

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: Congdon, Stephen and Persis Hart Browne House (herein, Congdon House)

Other names/site number: N/A

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: 2928 North Orlando Avenue

City or town: Tucson State: AZ County: Pima

Not For Publication: Vicinity: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 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 X 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

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B XC D

<p><i>Karen Stever</i> <u>28 Nov 2017</u></p> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>SAPO</u> Date: _____</p> <p><u>Arizona State Parks and Trails</u></p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>
<p>In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <p>Signature of commenting official: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Title: _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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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)

<u>Contributing:</u>	<u>Noncontributing:</u>	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling - house

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling - house

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7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Modern Movement

Materials: Principal exterior materials of the property:

ADOBE
BURNT ADOBE WALLS/MORTAR-WASHED
WOOD CEILINGS AND ROOF STRUCTURE
STEEL POSTS
STEEL SASH WINDOWS W/PLATE GLASS

Summary Paragraph

The Congdon/Persis Hart Browne House (hereinafter Congdon House) is a 5,500 SF single story Mid-century Modern ranch-style home designed in 1957 by the architect Arthur T. Brown, FAIA (1900–1993) and located just west of the Ft. Lowell Historic District in Tucson, Arizona. Art Brown, as he was known to friends and colleagues, was a significant regional architect and one of Tucson’s first Modernists. He arrived to Tucson from the Midwest in the mid-1930s in the depths of the Great Depression and at a time revival styles reigned supreme in architecture. Houses in Tucson were then typically built in the Mediterranean or Pueblo Revival style, while public buildings were Neo-Classical or California Mission-Revival Style. Art Brown introduced an unpretentious regionally-appropriate Modernism to Southern Arizona. In a prolific career, he designed hundreds of buildings including residences, offices, churches, schools and university buildings. The Congdon House is evidence that Art Brown was working within the broader Southern California ‘contemporary’ style of the 1950s and 1960s, as championed by Sunset Magazine. Furthermore, Brown created a unique local variation of that style, employing regional construction materials such as burnt adobe blocks from neighboring Sonora, Mexico. The Congdon House was completed in 1959. Building materials include mortar-washed burnt adobe bearing walls; wood board-and-batten partitions; and extensive plate glass window-walls with sliding glass doors. The house plan forms an ‘L’ with the east wing containing public spaces (foyer, living room, dining room, kitchen and carport) while the north wing contains private spaces (bedrooms and bathrooms). A low-slope timber-framed roof rises at a constant shallow pitch from south to north, with deep roof overhangs and porches adjoining interior spaces. This gives the house a sense of openness and free-flowing space, both between rooms and from interior to exterior. These qualities are characteristic of the Southern California ‘contemporary’ style of era, itself a regional variation of the Modern Movement in architecture. A non-contributing detached garage was built to the south in 2016. The Congdon House is in excellent condition, retaining integrity of historic features, setting, feeling, association and character-defining elements.

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Narrative Description

Note: Maps and Photos may be found at p. 20 and after.

Location

The Congdon House stands on a 1.6 acre parcel located west of the Alamo Wash and south of E. Fort Lowell Rd., near the Fort Lowell National Register Historic District of Tucson. The property is accessed from N. Orlando Ave. at the intersection of E. San Francisco Blvd. A 300 ft. long single-lane graveled drive extends from Orlando Ave. eastward along the south side of the property (*Sketch Map #1 - Site Plan, p.21*). Approaching the Congdon house, a circular driveway fills the open southwest corner of the L-plan. This creates a public arrival court and guest parking area.

Setting

The surrounding neighborhood is characterized by single-story suburban development, with single family residences on large lots with mature landscaping (*Map #1 - Aerial Photo, p. 20*). To the east are two cul-de-sac streets lined with detached single family homes, and then the Alamo Wash. The site has an informal, semi-rural feeling.

Site

The site has its own water well, and as a result has been lushly landscaped throughout its history with trees, shrubs and grass to create a cool micro-climate surrounding the house. The plant palette is primarily Mediterranean, with Asian accents. Trees include Aleppo pine, olive, African sumac, eucalyptus, chaste tree and mock orange. Shrubs include oleander, lantana and heavenly bamboo. California fan palms and alligator juniper trees are also found on site. The east and north sides of the house have grass lawns and accent plants including rose bushes (*Photos #7 and #16*).

