NPS Form 10-900a

OMB No. 1024-0018

(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section _____ Page ___

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 14000136 Date Listed: 4/11/2014

Peterson, Robert O.—
Russell Forester Residence
Property Name

San Diego
County

CA
State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Signature of the Keeper

4/11/14
Date of Action

==========

Amended Items in Nomination:

Classification:
The correct Category of Property is: *Building*
[Only one category should be selected.]

These clarifications were confirmed with the CA SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Peterson, Robert O. / Russell Forester Residence

other names/site number City of San Diego Historical Resources Board Site #959

2. Location

street & number 567 Gage Lane ☐ not for publication

city or town San Diego ☐ vicinity

state California code ____ county San Diego code ____ zip code 92106

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _x_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide _x_ local

Signature of certifying official/Title State Historic Preservation Officer Date 2-19-14

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 4/11/14

Peterson, Robert O. / Russell Forester Residence
Name of Property

San Diego, California
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [X] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [X] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
	1	structures
		objects
1	2	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic – single-dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic – single-dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement – California Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Wood; Glass; Concrete
roof: Copper
other:

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Designed and constructed in 1964-1965 by San Diego Master Architect Russell Forester, FAIA (1920-2002), the California Modernist Style Robert O. Peterson – Russell Forester Residence is located at 567 Gage Lane, San Diego, California (92106) in the upscale La Playa subdivision of Point Loma, a prominent coastal landform within the City's boundaries. The regionally-influenced high-end design of the Peterson Estate combines aspects of the International Sub-style of Modernism with Traditional Pacific Asian-influenced Organic-Geometric Architecture. The richly landscaped 1.69 acre property includes a Main Residence, a detached Guest House & Laundry Building, a Guard House (serving as an additional guest house), a three-car Garage, motor court, koi pond, security walls and gates, and various other site walls and hardscape features all designed by Russell Forester. Non-contributing buildings and structures include a compatibly-designed "lanai" guest house (or "pool house") and swimming pool by Architect David Lorimer, added in 1986, plus a "floating" Japanese Tea House designed by Donald D. Goertz (an employee of Peterson's company Foodmaker Inc.) and added to the koi pond in 1967.

Narrative Description

Located at 567 Gage Lane, San Diego, California (92106), the 1964-1965 Robert O. Peterson – Russell Forester Residence embodies high artistic value in expressing the key principles of Southern California's mid-20th Century Modernist Movement. Master Architect Russell Forester, FAIA designed the Peterson Estate to emphasize the natural beauty of the site and its coastal surroundings. The various buildings rest on a sloping, richly landscaped hillside facing east towards the Bay of San Diego, the city and mountains beyond. The site design provides a highly sophisticated example of Modernism's regional "California Style," merging the Modernist movement's rational and restrained International Sub-style with more humanistic Organic-Geometric elements influenced by Traditional Pacific Asian architecture and landscape design. The property includes a Main Residence of painted redwood post-and-beam construction and a combination of various roof forms, plus three original auxiliary buildings including a detached Guest House & Laundry Building of similar painted redwood post-and-beam construction, a Guard House (used as an additional guest house) and a three-car Garage -- both constructed of custom concrete brick masonry. An original Forester-designed security wall along Gage Lane obstructs the majority of the view from the public right-of-way; the iron security gates were fabricated out of New York City Subway platform grates. Forester also designed the koi pond, additional site walls throughout the property, and reflecting pools in the front garden.

The Peterson Residence demonstrates the clear influence of the Modernist Style through its site-specific design, honest expression of structure and materials, and practical configuration of living spaces according to use. Aspects of Pacific Asian-inspired Organic Geometric Architecture balance the typical starkness of the International Style, forging a harmonious relationship between the various buildings and the site with the use of natural materials such as wood, glass and concrete masonry. Outside, the naturalistic landscaping features an impressively large collection of exotic Asian plants and trees, plus water and hardscape elements conveying the strong influence of a Traditional Japanese Garden. The massive, irregularly shaped koi pond in the northeast corner of the lot is home to some 200 koi and serves as a habitat for ducks and other migrant water fowl.

The public view of the Peterson Estate is limited. A tall concrete masonry security wall designed by Russell Forester runs along the western edge of the property, set back a short distance from the street. The area between the street and the wall features Pacific-Asian Style landscaping with a combination of exotic bushes and trees and several naturalistic boulders. There are two separate gated entrances -- one for vehicles and one for pedestrians, connected by a raised wooden pedestrian bridge or "catwalk." To the north, the driveway and motor court feature the original pebbled concrete surface. A secondary security wall and doorway (--the large antique Asian wooden door is not original) is located inside the motor court, along the eastern edge. The formal pedestrian entrance is to the south of the motor court, also off of Gage Lane, between the rear wall of the garage and the Guard House.

The front garden is located in the southwest corner, at the highest point of the property. It is enclosed by perimeter walls to the south and west, by the Main Residence to the east, and the Guest House & Laundry Building to the north. To reach the formal entrance to the house via the pedestrian gate, the front garden must be traversed by a series of catwalks positioned above a man-made stream and a descending series of reflecting pools. The southwest corner of the lot features a complex Pacific-Asian-inspired landscape with exotic and native trees, bushes and smaller plants, naturalistic boulders, and a rocky pond. The pond feeds a stream running down grade to shallow reflecting pools located in front of the Main Residence and Guest House & Laundry Building. The bottoms of the reflecting pools are filled with natural river rocks. From the pedestrian gate, the descending path through the garden is defined by a series of linear redwood catwalks and

steps elevated slightly above the stream. The entrance to the house is recessed between the Kitchen & Dining Wing to the north and the long, linear Bedroom Wing (containing bedrooms, an office and gym) to the south. A long covered wooden catwalk or "bridge" over the lower reflecting pool leads to the front door. The bridge has a low-pitched front gabled roof and an open-beamed ceiling supported on square redwood posts. The bridge is separated from the Bedroom Wing to the south by the lower reflecting pool, and from the Kitchen Wing to the north by a planting bed. The front double-doors are currently tempered glass, allowing for an unobstructed view of the bay to be seen directly through the house. The original doors were solid wood; heavily rotted and with the teak veneer deemed too thin to be refinished, they were removed in 2007 but retained on site. (According to the current owners, architect Christine Forester, Russell Forester's window, was consulted about the wood doors at the time of their replacement and stated that the new glass doors were an improvement that her late husband would have approved of.)

The complex geometric plan of the sprawling Main Residence is characterized by a progression of square and rectangular "glass cubes" defining the various living spaces. Both the Main Residence and its closely associated detached Guest House & Laundry Building (to the immediate adjacent west) rest on raised foundations, surrounded by tiered and wrap-around redwood decks and catwalks and by thick plantings creating the appearance of the buildings hovering or floating above ground. The stepped-down plan and profile of the residence conforms to the easterly down-sloping terrain of the lot. The irregular footprint consists of four asymmetrical wings connected by a long, graduated, glassed-in staircase running east-west and serving as the plan's central axis. The Kitchen & Dining Wing is located on the north side of the central axis, in the upper northwest corner. Beneath the Kitchen Wing is a small below-grade basement with a wine cellar. The main entry foyer connects the kitchen and dining areas to the long linear Bedroom Wing in the southwest corner. A lower, secondary foyer at the bottom of the central staircase connects the living room in the northeast corner to the luxurious master bedroom suite in the southeast corner. The far eastern portion of the building projects out over the down-sloping grade, surrounded by a continuous full-width redwood deck with an expansive view of the bay.

All exposed wooden elements on the Main Residence and Guest House & Laundry Building are of painted redwood. The most common roof form throughout the property is the broad, low-pitched hipped roof with enclosed overhanging eaves. Steeply pitched mansard style roofs with overhanging eaves are located over the dining room and entry foyer. Approximately ten years ago, the roofs' original deteriorating redwood shakes were replaced in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*, with custom copper shingles of the same dimension and pattern, and a dark brown patina resembling wood. The primary walls of the main public areas, master suite and connecting corridors consist of massive floor-to-ceiling panels of tempered glass. Full-height glazed wood-framed doors open to the exterior wrap-around redwood decks and catwalks. The primary walls on the bedroom wing of the Main Residence and on the detached Guest House & Laundry are constructed of banks of fixed vertical panels of tempered glass set into heavy wooden frames with a ribbon of narrow fixed transoms running beneath the eaves. Glazed wood-framed single and double-doors are integrated into the geometric grid-pattern of these walls. Secondary elevations feature painted vertical redwood siding.

