountains. Prior to the introduction of this technology, the Santa Monica Mountains were largely inaccessible to the casual visitor from Los Angeles because of the distance and the ruggedness of the terrain. By 1915, however, it had become possible to drive to the region over well-graded roads. This sudden accessibility inspired the establishment of several resorts and the construction of rustic vacation homes. Automobiles and automobile travel would eventually become readily-available to all Americans, but initially access was limited only to those who could afford the expense and had leisure time. As a result, during this decade, the Santa Monica Mountains began to be associated with social privilege and became a retreat for the wealthy.

By the 1930s the movie industry began to assume a dominant role in Southern California's economy. The Great Depression had actually contributed to its ascendancy, since this industry was one of the few sectors of the economy that did not decline after the stock market collapsed. The more traditional sources of wealth which had contributed to Southern California's earlier economic growth—real estate speculation, agriculture and resource extraction—had all declined, costing many businessmen, including King Gillette, their fortunes. Hollywood professionals now began to replace the old order, becoming Southern California's new elite. Their greater public visibility made these entertainment professionals even more sensitive to visual symbols of status than their predecessors had been, and they readily adopted many of the same outward forms to identify their wealth and privilege. These included the vast landed estate and the lifestyle of the country gentleman. Many actors and directors bought or built large, distinctive mansions surrounded by elaborate gardens, often employing the same designers who had built the estates of wealthy businessmen during the

previous two decades. The Gillette-Brown Ranch became a typical expression of these changing social patterns when MGM director Clarence Brown purchased the estate from King Gillette's widow in 1935. Apart from introducing a few minor changes—such as adding a swimming pool and tennis courts, and building a projection room for viewing movies—Brown kept the estate much as it had been designed and adopted the appropriate lifestyle of the gentleman rancher. He retained a staff of laborers to run the actual ranch operations while he commuted to MGM studios to continue making movies. During his occupancy, the Gillette-Brown Ranch became a center for Hollywood social life. Brown periodically entertained large parties, which included many of the leading movie stars of the era. This further contributed to the character of the property as a gentleman's country estate. At the same time it reinforced the association of the Gillette-Brown Ranch with the Hollywood movie industry, which by now was becoming a major presence throughout the Santa Monica Mountains, as all of the major studios began buying large tracts of land nearby for outdoor filming. Brown himself filmed scenes for his own movies on the property and rented the site to other productions as well.

Between 1926 and 1952 the Gillette-Brown Ranch embodied or expressed important elements of all these interrelated themes. These associations potentially qualify the site as locally significant under the National Register's Criterion A for the site's association with events that have made a significant contribution to broader patterns of history. The site may also qualify under Criterion C as the distinctive work of a master designer and for possessing high artistic merit. The masterful design of architect Wallace Neff and of his staff gave physical expression to the social identity of the men who lived here and helped define this site in terms of the regional culture those men were in process of creating. In doing so Neff and his staff produced a genuine work of art. Both the architecture and the designed landscape possessed originality, quality of craftsmanship, and a high degree of aesthetic integrity, conveying some of the most salient characteristics of the golden age of Southern California architecture and garden design.

### **Integrity**

The historical significance of the Gillette-Brown Ranch between 1926 and 1952 is evident for the reasons stated above. However, the physical integrity of both the designed landscape and the historic buildings has been compromised by a variety of alterations and additions to the degree that the property no longer conveys its significance adequately to be considered eligible—as a historic district or as individual structures, for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Although the site retains integrity of location and setting<sup>80</sup>, the remaining aspects of integrity have all been severely impacted. The original Wallace

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<sup>80</sup> The setting has been affected to some degree by the encroachment of suburban development and increased volume of traffic and congestion.

Neff design survives only in vestiges and cannot be fully appreciated without reference to historic data. With the historic buildings, much of the original character and feeling remains, but additions, repairs and modifications made to these buildings have introduced many new and often non-compatible elements and materials affecting the design intent and architectural integrity. In a similar manner, the landscape survives in fragments as features have been modified, replaced with incompatible features, or lost altogether. The overall and cumulative effect of these changes has resulted in the workmanship of architect Wallace Neff, his contractor Frederick Ruppel, and his landscape designer being obscured or surviving only in isolated fragments.

### **Considering Historic Character**

Although the Gillette-Brown Ranch (1926-1952) does not meet National Register criteria for listing, it does retain several cultural landscape characteristics that may be worthy of preservation for their historic, aesthetic, and interpretive values.

Among the designed landscape characteristics which have survived are the entry system, which brings the visitor into the property from Mulholland Highway. Today this system is entirely intact including the alignment which routes the visitor through the original heavy iron gate, flanked by masonry walls and onto the ranch. From the gate, the entry drive continues along the Eucalyptus allée, over the bridges and wraps around the toe of the knoll before turning up toward the main building complex. Much of the original intent of this design—to build suspense and present a grand entry through the rural landscape to the formal grounds, is still felt by the visitor as he or she drives up the entry drive.

Another important landscape characteristic surviving from the original Neff design is the viewshed from the courtyard on the west side of the Gillette Residence. Although this view has been impacted by the construction of the Novitiate and parking area on the south side of the viewshed, the intent and overall character of this view is still largely discernible. Other impacts to this view such as the growth of vegetation along the margins of the sweeping lawn, the establishment of sycamore trees introduced after the period of significance along the shores of the pond, the removal of the low-profile Moorish fountain during the Church Universal and Triumphant era and replacement with a much larger fountain during the Soka University era, are somewhat reversible. In addition, still discernible in this view are the three distinct character zones which comprise the panorama Neff framed from the courtyard—the manicured lawn and ornamental foreground, the working landscape and agricultural fields comprising the middle ground, and the sublime and seemingly-wild background. Only the loss of the agricultural landscape has diminished this designed aesthetic progression.

Several of the natural systems which Neff and his landscape architect utilized in the design of the grounds also remain. The most important of these is the valley oak association which Neff intentionally preserved and systematically integrated into his design, as evidenced by annotations made on his original plans and lay-out drawings. Most of the existing mature oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) present throughout the property were purposefully preserved and incorporated in the designed landscape. This is still obvious on the western side of the Gillette Residence, where the aesthetic character, if not the ecological viability of the valley and live oak association is still present. Neff also modified and used the natural watershed—specifically the Stokes Canyon drainage channel to create a constructed water feature which became a key component in the realization of his overarching aesthetic scheme. This water feature, although altered, and the natural water system from which it was derived, remain today as functioning parts of both the cultural and natural landscapes. The deep alluvial soils that allowed agricultural use of the property also remain.