East and north side yards gain privacy from neighboring properties through 5 ft. high concrete block screen walls and mature vegetation. An 'L'-shaped swimming pool is located north of the house. The side yards have pathways of concrete and brick pavers, and brick borders are used to define planter spaces for trees and foliage. Views from the house interior are into this lush, green yard (*Photos #9 and #12*). This approach to landscaping with non-native plants is typical of 1950s Tucson. Presently city residents tend to use more native and drought-tolerant plants, to reduce water use in the arid climate. But in the period of significance water was used freely to irrigate lush landscaping, and in the Southern California 'contemporary' style landscaping was an important element to integrate with the design of the house. It is not known if Art Brown designed the landscaping, or if there was a landscape architect involved; it's possible that the landscaping was done by the home owners themselves over the past half century. Nevertheless, the character of exterior space was defined by the architect, through the placement and shape of the house on site. Space flows from interior to exterior, via extensive window-walls and sliding glass doors.

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This area of Tucson is known for its association with Fort Lowell, a US military post established during the Apache Wars in 1873. The Fort was active until 1891, with approximately 30 adobe buildings including accommodations, a hospital, commissary, stables, trading store, guard house and parade ground.¹ It is possible that a portion of the Congdon House – two small mud adobe rooms at the extreme south end of the house – may have been used as outlying officer's quarters for historic Fort Lowell. The walls of these rooms are built of un-stabilized mud adobe brick with ceilings of saguaro cactus ribs on timber beams, materials that are characteristic of the historic period of Ft. Lowell (**Photo #14**). While this story may be apocryphal, Brown incorporated this earlier structure into his Mid-century 'contemporary' design. On the original house plans these two adobe rooms are identified as 'workshop' and 'den' – appropriately located adjacent to the carport, at the southeast corner.

House

The L-shaped floor plan (*Sketch Map #2 - Floor Plan, p. 22*) has an east wing, with its long axis running north to south, containing public spaces (foyer, living room, dining room, kitchen and carport) and a north wing, with its long axis running east to west, containing private spaces (bedrooms and bathrooms). The principal rooms (living room, dining room and master bedroom) open to the exterior via floor-to-ceiling steel-sash windows and sliding glass doors (**Photos #9 and #12**). Masonry walls are deployed in unbroken planes (i.e. solid walls without window or door openings) placed to define the various rooms, as illustrated in the floor plan. The masonry walls are connected by planes of glass – that is, the exterior enclosure is composed of alternating planes of masonry and glass, as opposed to window openings being set into the masonry walls with lintels, as was done in traditional houses.

Exterior bearing walls are typically 12" thick mortar-washed burnt adobe, exposed inside and out (**Photo #5**). This is a low-fire solid clay brick imported from the neighboring Mexican state of Sonora, in the same sizes and shapes as mud adobe brick. Technically this is not truly adobe, as adobe is unfired mud brick; nonetheless it is colloquially referred to as burnt adobe. Nominal burnt adobe sizes (i.e. including ¾" thick mortar joints) typically range from 8" to 12" wide, by 4" high, by 16" long. These large bricks were fired in wood-burning kilns in Sonora, just an hour's drive by highway south of Tucson. Their use here sets the Congdon House apart from other examples of the 'Southern California contemporary,' making it more truly 'Southern Arizona contemporary.' Burnt adobe was introduced to the region by the Spanish in 1783, and was used for construction of the walls and roof domes of San Xavier del Bac Mission, the National Historic Landmark located 10 miles south of downtown Tucson. Thus the Congdon House shares a regional wall material with the oldest extant structure of European design in Arizona.

The 1950s and 60s were the hey-day of burnt adobe in southern Arizona, when it was widely used in residential construction as a locally available and economical wall material. Since 1975 burnt adobe has fallen largely out of use in the US, due in part to rising labor costs for masons, but also as a result building codes requiring masonry walls to be reinforced against lateral forces. Being of solid clay, burnt adobe cannot be readily reinforced with steel rebar and concrete grout as is the case with hollow concrete blocks.

