



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Lisa Ann L. Mangat, Director

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November 27, 2019

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room B-50
Los Angeles, California 90012

RE: National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Descanso Gardens

Dear Board of Supervisors:

Pursuant to Federal Regulations 36 CFR Part 60.6(c) I am notifying you that the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC) at its next meeting intends to consider and take action on the nomination of the above-named property to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Details on that meeting are on the enclosed notice. The National Register is the federal government's official list of historic buildings and other cultural resources worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register provides recognition and assists in preserving California's cultural heritage. If the item is removed from the scheduled agenda, you will be notified by mail.

Local government comments regarding the National Register eligibility of this property are welcomed. Letters should be sent to California State Parks, Attn: Office of Historic Preservation, Julianne Polanco, State Historic Preservation Officer, 1725 23rd Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, California 95816. So that the SHRC will have adequate time to consider them, it is requested, but not required, that written comments be received by the Office of Historic Preservation fifteen (15) days before the SHRC meeting. Interested parties are encouraged to attend the SHRC meeting and present oral testimony.

As of January 1, 1993, all National Register properties are automatically included in the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) and afforded consideration in accordance with state and local environmental review procedures.

The federal requirements covering the National Register program are to be found in the National Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and in Federal Regulations 36 CFR Part 60. State law regarding the California Register is in the Public Resources Code, Section 5024. Should you have questions regarding this nomination, or would like a copy of the nomination, please contact the Registration Unit at (916) 445-7009. **Note that staff revises nominations throughout the nomination process.**

Sincerely,

Julianne Polanco
State Historic Preservation Officer



**DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
STATE HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

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COMMISSION MEMBERS

Adam Sriro, Chair
Lee Adams III
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MEETING NOTICE

FOR: State Historical Resources Commission Quarterly Meeting

DATE: Friday, January 31, 2020

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: State Resources Building—Auditorium
1416 9th Street
Sacramento, California 95814

This room is accessible to people with disabilities. Questions regarding the meeting should be directed to the Registration Unit (916) 445-7008.

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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Descanso Gardens DRAFT

Other names/site number: Rancho del Descanso

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1418 Descanso Drive

City or town: La Cañada Flintridge State: California County: Los Angeles

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this ___ 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 ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/> Title :	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	buildings
<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>7</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	objects
<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

LANDSCAPE: garden

LANDSCAPE: forest

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

SOCIAL: meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE: garden

LANDSCAPE: forest

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

SOCIAL: meeting hall

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Asian

OTHER: Hollywood Regency

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood; Stone; Ceramic; Brick

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Descanso Gardens is a 149-acre botanical garden in a residential setting in La Cañada Flintridge, approximately fifteen miles north of the City of Los Angeles. Thirteen contributing resources include seven buildings, five sites, and one structure: the Boddy House, Garage, and associated landscaping (Boddy Complex), Boddy Lodge, Caretaker's Cottage, Boddy Drive Landscape, Descanso Creek Landscape, Camellia Forest, Japanese Garden, Tea House, Minka House, Japanese Garden Bridge, and Lakeside Lookout. Architectural styles include Colonial Revival, Hollywood Regency—an early twentieth century style influenced by the movie industry, Asian, and Mid Century Modern. Fourteen noncontributing resources—including four buildings, one site, seven structures, and two objects—have lost integrity, date from outside the periods of significance, or do not relate to the documented significance of the property. Despite intermittent development since purchase by Elias Manchester Boddy in 1937, Descanso Gardens retains historic integrity.

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Narrative Description¹

Descanso Gardens is situated in the Crescenta Valley, at the far western end of the larger San Gabriel Valley. The district is located at the northern end of the San Rafael Hills, bounded by the Verdugo Mountains to the west, the Angeles National Forest to the east and north, and the San Rafael Hills to the south.

The district is primarily owned by Los Angeles County, operated by the nonprofit Descanso Gardens Guild in a public-private partnership with the County. Southern California Edison (SCE) owns 9.9 acres within the district. Los Angeles County pays a modest annual rent to SCE for continued use of the property, including appurtenant uses such as overflow parking and picnic areas. An additional 1.2 acres in a riding and hiking easement recorded to the City of La Canada Flintridge crosses through the northern portion of the district, west of the SCE portion.

Thirteen contributing resources are grouped geographically according to development of the gardens. The first group includes resources associated with the first stage of development during Elias Manchester Boddy's cultivation of the garden from 1937 to 1952 and includes the Boddy House, Garage, and Associated Landscape, Boddy Lodge, Caretaker's Cottage, Boddy Drive Landscape, Descanso Creek Landscape, and Camellia Forest. A second area developed between 1966 and 1969 includes the Japanese Garden, Tea House, Minka House, Japanese Garden Bridge, and Lakeside Lookout, constructed as a bird observation station.

Contributing Resources

1-3. Boddy House Complex Two contributing buildings, one contributing site
Boddy House, Garage, and Associated Landscape

The Boddy House Complex consists of two buildings: a 6,706-square-foot, stucco-and-wood-clad, two-story residence of mixed Colonial Revival and Hollywood Regency style features overlooking an oak forest; and a one-story, six-car garage (**Figure 1**). Hollywood Regency became popular in the early twentieth century with the growth of the movie industry. The style used bold colors with metal and glass detailing and became prominent in Southern California in conjunction with the works of designers Dorothy Draper and Billy Haines.² In 2011, the garage was converted into the Sturt Haaga Gallery by the Los Angeles architecture firm Frederick Fisher & Partners. The residence faces south onto a motor court and includes its own formal landscaping, while the Descanso Gardens woodlands and landscape surrounds the property. The complex is sited upon a terrace cut into the hillside below a ridgetop and supported by retaining walls, with the rear of the house facing northward over treetops towards the mountains.

¹ Taken from County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, *Historical Resource Evaluation for Descanso Gardens*, (Pasadena, CA: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., December 2018).

² Alan Hess, *Forgotten Modern: California Houses 1940-1970* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2007), 36-37.

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The house and garage were originally constructed in 1938 by builders L. D. Richardson and Company. The plan of the main house consists of four attached wings with low-pitched gable roofs that radiate out from a central entrance hall. The two side wings project east and west, and are attached to the hall by short, cross-gabled, two-story hyphens; the two rear wings project diagonally to the northeast and northwest. A fifth wing, a two-story kitchen, is sited furthest from the center of the complex, attached perpendicularly to the end of the east wing. The location of this wing, which projects out to the south, helps provide spatial definition to the motor court, as does the garage on the court's east side.

Colonial Revival features exhibited by the Boddy House include brick-veneered exterior walls with second-story horizontal wood-clad exterior walls and gabled dormers, while the influence of the Neoclassical style can be seen in the full-height gabled front entry porch (**Figure 2**). The primary façade, or south-facing motor court elevation, is largely symmetrical, consisting of the front-gabled entrance hall and identically matched side wings. The entrance hall features a two-story open portico supported by four simple square columns, and a 1930s rendition of a classical Georgian-inspired front door with simple entablature, frieze, and sidelights.

The side wings that flank the hall feature symmetrical fenestration consisting of a central bay window projection with a metal hood on the lower story and paired casement windows beneath low dormers on the second story. Multi-light oval windows are centered over the canted bays. At the rear of the house, a curved, heavily glazed, rear bay provides access from the entrance hall to the rear patio via paired French doors. The sweeping bay and patio visually connect the two rear diagonal wings. The curved bay serves as the base for a second-floor balcony above and provides outdoor access to a second-floor master bedroom with its own projecting, glazed, curved bay.

In addition to the large rear open patio area, designed outdoor spaces include the formal garden area to the west of the house, a small patio area to the east of the kitchen wing, and the motor court. Unifying landscape features, including brick trim and pavers for the walkways and patios were compromised when all hardscape was re-surfaced with modern materials during the Pasadena Showcase House of Design in 2007. The Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts was founded in 1948 as nonprofit organization that was formed to raise money to help pay for the Pasadena series of concerts of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and other programs that benefit the community.

Each year, the Showcase House of Design selects a noted mansion in the greater Pasadena area and features renovations by interior and landscape designers and high-end furniture. Alterations that occurred at the time the building was featured as a Showcase House of Design appear to include the motor court landscaping features and installation of a temporary fountain. The motor court landscaping alterations include infill with tinted concrete pavers that raised the grade of the court to the landing level of the primary entrance, which effectively eliminated the brick curbing and surround for all planters, including the circular central feature. The installation of the temporary fountain occurred where a tree previously stood in the 1950s. Alterations to the patio areas included all replacement surfacing and possibly reconfiguration.

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The first floor features a main entrance hall with foyer, sunroom, library, gun room, dining room, kitchen, breakfast nook, and living room. The entrance opens into an arched foyer and entrance hall with hallways on either side leading to the east and west wings of the house. The entrance hall has a sight line straight to the sunroom with heavily glazed French doors leading to the rear of the house. The staircase to the second floor is to the right of the entrance hall. The hall has wood floors and the sunroom has checkered black and white granite tile floors. The sunroom features wainscoting and crown molding around the perimeter of the room. A built-in cabinet in the sunroom houses a stereo system that can be played through speakers in the dining room.

The west wing is composed of the library and gun room, and the east wing houses the dining room, kitchen, breakfast nook, and living room. The library has ten-foot ceilings, wood paneled walls, and a large bay window that overlooks the northern elevation of the house. There is a fireplace on the western wall of the room with built-in bookshelves on all four walls of the room. The gun room is a small triangular room off the library with an entrance leading out to the west elevation. The living room in the east wing has wood floors and ten-foot tray ceilings. A large bay window overlooks the northern elevation of the house and a fireplace on the eastern wall has built-ins on either side. The kitchen was heavily remodeled during the 2007 Pasadena Show House Design. Off the kitchen to the west, there is a small breakfast nook with a large bay window overlooking the northern elevation and wood floors. The dining room is off the kitchen to the east and has ten-foot ceilings, wood floors, wainscoting, and crown molding around the perimeter of the room.