The California Modernist Style of the Robert O. Peterson – Russell Forester Residence emphasizes a close relationship to nature and the site. The post-and-beam method of construction and abundant glass walls allow the minimalist interiors to be dominated by views of the lush landscape and the bay, while expansive redwood sundecks and narrower catwalks provide exterior connections between the various wings, creating a genuine indoor-outdoor living experience. Natural light floods the main living spaces, and even enters the bathrooms and closets of the master suite through skylights hidden behind stainless-steel grids on the roof. The often cold nature of the International Style is tempered with teak-paneled vaulted ceilings and accent walls in the public areas of the Main Residence, lending a sense of warmth and intimacy despite the overall openness of the plan. The convergence of the Modernist Organic Geometric sub-style with that of the International Style is particularly strong on the main building, where the irregular geometric footprint conforms to the naturally sloping topography. Built around two towering Lebanon Cedar trees off the Dining Room deck, the plan almost literally embraces nature. Here and throughout, the sprawling floor plan works in tandem with the glass walls to blur the distinction with the outdoors and to surround interior spaces from all angles with a panorama of vegetation.

Recently restored within the past 10 years, the Peterson Estate continues to demonstrate a very high level of architectural integrity. Since the time of completion in 1965, the Main Residence, associated out buildings and other structures designed by Russell Forester have been modified minimally. With the exception of a compatibly-designed, 60-square-foot breakfast nook "bump-out" addition to the north wall of the kitchen and a small number of other sensitive alterations including the replacement of the original swimming pool with landscaping and the construction of a new "Lanai" Guest House and lap pool -- all done in 1986 by the original owner and his second wife, there have been no significant changes to the overall site.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [ ] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [x] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [x] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance
1964-1965

Significant Dates
1964-1965: Design and construction

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Forester, Russell, FAIA

Period of Significance (justification)
A period of significance of 1964–1965 was selected based on the original design and construction period of the Robert O. Peterson – Russell Forester Residence, including the Main Residence, auxiliary buildings and all site features designed by Architect Russell Forester, FAIA.

Criteria Considerations

Construction began 50 years ago at the time of nomination submittal, but the completion overlaps the fifty year period by approximately one year, so the property does not need to meet Criteria Consideration G for exceptional significance.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Peterson-Forester Residence is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1964-65, the period when the property was built and expanded. The California Modernist Style Peterson Residence retains a high level of historic integrity, and is significant under National Register Criterion C as an example of the highly acclaimed design work of a recognized San Diego master architect, Russell Forester, FAIA (1920-2002). Russell Forester is considered to have been an important pioneer in San Diego's mid-twentieth century Modernist Period (1935-1970). The Peterson Residence is widely regarded to have been the best and most ambitious residential commission of his career. The property does not need to meet the requirements of Criteria Consideration G, as the period of construction overlaps the 50 year threshold by one year.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Completed in 1965, Robert O. Peterson – Russell Forester Residence demonstrates architectural significance at the local level under National Register Criterion C as a landmark commission by a recognized Master Architect within the historical context of San Diego Modernism (1935-1970). Modernism was an international architectural and cultural movement tied to specific events and patterns of physical development during the mid-twentieth century. Having a major influence on the character of Southern California's built environment, Modernist Era buildings, sites and structures are cultural artifacts that contribute to a rich and diverse continuum of local history in San Diego. The Peterson Residence was built late in the Modernist Period for one of the city's wealthiest businessmen of the Post World War II Era, Robert Oscar Peterson, founder of the Jack in the Box fast food restaurant chain. The sophisticated upscale California Modernist design of the Peterson Estate responds to the region's coastal terrain and indoor-outdoor lifestyle by incorporating signature elements of the International Sub-style of Modernism with Traditional Asian-Pacific inspired Organic-Geometric architecture. Primarily of post-and-beam construction, the compound of buildings that make up the Peterson Estate is the most impressive residential project known to have been produced by Russell Forester who was at the height of his career when he was commissioned for the job in 1964 (-- he retired from architecture in the early 1970s). Already a well-known designer of commercial and upscale residential buildings by the 1950s, Forester is best known for introducing the International Style of Modernism to Post WWII consumers through his easily-recognizable, compactly utilitarian original Jack in the Box "drive-thru" hamburger stands. On the opposite end of his range, the luxuriously sprawling Peterson Residence was the ultimate expression of Forester's artistic talents as a groundbreaking San Diego Modernist.

Developmental history/additional historic context information

The History of San Diego up to 1970

To understand the development of Modernism in San Diego between 1935-1970 and to appreciate the significance of the Robert O. Peterson – Russell Forester Residence within this context, the historical events that preceded and influenced the local Modernist movement must first briefly be discussed. The City of San Diego's *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement* identifies several major themes in the development of the region from the Pre-History Era up to 1970 that helped shaped it into what it is today.

Far removed from the Modernist Era, the earliest period in San Diego History, the Pre-History/ Native American Era ended in 1769 with the start of the Spanish Period and early European settlement. As a remote and dusty outpost on the edge of the Western frontier, San Diego grew slowly during the Spanish Period (1769-1822) and through the Mexican Period (1822-1846). Beginning in 1846, the Early American Period (1846-1914) saw more sporadic population growth as well as periods of decline up to the start of World War I. Once the main commercial and residential center was relocated from Old Town to what is now Downtown, San Diego was finally able to transition into a small city and gradually attract more residents and services. The completion of a cross-country rail link spurred growth exponentially in the 1880s, but the area soon felt the effects of a national economic depression which halted expansion for several more years. With the onset of the first major global war in 1914, however, San Diego emerged as one of the West Coast's most important military ports. Up to this point, the major historical and cultural trends that had defined the Early American Period in San Diego were the Victorian Period and the Development of New Town in the latter half of the 19th century. City Planning and emergence of the Arts & Crafts design movement were the major cultural themes that developed at the beginning of the 20th century.

Rational city planning became an important focus in shaping the emerging 20th century metropolis. The Arts & Crafts movement, which originated in the mid-west and eastern United States, was reaching its height in popularity around this time and leaving a major mark on San Diego's built environment in the post-Victorian era. Architect Irving J. Gill arrived in San Diego from Chicago during this period. Experimenting with groundbreaking, early Modernist design concepts, Gill began to define a new style of architecture suited to the climate, landscape and lifestyle of Southern California. San Diego's "Boom and Bust" Period of 1915-1935 commenced with the 1915 Panama-California Exhibition in Balboa Park. The Exhibition served to attract new residents from outside the region and had a major influence in popularizing Spanish Colonial Revival and other architectural revival styles both locally and throughout Southern California. The 1920s were marked by outward suburban expansion characterized by new Spanish Colonial Revival Style residences and commercial construction as the growing presence of the military created new industries and jobs for those seeking to move to sunny San Diego.

The Great Depression was slower to arrive and less severe in Southern California than throughout the rest of the United States, but the effects of the national economic downturn could be felt in San Diego by 1935 as the city entered into another period of transition. Until the onset of World War II, the second World's Fair in Balboa Park – the California-Pacific International Exposition of 1935 and 1936, helped temporarily abate the financial doldrums. Federal New Deal programs and the Federal Housing Administration also helped support the economy while, for the first time, introducing Modernist design on a widespread scale. As activities abroad began spurring local economic growth via Aerospace engineering and other related industries prior to the country's official entrance into WWII, another major population boom flooded the region and radically changed its physical and cultural landscape for decades to come. Soon, war-time housing would have a major impact, helping spread the philosophy of Modernism to the military as well as to the suburban working class. Then in the wake of the war, the Modernist movement took center stage not only in San Diego but throughout America as a way to express optimism in the future. Modern Style was used in America to redefine nearly all building types from homes to shopping centers, commercial strips, industrial parks, schools and other public buildings. It even influenced freeways and other new infrastructure. Continuing to flourish in San Diego into the 1960s and 1970s, its principles were eventually applied to everything from downtown's massive urban renewal projects to new churches and sports complexes on the periphery.[1]

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1 City of San Diego, *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement*, October 2007, 15-48.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Continued)

Early Modernism & The International Style

The Modernist Era arrived in San Diego in 1935 with a new boom in population and prosperity that initiated a decades-long explosion of new construction. Neighborhoods and other areas that were developed during this period feature Modern style buildings ranging from small single-family homes to large-scale commercial and public buildings. Architectural themes which appear consistently in buildings from this period include the honest expression of structure, the use of new materials and techniques, the introduction of glass walls and large picture windows, functional floor plans and the integration of interior and exterior spaces, plus a variety of low maintenance features.