¹ Jeffery, Brooks and Anne M. Nequette. *A Guide to Tucson Architecture*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002; and SWCA Report No. 02-18, *Fort Lowell Historic District* Portfolio II Tucson, 2004.

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Commercial block manufacturers now produce a terra-cotta colored hollow concrete block in the approximate size of burnt adobe (8"W x 4"H x 16"L), although allowing for only a 3/8" thick mortar joint as is typical with concrete block. Hence these 'faux' burnt adobes do not capture the actual proportion of the original material. Being machine made, they also lack the subtle variation in shape and color found in true burnt adobe made by hand under primitive conditions in rural Mexico.

Burnt adobe is still produced in Sonora and elsewhere in Mexico, where it is still widely used in construction. In the US it is now in limited use as a landscape paving material and for site walls. The fact that Art Brown employed a traditional regional material in the construction of a Modernist or 'contemporary' home is noteworthy.

Two small rooms at the southeast corner of the house are the exception to the above description: these have true adobe walls (unfired mud brick), plastered and painted inside and out, with conventional window and door openings set in the walls (*Photo #14*). The roof of this section is wood beams and saguaro rib lathing. These rooms predate the Congdon House and, judging from their construction materials and methods, appear to date to the late 19th century. As noted above, they may have been outlying structures of historic Fort Lowell.

Interior partitions are of 2x4 wood frame, with 1x12 board-and-batten siding and extensive built-in shelving and cabinetry. The hallway along the north bedroom wing is lined with built in shelving and storage modules, finished with board and batten siding. The thickness of this storage wall achieves privacy for the bedrooms and bathrooms (*Photo #10*).

The roof/ceiling structure is exposed heavy timber beams with lapped rough-sawn 2x12 fir decking, that gently slopes for the length of the house (*Photo #12*). The low-slope roof is a common characteristic of the Southern California contemporary style, as practiced by the architects Cliff May, Quincy Jones and Joseph Esherick Jr. among others.

All exposed wood in the house – siding, shelving and roof/ceiling decking – is stained with a semi-opaque 'driftwood gray' stain, typical of the period and Arthur Brown's residential designs (*Photo #2*).

In the kitchen and sitting room, Brown used three-inch diameter steel columns to keep the floor plan open and leave the structure simplified (*Photo #12*). The beams spanning the ceiling extend beyond the exterior walls to create deep heavy-timber overhangs that taper at the edges (*Photo #11*).

The house responds to the sunny climate of the Sonoran Desert with deep roof overhangs to shade glass clerestories and deep porches off the living and dining rooms, recessed under the roof line to function as outdoor rooms, while also shading the window-walls (*Photo #15*).

The living room features a masonry fireplace flanked by windows and built-in benches, along a north-facing window wall oriented for views to the Catalina Mountains (*Photo #3*). This system of planes framing specific views is used throughout the house. From the dining room/family room, the window wall looks east into the side yard (*Photo #12*). The master bedroom also has a window wall oriented for northern views, with sliding doors opening to north and west (*Photo #9*).

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Both the west and south-facing walls have partial height masonry walls with continuous clerestory glazing above, extending to the roof structure (*Photos #2 and #11*). The bedroom hallway is lined with built in shelving and storage modules, finished with board and batten siding (*Photo #10*). The clerestory creates a long ribbon window expression on the south and west facades of the house (*Photo #11*), a common characteristic of Modernist architecture. Traditional openings are used only for windows in the small bedrooms on the north side of the house (*Photo #8*).

Alterations

In 1962, the Congdon's again engaged Arthur Brown to design additions to and the remodeling of their then-new home (*Sketch Map #2 - Floor Plan, p. 22*). He added a fourth bedroom at the west end of the bedroom/bathroom wing; enclosed a portion of the east porch as a family room (*Photo # 13*); remodeled the kitchen and pantry; and expanded the original carport by lengthening it ten feet to the south and adding two storage closets at the east.

In 1971 the carport was enclosed to create a family/game room. Drawings for this design have not been found, so it is not certain who designed this alteration. Art Brown lived and practiced up into the 1990s, so it's possible that he was the architect. The enclosure was done in a sympathetic manner using board-and-batten siding stained driftwood gray, and with glass doors typical of the original house.