A first-floor casement window on the east wing was replaced with a single wood and glazed door circa 1940. A casement window on the first floor of the east wing replaced a set of French doors in 1970. The Boddy House kitchen was remodeled in 1970 and 2007. Restrooms were also remodeled in 2007 during the Pasadena Showcase House Design.

The second floor of the house features multiple bedrooms and two bathrooms. These rooms were heavily altered during the 2007 and 2019 Pasadena Show House Design and are not accessible to the public.

A detached garage measuring 2,800 square feet is located southwest of the residence. The one-story building is asymmetrical in appearance and rectangular in plan. The poured-concrete and brick building rests on a concrete foundation and is capped by a medium-pitched hipped roof with slightly overhanging boxed eaves. Three single-car garage bay doors occupy most of the east elevation. Three additional single-car garage bay doors are located on the west third of the north-facing façade. Three wood-paneled and glazed doors in the central section of the north elevation lead into the chauffeur's bathroom, gardener's storage room, and into the garage itself. These entrances are located beneath a partial-width loggia capped by a projecting shed roof and supported by wood posts. Metal sash casement windows are located along the north, south, and west elevations. The garage was designed to complement the house's style through use of brick and horizontal wood siding on the exterior walls and its cupola-crowned gable-and-hip roof.

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The interior of the garage, since its 2012 renovation to an art gallery, features three large exhibit spaces with plain white walls to house art. Eight-foot tray ceilings have a large light fixture at the center. The floor is made of concrete. Additional alterations to the garage included the loss of two windows on the rear south elevation and enclosure of the loggia with glass. An addition was constructed just west of the garage against the hillside. Original materials were retained and stored, all changes were determined reversible, and the addition was designed to serve as a background element.

The road leading to the Boddy House Complex winds with a slight elevation and crosses over a stone bridge before opening to the Boddy House and Garage. The landscape on either side of the road is lined with heavy vegetation from the edges of the Camilla Forest. The round driveway in the in front of the Boddy House is constructed with brick pavers with a center landscaping feature.

4. Boddy Lodge

One contributing building

Boddy wrote the screenplay for the feature film *Malaya* that aired in 1949 and starred Spencer Tracy and Jimmy Stewart. Circa 1950, with the money he made on the film, Boddy added a lakeside house. At Boddy Lodge he entertained such notables as war correspondent Ernie Pyle and General Jimmy Doolittle.³

The 1,008-square-foot Boddy Lodge is a simple, one-story vernacular cabin with a primarily rectangular footprint. The gabled and shed roofs are clad in composition shingles and feature exposed rafter tails. The walls are clad in wide horizontal, clapboard wood siding. The front, or lakeside façade, features a full-width, integral porch area that has been glazed, with doors at both ends. It is presumed to have been originally open and screened.

The rear of the cabin features two wood casement windows, a smaller window to serve the bathroom, and a large red brick chimney. A long shed-roofed one-story wing attached at the north gabled end projects well beyond the rear façade of the lodge and provides core functions, while a small, short, more integral shed-roofed element is built onto the southern side of the building. The building appears to be unaltered beyond the glazed porch.

The interior includes the front porch, one main room, kitchen, and bathroom. The porch faces the lake with composition vinyl tiles and exposed wood beam ceiling. The main room consists of composition vinyl tiles and vertical wood paneling on the walls. The ceiling is vaulted with exposed wood beam rafters and a brick fireplace sits on the western wall.

³ Cecilia Rasmussen, "Then and Now: Descanso Gardens Blossomed along with L.A.," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 June 2004; Yana Ungermann-Marshall, *Images of America: La Cañada* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006)

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5. *Caretaker's Cottage*

One contributing building

This 1,421-square-foot, Ranch-style residence is visible in Manchester Boddy's illustrated map for the 1951 Descanso Gardens brochure. The building faces northeast towards the primary parking area. It is a one-story, wood-framed, side-gabled building with vertical board and batten siding; a full-length, covered front porch; exposed rafter ends; and an unusual, staggered, two-stage wing at its south gabled end. A red brick chimney is visible at the south end of the primary body of the house.

At the east-facing primary façade, the front porch features a stone patio built near-grade and provides access for a centered entrance flanked by paired multi-light windows to the south, and a single multi-light unit to the north. The porch roof is extended at a slightly shallower pitch than the main roof and is supported by four simple squared wooden posts topped by brackets. The south wing features an offset secondary east entrance balanced by two horizontally divided double-hung windows.

Seven rooms include the living room, kitchen, dining room, restroom, and three bedrooms. The cottage opens to a small living room with wood floors, a slanted ceiling with exposed wood beams, and a fireplace on the northeast wall. A hallway off the east side of the living room leads to two small bedrooms with eight-foot ceilings and wood floors. A wood built-in is situated at the end of the hallway between the bedrooms. A kitchen with ceramic tile flooring is situated behind the living room in the northeastern portion of the house. A sunken dining room is located off the living room to the northwest with an eight-foot ceiling and wood floors.

6. *Boddy Drive Landscape*

One contributing site

Boddy Drive includes features such as rustic stone curbing, stone retaining walls, and a stone culvert and bridge. These stone features were mostly created with field stones and include minimal concrete relief. The stone culvert and bridge features an approximately waist-high parapet and low depressed arch (**Figure 3**). Stone walls mostly come in two varieties: fieldstone walls which are held together by concrete, and individual stones placed next to each other to serve a decorative rather than functional purpose. Stone walls of the first variety line the driveway and serve as curbing with flat tops (**Figure 4**). Individual stones follow the riverbed, and are intended to accentuate natural features.

Maps and aerials document that the original driveway to the Boddy House included the present road as it approaches the house from the north and west⁴ and the loop that continues around to the east appears to have been added at some point in the mid-1960s or later.⁵ The earlier path provided access to Descanso Drive, and linked the primary house to Boddy Lodge and the nearby pond and waterfall.

⁴ "Topographical Maps for Descanso Gardens, 1942 and 1955," Historic Aerials, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>, accessed July 2017.

⁵ "Topographical Map for Descanso Gardens, 1968," Historic Aerials, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>, accessed July 2017.

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7. *Descanso Creek Landscape*

One contributing site

The manmade lake and Rose Garden pond remain notably intact and define the landscape. Historic photographs evidence the maintenance and integral appearance of these water features (**Figures 5 and 6**). The waterfall was constructed in 1980, and Mulberry Pond was redesigned in 2000. The streambed, often referred to as Descanso Creek, became part of Descanso Gardens' irrigation system under the original development of the property.

8. *Camellia Forest*⁶

One contributing site

The land that comprises Descanso Gardens was historically an oak forest although it now contains many camellia trees. The camellia forest is dominated by coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*). Some of these trees are centuries old and are the remainders of two generations of forest that existed long before Descanso Gardens. Additionally, the forest was filled with over fifteen varieties of camellias, imported from China in the 1940s. Due to a hybridization program at the garden, there are over 10,000 specimens of camellias comprised of more than 800 varieties at Descanso Gardens. Besides those imported from China, varieties from Japan, England, and the southern United States were combined at Descanso Gardens to create one of the largest collections of camellias in North America. The oak forest is roughly contained by Boddy Drive to the west and south and reaches the edge of the garden to the east and north.

With the advent of World War II and the internment of Japanese Americans, Boddy paid a fair price for the camellia stock of two Japanese families in the San Gabriel Valley.⁷ This purchase expanded his camellia holdings substantially. The reintegration of Japanese American families into the fabric of the United States during the 1960s after the closure of internment camps was also evident in the proliferation of Japanese style gardens during that period, including the one at Descanso Gardens.

9. *Japanese Garden*

One contributing site

The garden opened in 1966. It was partially redesigned in 1969 with alterations to the landscape and with the addition of the Minka House and Japanese Garden Bridge. The garden was designed by prominent landscape architect Eijiro Nunokawa (**Figure 7**).

This garden is identifiable by its curling, ambulatory paths and imported vegetation. Raised concrete platforms and walkways serve as paths between the various buildings and features in the garden. Vegetation is mostly smaller imported varieties. The garden is relatively confined to the northeastern region of Descanso Gardens. The Tea House, Minka House, and Japanese

⁶ "Gardens," Descanso Gardens, 2015, <https://www.descansogardens.org/explore/gardens/>, accessed July 2017.

⁷ "Descanso Gardens: Learn the Untold History of the Japanese Internment and Camellias," KCET: LostLA, video, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/descanso-gardens-learn-the-untold-history-of-the-japanese-internment-and-camellias>, accessed July 2017.

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Garden Bridge are all located within this garden. In 1997, the garden was refreshed and redesigned for \$100,000, including new maple trees and a new bamboo water fountain.⁸

10. Tea House

One contributing building

The Full Moon Tea House measures approximately 905 square feet and has a rectangular footprint, situated in the northern region of the Japanese Garden. The tea house was designed in 1966 by Whitney R. Smith and Wayne Williams of Smith & Williams (**Figure 8**) with Frank Ashley acting as general contractor. The building is perched upon a raised, tapered concrete patio that connects to various walkways. The exterior is comprised of unpainted wood battens and boards along one side, and an open porch upheld by striated cylindrical wood columns along the other side.