Finally, most of the historic structures in the developed area are considered substantial, believed to be well constructed, and have been well maintained throughout most of their history. And, although many changes to the structures have compromised their architectural and historic integrity, these changes have, in most cases, been of a very high standard in both construction and in use of materials. This is particularly true of work done during the Soka University era of occupation.

Land use and the spatial relationships of historic buildings and structures in relation to the remaining landscape features continue to reflect the character of the gentleman rancher and the opulence of an estate designed during a unique era in the history of the Santa Monica Mountains. Protecting these relationships in future development should be considered as new building and site development occurs.

### **Other Potential Periods of Significance**

Because of the limited time frame for this DOE, the team was unable to expand their research to determine the full extent of other historic resources on the property. To this point, it is recommended that in conjunction with the park Historic Resources Study (draft), additional research is needed to determine other potential periods of significance. For this property, the following periods may also be significant and worthy of full evaluations.

#### **The Claretians: 1953-1977**

The greatest impact on the physical integrity of the Gillette-Brown Ranch designed landscape was the result of the later development called Claretville, the Claretian Seminary and Novitiate which occupied the site between 1953 and 1977. Additional research may shed light on the degree to which this institution was associated with locally important historic themes. Because

modifications of the architecture and physical landscape after 1977 were minimal, Claretville retains most aspects of integrity. Because of this, if further research demonstrates historical significance under one of the National Register criteria, it is possible that this property would be eligible for nomination to the National Register. Themes that should be considered for further research include, first, the impact of Vatican II on American Catholicism and, second, the role of individual Claretians in the social activism of the 1960s and early 1970s.

### **Periods of Early History**

In addition to the Claretian era other historical periods may also be documented and evaluated. For example, the Gillette-Brown Ranch was part of the Rancho Las Virgenes, an early Spanish land grant, and may retain valuable physical evidence associated with this period or with the subsequent period of American settlement. Although physical features associated with this era would probably be preserved only in archaeological deposits, the high likelihood of significant findings may justify documentation and evaluation of this property under Criterion D of the National Register Criteria because of the site's potential to yield historically valuable information.

The most important known archaeological deposit associated with the site is the Chumash village of Talepop, which lay partially within the boundaries of the Gillette-Brown Ranch. Talepop appears to have possessed considerable significance within the Santa Monica Mountains Chumash culture. It was linked by a direct transportation route with the important coastal center of Humaliwu, site of the regional chief. Talepop also possessed local significance during the historic period of Spanish occupation and missionization. It was a major source of recruitment for the nearby Mission San Fernando, and its inhabitants also provided essential labor for local ranchos. Preliminary archaeological surveys suggest that the site retains good integrity and might yield important information about Chumash culture and the Spanish impact on it. The Talepop archaeological site may also qualify as eligible for the National Register under Criterion D (See *Archaeological Assessment of King Gillette Ranch*, Los Angeles County, California, Chester King, 2006).

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### **Archival Repositories**

Academy of Motion Pictures. Arts and Sciences Library.

Historic Resources Group. Soka University Project Files. Hollywood, CA.

Huntington Library. San Marino, CA.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. Building and Safety Office. Calabasas, CA.

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Pacific West Regional Office Archives, Park Files: Santa Monica Mountains NRA. Oakland, CA.

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Park Archives. Thousand Oaks, CA.

University of Santa Barbara Imaging Center. Santa Barbara, CA.

University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Clarence Brown Collection. Knoxville, TN.

Whittier College, Department of Geology. Fairchild Aerial Photography Collection. Whittier, CA.

## **Appendix A**

### **Treatment Considerations for Historic Buildings**

#### **Gillette-Brown Ranch**

**Prepared by:**  
**Hank Florence, Historical Architect**  
**Pacific West Region**  
**National Park Service**

The following condition assessment is based on three days of visual inspection of the historic buildings comprising the Gillette-Brown Ranch.

Almost without exception, the function and physical condition of all of the buildings historically associated with the Gillette-Brown Ranch have changed since the period of significance (1926-1952). It is perhaps not unexpected that the change in use from a private estate and gentleman's ranch to a more institutional use by the Claretians, the Church Universal and Triumphant, and Soka University would not result in some change. It is the *degree of change* that has greatly compromised many significant character-defining features of the earlier periods. Based on this visual assessment, it seems apparent that in changes during these later periods of ownership, great strides were taken to not only accommodate a new use, but to do it in a way, that, by design, created an institutional architecture and setting.

The changes to these buildings that have occurred subsequent to the Gillette and Brown eras make the prospect of individual buildings being eligible for listing on the *National Register of Historic Places* unlikely. Without listing on the National Register, future development or modifications to these buildings may not require compliance with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. However, even without National Register designation, new building and site development planning could benefit from integrating remaining historic character as a unifying design theme for the property. For example, following the *Secretary's Standards* for adaptive use or rehabilitation of buildings could help preserve key building features and architectural character, while providing a recognized and structured approach for compatible new design and construction standards and techniques.

The buildings that comprise the Gillette and Brown eras of occupation represent a distinct regional architectural style. Three of the primary buildings were designed in the early career of a noted architect. Good architectural practice would suggest that future work on these structures should recognize the work of this architect and the architectural style that is the basis of their design. For these reasons, all proposed work on these buildings should recognize and appropriately incorporate the architectural characteristics of this style consistent with the original design.

People will continue to be interested in the resources on the property and with the stories of King Gillette and Clarence Brown. Brown's tenure on the property may bring even more interest because of his Hollywood connections and his use of the site. Visitors will likely want to experience, in some way, life from these previous eras. Site development and building use should consider this opportunity and identify where and how such uses might occur.

## **Planning**

### **Interim Use / Short Term Planning**

Prior to completion of master planning for the property, and the identification of new uses for structures, the primary short term treatment recommended for the buildings is *preservation*.

*Preservation is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project.*

Preservation assumes that until uses and treatment have been identified for long-term use, existing (or similar) uses for the building will occur, and the structures will be maintained in their existing form. This applies to both interiors and exteriors. This treatment allows existing uses or uses that do not require substantial alterations. It is basically a program of good maintenance – good care of the facilities in their existing configuration.

Until information is in place to guide appropriate long-term use and development of the site, preservation is a treatment strategy that limits work that may prove inappropriate in meeting broader site development and building use goals. It will also help avoid inappropriate alteration to structures prior to adequate research and planning.