In 2016 a new free-standing garage was built 16 feet south of the original house (*Photo #17*). The scale and form of the garage reflect the low-slope shed roof of the original, with a continuous north-facing clerestory to bring natural light into the space. The walls of new building are un-galvanized metal siding that will be allowed to rust, to distinguish the addition from the original burnt adobe construction. The addition was designed by the architect Bob Vint to be compatible with the original Art Brown design, yet differentiated.

Integrity of Design and Materials

The Congdon House is in an excellent state of maintenance and retains its original character-defining elements, including: horizontal low-slung massing with a broad, low-sloping roof form; open floor plan, creating a variety of spaces that flow through the house and site; burnt adobe wall planes; steel sash window-walls with sliding glass doors; deep exterior porches where interior spaces flow out to the exterior; exposed structural timber roof framing; and continuous clerestory windows protected by deep roof overhangs.

Over the years certain details have been altered -- such as the substitution of revival-style light fixtures at the interior that are incompatible with the Mid-Century Modern aesthetic of the original -- but these are readily reversible and do no permanent harm to the integrity of the house or its ability to convey its significance. The totality of physical integrity of the Congdon House conveys its significance as an expression of the Southern California 'contemporary' movement, within Modernist architectural philosophy and practice of 1959, and with regional variations unique to its location in Southern Arizona.

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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.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1959

Significant Dates

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1959

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Arthur T. Brown, Architect

(Contractor unknown)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Congdon House is eligible for NRHP listing at the Local Level of Significance under Criterion C, as it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, and possesses high artistic values.” This house is evidence that the Mid-century Modernist architect Arthur T. Brown of Tucson, Arizona, was working in the Southern California ‘Contemporary’ style, a regional offshoot of the Modern Movement that was practiced in the American west in the 1950s and 1960s. The house was designed in 1957 and completed in 1959 – in the heart of this time period. The Congdon House is a fine example of this type of construction, embodying the essential characteristics of the Southern California ‘Contemporary’ style including: horizontality; an open floor plan; freely flowing spaces between interior and exterior; a broad, low-sloping roof form; exposed structural timber roof framing; and continuous clerestory windows protected by deep roof overhangs. The period of significance is 1959.

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

The Southern California ‘contemporary’ style within the Modern Movement

Southern California ‘contemporary’ designs display both Western and Eastern architectural influences – in the broader sense of European and Asian cultural antecedents. Modern residential architecture in the United States can be traced to the Arts and Crafts movement of mid-19th C. England (a response to the dehumanizing effects of the Industrial Revolution); through the “discovery” of Japanese art and architecture in that same era (Japan, after centuries of isolation, was finally opened to the West by a US Navy fleet in 1853); to the pioneering work of designers and architects the ‘American Craftsman’ movement (notably Gustave Stickley in upstate New York and the brothers Greene in Southern California); and the ‘Prairie School’ in the Midwest (most notably Frank Lloyd Wright, who went on to develop the ideal Usonian house and accompanying Broadacre City – aspiring to the Jeffersonian ideal of the Agrarian Republic). All these ideas and influences were swirling around in an early-onset of globalization – then following World War II, they mixed with European Modernism and the ideals of the Bauhaus, in search of an honest architectural expression for the Modern era.

In the 1959 Congdon house of Tucson, Arizona, we see a post and beam structure with heavy-timber-framing and built-in cabinets and shelving, recalling the simplicity and efficiency of traditional Japanese residential architecture. In the placement of solid burnt adobe wall panels, alternating with open window walls, we see space freely composed in a manner that recalls early European modernism, as seen at the Brick Country House project of 1923 by Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe, the revolutionary German modernist. These influences from Asia and Europe are interrelated – and in a sense, Southern California ‘contemporary’ represents the architecture come full circle: from England and Japan to America; from America to Europe; the back from Europe, to the west coast of the United States.