The roof incorporates blue glazed tile roofing imported from Nara, Japan and features a unique roof, possibly derivative of traditional Japanese style. The roof features a central square pyramidal section set atop a low-slope hipped skirt. The pyramidal section of the roof features horizontal rows of blue glazed tiles, whereas the flat eaves are contrasted with vertically placed tiles. Rafters are exposed beneath the boxed eaves. The floors are concrete with a pressed gravel textured surface. Columns and fences are painted a dark matte brown and the building incorporates a sliding door with panels meant to resemble rice paper. String-art round lighting fixtures hang from the underside of the roof (**Figures 9 and 10**).

11. Minka House

One contributing building

The minka house, approximately 818 square feet, was inspired by a traditional Japanese country-style farmhouse. Minka, translated to “house of the people,” is a rural Japanese vernacular architecture type prominent in the Edo Period (1603-1868).⁹ Constructed in 1969, the minka house is situated in the eastern region of the Japanese Garden, just north of the Japanese garden bridge. The minka house has an irregular footprint and a complex roof somewhat similar to the traditional gable-on-hip style. The gable rests on a multi-sided flared eave that curves with the building. The roof is clad in composition shingles. The many-sided exterior of the building features rounded pilasters at each joint and are mostly divided into rows of large fixed-pane windows and traditional sliding doors with panels meant to resemble rice paper. Additionally, sliding bamboo panels add further credence to the building’s Japanese influence and traditional building elements. The minka house was designed by Kenneth Masao Nishimoto, and constructed by Robert Kawashima in 1969 with Frank Ashley acting as general contractor.

12. Japanese Garden Bridge

One contributing structure

The gently curved, Zen-inspired garden bridge is situated in the center of the Japanese Garden and leads to the Minka House. In 1969, the bridge—a replacement for a 1966 crossing—and

⁸ Paul Clinton, “Keeping it Simple,” *The Foothill Leader* (Glendale, CA), August 12, 1998.

⁹ David Young and Michiko Young, *The Art of Japanese Architecture: History/Culture/Design* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2014).

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raised patios were designed by Kenneth Masao Nishimoto and donated by Robert H. Kawashima. The footbridge is constructed with wood and concrete that forms a gently arched deck. The railings are comprised of rectangular balusters decoratively notched at the tops, and arched round and paired square balustrades. Each section of the square balustrades is centrally accented with a small square baluster. The ends of the balustrades are accented with small pillars with globe-shaped caps with rounded finials. Historically, the bridge was painted a cinnabar red with black accenting. The current color of the Japanese garden bridge was selected via a paint layer investigation conducted by historic preservationists.

13. Lakeside Lookout

One contributing building

Constructed in 1968 in partnership with the San Fernando Audubon Society and the Descanso Gardens Guild, Inc., the bird observation station is a simple, 648 square foot rectangular building with a viewing platform facing the lake. The building is constructed in a minimalist style popular in the early part of the twentieth century, with a half-height wall of matchboard-type vertical wood siding. The side-gabled roof, with central accent beam, is clad in composition shingles.

The wide overhangs of the roof are supported by square wood posts. The observation deck is partially enclosed with a wood porch railing. The base of the deck is enclosed with board and batten skirting. The non-ADA compliant accessibility ramp was constructed circa 2000. The ramp is a minor alteration on the southern façade that does not face the lake or impede the ability to observe birds.

Noncontributing Resources

Fourteen noncontributing resources have lost integrity, postdate the later period of significance, or do not relate to the documented significance of the property.

14. Entrance Complex/Van De Kamp Building

Noncontributing Building

Built of brick with a front-gabled roof, completed in 1982. An open overhang constructed of wood rafters is supported by three brick columns. Three entrance paths lead into the gardens and to the ticket booth.

15. Promenade Comfort Station

Noncontributing Building

A square cinderblock building with a flat roof and overhanging wooden eaves, located near the Descanso Gardens entrance, constructed circa 1955 for use by the public.

16. Rose Garden Comfort Station

Noncontributing Building

Rectangular in plan and reminiscent of an English garden cottage in design and execution. The side gabled roof is clad in slate and accented with a false chimney. The exterior walls are clad in smooth textured stucco. Metal casement windows allow for ventilation. A sounce and a cantilevered trellis accent the common entryway. The building was constructed in 1994 for use by the public.

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17. *Rose Garden Pavilion* Noncontributing Structure
A simple open structure with exposed roof trusses that rest upon square wood columns mounted on low, stone piers with cast concrete coping stones, constructed in 1994.

18. *"Weeping Wall" sculpture* Noncontributing Object
Located near the district entrance, the sculpture is a remnant of a 1981 art installation by artist and landscape architect Lew Watanabe, permanently donated to Descanso Gardens in 1991.

19. *Under the Oaks Theater* Noncontributing Building
An open stage in front of an audience that sits on the open main lawn where the Garden House Lounge existed in the 1950s and 1960s.

20. *Children's Maze* Noncontributing Site
Part of the renovations made to the Rose Garden in 1991, the maze is set amongst a square enclosure of low-cut hedges.

21. *Victorian Gazebo* Noncontributing Structure
An iron-constructed gazebo added to the renovated Rose Garden in 1991.

22. *Wedding Gate* Noncontributing Object
Two-door wooden gate added to the renovated Rose Garden in 1991.

23. *Mission Fountain* Noncontributing Structure
A low, wide traditional Spanish-style fountain added to the renovated Rose Garden in 1991.

24. *Canyon View Rest Ramada* Noncontributing Structure
A simple redwood shade structure that rests upon a concrete foundation pad. A low-sloped shed roof is accented with exposed rafter tails on each. The structure is partially enclosed with vertical wood siding and a handrail. The structure postdates Boddy Manchester's ownership, although no specific construction date was identified.

25. *Mountain View Structure* Noncontributing Structure
A partially framed platform from which two Adirondack-style chairs provide framed views to the mountains, largely unobstructed by development. The structure postdates Boddy Manchester's ownership, although no specific construction date was identified.

26. *El Portal Ramada* Noncontributing Structure
An open-air wooden structure constructed in 1959 with an interior bench, located just off the Oak Forest path. The two ramadas and the view structure are in the drier northwestern end of the gardens in the California native plant section.

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27. *Enchanted Garden Railroad*

Noncontributing Structure

The railroad runs a loop through the renovated Rose Garden and back through the West Forest. It was donated by filmmakers Frank Marshall and Kathleen Kennedy and made its inaugural run in 1996.¹⁰

Integrity

Descanso Gardens retains integrity of location, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association with slight compromises to integrity of design and setting. The district has shifted over time from private residence to public garden, altering the setting slightly. The roads within the district have also been reconfigured in places and widened to meet modern transportation needs. Inappropriate repointing of some of the landscape features has also taken place over time. Both actions minimally compromise the workmanship of the district.

¹⁰ Carol Cormaci, "La Cañada History: Enchanted Railroad makes its inaugural run through Descanso Gardens," *La Cañada Valley Sun*, November 23, 2016, accessed September 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/socal/la-canada-valley-sun/tn-vsl-me-102030-20161123-story.html>.

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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.
- 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.)

- 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
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Japanese

ARCHITECTURE

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1937-1952

1966-1969

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Smith, Whitney R. (architect)

Williams, Wayne R. (architect)

Nunokawa, Eijiro (landscape architect)

Nishimoto, Kenneth Masao (architect)

Dolena, James E. (architect)

Ashley, Frank (general contractor)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Descanso Gardens is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Agriculture for its association with Elias Manchester Boddy's contributions to horticulture in southern California, and in the area of Ethnic Heritage: Japanese for its association with the Japanese American experience before and after World War II. The district is also eligible at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Landscape Architecture as the work of master architects and landscape architects Smith & Williams, Eijiro Nunokawa, and Kenneth Masao Nishimoto. The 1937 to 1952 period of significance encompasses Elias Manchester Boddy's ownership of the property. The Japanese Garden was completed during the second period of significance, 1966 to 1969.

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

Criterion A: Agriculture and Ethnic Heritage—Japanese

Descanso Gardens creator Elias Manchester Boddy was born in Washington State in 1891 to an impoverished potato farming family. Boddy, who started life with humble beginnings, was forced to start work at an early age. He began supporting his family while in high school and continued throughout his college years. After transferring to the University of Montana, he found himself without a job and penniless. He worked his way east taking odd jobs until he settled in New York City, where he became employed selling the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Boddy proved to be a talented salesman and was quickly promoted to the position of New York sales manager. He married Gimbel Brothers bookstore employee Berenice Maud Klotz, from Winnetka, Illinois, on January 1, 1918, the day before he left to serve in World War I. Boddy returned to New York City after being discharged to recuperate from injuries received during a gas attack. He eventually worked for *The New York Times* as a salesman. After an attack of double pneumonia, his doctor recommended a move west for his health. In 1920, Boddy, his wife Berenice, and their son Robert arrived in Los Angeles with only \$55.¹¹

Boddy, who preferred to drop Elias and referred to himself as Manchester Boddy, immediately established his own small book company, which sold textbooks to schools. He was eventually hired to run the newly formed Times-Mirror Book Publishing Company, headed by Harry Chandler, which specialized in Southern California historical and biographical works and lives of movie stars. In 1926, Boddy purchased Cornelius Vanderbilt's failing publication, *The Illustrated Daily News*, with \$750 and the backing of several investors. Although the newspaper was \$3 million in debt prior to Boddy's purchase, he was able to turn a profit within a few years by reformatting the publication into a reader-friendly paper with a distinctly liberal-leaning

¹¹ Frank J. Taylor, "Man with a Borrowed Shoestring," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 2 December 1944.