In the short term, and with the exception of the Stable and the early ranch buildings on Las Virgenes Road, a program of preservation would be appropriate for all structures on the property. The condition of the Stable, the Frisk House, and the Brandt House will require major intervention, and perhaps total rehabilitation prior to any adaptive use.

### **Ultimate Use/ Long-Term Treatments**

As a possible result of the planning process, *preservation* may also be an appropriate treatment for the long term management of several structures. Again, with the exception of the Stable and the early ranch structures on Las

Virgenes Road, the remaining buildings on the property appear to be in generally good condition making them serviceable for appropriate new and continued uses.

In addition to preservation, other options for long-term treatment of the structures or individual rooms within buildings include **restoration**, especially as applied to the Neff designed buildings.

***Restoration is defined as the art or process of, accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project.***

Of the four treatments identified in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*, the most commonly used, and the one that may be the most appropriate for building on the Gillette-Brown Ranch is **Rehabilitation**.

***Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.***

Rehabilitation as a treatment provides the opportunity to reintroduce missing components important to the original Neff designs and retains remaining character-defining features of the architectural style. This treatment allows for compatible upgrades to building systems required by contemporary codes and standards while providing a systematic approach to developing new compatible designs. Whether done as part of a single project, incrementally over time, or as part of a cyclic maintenance program, such an approach has merit for this property.

## **Treatment Recommendations for Individual Buildings**

### **Gillette Residence (Bldg. #3)**

If the proposed new use of the Gillette Residence requires space for formal events—such as weddings or receptions, then restoration of select rooms may be appropriate. It should be noted that the library and billiard rooms on the main floor of the house are in near original condition. The restoration of other first floor spaces including the living room, dining room and conservatory, and the patio that connects all of these spaces, could easily compliment the use of these spaces for such events. It is believed that the original Neff drawings and available photo documentation could provide adequate information for such restoration. Restoration may also support other programs and interpretive goals (such as telling the Gillette, Brown, and Neff story). It would be difficult to justify restoration anywhere other

than on the first floor. The second floor is highly altered with most original building fabric removed. It is also assumed that these spaces would not be used as they were historically or as a house museum, at least in the short term.

Rehabilitation, a less aggressive and usually less costly approach than restoration, could be considered an appropriate treatment approach in creating spaces for program needs served in the Gillette Residence described above. The Gillette and Brown era character of these spaces could be reintroduced with a design that is respectful of original building fabric that remains, and that carefully introduces new materials that convey the spaces original design intent. Appealing and functional spaces could be the products of a carefully considered program of rehabilitation for most spaces of the Gillette residence.

Rehabilitation as a treatment could also provide direction in the replacement, and or repair of windows. A number of windows have been replaced with units considerably different than those that were part of the original construction. In order to avoid the randomness that seems to have occurred with window replacement that is inconsistent with the original design intent of Neff or even consistent with the architectural style of the residence, rehabilitation could provide direction here. Take for example, the windows located in the wall where the front entry of the house is located and that which faces the entry court. As originally designed, the starkness and simplicity of this wall as an entry contrasted with the seemingly random placement of windows and vents. Most of the windows in this location varied in size, configuration, and the use of materials for both glass and trim detail. The rehabilitation of this façade through window replacement would recommend the reintroduction of windows and associated details the same or very similar to those of the original design. Other rehabilitation recommendations in this area of the building include the removal of the porch structure over the front door and removal of the iron-gate under it, elements not part of the original design.

Windows and doors that were removed from the archways in two walls of the conservatory and the north wall of the dining room could be replaced through a program of rehabilitation. The replacement units currently found in these locations are inconsistent with the original design both visually and in providing cross ventilation of these spaces. The reintroduction of units more consistent with the originals will contribute to both reinstating lost architectural features important to the home, but also provide energy saving measures that were part of the building's original design.

Similarly, the rehabilitation of porches that have been enclosed—such as the tower off of the upstairs bedroom, would do much to reestablish building features important to the original design. The use of the tower seems rather limited as a single and isolated enclosed space with somewhat restricted access. Opening the space again may provide a location for interpretation, as

views from here provide wonderful vistas of much of the property. Opening the porch off the master bedroom on the second floor would simply add another layer of detail important in the expression of the original design as intended by Neff.

In other areas of the Gillette Residence, when finishes are in need of replacement, care should be taken in the selection of new materials. Original brick floors on the main level are currently covered with carpet. Removing the carpet and exposing the original floor would do much to change the character of these spaces and reestablish their historical appearance.

Original wall and ceiling surfaces of plaster should be maintained. Generally, these surfaces are in good condition.

When opportunities exist to eliminate heating and ventilating duct work that has been insensitively introduced into living spaces, they should be taken. This is of particular interest in the living room where the symmetry of a very formal space has been lost with the installation of exceptionally large duct work that runs from the floor to ceiling and across the entire end wall of the room. Ducting is also incorporated into the ceiling light fixtures in this room, where ducts and lights rest on exposed ceiling beams. Excessive ducting is also found in the master bedroom suite on the second floor.

#### **Garage (Bldg. #4) and Cook's House (Bldg. #5)**

Sometime after the Brown era, the Garage, a Neff design, and the Cook's House underwent major interior construction projects that left little if any original interior building fabric. The floor plans of these structures were totally reconfigured to provide sleeping rooms. The exteriors remained generally intact although both porches of these buildings were enclosed.

As mentioned above, preservation as a long-term treatment for the Cook's House and the Garage, and their continued use as sleeping rooms would be appropriate and easily accommodated by new users. It is unlikely that the historic uses of these facilities will be reintroduced so restoration of these structures would be inappropriate. Should a change from the current dormitory use be desired, a treatment of rehabilitation should be considered.

For example for both buildings, it is very likely that with minimal alteration, the plan and size of the existing rooms could easily lend themselves to adaptive use as office space. Rehabilitation treatment would guide such a conversion in appropriately addressing infrastructure, code, and programmatic needs of this new use. And, like with the Gillette Residence, consideration of work that would reintroduce or strengthen original design features important to these structures should be considered. This is of particular interest on the building exteriors. Reintroducing the open porches and being well informed when selecting all exterior materials – windows, doors, roof tiles, paint and plaster surfaces, and wood trims – are all decisions in

design that would benefit from a rehabilitation approach and in creating consistent design site-wide.