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Frank Lloyd Wright introduced the open floor plan to America, where the kitchen (now called a “work space”) opened to the dining area, which then opened to the living space, and beyond that through glass doors onto a terrace – as opposed to conceiving of the house as a series of enclosed rooms. These ideas Wright had, in turn, absorbed from his “discovery” of Japanese architecture. Wright was inspired by the Japanese conception of space, first through a fascination with Japanese prints (which he collected widely) and subsequently through a study of Japanese architecture. He admired the clarity of structure through which space flowed, and the blurring of the distinction between interior and exterior through sliding *shoji* screens.² These traits are visible in the Congdon House – with the *shoji* replaced by sliding glass doors.

Wright embraced the use of materials in their natural state, a philosophical reflection of both Shintoism (the indigenous religion of Japan) and Zen Buddhism (the uniquely Japanese version of an originally Indian religion).³ The 1942 book on Wright’s work (co-authored with Henry-Russell Hitchcock, author of the seminal ‘The International Style’ just a few years earlier) was entitled *In The Nature of Materials*. This influence is seen in the Congdon house, where rough-sawn fir and mortar-washed burnt adobe are the structure, the enclosure and the finish of the house, all in one.

Wright helped open the way to Modernism for European architects, transmitting the lessons he has learned from Japan. It was the publication of Wright’s work in Germany (*The Wasmuth Portfolio*, 1910) that inspired Mies van der Rohe with the possibilities of the free plan. Prior to seeing Wright’s work, Mies’s own designs were conventional, even traditional. Afterwards he designed open floor plans as seen in his Brick Country House project of 1923 and the Barcelona Pavilion of 1929. When asked about Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies stated: “He was certainly a great genius – there’s no question about that.”⁴

“The Wasmuth portfolio (1910) is a two-volume folio of 100 lithographs of the work of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959)... The portfolio is significant as a link between Wright’s pioneering American architecture, and the first generation of modernist architects in Europe. Wright toured Europe for a year from October 1909 through October 1910, partly to support the publication of the portfolio, but also to experience first-hand a great deal of European architectural history... Wright’s early influence in northern Europe is unquestionable: Le Corbusier is known to have had and shared a copy... At the time of the portfolio’s publication, three major influential architects of the twentieth century (Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius) were all working as apprentices in the atelier of Peter Behrens in Berlin, where it has been said that work stopped for the day when the portfolio arrived.”⁵

² Nute, Kevin: Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: The role of traditional Japanese art and architecture in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993.

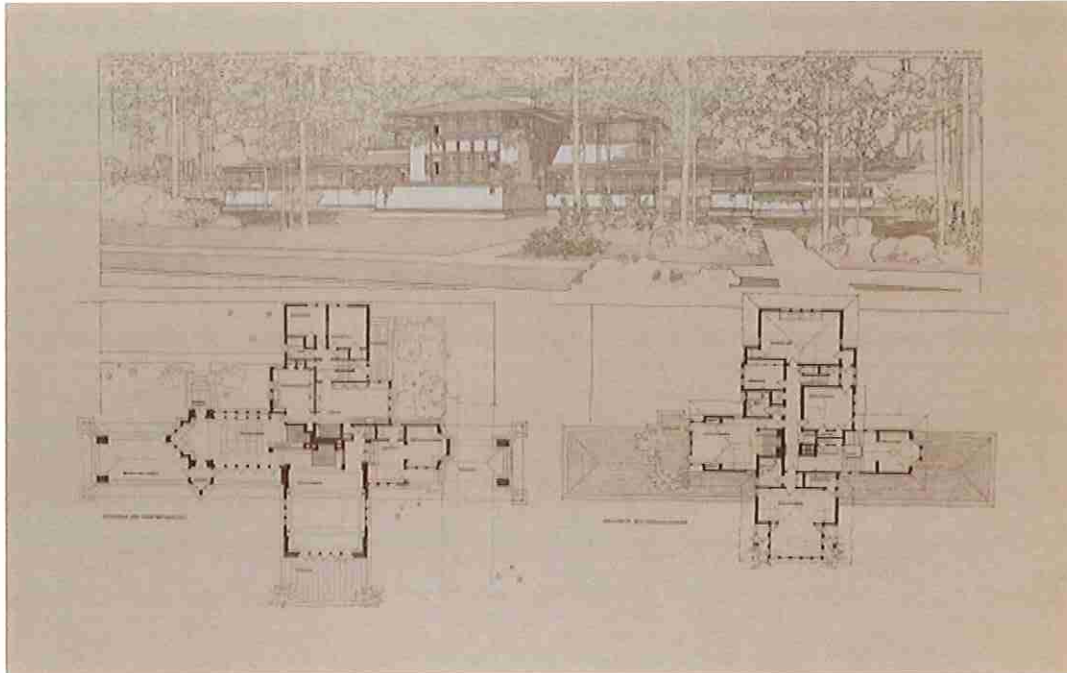
³ Nute, Kevin: Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan, op. cit.