In the Pre-Depression Era, San Diegans like most Americans had been enamored with the charm and character of Period Revival architecture as well as with the highly stylized and exuberant Art Deco style. Meanwhile in Europe, a new aesthetic movement was underway to break with tradition and promote rationality and simplicity in design concepts. Germany's Bauhaus school, founded by Walter Gropius, was the first major school to triumph Modernist design and architecture. Other European pioneers of Modernism included Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe, Le Corbusier, H.P. Berlage, Willem Dudok, Otto Wagner, and Henri Labrouste. The new Modernists endeavored to express the nature of building materials and their structural qualities honestly. Advocating for simplified building forms with "rational, clean, uncluttered" design, they rejected what they saw as superfluous ornamentation in popular styles such as Arts & Crafts and Art Deco.

Stripped of nearly all decoration and vernacular associations, early Modernist design was intended to have a universal application and appeal, hence it came to be known as the "International Style." Although the International Style and its underlying philosophies were initially slow to catch on in the United States, the immigration of several prominent European Modernists allowed the movement to finally take hold in America during the Post-World War II Era. Going on to teach and practiced in the U.S., Walter Gropius and Mies Van Der Rohe had a profound influence on many young American architects, including Russell Forester who was a student of Van Der Rohe at the Institute of Design in Chicago in the early 1950s. The West Coast arrival of other European Modernists such as Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra also had a major impact on the popularity of the International Style in Southern California.

Prior to 1935, most formative examples of Modernist architecture in America were confined to the eastern and mid-western regions. Early American Modernism was defined and popularized between 1880-1920 by Chicago-based architects such as Louis Sullivan, Dankmar Adler, D.H. Burnham and Frank Lloyd Wright. These early American Modernists, in contrast with their European counterparts, chose to explore a less rigid form of design over the more pedantic International style. Although still adhering to the notions that form should follow function and that simplicity was key, their Humanist brand of Modernism broke with the strict limitations of the International Style in terms of its severity and rigidity of form. Instead, they emphasized the use of natural materials and motifs as well as more informal open planning. This Humanist expression of Modernism is a notably American contribution to the early history of the movement. Frank Lloyd Wright, with his Prairie Style "experiments" in the mid-west, inarguably became one of the country's most influential architects of all time.

While Modernist structures were uncommon in the United States prior to the 1930s, it is important to note that the architects Irving Gill and Rudolph Schindler both promoted Modernism in San Diego prior to this date. After 1935, the style became increasingly more common, fueled by a boom in construction that was precipitated by a rush of people arriving from outside the state. By World War II, Modern design in all its various sub-styles had replaced the Spanish Colonial Revival style as the city's most popular building trend. The Case Study House Program, launched in January 1945 by Los Angeles-based *Art & Architecture Magazine*, was a major influence on the architectural as well as cultural move towards defining the Contemporary Southern California lifestyle. More design based than economically driven, the program's initial objective was to publicize the design and construction of eight houses by nationally recognized architects J.R. Davidson, Sumner Spaulding, Richard Neutra, Eero Saarinen, William Wilson, Charles Eames and Ralph Rapson. Working within specified budgets, the architects were instructed to create "good living conditions" compatible with the region's unique climate and terrain. One of the most influential aspects of the program was the requirement that the design be "contemporary." As a result of the program's popularity, "contemporary" features such as large patios and indoor-outdoor living spaces, free-flowing open floor plans, and the use of simple and economical building materials -- not to mention the abundance of glass, became increasingly more common in newer homes. Some of the new conveniences promoted by the Case Study Homes included low maintenance materials and features including landscaping…

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Continued)

Well-received by the public, the Case Study House Program continued until *Art & Architecture* folded in 1967. Out of thirty-six designs, twenty-three were constructed. Case Study House #8, the Pacific Palisades home of Charles & Ray Eames, is likely one of the most recognizable icons to emerge from the program.

The Post-and-Beam Modernist Sub-style

The *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement* regards post-and-beam-constructed Modernist Era buildings as representations of a rare sub-style worthy of preservation: "Due to the relative rarity of this sub-style and high degree of individualization, any extant examples should be considered for historic designation."[2] As a high-end example of custom post-and-beam architecture, the Robert O. Peterson represents a rare historic resource within the City of San Diego and the Southern California region.

Historically, the post-and-beam method of construction used on the Peterson Residence has been employed for centuries in wood-frame and heavy-timber construction. The Case Study House Program influenced the popularity of post-and-beam construction in San Diego between about 1950-1970. Applied to both residential and commercial uses, post-and-beam structures are generally custom designed due to the high degree of individualization. In Modernist era buildings constructed using this technique, solid load-bearing walls are replaced with structural framing consisting of load-bearing wood or steel columns. This structural support system allows for the characteristic placement of floor-to-ceiling glass walls along the perimeter. Due to the transparent nature of these structures, contextual relationship and landscape setting are of extreme importance to the overall design. Buildings are typically rectilinear with open, grid-like floor plans based on consistent modules or beam lengths. Other important character-defining features of Modern Era post-and-beam structures include horizontal massing, repetitive façade geometry, minimal use of solid load-bearing walls, direct expression of the structural system, strong interior-exterior connections, exterior finish materials consisting of glass, wood and steel, and the absence of applied decoration. Although roofs are generally flat with wide-overhangs, some subtypes feature broad gabled, hipped, and even mansard style roofs as those that are featured on the Peterson Residence over the entry foyer and kitchen and dining rooms.

Most examples of custom post-and-beam architecture in San Diego tend to be located in long-established affluent neighborhoods such as Mission Hills, La Jolla and Point Loma. Advancements in construction and engineering technology allowed for difficult, previously un-buildable canyon lots in these highly-coveted areas to be developed beginning in the mid-twentieth century. Approached from a Modernist perspective, sloping and irregular parcels challenged architects to develop interesting and innovative building solutions while adding visual interest to their completed designs. The Design Center on 5th Avenue, designed by Lloyd Ruocco in 1949, is considered to have been the "catalyst" for post-and-beam architecture in San Diego. Ruocco's 1963 Institute of Geo-Planetary Physics at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla represents another local post-and-beam architectural landmark. During the height of the Modernist movement in 1959, the famed Case Study House program came to San Diego to create three post-and-beam houses in a small cul-de-sac development in La Jolla. Designed by the firm Killingsworth, Brady and Smith, the Case Study Triad Houses took advantage of the naturally sloping coastal terrain, providing views and contemporary indoor/outdoor living spaces while managing to maintain a level of privacy. Russell Forester, who had been working with post-and-beam construction since at least 1951 with his original Jack in the Box designs, also used this method effectively to integrate the sprawling Peterson Residence with the irregular terrain of its spectacular ocean-view lot.

Sub-styles such as Post-and-Beam represent distinct variations on Modernism. However, overlapping sub-styles within a single building are also quite common in San Diego and Southern California. Post-and-beam architecture, for example, is particularly accommodating of simplified aspects of Japanese and Ranch Style design. This cross-pollination of subtypes is illustrated by the Peterson Residence which blends aspects of the often staid International Style with "lighter" post-and-beam construction and more Humanist Traditional Pacific Asian and Organic Geometric architectural influences.

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2 City of San Diego, *Modernism Historic Context Statement*, 68.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Continued)

Organic Geometric Architecture

Organic Geometric architecture was a design philosophy popular between ca.1955-1975 that promoted a harmonious relationship between buildings and nature. The movement borrowed its name from Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright first incorporated organic principles into his design for the Graycliff complex of buildings near Buffalo, New York in the 1920s. He coined the phrase "organic architecture" in a 1939 speech titled *An Organic Architecture*. His body of work had a major impact on later emerging San Diego Organic Geometric architects. Exercising a nature-inspired design ideology, Wright integrated his buildings into their surroundings using natural, locally-found construction materials such as wood and stone. His designs focused on creating harmony and balance between buildings and their particular sites, employing key elements to blur the distinction between indoor and outdoor space such as large cantilevered balconies, ribbon windows and transparent glass walls. Triumphed as one of his major achievements, Fallingwater in Pennsylvania is the perfected embodiment of Wright's typically organic and Humanistic approach to design. Completed in 1934, Fallingwater is positioned over a waterfall, fully integrated into its site and surrounds. The building's horizontal geometry mimics and blends in with the site's natural rocks and ledges, while the acoustic effect of falling water can be heard intentionally throughout the interior.