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editorial stance. Boddy's front-page editorials attacked corrupt government policies and mob-like activities. Circulation increased to 200,000 and Boddy gained wealth and reputation in the newspaper world as a self-made man. With his increasing wealth, Boddy sought to move to a location that more accurately reflected his ideals.

Before the purchase of *Rancho del Descanso*, Boddy and his family lived at 5251 Linda Vista Drive in Alta Canada, later La Cañada Flintridge. In 1935, Boddy took out an option to buy land in the Crescenta Valley, which consisted of 125 acres of oak and chaparral. Two years later, he added forty acres and began to clear the native chaparral and oak woodland plant communities to raise cattle. The Camellia Forest (previously known as Oak Forest) is what remains of the native oak woodlands and chaparral plant communities. Some oaks on the property are centuries old.¹²

Boddy, a strong believer in self-sustaining land, started to plant various flowers and plants on the property in 1936. The dense oak leaves that covered the property made the soil more acidic. It was recommended that this soil was similar to the mountainside of eastern Asia and that camellias would do well. Boddy immediately began planting camellias under the canopy of the native oaks, which proved to be successful. He focused on the *japonica* cultivars, which were popular as corsages. In 1937, the purchase of the property was finalized, and Boddy, Berenice, and their two sons named the property *Rancho del Descanso*, which translates as "Ranch of Tranquility."¹³

In 1937, Boddy commissioned prominent Los Angeles architect James E. Dolena to design his family's home on the ranch. Although still working as a newspaper owner, Boddy sought to settle on his land permanently. Working in his characteristic Hollywood Regency style, Dolena produced a 9,877-square-foot, 2-story, 22-room mansion at a cost of \$140,000. The mansion was built into a prominent hillside in the far southeast corner of the property, with a panoramic view of the San Gabriel Mountains. The house incorporated many features that were quite advanced for the time, including steel framing, a built-in stereo music system, and heating and cooling based on geothermal principles.¹⁴ The stately home was featured in a 1941 edition of *Architectural Digest*, which gave a pictorial overview of the interior features of the home designed by the most prominent furniture retailer in Los Angeles, Barker Brothers. The first floor of Boddy House was organized in a semicircular plan, with the entrance foyer and solarium serving as the central focal point. Maid's quarters were located next to the kitchen. The second floor was divided into two wings: one for Boddy and his wife, and the other for their two sons. The house included a private library of more than 50,000 volumes and an art collection. To accommodate Boddy's collection of cars, a six-car garage with chauffeur's bathroom and storage closet was constructed southwest of the house against the hillside along the original oil and rock driveway. The house was completed in 1938.

¹² "Descanso Gardens," <http://www.descansogardens.org/>, accessed May 2016.

¹³ Yana Ungermann-Marshall, *Images of America: La Cañada* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 112.

¹⁴ "Boddy House: A Link to Descanso's Glamorous Past," Descanso Gardens, <https://www.descansogardens.org/explore/boddy-house/>, accessed May 2016.

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To create self-sustaining land, Boddy cultivated flowers and raised livestock on the ranch. To bring water to the land, Boddy purchased 440 acres in Hall-Beckley Canyon in 1941, which included a spring-fed stream and built an underground pipeline to move water across the valley to the ranch. Before 1940, the canyon was used as a private recreational area. Boddy is also reported to have built a lodge on the property that was demolished in 2015.¹⁵ The underground irrigation system continues to provide approximately 15 million gallons a year of high-quality mountain water to Descanso Gardens for use in irrigation.¹⁶

In addition to his business interests in publishing, Boddy was an avid amateur horticulturist with a particular interest in the then-new and exotic plants being imported into Southern California that were of Asian origin—particularly camellias, azaleas, and rhododendrons. From the earliest days at *Rancho del Descanso*, Boddy acquired camellias and azaleas for his estate.

The early twentieth century labor force for gardening was heavily Japanese, and many in turn began nurseries, particularly in the San Gabriel Valley. Of the 2,000 acres of land farmed for flowers in the 1940s, about half were owned by Japanese American families.

A camellia enthusiast, Boddy regularly visited neighboring nurseries operated by pioneering Japanese immigrant growers. Francis Miyosaku Uyematsu's Star Nursery in Montebello and Sierra Madre boasted an expansive collection of hybridized camellias cultivated from seeds purchased in Tokyo and plants imported from Japan. Mission Nursery was a successful retail business in San Gabriel with sixty employees, founded by Fred Waichi Yoshimura and his wife Mitoko, who managed one of the city's few flower shops. Uyematsu and Yoshimura were both members in the Southern California Flower Market.

In the wake of Executive Order 9066 during World War II, shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, thousands of Japanese Americans were forced into internment camps across the country. Descanso Gardens dramatically multiplied its holdings of camellias with Boddy's purchase of 300,000 plants from Uyematsu, a significant portion of his camellia stock, and the Yoshimuras' entire nursery before the families were forcibly removed from the West Coast. Boddy faithfully paid the Yoshimura family installments while they were incarcerated in the Gila River detention camp in Arizona, and took over and helped run the Uyematsu family's nursery while they were away. The foundation of Descanso's vast camellia collection rests on the sixteen varieties acquired from Uyematsu in 1942, among the eventual six hundred known varieties. In Boddy's hands and under the direction of renowned camellia expert and hybridizer Howard Asper, these thousands of acquired camellia plants soon became part of the largest commercial camellia plantation in America.¹⁷

¹⁵ Kelley M. Russell, "Cultural Resources Historic Report Eligibility Assessment of the Hall Beckley Cabin and Garage" (Los Angeles: Atkins, 2012).

¹⁶ David R. Brown, Anne Lyden, Warren Marr, and Robert Smaus, *Descanso: An Urban Oasis Revealed* (Glendale, CA: Balcony Press, 2007), 17-20.

¹⁷ Naomi Hirahara, "Descanso Gardens: Beginning of Camellia Collection," *Sharing Culture, Creating Community Exhibition October 2016-January 2017* (La Cañada Flintridge: Descanso Gardens Guild, August 23, 2017).

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During the war years, Boddy and his chief horticulturist Asper supervised the planting of thousands of camellias (primarily nursery-bred cultivars of *C. japonica* and *C. sasanqua*) in the shade and rich, acidic soil provided by the decomposing leaf litter shed by the towering oak trees. Boddy's horticulture interest turned into a business investment, as he soon built a thriving camellia business selling cut flowers, seed, foliage, and plants from his camellia plantation. The combination of the slow-growing and miniature forest of camellias growing in the dappled shade provided by some 1,200 mature oak trees is one of the most distinctive characteristics and public attractions of Descanso Gardens. As of 2015, Descanso Gardens' camellia collection—considerably broadened and diversified by more than fifty years of professional management and constant additions—is one of North America's largest camellia collections. By virtue of its camellia collection and their unusual siting, Descanso Gardens has been designated an "International Camellia Garden of Excellence" by the International Camellia Society. Camellias at Descanso Gardens bloom from early autumn to spring. The camellia forest was specifically mentioned when Descanso Gardens was designated a California Point of Historical Interest (CPHI) in 1968. The camellias are the most significant, surviving botanical features from the period that Elias Manchester Boddy and his wife developed Descanso Gardens.

Boddy hired horticulturist Dr. Walter Lammerts in 1945 for the purposes of creating new hybrids of native plants, flowering fruit trees, lilacs, and roses.¹⁸ The camellia collection at the garden continued to grow even after the end of World War II. In 1948, Lammerts acquired twenty *Camelia reticulata* plants for export to the United States from China. Upon arrival in San Francisco, the plants were quarantined. The plants were eventually released to Boddy, although, several did not survive either the journey or the quarantine. In 1949, a hybridization program was initiated to expand the blooming season, color palette, and bloom intensity of the camellias. Although originally grown as plantation stock comprised exclusively of *japonica* and *sasanqua*, through breeding programs, the plants have developed into a species collection. By the 1960s, the gardens had approximately 100,000 camellias comprising of over 800 varieties gathered from Japan, England, the southern United States, and local growers. The camellia forest has one of the largest collections of camellias in North America including *C. japonica*, *C. reticulata*, and *C. sasanqua*.¹⁹

Lammerts created several new varieties of roses and the original Old Rose Garden in 1948.²⁰ The garden was so popular that it expanded fivefold and became a more prominent feature of his estate and the later public garden. The History of the Rose Garden featured 8,000 bushes, including varieties from all over the world. The roses were grouped, labeled, and arranged to demonstrate the historic development of roses since the Christian era. Next to the Rose Garden was another area that showcased All-American Rose Selection winners in chronological order, beginning with the first winner in 1940.²¹

¹⁸ Ungermann-Marshall, *La Cañada*, 116.

¹⁹ Brown, et al., *Descanso*, 17-20.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ John Threlkeld, "Descanso Has Varied Attractions," *Independent Star News* (Pasadena, CA), April 9, 1961.

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In March 1950, Boddy renamed his property Descanso Gardens and opened it to the public for a \$1 admission charge. Approximately 6,000 people showed up, infuriating many of Boddy's neighbors and causing Boddy to close the gardens immediately, which he reopened the following year. Following Boddy's retirement as editor and publisher of *The Illustrated Daily News* in 1952,²² he decided to sell Descanso Gardens. This period was precarious for the property, as Boddy reported that a subdivision of up to 600 lots was a possibility, and newspapers stated on numerous occasions that development was possible and imminent.²³ It has also been suggested that Walt Disney was interested enough in the property to have assessed it as one of the possible locations for a theme park during this period.²⁴

To expedite gaining control of the property while considering their options, Los Angeles County made a lease/purchase offer for the property so that it would not be developed. The County opened Descanso Gardens to the public that year, after negotiations with neighbors to satisfy concern over the number of vehicles that would park in the neighborhood. The largest and most popular building accessible to the public at that time was the Garden House Lounge (no longer extant).