⁴ Puente, Moisés (Ed.): Conversations with Mies Van der Rohe. New York. Princeton Architectural Press, 2008

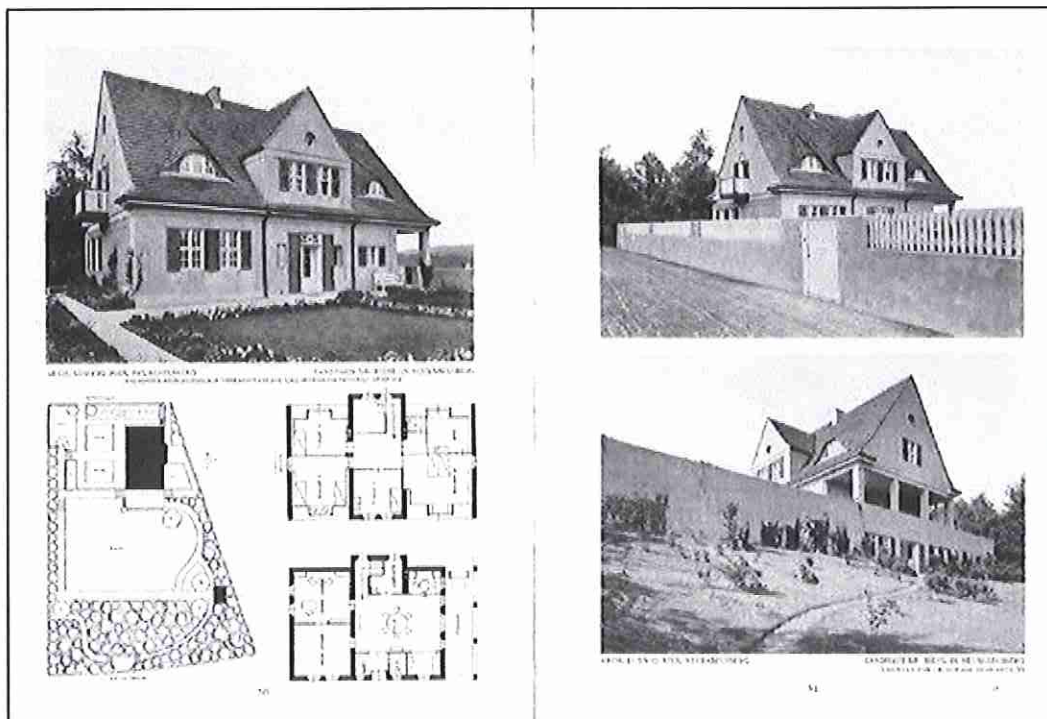
⁵ Turner P. V.: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Young Le Corbusier. JSAH Vol. 42, No. 4 (Dec., 1983)

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Frank Lloyd Wright – *Prairie House* from *The Wasmuth Portfolio* (1910) stretches into the landscape.