Organic Geometric-minded architects of the 1950s-1970s followed Wright's philosophy of designing buildings to be integrated with their surroundings. While continuing to make use of natural materials such as wood and stone and being respectful of the site, they also used post-and-beam construction and glass to create strong relationships between interior spaces and the exterior setting. Post-1950 Organic Geometric style buildings can be identified by their sharp angular massing, rectilinear geometry, asymmetrical facades, exposed structural framework, complex roof forms, square, diamond and polygon design motifs, and site specificity. Often with large balconies projecting over steep slopes, Organic Geometric Style buildings were usually positioned to take advantage of views and other unique features of the lot. According to the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context*, examples of Organic Geometric architecture are rare in San Diego and should be considered individually significant due to their limited number and likely associations with master architects.[3]

The Peterson Residence strongly relates to the Post-and-Beam International Style based on functionalism, lack of adornment, and honest expression of construction methods and materials. However, the residence also demonstrates the clear influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and Pacific Asian-inspired Organic Geometric architecture, apparent in the close relationship between the home, its lot, and the surrounding coastal environment. Partly planned around two massive Lebanon Cedar trees, the post-and-beam construction, rectilinear geometry and varying roof forms allow the home to conform to and blend in with the sloping, uneven terrain. The abundance of glass walls and glazed doors creates a sense of intimacy with the outdoors and nature from the inside the residence. Moreover, the dramatic approach to the front door and the placement of reflecting pools in the entry courtyard is pure Frank Lloyd Wright, as are the exposed construction techniques and materials, abundant fenestration patterns and outdoor living spaces provided by redwood decks and catwalks surrounding the buildings. The lush naturalistic landscaping and assorted hardscape features in Forester's design also indicate the strong influences of Wright and Organic Geometric architecture.

Russell Forester, FAIA

An esteemed architect as well as an artist of national and international recognition, Russell Forester was once described as "a man with the physique of a bear and the mind of a cat."[4] So unique was his contribution to architecture that the American Institute of Architects awarded him a prestigious and unique FAIA designation -- not simply for his progressive building designs, but for his broad overall contribution to the aesthetics of art and architecture.

A La Jolla resident since age five, Forester was born in Salmon, Idaho on May 21, 1920. He moved to California in 1925, and graduated from La Jolla High School in 1938. From 1943 to 1946, he served in the Army Corps of Engineers, working as a draftsman under Lloyd Ruocco -- another important San Diego architect. In 1948, Forester opened his first architectural design office. He did not begin formal training to become a licensed architect until 1950. At the urging...

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3 City of San Diego, *Modernism Historic Context Statement*, 80-81.

4 Kate Callen in Wayne Carlson, "Case Study Meets Asia," *San Diego Home/ Garden Lifestyles*, May 2006, 95.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Continued)

...of Ruocco, he attended the Institute of Design in Chicago, studying under famed Modernist architect Mies Van Der Rohe. During this period, he developed an affinity for the new International Style, which he brought back and pioneered in San Diego in the early 1950s. Although Forester did not receive his architectural license until 1960, he completed a number of Modernist structures in the meantime including his own home on Hillside Drive in La Jolla in 1952.[5] As an architect, he was known for his unquestionable integrity, passion and vision. After a successful but relatively short, less-than-thirty-year-long career, he retired from his practice Russell Forester / Associates Inc. to become a full-time artist in 1976.

Forester's design principles seemed strange to many of his more conservative and traditionally-minded colleagues. By the end of WWII, San Diego had abandoned its Spanish Colonial Revival architectural heritage, and new residential development was being influenced by the imported tastes of home buyers arriving in droves from outside the region. Newcomers to San Diego wanted their residences to reflect the traditional, more familiar styles found elsewhere throughout the country. Hence, a lack of homogeneity characterized much of the city's new building stock. Forester and his fellow Modernists went against this trend, however, making a philosophical choice to create innovative designs and use materials more appropriately suited to the California climate and lifestyle. This concept of a regionally based architecture was first pioneered in San Diego during the early decades of the 20th century by architects such as Irving J. Gill, Richard Requa, William Templeton Johnson and others. However, as a later, Post-WWII architect, Forester was more strongly influenced by the European Modernist movement than he was by these early San Diego innovators. He rejected traditional vernacular design and looked to the International Style to redefine the contemporary Southern Californian home. He based his designs around his clients' practical needs and the dictates of the specific site, relying on the use of organic materials and glass walls to create balanced -- but sometimes juxtaposing, relationships with the outside environment.

Between 1948 and 1976, Russell Forester's architectural designs varied in style and materials, but he remained consistent in his focus on problem solving and intense attention to detail. He considered the whole of a project to be the sum of its parts. Working out of his La Jolla office, he was one of the first architects in San Diego to promote Mies Van Der Rohe's use of steel and glass construction in commercial and residential buildings. In 1951, his first Jack in the Box restaurant introduced stripped-down Mieisian Modernism to American popular culture. A major innovation in the world of modern convenience, Forester's "food dispensing machine" is said to have been the country's first drive-thru restaurant equipped with a two-way intercom system for ordering.

In addition to Jack in the Box and other commercial design projects, Russell Forester produced many high-end residences for prominent San Diegans such as art patrons Lynn and Danah Fayman. Many of his clients also filled their homes with his own paintings and sculptures. He believed that a client's lifestyle was central to creating a home to fit their specific needs, but he was also known for being uncompromising about aspects of his designs. Nevertheless, he managed to attract loyalty among well-to-do clients such as Bob Peterson, although the men are reputed to have butted heads repeatedly over the Jack in the Box designs as well over Peterson's Gage Lane residence and elegant Family Tree Restaurant in Point Loma.

Despite his successes designing commercial and top-market residential properties for the wealthy, Forester grew frustrated by the mounting number of regulations being imposed on the field of architecture. In his fifties, he left his practice to become a full-time artist. His second wife, Marie-Christine Forester -- also an architect, encouraged his foray while she continued working. Over the next decades, his art advanced from intricate abstract line drawings in black ink to polychrome paintings and three-dimensional multimedia installations. One of his last paintings was acquired with the purchase of the Peterson Residence along with a large portion of Robert Peterson's collection of Modernist era art by other known artists; the painting still hangs in the dining room to this day.

Heralded as an important architect and an important artist in his own time, Russell Forester always viewed architecture as a way to problem-solve for his clients, but creating abstract art was his vehicle for intuitive self-expression based on "emotional inner necessity." Formal and rhythmic in the use of varied lines, rectilinear geometric forms and repeating...

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5 Modern San Diego, *Russell Forester, AIA (1920-2002)*,www.modernsandiego.com (Last accessed Nov.2011).

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Continued)

...themes, Forester's art managed to remain fundamentally organic, atmospheric, and rich in color and texture, inspired by the hills, sea, light and fog of La Jolla. In 1962, his work was described in *San Diego & Point Magazine* as simultaneously "arresting," "constructivist," "severe," "functionalist" and "mainstream."Forester's architecture, paintings and multi-media pieces all share certain key similarities, however. Evidence of his deeply entrenched architectural background is present in the structural emphasis and draftsman-like precision of his art, along with the influences of European Masters such as Paul Klee, Mondrian, and the multi-disciplinary Bauhaus school. The heavy reliance on the reoccurring theme of repetition can be witnessed in his designs for the Peterson Residence, Park Prospect Apartments in La Jolla, early Jack in the Box drive-thrus, and many other built-projects, as well as throughout the entire body of his artistic work in everything from early geometric line drawings to later mixed-media pieces.[6]