### **Brandt House and Garage (Bldgs. #12 and 13) and Frisk House (bldg. # 14)**

The early ranch dwellings and garage that face Las Virgenes Road and that were part of the early ranch complex are in a state of disrepair. Prior to treatment recommendations an extensive condition assessment with recommendations and cost estimates for reuse of these structures will be required. The lack of exterior envelope protection over what must be several years, has created predictable moisture related problems to not only building fabric, but possibly to the building's structural components, as well. Should recommendations from the condition assessment warrant reuse, rehabilitation would be the appropriate treatment in guiding both design and construction as well as identifying appropriate use.

Earlier assessments that the smaller dwelling (Frisk House) located across from the entrance to Malibu Creek State Park was constructed of the trademark Neff adoblar are inaccurate. Upon further investigation the building is determined to be wood frame construction.

### **White House and White House Garage (Bldgs. # 10 and 11)**

The most intact, and beautifully restored and rehabilitated structures that remain from the Gillette and Brown periods, are the White House and White House Garage currently associated with the Botanical Research Center of Soka University. Recent work executed by the University clearly exhibits a high degree of craftsmanship in both restored and rehabilitated elements. Future occupancy of these structures should encourage uses that would require minimal (if any) impact to the home. Rehabilitation of the garage for a new use could easily be accommodated through appropriate design.

### **Seminary (Bldg. #1)**

The Seminary building is of substantial concrete and steel construction and has been well maintained over the years. With the exception of minor changes to the floor plan in the main entry and a classroom space, this building retains its original interior configuration. Cosmetic changes have occurred to the large auditorium, a space originally used as a chapel by the Claretians. The exterior has remained as originally designed. Although an analysis by a structural engineer to assess seismic capacity needs to be undertaken, it is believed that the concrete and steel construction of the building has fared well in previous seismic events.

With a main floor that includes an auditorium, classroom, offices, and elegant circulation spaces, its continued use in these functions would be appropriate without alterations for a new user. As such, preservation as an ultimate treatment would be appropriate. In meeting new program needs, retaining

the current dormitory use of the upper two floors may be problematic. These floors currently have a simple circulation pattern, with a central hall flanked on each side with sleeping rooms and bath facilities, and with a “common” room near the central stair. The concrete and steel structural system of the building, and block construction of the partition walls on these floors, would make major alterations of space difficult and likely costly. To meet egress requirement for any use, the reconfiguration of circulation on these floors would be difficult. The central hall that provides access to the exit stairs on each end of the building will likely need to be retained. Combining two or more sleeping rooms for new uses could be considered although the resulting spaces may have limited appeal. Although use of the sleeping rooms for small, private offices might be an option, reuse of the facility in its existing use is always desirable.

### **Novitiate (Bldg. #6)**

Although not possessing the distinct architectural style of the Seminary building, the Novitiate building has also been well maintained and there appear to be few changes to its original configuration. An addition (for a cafeteria) that connects the main building to a formerly separate service structure has occurred, but with minor visual impacts to the original structure. Other adjustments to the building's original floor plan are not apparent if they exist. Many of the building's finish surfaces appear to be original, of good quality, and are in serviceable condition.

The long-term multiple-use of the Novitiate building in assembly, classroom, office and service—uses that occur today, would easily be accommodated through preservation treatment. Other than the need for communication infrastructure, or other unique needs for a specific user, few, if any building modifications would be required if the structure were to remain in its current or very similar uses.

### **Stable (Bldg. # 8)**

The Stable, a Neff structure, for unknown reasons, is a relative “shell” and in a condition that will require total rehabilitation for reuse. All building systems will need replacement or extensive repairs. Apparent drainage problems in the immediate vicinity of this structure will also need to be addressed.

The exterior character of the building, some interior features, its prominent location, and its potential to serve various program needs in future site development are all elements that will drive the program of rehabilitation. Information in this document should be supplemented with more building related information on this structure in the form of a *Historic Structure Report*. This report should provide a chronology of work that has occurred over time and identify character-defining features important for retention. A thorough condition assessment with examination of all building systems is

also needed. With this information and a proposed use for the structure, a cost estimate for rehabilitation can be developed.

## Appendix B

### Brief Biography of King C. Gillette

King Camp Gillette (1855-1932) was born January 5, 1855 in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, the fourth of five children. Both of Gillette's parents were from old New England families. His father, George Gillette, engaged in a variety of professions, from newspaper editor to manufacturer of japanned tinware but considered himself primarily an inventor. The entire family followed their father's lead and devoted much of their lives to tinkering with various inventions, logging numerous patents between them. But only King Gillette and his mother, Fannie ever derived financial success from their creative activities. Fannie Gillette published a best-selling cookbook in 1887 called *The White House Cookbook*. It sold millions of copies and went through several reprints, earning its author an entry in Marquis' *Who's Who in America*. King Gillette went on to patent the disposable safety razor, founding the now well-known Gillette Company and becoming a multi-millionaire.<sup>1</sup>

When he was not tinkering with new ideas, the young King Gillette generally supported himself as a traveling salesman, a profession which apparently suited his friendly and outgoing nature very well. On July 2, 1890 he married Atlanta Ella Gaines, the daughter of an Ohio oilman. She was 21 at the time. He was 35. Four months after their wedding, Atlanta gave birth to the couple's only child, a son whom they named King Gaines Gillette. The following year, in 1891, King Gillette became a salesman for Crown Cork and Seal, a Baltimore company which had just invented the familiar bottle cap. It was while working here that King first started thinking about the economic potential of disposability, still a relatively alien concept for most Americans. The bottle cap was, in fact, one of the first examples of a disposable product in America, and its enormous success was an unforgettable lesson for King. The idea captivated him. He would run through the alphabet during his travels, making a mental catalogue of all objects which might be rendered disposable. But it was not until 1895, when he was forty years old, that he finally thought of one. According to his own recollection, Gillette was standing before the bathroom mirror of a Boston hotel room, contemplating his unshaven face with a dull razor in his hand and no way to sharpen it, when he suddenly conceived of the throw-away razor as the solution to his problem. If razor blades could be manufactured from thin, disposable pieces of steel and sold cheaply in packages, men would no longer have to be

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the biographical information for this section is taken from the following sources: Tim Dowling, *Inventor of the Disposable Culture: King Camp Gillette, 1855-1932* (London: Short Books, 2001); and Russell B. Adams, Jr., *King C. Gillette: The Man and His Wonderful Shaving Device* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978). Further information might be obtained from the Gillette Company archives. Some years ago a family member donated several boxes of material pertaining to the personal life of King Camp Gillette, according to a personal correspondence between this family member and Phil Holmes of the Santa Monica Mountains NRA.

bothered with the arduous task of honing and stropping their razors whenever they needed a shave. Convenience, Gillette rightly surmised, would ensure the popularity and profitability of the product.