Five years later, in 1957, a volunteer support group formed to promote Descanso Gardens and advance the institution as a true botanical garden with a broad educational purpose. For the next four decades, the County and the volunteers collaborated to operate the facility in the public interest and to improve its offerings through the additions of special features and garden exhibits. In 1993, the County entered into a comprehensive operating agreement with the nonprofit Descanso Gardens Guild that provided for the volunteer organization to assume full management responsibilities for Descanso Gardens. The November 2014 renewal of that agreement runs through 2024 and includes a five-year renewal option.

A Japanese garden and tea house, formally known as the Full Moon Tea House, opened in 1966. The garden was designed by the prominent landscape architect Eijiro Nunokawa, who also designed the Japanese Garden in Brand Park in Glendale.²⁵ The tea house was designed by award-winning Pasadena architect Whitney R. Smith and Wayne R. Williams of firm Smith & Williams and constructed by general contractor Frank Ashley of Smith and Williams.²⁶ Smith, a graduate of the University of Southern California School of Architecture, in his early career worked as a designer for noted Mid-Century Modern architects Harwell Hamilton Harris and William Pereira. He was known for his contribution to the emergence of post-World War II modernist architecture. From 1945 to 1966, he participated in the "Case Study House" program, which involved the design and construction of experimental modern houses primarily in Los Angeles. Some of his nationally award-winning projects include the Blue Ribbon Tract and the

²² The Times-Mirror Company purchased the publication in 1954. Cecilia Rasmussen, "Descanso Gardens Blossomed Along with L.A.," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 2004.

²³ "Descanso Gardens Subdivision Near," *Valley Sun*, November 27, 1952.

²⁴ Donald L. Finch and Samuel Ayres, Jr., "A Brief History of Descanso Gardens" (n.p.: January 17, 1961).

²⁵ Descanso Gardens Guild, Inc. February 1966. "Report of Progress."

²⁶ Dennis McLellan, "Whitney Smith, 91; Pioneer in Modernist Architecture," *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-apr-28-me-smith28-story.html>, accessed July 2017; Brown, et al., *Descanso*, 17-20.

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Children's Chapel.²⁷ In 1949, Wayne R. Williams partnered with Smith to form Smith and Williams.

In 1969, a *minka*, a traditional Japanese country-style farmhouse designed by Pasadena-architect Kenneth Masao Nishimoto and donated by restaurateur Robert H. Kawashima, with additional support from Bob and Mary Matsumoto, was added.²⁸ Nishimoto was notable for his integration of Japanese design principals into his work, including simplicity, sliding doors, and open modular plans. The Japanese Garden also included a koi-filled stream, an arching bridge, and a pool with waterfalls, Japanese maples, and bamboo.²⁹

Construction of the Japanese Garden with the Tea House, Minka House, and Japanese Garden Bridge between 1966 and 1969 helped reconnect the gardens to Japanese culture in Southern California after the end of World War II. The Japanese Garden's instant popularity spoke to Southern California's embrace of the Japanese aesthetic and the evolving identity of Japanese Americans. Japanese style gardens flourished during this period, when Japanese culture and design were integrated into architecture and landscapes, as evident with the involvement of Kenneth Masao Nishimoto and Eijiro Nunokawa in many area projects.

During his years at Descanso, Boddy also built a lodge retreat by the small lake on the property. It is assumed the lodge was built in 1949 with profits received from the story Boddy wrote for the movie *Malaya*, in which a newspaperman convinces government officials of a plan to steel rubber from the Japanese.³⁰ The lodge is similar in style to the addition on the cabin built on Boddy's property in Hall-Beckley Canyon (demolished in 2015).

In the brochure he created in 1951, Manchester Boddy described his hope for the future of the gardens when he said, "I want Descanso Gardens to remain for all time as a living monument to the beautiful old West, whose deserts, mountains, trees, streams, and flowers have been a source of inspiration and joy to me."³¹ Descanso Gardens continues to serve the community with educational programs, horticultural events, and as a tranquil escape. The facility hosts approximately 565,000 visitors per year.³²

Criterion C: Architecture and Landscape Architecture

The district's high artistic value is represented in early twentieth century architecture styles including Colonial Revival, Asian Revival, and Hollywood Regency, prominent in Southern

²⁷ R.R. Bowker LLC, *American Architects Directory* Second Edition, 1962
<https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/AHDAA/pages/20677106/1962+American+Architects+Directory>, accessed August 21, 2019.

²⁸ Brown, et al., *Descanso*, 17-20.

²⁹ "Descanso Gardens," The Cultural Landscape Foundation, <https://tclf.org/landscapes/descanso-gardens>, accessed May 2016.

³⁰ Frank Fenton and Manchester Boddy, *Malaya*, Metro-Goldwyn Studios, 1949,
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041622/>, accessed August 21, 2019.

³¹ Manchester Boddy, "Welcome to Descanso Gardens," 1951.

³² Brown, et al., *Descanso*, 17-20.

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California, reflecting the influence of Hollywood movie sets.³³ The Boddy Complex is a significant example of Colonial Revival and Hollywood Regency architecture designed by master architect James E. Dolena in the 1940s.

The 1968 Lakeside Lookout is a unique, use-designed building that was one of a few such buildings in the country at the time of its construction and drew large numbers of bird watchers. The building combines the minimalist style popular in the early twentieth century and a more rustic interpretation of Mid-Century Modern design principals including an emphasis on materials and function.

Master architect firm of Smith & Williams (Whitney R. Smith and Wayne R. Williams) designed the tea house. The Japanese Garden was completed by notable local landscape architect Eijiro Nunokawa. Notable local architect Kenneth Masao Nishimoto designed the Minka House and Japanese Garden Bridge in 1969. The blend of these buildings, structures, and landscapes reflects both Japanese and Mid-Century Modern architectural elements, resulting in a complex and artistically unique Japanese-inspired area of Descanso Gardens.

Architects and landscape architects are presented in chronological order.

James E. Dolena

Dolena was born in 1888 in St. Petersburg, Russia, and immigrated to the United States in 1905. He moved to Los Angeles in the late 1920s and designed some of the most elegant Neoclassical houses in Southern California. Often referred to as “architect to the stars,” Dolena was best known for helping create the “Hollywood Regency” style of architecture found throughout exclusive areas such as Beverly Hills, Bel Air, and Holmby Hills. Dolena’s designs provided a Mid-Century Modern spin on the Greco-Roman sensibilities of Neoclassicism, with elements of the English Regency and Colonial Revival styles. He most often employed symmetrically arranged buildings of monumental proportions with colossal pedimented porticos. Dolena was involved in all aspects of his designs, from the furniture to the landscaping, collaborating with some of the best-known designers of the time, including interior designers T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings and William “Billy” Haines and famed female landscape architect Florence Yoch.³⁴

Dolena’s commissions in the years before he was contracted to design Manchester Boddy’s house included Hollywood Regency-style homes for film celebrities such as William Powell and Carol Lombard, Constance Bennet, and director George Cukor.³⁵ The Weber house in Bel Air, better known as Casa Encantada, was by far his largest residence, built around the same time as

³³ National Register of Historic Places, Yamashiro Historic District, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California, National Register #10240018, 11.

³⁴ Sapphos Environmental, Inc., “Rehabilitation and Adaptive Reuse of Boddy House Garage,” Descanso Gardens Guild, August 7, 2009.

³⁵ “Architect//James Dolena (1888–1978),” Modern Living LA, December 2017, <http://modernlivingla.com/architects/james-dolena-1888-1978/>, accessed July 2017.

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Rancho del Descanso in 1938, for a cost of \$2,000,000 and containing sixty-five rooms. Dolena later designed Walt Disney's 1949 estate in the Hollywood Regency style.

Less well known than these properties were Dolena's progressive, glass-walled Mid-Century Modern designs such as the Harold Residence in Los Angeles (1948), the DeWare House in Palm Springs (1953);³⁶ or his wartime modular modern house concept (1942) that did not get beyond the scale model stage.³⁷

Dolena's modern designs displayed a strong sense of the indoor-outdoor transparency that defined Mid-Century Modern residential design in Southern California and contrasted significantly with the conservative elements of the Hollywood Regency style. His Hollywood Regency-style homes for celebrities were constant subject matter throughout the pre- and post-war years in *Architectural Digest* and other architectural and interior design periodicals.

The impact and scale of Dolena's residences continue to resonate into the twenty-first century. Casa Encantada has twice set the record for highest price ever paid for a family residence. The city of Beverly Hills has included Dolena on its list of master architects, in the company of Stiles O. Clements, A. Quincy Jones, John Lautner, Myron Hunt, Julia Morgan, I.M. Pei, and Frank Lloyd Wright.³⁸

Whitney R. Smith

Whitney R. Smith was born in Pasadena, California in 1911.³⁹ Smith received a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Southern California (USC) in 1934. After working as a movie set designer for a brief period, Smith worked under architect Harwell Hamilton Harris before starting his own practice in 1941. Smith was responsible for designing the Linda Vista Shipping Center in San Diego, a revolutionary site plan that placed a green in the center. He taught architecture and planning at USC in the early 1940s and at Scripps College from 1945 to 1952.⁴⁰

Besides working with Wayne R. Williams, Smith also collaborated with A. Quincy Jones and Edgardo Contini between 1948 and 1950 on the Mutual Housing Association planned community of Crestwood Hills in Brentwood. The project's emphasis on materials, such as exposed concrete block, redwood siding, and Douglas fir ceiling planks, alongside "expanses of glass creating an illusion of free-flowing space" came to define Smith's architectural vocabulary.⁴¹ Smith was also responsible for two architectural designs for the Case Study Houses project, a program designed to influence public opinion on the benefits of modern

³⁶ ArchinForm, "James E. Dolena, Architect," <https://eng.archinform.net/arch/83801.htm>, accessed May 2016.