Emerging as a nationally recognized artist over the final three decades of his life, Russell Forester was featured in a number of one man shows in museums across the country including the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego, the Rex Evans Gallery of Los Angeles, the La Jolla Museum for Contemporary Art, the Willard Gallery in New York City, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, the Phoenix Art Museum, the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery in Lincoln, NB, the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, NY, and the Track 16 Gallery in Santa Monica. He also participated in group shows at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego, the Southern California Exposition in Del Mar, the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Willard Gallery, the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo, NY, the Schindler Gallery in Bern, Switzerland, the Laguna Beach Museum of Art and elsewhere. In 1983, he contributed a 28 piece lighted installation to the local "Architectonic Series," filling 10,000 square feet of empty office space in downtown San Diego with architecturally-inspired sculptures, the largest of which was taller than 10 feet. The Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego organized his mixed media installation *Regent Square* in 1987. Today, while the majority of his highly-prized pieces are in private hands, some of his work can be found in the permanent collections of prestigious, world-renowned museums such as the Guggenheim in New York City.[7]

Conclusion to the Historic Context Evaluation

Located within the context of San Diego Modernism, the Robert O. Peterson – Russell Forester Residence is historically significant at the local level under National Register Criterion C for demonstrating high artistic value as the work of a known Master Architect, Russell Forester, FAIA. Forester is considered to have been a leading pioneer of Modernism in Post-World War II San Diego. The Modern "California Style" of the primarily post-and-beam constructed Peterson Estate responds to the landscape, climate and lifestyle of Southern California, combing key aspects of the International Style with Traditional Pacific Asian-inspired Organic Geometric Architecture. Commissioned by one of the city's most prosperous businessmen at that time, no other property designed by Russell Forester in San Diego is known match the Peterson Residence in terms of aesthetic beauty, architectural sophistication, and overall grandeur.

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6 Henry J. Seldis, *Russell Forester* (Art Pamphlet), 1976; *Russell Forester Exhibition of Pen and Ink Drawings – Casein Paintings, 1971-1973* (New York: Willard Gallery, 1973).

7 *Russell Forester Exhibition of Pen and Ink....*

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Russell Forester: Unauthorized Autobiography. Smart Art Press. Vol. 3. No. 28. Track 16 Gallery, Santa Monica, CA, March 15 – July 14, 1997.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
_X_ Local government
____University
____Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.69 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	477760	3619820	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The boundary of the nominated property is defined by legal property lines associated with Assessor's Parcel Number 532-180-13-00, with a legal description of: "That portion of Lot 149 of the Pueblo Lands of San Diego, in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California according to map thereof by James Pascoe in 1870."

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The property is a city lot retaining its original property lines.

Peterson, Robert O. / Russell Forester Residence
Name of Property

San Diego, California
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jaye MacAskill, Historical Consultant

organization N/A date October 2012

street & number 4158 Georgia Street telephone 619-955-8756

city or town San Diego state CA zip code 92103

e-mail jayemacaskill@gmail.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map. (See Continuation Sheet **Sketch Map/ Photo Key**.)
- **Continuation Sheets**
  - **Sketch Map/ Photo Key**
  - **Architectural Drawings**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name [redacted]

street & number [redacted] telephone [redacted]

city or town [redacted] state [redacted] zip code [redacted]

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: The Robert O. Peterson – Russell Forester Residence
City or Vicinity: City of San Diego
County: San Diego State: California
Photographer: Daniel Soderberg
Date Photographed: June 18, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 14. View from Gage Lane: Entrance to Motor Court and Detached Garage.

2 of 14. Looking south from the Motor Court at the primary north elevation of the Garage.

3 of 14. View from Gage Lane looking east: Pedestrian Entrance. Formal walkway runs between the rear south wall of the Garage (left) and the north wall of the Guard House (right).

4 of 14. Looking northeast from upper southwest corner of the Front Garden. Primary south elevation of detached Bedroom & Laundry Building (left); secondary west elevation of the Bedroom Wing (right).

5 of 14. View east towards the Main Residence. North elevation of Bedroom Wing (right). South elevation of detached Bedroom & Laundry Building (left). (Roofs of the Kitchen & Dining Wing in background.)

6 of 14. Looking east at the formal entrance to the Main Residence. North elevation of Bedroom Wing (right). Roof of Kitchen Wing (left).

7 of 14. Looking west from the front door, through "covered bridge" access towards the front garden. North elevation of Bedroom Wing (left).

8 of 14. North elevation of the Kitchen & Dining Wing. (Three-panel glass wall over small bumped-out addition at center, ca.1986.)

9 of 14. Looking west, east elevation of Kitchen & Dining Wing. Dining Room (left). Kitchen and breakfast area (right).

10 of 14. Looking southeast at the sunken Living Room from the deck off of the Kitchen & Dining Room.

11 of 14. Looking north at the south wall of the Living Room. East wall of the Lower Foyer (left).

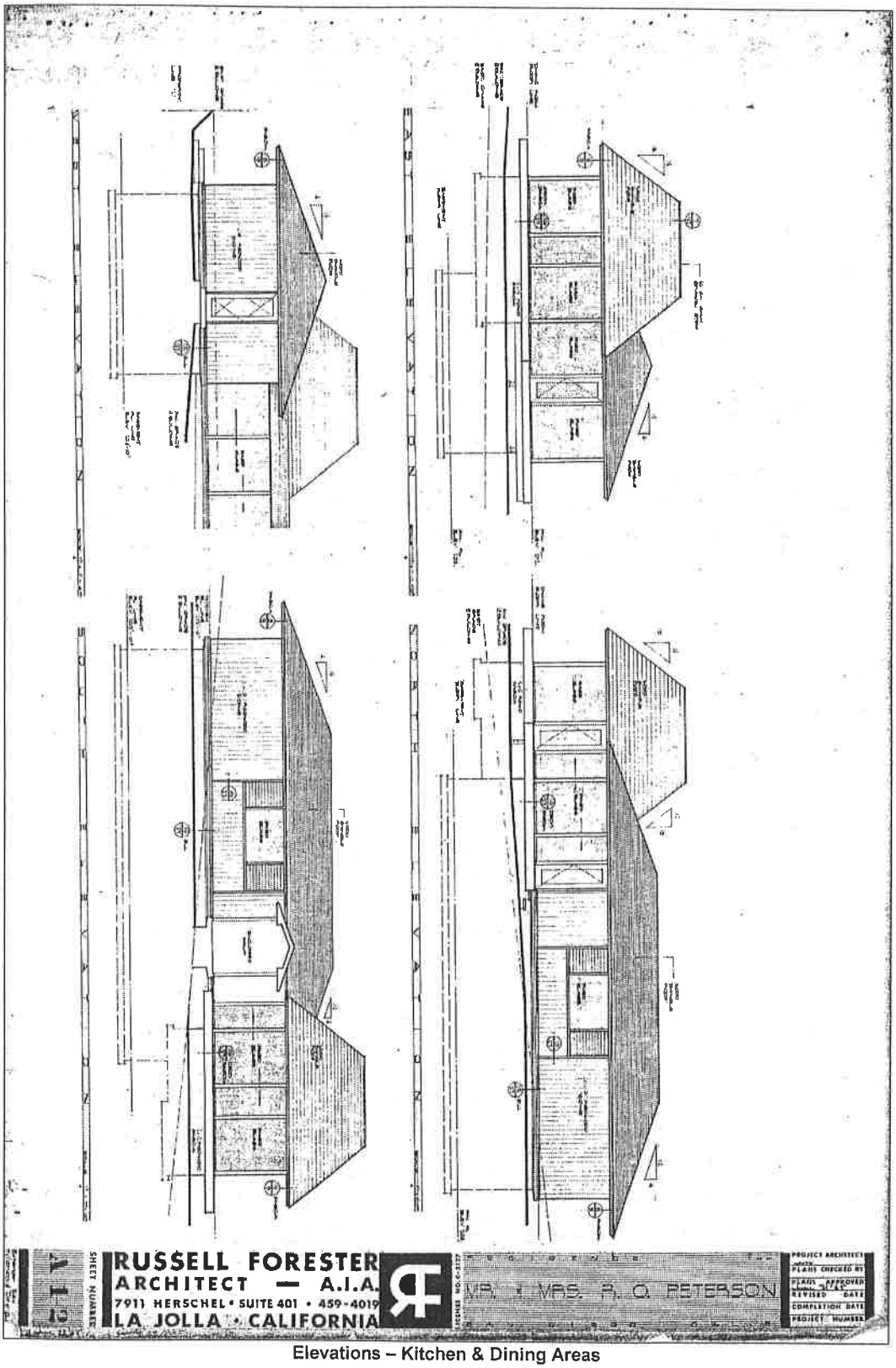
12 of 14. View from the south wall of the Living Room of the north and east elevations of the Master Suite (left), plus the east elevation of the Lower Foyer (right).