The idea was sound, but the challenge of realizing it proved more difficult than Gillette first imagined. It took another four years of experimentation to find a workable technique just to manufacture the thin blades. Gillette finally filed his invention at the U.S. patent office in 1899. Another two years passed before he could find anybody willing to go into business with him. But in 1901 the Gillette Safety Razor Company was born.<sup>2</sup> In 1903 the Company registered its first sales—just 51 razor handles and 168 disposable blades. But the idea was popular and caught on fast. The following year the company sold 91,000 handles and 12.4 million blades, and King Gillette was finally able to quit his job with Crown Cork after thirteen years on the road and begin drawing a salary from his new company. He was granted his patent on November 15, 1904.

With his fortune now assured, Gillette soon turned his attention to another of his interests—utopianism. Gillette's penchant for tinkering embraced more than just razor blades. It included social engineering as well. In 1906, in an article for the July issue of *National Magazine*, he proposed achieving his utopian dream through the establishment of a "world corporation." A few years later he actually filed articles of corporation and published a lengthy prospectus outlining the purpose and nature of this fantastic company. Gillette's idea was to apply the efficiencies of business to eliminate poverty and other social injustices world-wide. The entire globe, he argued, should be organized into a single corporation—the World Corporation—which would then ensure the equitable distribution of resources among all people. The fact that the proposal got any attention at all was partly through Gillette's new fame as the "razor king," and partly through his offer to hire Theodore Roosevelt to be first president of the company (Roosevelt declined). The World Corporation was only the latest expression of an idea with which Gillette had been toying for years. In 1894 he had published his first utopian book, *The Human Drift*, in which he described an ideal society where more efficient organization and modern technology would make it possible for people to work only five years of their lives. The entire population would be housed in a single city of 40,000 massive high-rise towers—designed by Gillette himself—and powered with hydroelectric energy generated by Niagara Falls. As outlandish as these proposals of Gillette seem, they all shared a genuine awareness of the often perverse contradictions of modern capitalism. Gillette wrote with passion about the absurdity of a system where overproduction results in poverty rather than plenty, a situation he had experienced firsthand during the economic depression which coincided with his writing of *The Human Drift*. But Gillette's extraordinary faith in our capacity to overcome these contradictions through rational planning—a capacity which Gillette believed found its highest incarnation in the American

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<sup>2</sup> It was originally called the American Safety Razor Company to assuage the egos of the other partners.

businessman—seems impossibly naive. It was also something of an embarrassment to the board of directors at the Gillette Company, especially as domestic labor unrest and the threat of European Bolshevism made socialist ideas of any sort increasingly unpopular, even if they were being expressed by one of the wealthiest capitalists in America.

By 1913 this no longer mattered. Weary of arguing with the other members of the board, King Gillette sold his majority share of company stocks to a rival director and effectively retired at age 58, though he remained titular president and still drew a salary. He moved shortly afterward to California, where he took up a new interest—buying and building estates. This may have been driven by the practical necessity of accommodating his extended family, most of whom followed him out west. But it may also have been a new form of Gillette's old obsession with utopias. If he could not make the entire world conform to his personal vision of perfection, at least he could make a few hundred acres do so. Gillette had been buying land in Southern California as early as 1911, when he was preparing to develop a parcel in Santa Monica not far from the ocean. He also owned a ranch near Porterville in Tulare County.<sup>3</sup> In late 1916 Gillette and his family moved into a new \$50,000 estate in Beverly Hills.<sup>4</sup> By 1920 he had also bought land near Indio in the Coachella Valley, where he began raising date palms.<sup>5</sup> As a result of this venture, he became a director in the local Date Corporation of America. In nearby Palm Springs he built a three bedroom vacation home in 1925, where he and Atlanta would spend their winters.<sup>6</sup> About the same time he also built a large house in Hollywood and another in Newport Beach. The latter he never occupied.<sup>7</sup> As if all this activity were not enough to keep him occupied in retirement, Gillette also bought several oil wells in Southern California, becoming president of a small oil company, and even became a partner in a venture to establish an airline between southern Mexico and Los Angeles.

By this time Gillette had more than enough money to indulge his numerous whims. Though no longer a majority shareholder in the razor company, he had retained enough stocks to benefit dramatically from its rising fortunes. With the U.S. entrance into World War I, sales had increased exponentially. The Gillette Corporation had convinced the government to include its razor kit in every serviceman's standard issue, and the company sold 3.5 million razors in 1918 to the U.S. military alone. More importantly, it exposed tens

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<sup>3</sup> An F.W. Griffin was preparing plans for various barns and outbuildings for this ranch in 1913, according to a notice in *Southwest Contractor & Manufacturer*, May 24, 1913, pg. 22.

<sup>4</sup> "Fine Suburban Homes Finished" *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1916, pg. V1. The home was later sold to Gloria Swanson and has since been demolished. "Gloria Swanson Expounds on What's Wrong in L.A." *Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 1966, pg. A6.

<sup>5</sup> In 1940 the Gillette ranch in Indio became the 330 acre private residential community of Palm Village. "Palm Village Season to Open" *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 1940, pg. E2.

<sup>6</sup> The home is in the Mesa district of Palm Springs and was reportedly in good condition as recently as 1984, when it sold for \$1.2 million. "King Gillette Mesa Estate Goes on Market for \$1.2 Million" *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 1984, pg. N1.

<sup>7</sup> The home is still standing at the end of the pier but has since been divided into two separate houses. John O'Dell, "Gillette : Fixer-Upper for Sale at \$3 Million" *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1983, pg. OC\_CA.

of thousands of young men to the Gillette razor, rendering them loyal customers. By war's end, Gillette's invention had successfully revolutionized male hygiene. Few if any men went to the barber to be shaved any longer, or honed and stropped their own blade. But probably the most significant result of Gillette's fantastic success was his contribution to the idea of disposability, which, for good or ill, has become central to our contemporary consumer culture.