³⁷ Maynard Parker, *Sectional Demountable Building Models*, (photograph), June 1942, <http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15150coll5/id/5777/rec/4>, accessed July 2017.

³⁸ "List of Master Architects," Planning Department, City of Beverly Hills. n.d.

³⁹ "Obituaries: Smith, Whitney R.," *Pasadena Star-News*, March 20, 2002.

⁴⁰ McLellan, "Whitney Smith, 91; Pioneer in Modernist Architecture."

⁴¹ "Crestwood Hills," Los Angeles Conservancy, <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/crestwood-hills>, accessed January 16, 2019.

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architecture. Case Study House #5, Loggia House, dramatically reorganized the approach to traditional planning. This design deconstructed the residence into separate rooms centered around a garden.⁴² Besides his individually unique approach to planning and design, Smith was also an engineer in craft and material usage. In 1955, *Popular Science* magazine featured a section on *moké*, a craft designed by Smith that weaves plywood to form intricate designs.⁴³

Smith worked with Williams from 1939 to 1973. From 1973 to 1987, he went into private practice and moved to Sonoma, California. He passed away in 2002.⁴⁴

Wayne R. Williams

Wayne R. Williams was born in Los Angeles in 1919 where he studied architecture at USC. Williams enrolled in the U.S. Army during World War II. In this capacity, he designed hangars and military buildings before returning to USC at the war's culmination. He graduated with a bachelor's degree and immediately started studying under Smith. Williams was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

After the dissolution of the firm, Williams continued to practice architecture. He designed large-scale projects for Giuseppe Cecchi's International Developers Inc. in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Williams moved to Virginia in 2003 with his wife Paula Williams. He passed away in 2007.⁴⁵

Smith & Williams⁴⁶

The architectural firm of Smith & Williams was formed by Whitney R. Smith and Wayne R. Williams and based in South Pasadena, California. The pair began working together in 1946 and formed a partnership from 1949 to 1973. Smith & Williams was active in the post-war building boom, and was responsible for hundreds of homes as well as schools, community buildings, recreational facilities, and commercial buildings. They were notable for their post-and-beam construction that lauded the tenants of Mid-Century Modern design. The duo's use of wood is of note, as it inspired architectural historian Esther McCoy to write a segment on the firm's use of the material. As Smith stated: "use a few materials and exploit them thoroughly. The façade of a house should create a feeling of friendliness rather than attempting to startle the visitor."⁴⁷ Besides materials, the architectural firm was also lauded for their revolutionary planning and design, which allowed them to integrate landscapes and building programs for a uniquely

⁴² Jane Patton, "Case Study House #5: Experimental Planning Defies Convention," Better Living Social, 2015, <http://betterlivingsocial.com/c%E2%80%8Bbase-study-house-5-experimental-planning-defies-convention/>, accessed July 2017.

⁴³ "Make it with Moké: New 3-D Way to Decorate with Plywood," *Popular Science*, September 1955, 201.

⁴⁴ McLellan, "Whitney Smith, 91; Pioneer in Modernist Architecture."

⁴⁵ Claire Noland, "Award-winning Architect left Modernist imprint across the Southland," *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 2007.

⁴⁶ Historic Resources Group and Pasadena Heritage, "Cultural Resources of the Recent Past Historic Context Statement," Pasadena, CA, October 2007.

⁴⁷ Esther McCoy, "A Statement of Architectural Principles," *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1956, 329.

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“Indoor-Outdoor” style. The firm’s work was a popular subject of Julius Schulman’s photography. Schulman recounted the firm’s work as “instrumental in bringing architecture down to earth, to the level of the average client... but they didn’t beat their drums loud enough; that’s why they didn’t become world-famous.”⁴⁸

Smith & Williams’ Community Facilities Planners Building in South Pasadena was constructed in 1958. This building, besides serving as their work base, was notable for its groundbreaking design. It is listed by the Southern California Chapter of the AIA as “one of the most significant examples of Los Angeles architecture constructed between 1947 and 1967.”⁴⁹

Kenneth Masao Nishimoto

Kenneth Masao Nishimoto was a renowned architect based in Pasadena, California. Born in Japan, Nishimoto moved to the United States at the age of thirteen and graduated from USC with a degree in architecture in 1934.⁵⁰ Nishimoto was a member of the AIA, and lauded Japanese design principals. In the 1940s, like many Japanese Americans, Nishimoto was sent to a wartime internment camp. William Henry Taylor, a fellow architect from Pasadena, worked with Nishimoto and other Japanese American architects on projects related to the design of internment camps with the hope of securing an earlier release.⁵¹

Upon the end of the war, Nishimoto again began to practice architecture in Los Angeles. Nishimoto realized that many Japanese principles were foreign to Western design standards, yet others were increasingly adopted by professionals. Nishimoto imbued many Japanese elements into his Southern California buildings, including the 500-year-old practice of integrating the indoors and outdoors.⁵² As he remarked in 1960, Americans had employed Japanese principles in architecture for years, such as with the use of sliding doors to carry space inside. By designing this way, he continued, “there is an easy transition from the exterior to the interior so that the house is a unity with the earth, space, light, and nature.”⁵³ Other design elements adopted included exposed posts and beams, more modular plans for proportioned spaces, and movable partitions. Perhaps the most integral characteristic of his designs was their inherent simplicity; he even went on to call himself a “one-man revolt against the ornate.”⁵⁴ These design principals were materialized in his many projects.

In 1957, Nishimoto built his residence at 1525 Poppy Peak Drive in Pasadena. Nishimoto collaborated with other architects and landscape architects for this Mid-Century Modern-style neighborhood later identified as the Poppy Peak National Register Historic District. Residences date from 1935 to 1968 and were designed by master architects including Kenneth Masao

⁴⁸ Noland, “Award-winning architect left Modernist imprint across the Southland.”

⁴⁹ Pierluigi Serraino, *Modernism Rediscovered* (New York: Taschen, 2000), 104.

⁵⁰ Jean Krenzer, “New Directions,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1960, 73.

⁵¹ National Register of Historic Places, Poppy Peak Historic District, Pasadena, Los Angeles County, California, National Register # 09000182, 8.

⁵² “Outdoor Living Not New,” *Independent Star-News* (Pasadena, CA), June 12, 1960, 44.

⁵³ Krenzer, “New Directions.”

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

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Nishimoto, Lyman Ennis, James Pulliam, Buff, Straug & Hensman, Leland Evison, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Richard Neutra, William Henry Taylor, and Robert Cox. Landscapes were designed by experts including Theodore Payne and Garrett Eckbo.⁵⁵

Projects included the Antelope Valley Senior Center, Joseph Illig & Sons Inc. Headquarters, and numerous residences, including the J. Gregory Conway home in Fullerton.⁵⁶ Nishimoto also led annual architectural tours of Japan.⁵⁷ Nishimoto died in 2002.

Eijiro Nunokawa

Eijiro Nunokawa was born in Japan in 1905 before moving to the United States. Nunokawa was born into landscape architecture as his family had designed gardens in Japan for seven generations.⁵⁸ He was an accomplished landscape architect in Los Angeles before moving to Atlanta.

In addition to designing the Japanese Garden at Descanso Gardens, Nunokawa designed the Japanese garden in Brand Park in Glendale, created to honor Glendale's sister city, Higashiosaka, Japan.⁵⁹ Nunokawa also designed the Japanese garden in the Occidental Life Insurance Company's Occidental Center in Los Angeles; William L. Pereira designed the building.⁶⁰ Nunokawa also designed residential gardens, including that of the Zinsmeyer family in Arcadia, California.⁶¹ Continuing the family tradition, Eijiro trained his son, Eiichi Nunokawa, who worked with him. Eijiro Nunokawa died in 1987.⁶²

⁵⁵ National Register of Historic Places, Poppy Peak Historic District, 5.

⁵⁶ "Solar Energy Considered for Seniors' Center," *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 1976, 144; Maxine Bartlett, "A Japanese Palace," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1958, 382; "Remodeled," *Los Angeles Times*, October 31, 1965, 143.

⁵⁷ "Calendar," *Progressive Architecture*, 44(6): 70, June 1963.

⁵⁸ "Home and Garden tours herald arrival of spring in Atlanta," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 24, 1985, 356.

⁵⁹ Don Snyder, "Sister City Shrine a Step Closer to Reality," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1970, 42; Descanso Gardens Guild, Inc., "Report of Progress," February 1966.

⁶⁰ Art Seidenbaum, "Los Angeles: The New Neighborhood," *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1972, 173; Toyo Miyatake Studio, "Nunokawa Japanese garden in Occidental Center," Japanese American National Museum, April 10, 1965, <http://www.janm.org/collections/item/96.267.863/>, accessed July 2017.

⁶¹ Margaret Stovall, "Home of the Week," *Independent Star-News* (Pasadena, CA), September 1, 1963, 34.

⁶² "California, Death Index, 1940-1997," Ancestry.com, 2000.

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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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation
Descanso Gardens Guild, Inc.