13 of 14. Looking northeast from the Main Residence. View of (upper) Koi Pond and Japanese Style Tea House (1967).

14 of 14. Looking southeast from the northern portion of the property. View of the Japanese Style Tea House and lower portion of Koi Pond.

Architectural Drawings (Continued)

From Partial Set of Original 1965 Russell Forester Drawings

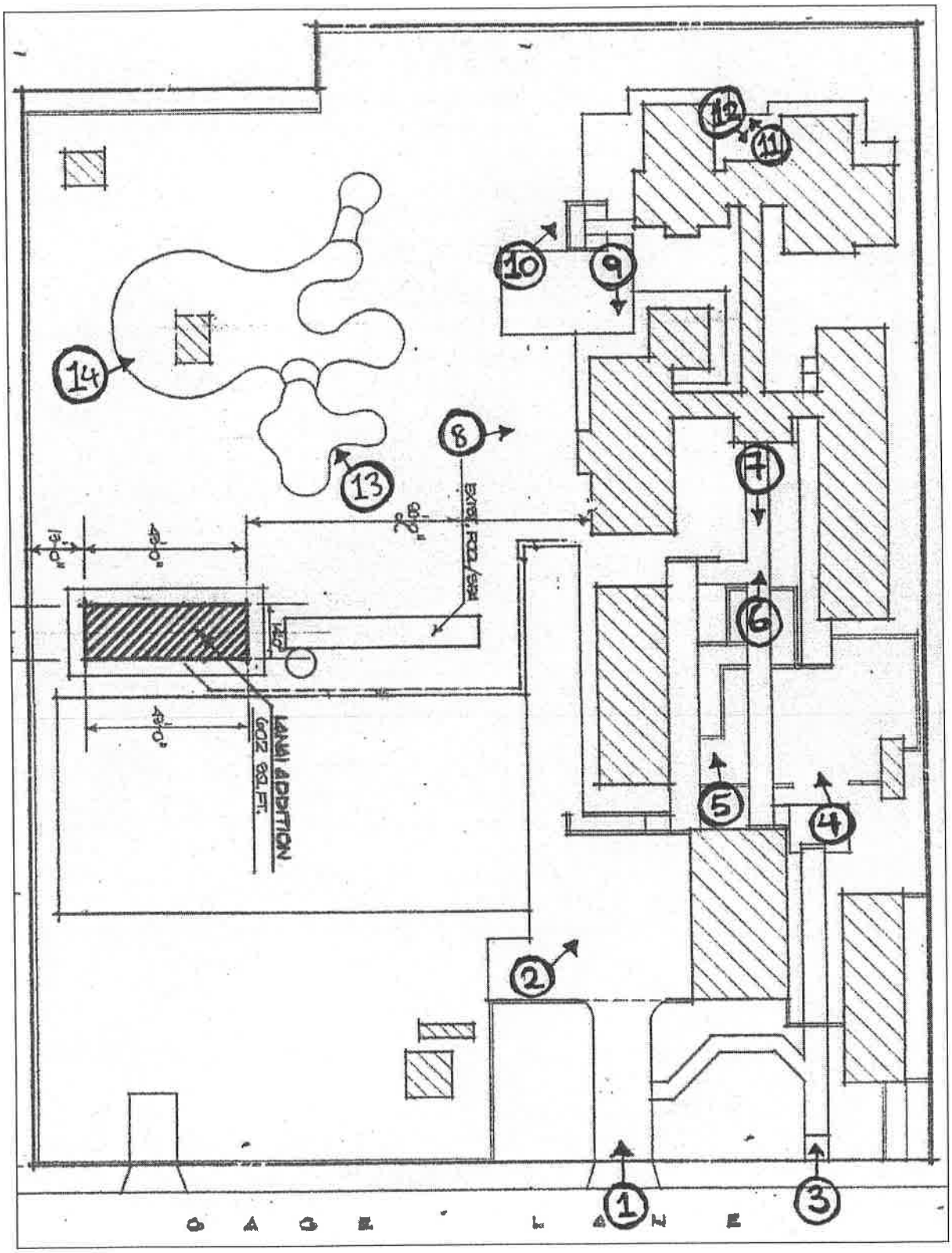


Elevations – Kitchen & Dining Areas

Peterson, Robert O. / Russell Forester Residence
Name of Property

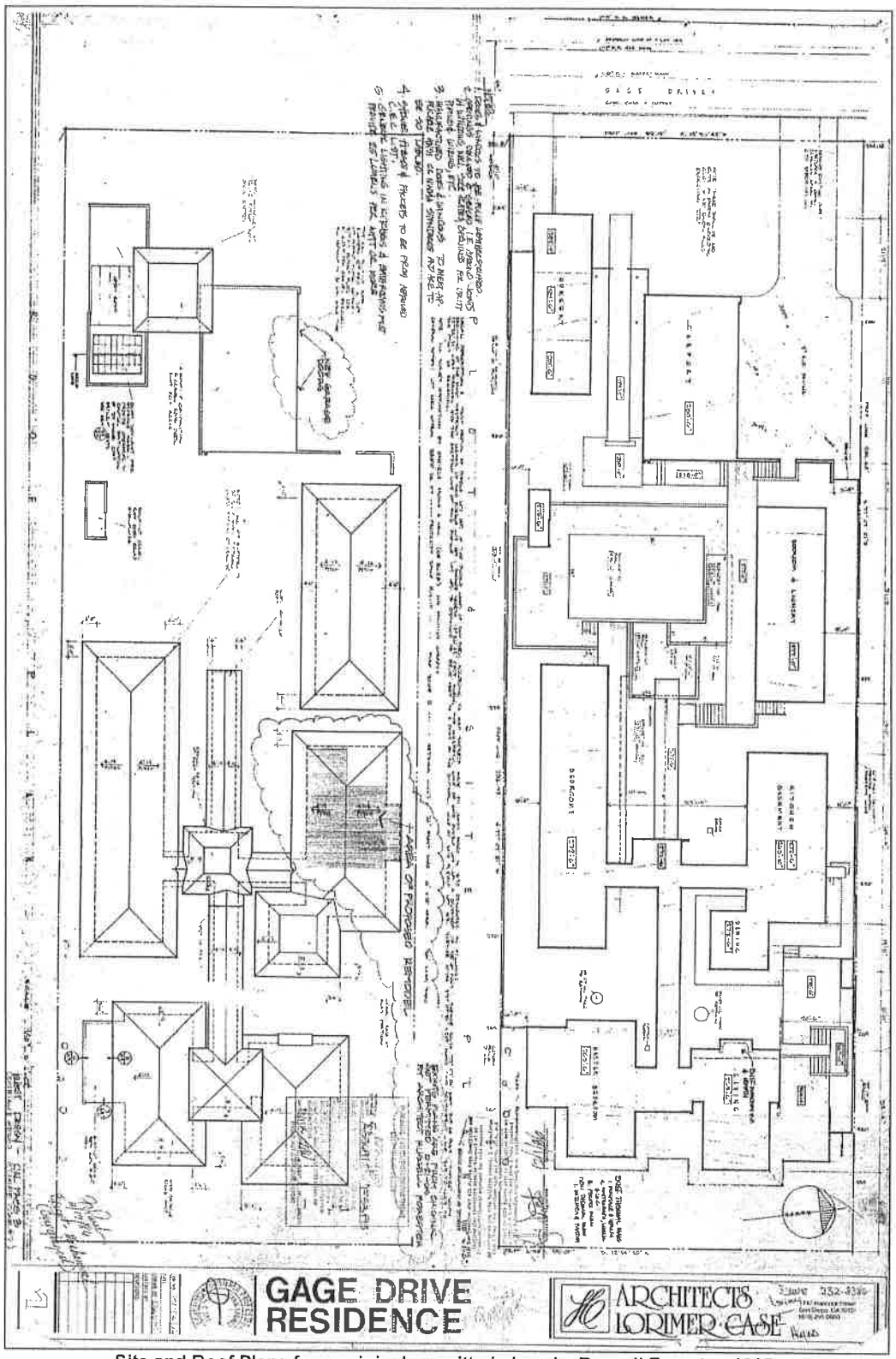
San Diego, California
County and State

Sketch Map with Photograph Numbers:



Architectural Drawings

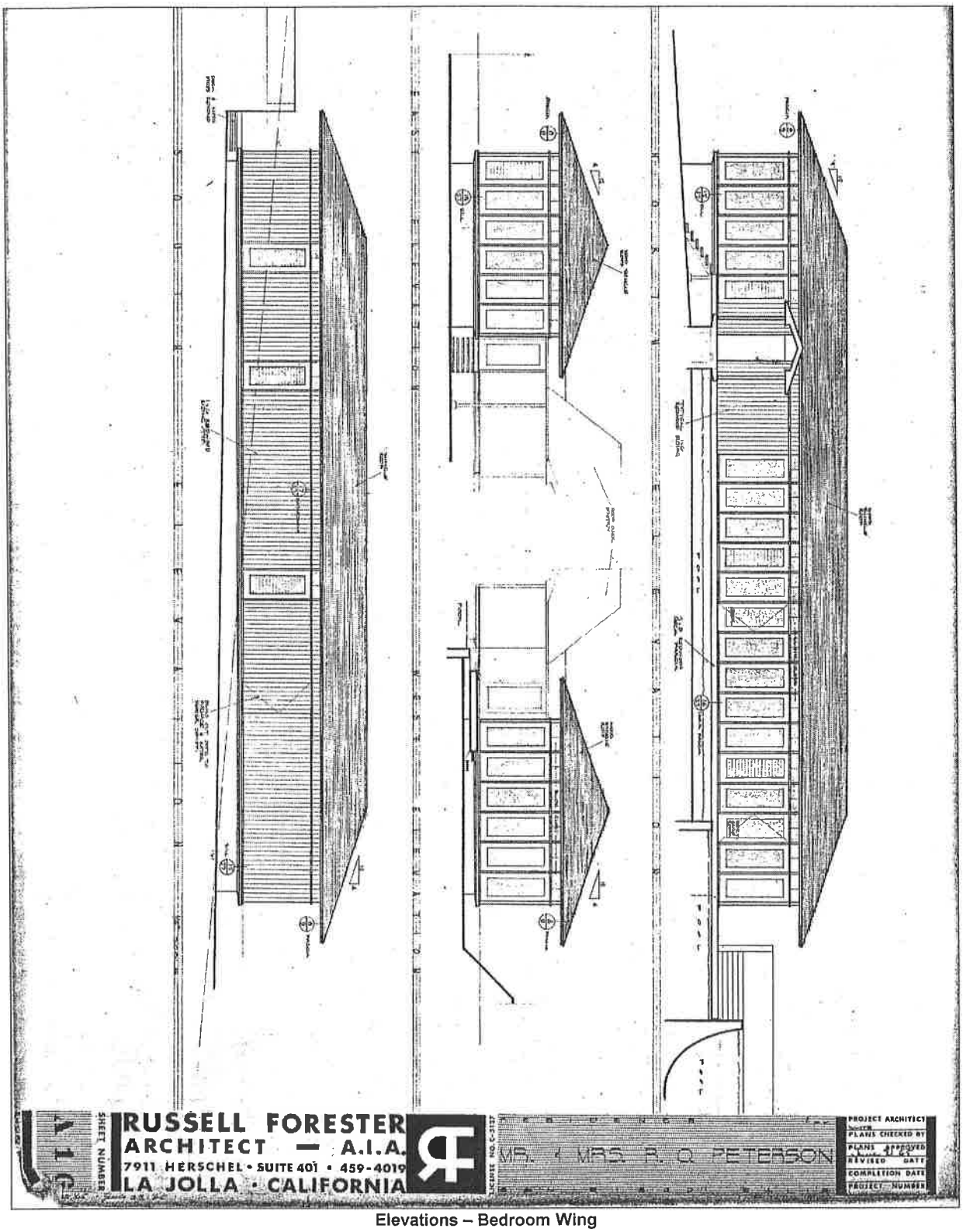
Architects Lorimer Case, 1986



Site and Roof Plans from original permitted plans by Russell Forester, 1965.

Architectural Drawings (Continued)

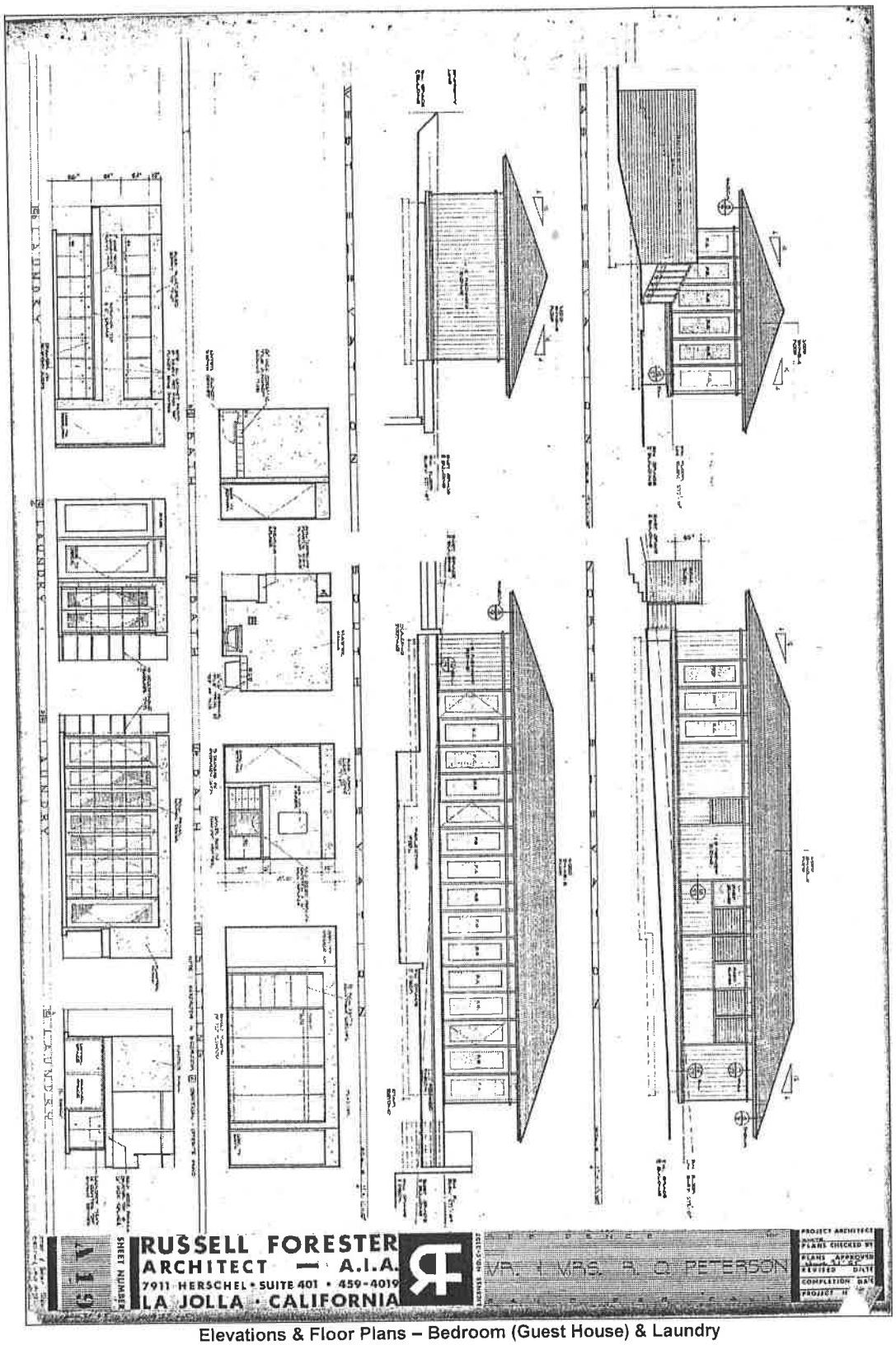
From Partial Set of Original 1965 Russell Forester Drawings



Elevations – Bedroom Wing

Architectural Drawings (Continued)