## Appendix C

### Brief Biography of Clarence Brown

Clarence Brown (1935-1952) was a successful Hollywood director of many popular films from the late 1920s through the early fifties. Most of his career was associated with MGM studios, where he was considered a reliable and highly-competent "house director." The epithet meant he usually directed scripts given to him by the studio rather than insisting on scripts of his own choice or developing original material. As a result, most of Brown's work expressed the characteristic MGM style, as defined by the authoritarian Louis B. Mayer who dominated the studio from 1924 to 1951. This willingness to conform endeared Brown to Mayer and ensured the longevity of Brown's contract, but many film critics also believe that his slavish adherence to the MGM formula resulted in artistically mediocre films. Whatever the value of these opinions, Brown's historic significance within the film industry was nonetheless considerable. He had the undisputed respect of many of the leading actors and film-makers of the day, and he directed some of MGM's most successful films. Clarence Brown also had the reputation for being the best woman's director. The actress Greta Garbo, notoriously difficult to work with, frequently demanded that she be directed by him, and Brown became known unofficially as "Garbo's director." Brown also played a less formal, if no less important, role as a society host within the entertainment community, regularly holding large parties at his Calabasas ranch in the Santa Monica Mountains. Many of the most famous actors and actresses of the day were his guests.<sup>8</sup>

Clarence Brown started life about as far from this film industry culture as one can imagine. He was born in Clinton, Massachusetts on May 10, 1890 to a working class family.<sup>9</sup> Both his parents were employed in the textile industry, his father as a mechanic and his mother as a weaver. By the time Brown was eleven, the family had moved to Knoxville, Tennessee, where the senior Brown had become manager of a cotton mill. Clarence appeared interested in following his father's lead and studied mechanical engineering at the University of Tennessee, whose main campus was in Knoxville. Rather than go into the cotton industry, however, Brown applied his talent and education to the newly-created auto industry. He worked as an auto mechanic for a

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<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the biographical information for this section is taken from the following sources: Allen Estrin, "Clarence Brown" in *The Hollywood Professionals, Volume 6: Capra, Cukor, Brown*, 139-190 (South Brunswick: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1980); Harry Haun, "MGM's Brown: 60 Years the Company Man" *Los Angeles Times*, 1973, pp. 26-30; Harry Haun, "The UT Grad who Engineered Dreams" *The Tennessean Magazine*, July 2, 1972, pp. 5-10; and Philip Scheuer "Brown Champions Work on Location" *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 1949, Pt. IV. Further information might be obtained from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Clarence Brown Collection, which is the primary repository for all family papers relating to Clarence Brown.

<sup>9</sup> Brown's friendship with his boss, Louis B. Mayer, may have owed much to their common working class background. Mayer was born into an impoverished Jewish family in the Ukraine. While still a young boy, Mayer's family emigrated to New Brunswick, where his father found work as a scrap metal dealer.

while in Illinois, then moved to Birmingham, Alabama in 1912, where he established a dealership. It was here that he began to develop an interest in film, which was still a novel and relatively simple technology. On a whim, Brown sold his auto dealership and traveled to Fort Lee, New Jersey to introduce himself to director Maurice Tourneur of Peerless Studios. Fort Lee was at that time the capital of America's young film industry. The first studio had opened there in 1907, and Tourneur had arrived in 1914 from the French studio Eclair. Apparently Tourneur was impressed with his impetuous visitor, because he hired him as an assistant.<sup>10</sup> Brown would always remember the older French director as his mentor, as Brown himself confessed, "Tourneur was my god...I owe it all to him. Before he got into filmmaking, he was a painter. He used the screen like a canvas. Everything I know about lighting and composition and arrangement I learned from him." Apart from the homage to Maurice Tourneur, this quote reveals volumes about Brown's own aesthetic values and helps to understand, not only his films, but his ability to appreciate any artistic creation. His sensibility to composition would later inform his understanding of the Wallace Neff landscape at the Gillette Ranch and guide his manipulations of it.

Brown worked with Maurice Tourneur until 1917 when the United States entered World War I. Brown then joined the Army Air Corp and learned to fly, eventually becoming a flight instructor. Flying would remain a life-long interest of his, and he would later build an airstrip at his Calabasas estate to accommodate his own plane and those of other aviator friends. Following the war, Brown returned to work with Maurice Tourneur, who had gone to Hollywood in the meantime. Southern California's inexpensive real estate and temperate weather were beginning to attract the film industry, and one-by-one all the major studios began relocating to the Los Angeles area. At about that time, Tourneur left Peerless Studios to start his own production company and gladly took Brown on as soon as he arrived fresh from military service. As an employee of Tourneur in Hollywood, Brown got the opportunity to direct his first film in 1920, *The Great Redeemer*. Brown stayed with Tourneur another two years, co-directing a few more films (one of which was Tourneur's best-known American film, *The Last of the Mohicans*), but he finally left in 1922 to work for First National on a film of his own, *Light in the Dark*. Always the clever engineer, Brown experimented with an innovative color process which, though not entirely successful, caught the attention of Universal Pictures. Universal subsequently offered Brown a five picture contract. This opportunity marks the beginning of Brown's directorial career as well as his formal entrance into Hollywood. Universal Pictures had moved from Fort Lee to Los Angeles in 1915, buying a ranch just north of the Cahuenga Pass (not far, in fact, from Calabasas). Brown fulfilled his contract with Universal in two years, completing his fifth film, *The Goose Woman*, in 1925. Later that year Brown contracted one film for the struggling United Artists Studios, directing Rudolph Valentino in *The Eagle*. By now Brown's continuing success, and his rare ability to stay within budget, was attracting

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<sup>10</sup> Clarence Brown, "Recollections of Early Days." (Unpublished memoir).

the attention of the largest studios in Southern California. In 1926 Louis B. Mayer's MGM Studios offered Brown a two-film contract. Brown accepted. He would remain with MGM for the rest of his career, directing forty-one films for the studio over the next twenty-six years. When Brown renewed his contract the following year, MGM offered him uncommonly generous terms.<sup>11</sup>