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 149

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 34.202551 | Longitude: -118.217684 |
| 2. Latitude: 34.204569 | Longitude: -118.213317 |
| 3. Latitude: 34.202570 | Longitude: -118.208535 |
| 4. Latitude: 34.195340 | Longitude: -118.212805 |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Boundary begins west of the guest parking lot to include Boddy Lodge and Lakeside Lookout, then south to include the Camellia Oak Forest, then east to include the Boddy Complex, and then north to include the Japanese Garden, Tea House, and Minka House.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses all contributing resources with original landscaping and construction within the two Assessor parcels that comprise the legal property. Peripheral areas that have lost integrity, due to new construction and landscaping, are excluded.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Alexandra Madsen, Senior Architectural Historian; Carrie Chasteen, Historic Resources Manager; Kasey Conley, Architectural Historian

organization: Sapphos Environmental, Inc.

street & number: 430 N. Halstead Street

city or town: Pasadena state: CA zip code: 91107

e-mail amadsen@sapphosenvironmental.com

telephone: (626) 683-3547

date: January 2019; Revised May 2019, August 2019, October 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Descanso Gardens
City or Vicinity: La Cañada Flintridge
County: Los Angeles
State: California
Photographer: Alexandra Madsen
Date Photographed: January 11, 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 18 Boddy Complex, House, camera facing north
- 2 of 18 Boddy Complex, House, camera facing northeast
- 3 of 18 Boddy Complex, Chauffeur's Quarters, camera facing east
- 4 of 18 Boddy Lodge, camera facing northwest
- 5 of 18 Boddy Lodge, camera facing southeast
- 6 of 18 Caretaker's Cottage, camera facing northwest
- 7 of 18 Boddy Drive Landscape Features, camera facing northwest
- 8 of 18 Descanso Creek Landscape Features, Stone Bridge, camera facing northeast
- 9 of 18 Descanso Creek Landscape Features, Rose Pond, camera facing west
- 10 of 18 Camellia Forest, camera facing east
- 11 of 18 Japanese Garden, camera facing northeast
- 12 of 18 Tea House, camera facing east

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- 13 of 18 Tea House, camera facing northwest
- 14 of 18 Minka House, camera facing southeast
- 15 of 18 Minka House, camera facing northeast
- 16 of 18 Japanese Garden Bridge, camera facing south
- 17 of 18 Lakeside Lookout, camera facing southeast
- 18 of 18 Lakeside Lookout, camera facing east

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.).

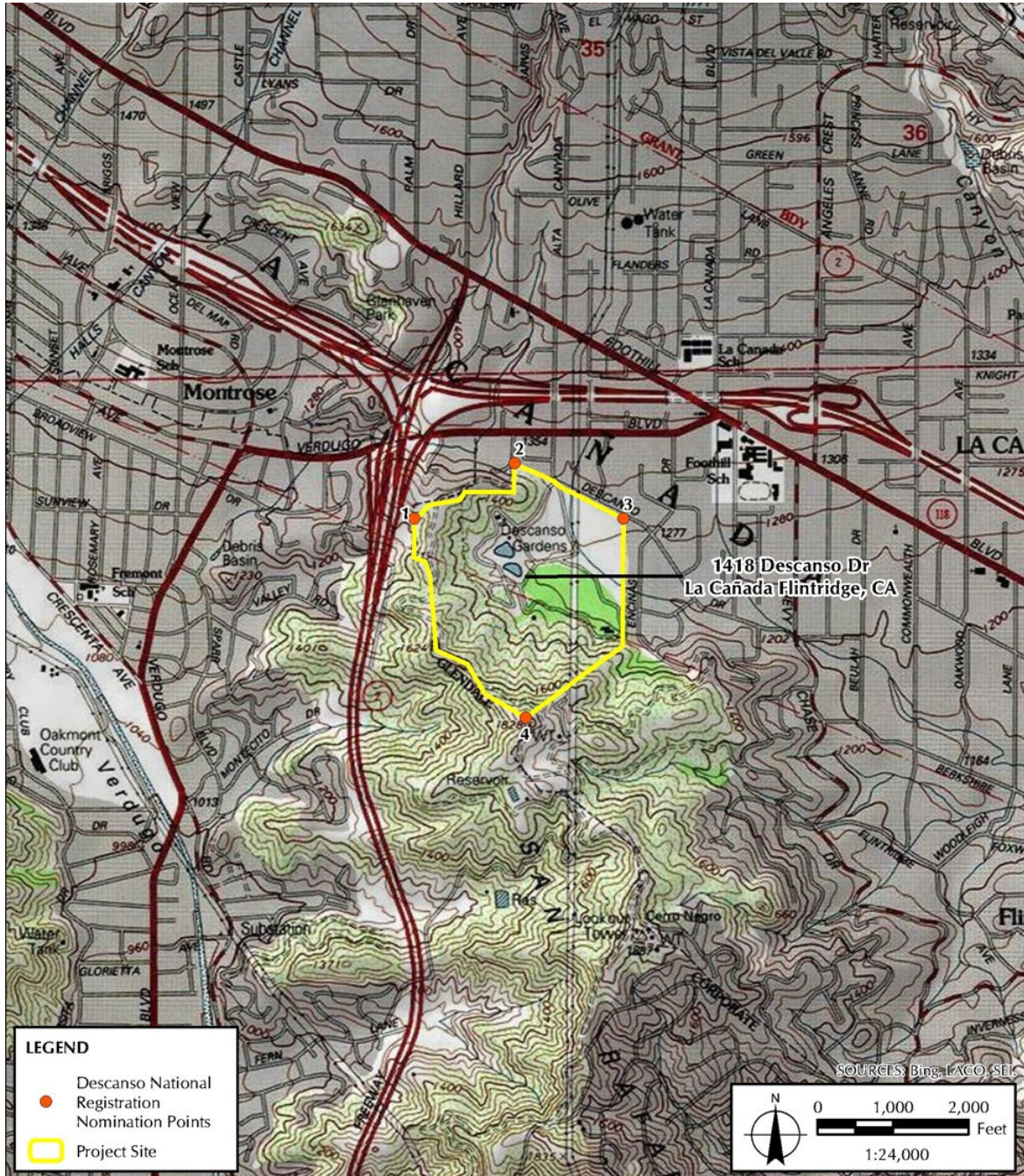
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Location Map

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 34.202551 | Longitude: -118.217684 |
| 2. Latitude: 34.204569 | Longitude: -118.213317 |
| 3. Latitude: 34.202570 | Longitude: -118.208535 |
| 4. Latitude: 34.195340 | Longitude: -118.212805 |



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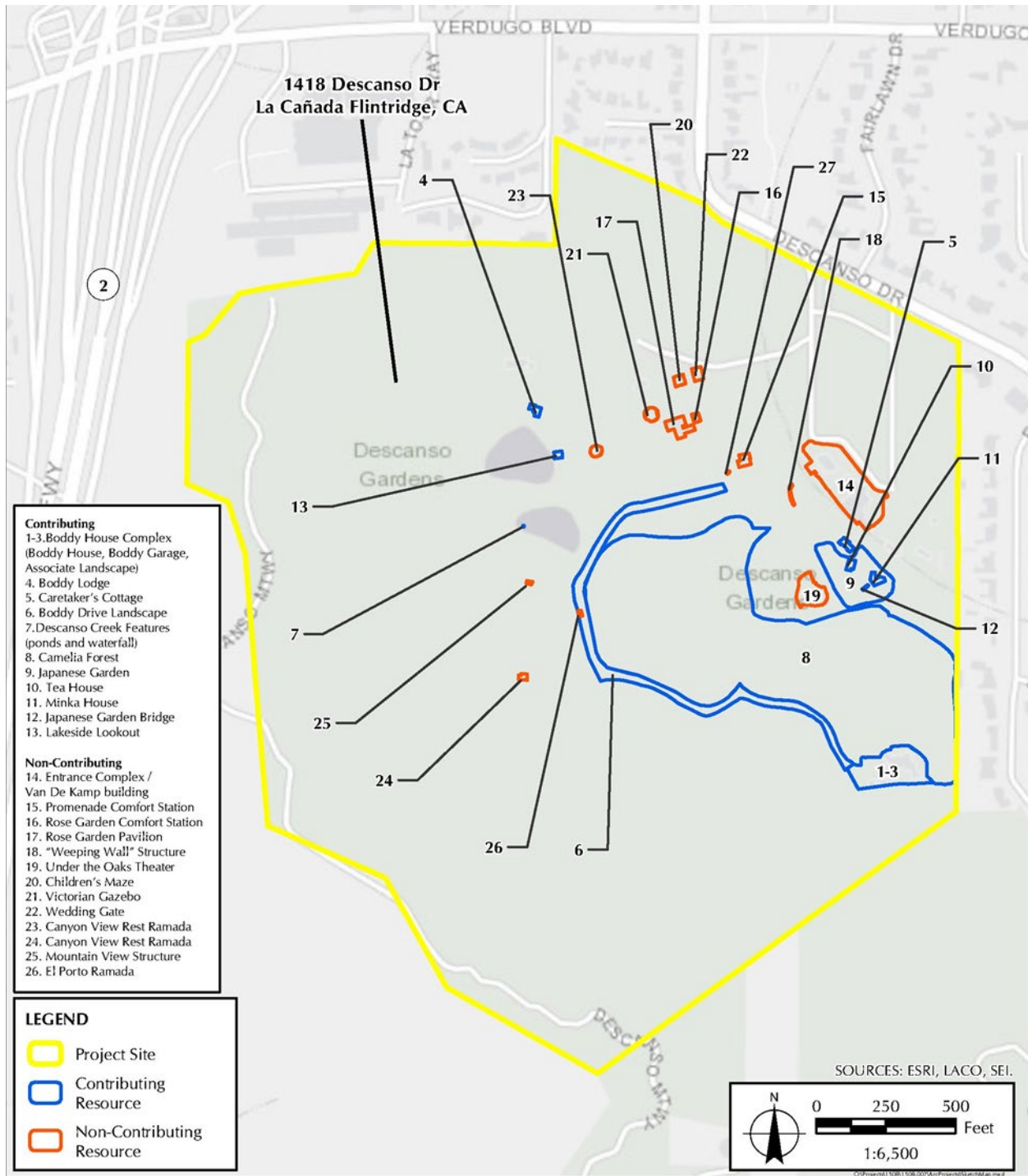
Site Map (Aerial View)