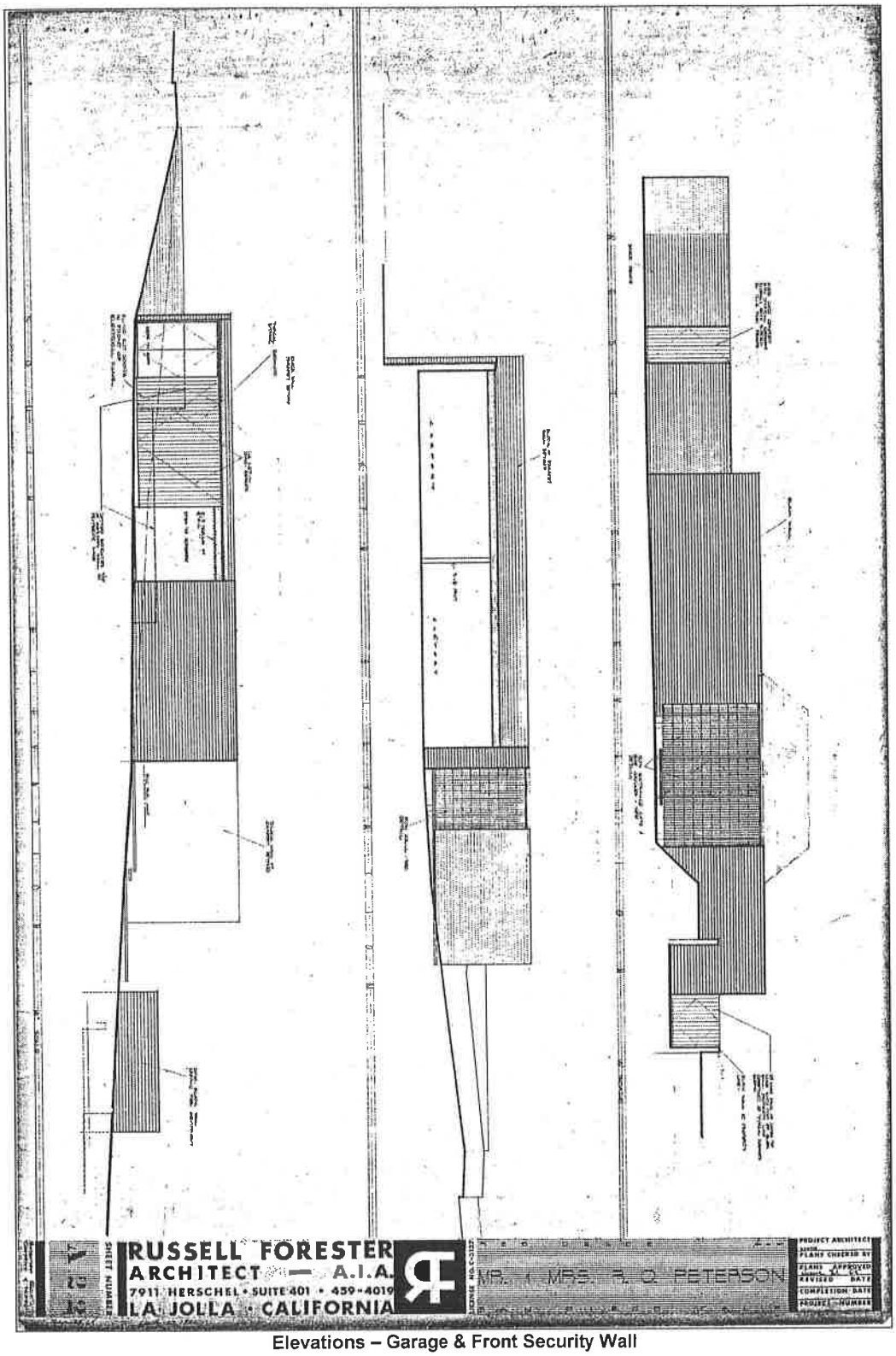
From Partial Set of Original 1965 Russell Forester Drawings



Elevations & Floor Plans – Bedroom (Guest House) & Laundry

Architectural Drawings (Continued)

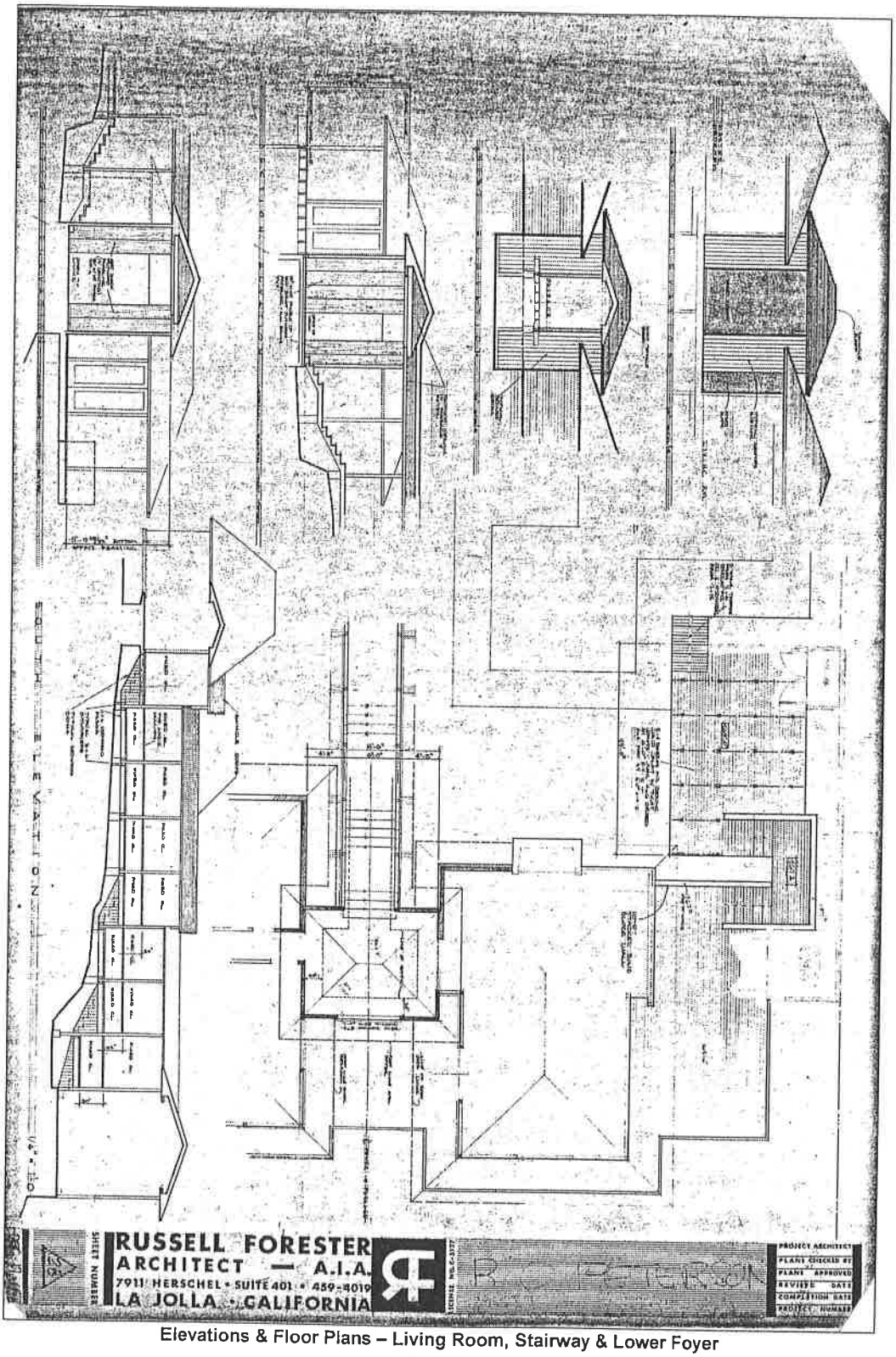
From Partial Set of Original 1965 Russell Forester Drawings



Elevations – Garage & Front Security Wall

Architectural Drawings (Continued)

From Partial Set of Original 1965 Russell Forester Drawings



Elevations & Floor Plans – Living Room, Stairway & Lower Foyer

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NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988

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CALIFORNIA
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

La Jolla OE W	La Jolla	La Mesa
Point Loma OE W	Point Loma	National City
	Imperial Beach OE W	Imperial Beach

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLES

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Interstate Route
US Route
Ramp
State Route
Local Road
4WD
Interstate Route
US Route
State Route

POINT LOMA, CA
2012