In 1927 the first sound picture, or "talkie," premiered with Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer*. The new technology was adopted almost immediately, and many film careers ended abruptly as actors and directors both failed to make the transition to the new medium. Clarence Brown managed to negotiate the change with relatively little effect on his career, perhaps due in part to his aptitude for technology. However, some critics believe that the quality of his work declined as a result. They argue that Brown's greatest talent was for the purely visual qualities of the picture and that he was never able to do with sound what he did so effectively with silence.<sup>12</sup> Whether this criticism is justified or not, Brown's success as a film-maker never suffered. He continued to direct, on average, about two films a year for MGM. While most of these received little critical acclaim, they were all popular and did well at the box office. Two of his best-known films were *National Velvet* and *The Yearling*, both children's films. Brown received six academy award nominations, all for films done with MGM. Although he never actually received the trophy, this was still a rare achievement. Most of Brown's films reflected the personal taste of Louis B. Mayer, who emphasized traditional American values and deliberately avoided any themes which might be morally offensive or politically challenging. Brown would never return to the provocative films of his early, pre-MGM years. The only exception came in 1949, when he directed *Intruder in the Dust*, an adaptation of William Faulkner's story about racial intolerance in the South. The film is considered one of his finest, but at the time was too inflammatory to earn him any awards in America. The British Academy, however, awarded Brown its prestigious prize of best director for that year. Following *Intruder in the Dust*, Brown directed only three more films, all light and relatively unremarkable. He then retired from film-making altogether in 1952, selling his ranch at Calabasas and living off his lucrative real estate investments. He died in 1987 at age 97.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Allen Estrin cites the following for this information: Dorothy Manners, "Without Benefit of Close-Ups," *Motion Picture Classic* (April, 1928): 78.

<sup>12</sup> This opinion is shared by Allen Estrin.

<sup>13</sup> In 1953 Brown produced a film which he did not direct—*Never Let Me Go*. In total, he produced twenty-five films during his career, all but three of which he also directed.



## Appendix D

### Ownership Patterns for Adjacent Parcels

The property currently occupied by Soka University comprises approximately 588 acres, including a core area of approximately 213 acres which has been developed as a campus. All of the property is located in Township 1 South, Range 17 North, San Bernardino Meridian, and includes portions of Section 7 and 8, and portions of Tract 6360. According to an appraisal made in 2004, the property comprises fifteen lots containing a total of sixteen legal parcels.<sup>14</sup> These were assembled into the existing property by Soka University through acquisitions made in 1986 and in 1990. Two of these parcels represent the core property purchased from Elizabeth Clare Prophet and include the historic Gillette-Brown Ranch (or a portion of it). The other fourteen parcels were acquired in additional purchases and represent three distinct property groups. The history of each is briefly discussed in the following sections.

### The Wickland Property

#### *Charles F. Wickland Period (1925-1961)*

In January of 1925, Charles F. Wickland bought a ten acre parcel on the southeast corner of Edward R. Stokes' land. The following year he bought two more ten acre parcels just west of his original purchase, giving him a total of thirty acres in the northeast quarter of Section 7, Township 1 South, Range 17 West. Wickland is reputed to have been a friend and business partner of King Gillette. If that is so, he may have influenced Gillette's choice of location for his final estate, for only a month after Wickland's third purchase, King Gillette bought the entire Edward Stoke's parcel adjacent to Wickland's land.

In 1938 Wickland sold his original ten acre parcel. This parcel was separated from the rest of Wickland's land and never appears to have been developed by him. (He sold it to Louis B. Mayer, who had just bought 240 acres adjoining Wickland's property to the north.) At about the same time Charles Wickland bought the forty acre parcel which adjoined his remaining property to the south. The exact date of this purchase is unknown, but it occurred prior to 1943. The only other modification that Wickland made to his holdings was the addition of a small, triangular parcel comprising 1.69 acres in 1948. This was a natural addition to the rest of his property, which it adjoined. Wickland now possessed a total of 61.69 contiguous acres in the eastern half of Section 7.

In 1956, Charles and Katherine Wickland transferred all of their property to either Robert and Mary George or to Robert and Katharine Spensley or, as

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<sup>14</sup> Teobaldi, Michael, Jr. "Appraisal Review Report of Kioren Moss Appraisal of Soka University Campus & Lands...", July 23, 2004" MT Associates, Inc., January, 2005.

joint tenants, to both. The Wicklands retained a life estate on a small portion of their northernmost parcel, where a small cabin had been built in 1947.<sup>15</sup> The Wicklands apparently lived here for the remainder of their lives. Charles died in 1961 and Katherine in 1971. The circumstances surrounding this complicated and rather intimate property transfer suggest that the three families were all related in some manner. If not, they must have been close friends.

*George/Spensley-DeCinces Period*

The Georges listed their residence as North Hollywood, where Robert George was an insurance broker. The Spensleys, however, did eventually reside at the Calabasas property, though exactly when they settled here is uncertain. In 1959 they built the house currently extant on the site (26416 West Mulholland Highway, or Soka University bldg. #17), but whether they lived here prior to that date is not known. It is very likely that another house stood on or near the same location and was torn down to make room for the current building in 1959. The ruins of an elaborate outdoor barbeque and a stone grotto or rustic swimming pool lie nearby. On one of these features is a large "W" and the year "1927" inscribed in the concrete, an obvious reference to Charles Wickland, who acquired this parcel in 1926 and probably made his residence here. Since Wickland's cabin burned in the fire of 1996, these are the only surviving features directly associated with him, and they should be preserved. The Wicklands were family friends of the Gillettes. Katherine Wickland regularly traveled with King and Atlanta Gillette and continued to spend time with Atlanta after King's death. This intimate family connection suggests that any features associated with the Wicklands during the period of significance might qualify as contributing. This would include the grotto ruins and the barbeque structure.

In 1971 Robert George died and his widow (by a second marriage), Bunny Boyd, traded her partial shares in the northern half of the original Wickland property for a full share in the southern half (the original forty acre parcel, which had a small inholding cut out of it at a later date but is otherwise intact). The northern half was now owned fully by the Spensleys. A few years after Robert Spensley died in 1976, Katharine Spensley divided ownership of the various parcels among the DeCinces and Vernon families, who were related by marriage. Katherine Spensley retained a joint tenancy for herself and continued to live at the property. These circumstances suggest that Katharine Spensley may also have been related to the Vernon and DeCinces families. Following Katharine Spensley's death in 1989, Phyllis Vernon DeCinces was the executrix of her will. In 1990, one year later, a trust representing the combined DeCinces and Vernon families sold the entirety of their property at Calabasas to Soka University. This included the parcel Buddy Boyd had taken over in 1971. The total property was essentially the same as that which Charles Wickland had assembled by the early 1940s (with the exception of the small inholding taken from the NW1/4 of the

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<sup>15</sup> Source for this date is HRG CR Evaluation, where it is not substantiated.