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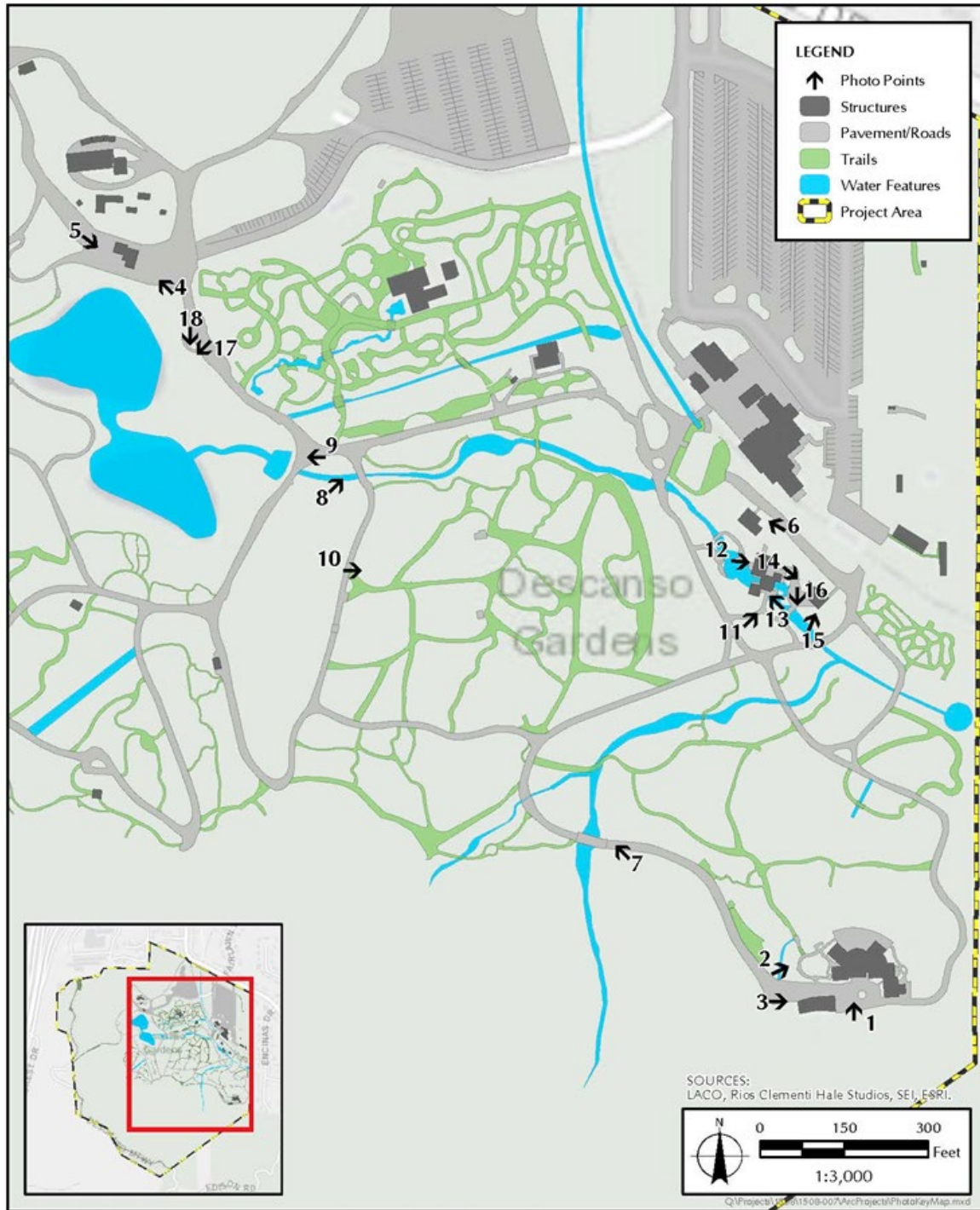
Sketch Map



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Photo Key



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Figure 1. Aerial View of Boddy House and Garage, 1965 (Courtesy of the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors Photo Unit)

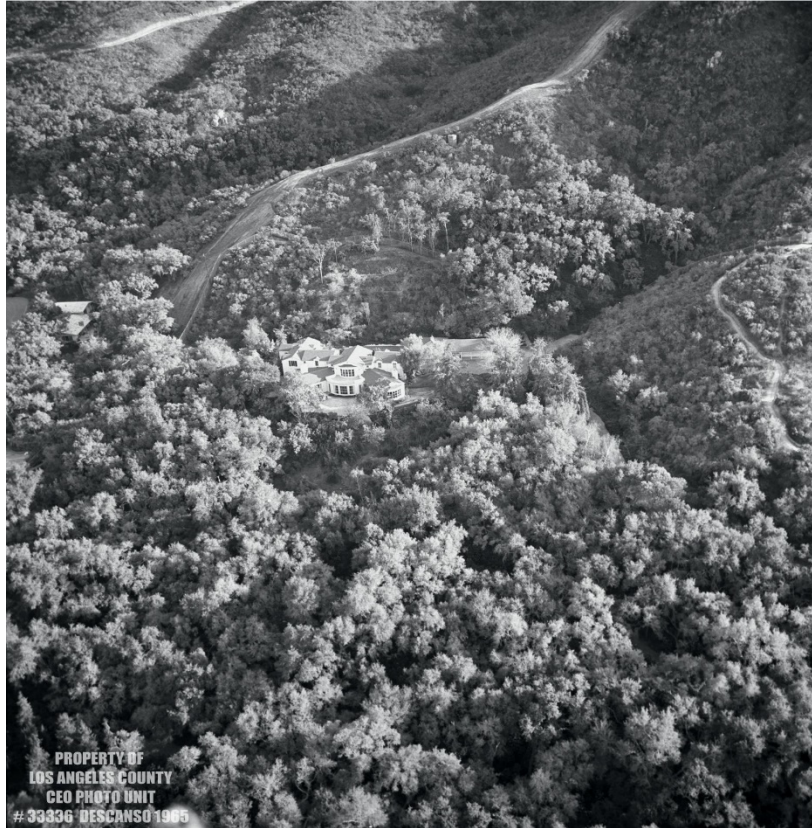


Figure 2. Boddy House Façade, 1955 (Courtesy of the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors Photo Unit)



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Figure 3. Boddy Drive Stone Culvert and Bridge, 1955 (Courtesy of the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors Photo Unit)



Figure 4. Boddy Drive Stone Walls and Curbing, 1957 (Courtesy of the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors Photo Unit)



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Figure 5. Lakeside Lookout, circa 1970 (Courtesy of the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation)



Figure 6. Mulberry Pond, 1956 (Courtesy of the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors Photo Unit)



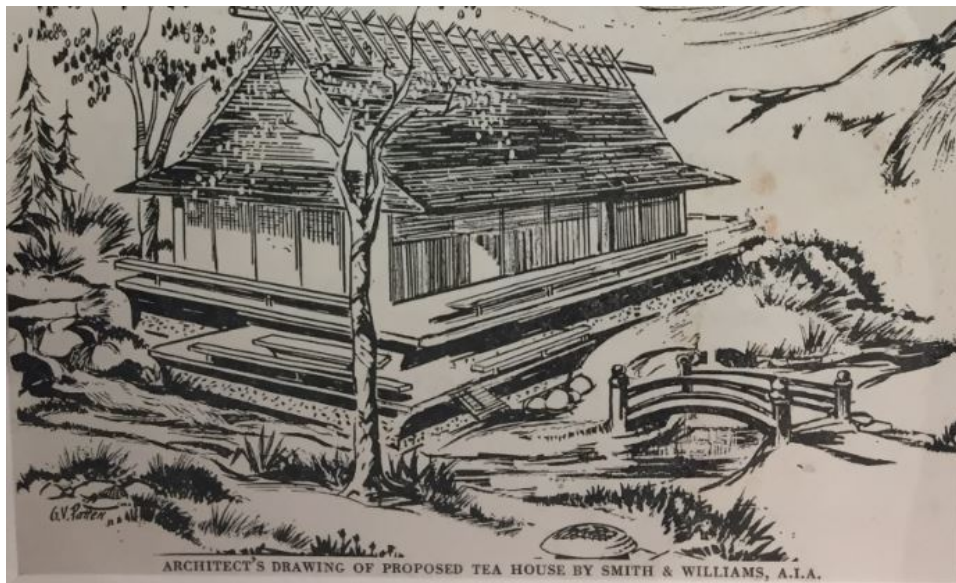
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Figure 7. Master Plan by Eijiro Nunokawa & Son, 1966 (Courtesy of the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation)



Figure 8. Architect's Drawing of Proposed Tea House by Smith & Williams, AIA, c. 1965 (Courtesy of the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation)



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Figure 9. Japanese Garden and Tea House, 1966 (Courtesy of the Huntington Gardens and Library, Photo Collection #310 [1285]; Photo by Ward Linton)



Figure 10. Tea House, 1966 (Courtesy of the Huntington Gardens and Library, Photo Collection #310 [1283]; Photo by Ward Linton)