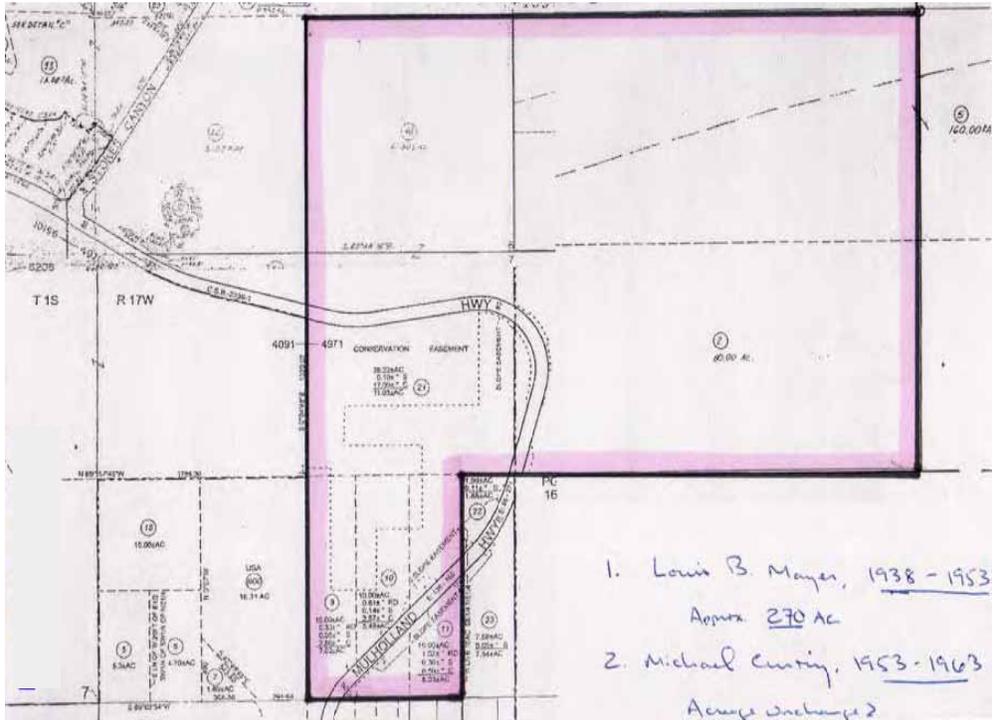
### Charles Wickland Parcels

Top: 1926, 70 acres. Bottom: 1938, approx. 60 acres (after sale of 10 acres to Louis B. Mayer)



### Charles Wickland Parcels

Top: 1948, Approx. 61.69 acres. Bottom: 1990, Approx. 61 acres



**Louis B. Mayer Parcels**

Ownership record (see notes on maps)



SE1/4 of Section 7 and a small addition along the west side of Mulholland Hwy in the NE1/4 of the SE1/4 of Section 7, which was acquired sometime between 1971 and 1990). The fact that the property remained intact over so much time and through so many complex transfers strongly suggests, but does not prove, that the following people were all related and were heirs to Charles and Katherine Wickland: Robert and Mary George, Bunny Boyd, Robert and Katharine Spensley, Theodore and Phyllis Vernon DeCinces, Dean and Gloria Vernon, and Douglas and Kristi DeCinces.

### **The Mayer Property**

#### *Louis B. Mayer Period (1938-1953)*

Louis B. Mayer was head of MGM from 1924 to his retirement in 1948 (he was actually fired). Since Clarence Brown was one of MGM's leading directors between 1926 (the year he was contracted) and 1952, he undoubtedly knew Louis B. Mayer fairly well. If this is true, Mayer's ownership of land adjacent to Clarence Brown's Ranch may not have been coincidence. In January of 1938, Mayer bought a 240 acre parcel adjoining Brown's on the east side. He purchased it from Los Angeles real estate developer Harry Fryman, who had owned it since 1923. Mayer eventually added three more small parcels to the south end of his property, including 10 acres sold to him by C.F. Wickland in March of 1938, giving him a total of 270 acres directly adjacent to Clarence Brown. There is no evidence that he ever developed any of this property.

#### *Subsequent History (1954-1990)*

Mayer sold his parcel in its entirety in December, 1953 to film director Michael Curtiz. Curtiz owned it until his death in 1963. At that time the entire property was sold to Irving and Peggy Jean Berman for \$357,500.00. The Bermans increased the size of the parcel by an additional 10 acres in 1971, bringing the total up to 280 acres (minus the easements for Mulholland Hwy.). When Irving Berman died in 1972, his widow sold the property to Leonard M. Ross, a Beverly Hills lawyer and majority owner of the Quaker Corporation. By the early 1980s the National Park Service, led by Superintendent Dan Kuehn of Santa Monica Mountains NRA, entered negotiations to buy the Mayer parcel from Ross. The Park Service estimated the value of the parcel at \$1.7 million and threatened to condemn the property when Ross refused to sell at that price. In retaliation, Ross lobbied the state legislature to pass a bill appropriating \$9 million to acquire his property for the state parks system.<sup>16</sup> This strategy ultimately failed, and Ross held on to the property for another six years. In 1990 he finally sold the entire Mayer parcel to Soka University.

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Simon and Mark Gladstone, "Landowner Gets State to Bid for Key Malibu Tract", *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 1984.

## **The Mountain View Property**

### *Cohn Period (1922-1978)*

The Cohn family first occupied a portion of this property just south of the future Gillette Ranch in 1922.<sup>17</sup> They subsequently bought one parcel in 1936. In 1947 they bought an adjacent parcel from the Hunter family, who had been owners since 1902. The Cohns operated a ranch and later developed a camp and riding academy here. In 1978, they sold their ranch—comprising both of the original two parcels—to Harmony Center. The site currently comprises what is known as the Mountain View area.

### *Harmony Center Period (1978-1986)*

Harmony Center was established in 1965 as a private school for disabled children. Beginning in 1968, the center leased a portion of the Gillette Residence (bldg. #3) from the Claretians. In 1978 they purchased both parcels comprising the Cohn Ranch and moved their entire operations there. The center included twelve trailers and several permanent residences and outbuildings dating back to the Cohn period. In 1986 Harmony Center sold both of their parcels to Soka University. All of the Harmony Center trailers were removed in the 1990s, presumably after they were damaged in the 1996 fire. Currently (2006), several buildings on the property are being renovated by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) for use as an operations center.

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<sup>17</sup> HRG CR Evaluation, pg. F-1-9.