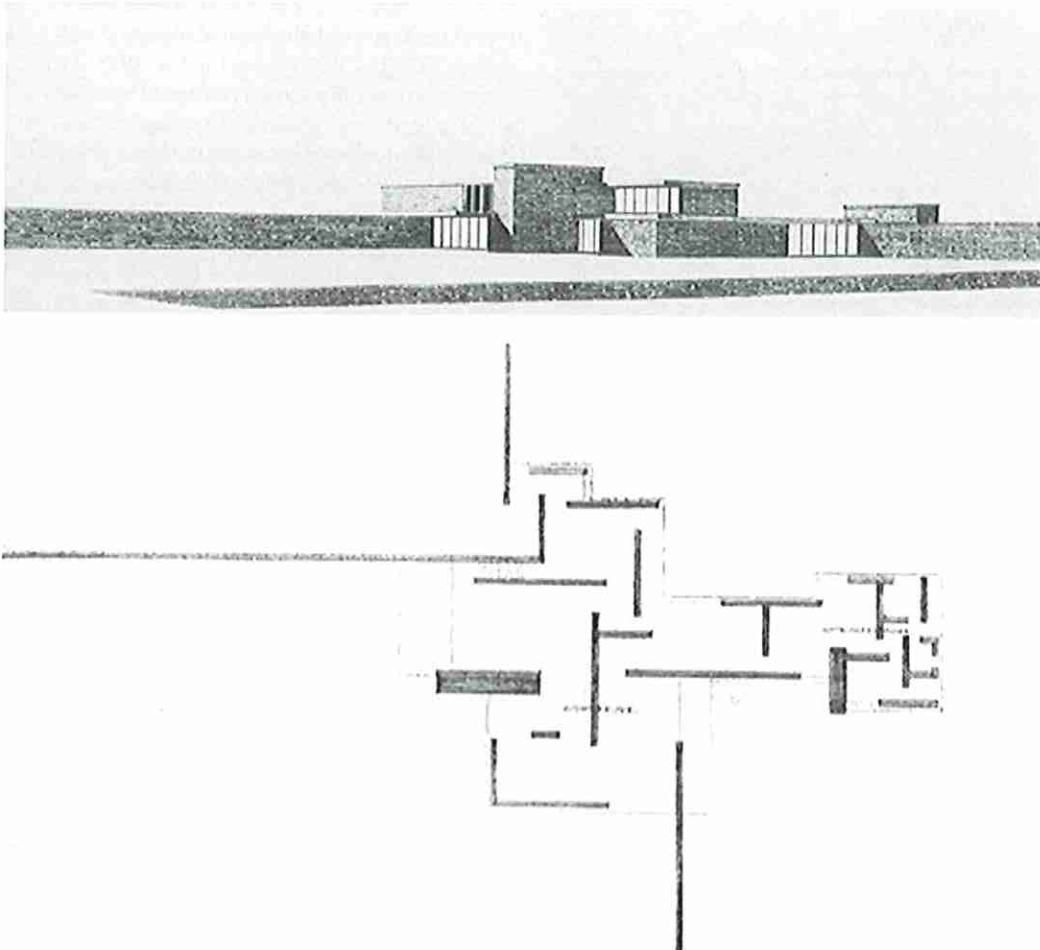


Mies before Wright: Mies van der Rohe, Riehl House, Neubabelsberg, Germany 1907 [From Hermann Muthesius, *Landhaus and Garten: Beispiele neuzeitlicher Landhäuser nebst Grundrissen, Innenräumen und Gärten*, 1910]

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"Mies van der Rohe's Brick Country House... is an early piece that anticipates his later work, presenting ideas about architectural forms and construction considered visionary at the time. While it was never actually built, the Country House is very well known – it's often reproduced and helped establish his reputation. Almost all that remains now is a couple of charcoal drawings – a three-dimensional sketch, and a floor plan."⁶



*Mies van der Rohe's perspective sketch and floor plan of the Brick Country House, 1923
[Image via "5 Projects: Interview 5 – Alex Maymind" on Archinect.com]*

"The project was a step towards Mies's goal "to bring Nature, houses and people into a higher unity." He broke the convention of orderly, enclosed boxes for living. As he says: "In the ground plan of this house, I have abandoned the usual concept of enclosed rooms and striven for a series of spatial effects rather than a row of individual rooms. The wall loses its enclosing character and serves only to articulate the house organism..."⁷ "Organism is a term as ambiguous as it is resonant. The rooms flow into each other without clear definition of their boundaries or their separation from the exterior, as they do in his Barcelona Pavilion built a few years later. **The influence of Frank Lloyd Wright is obvious and was acknowledged.**"⁸ (*emphasis added*)

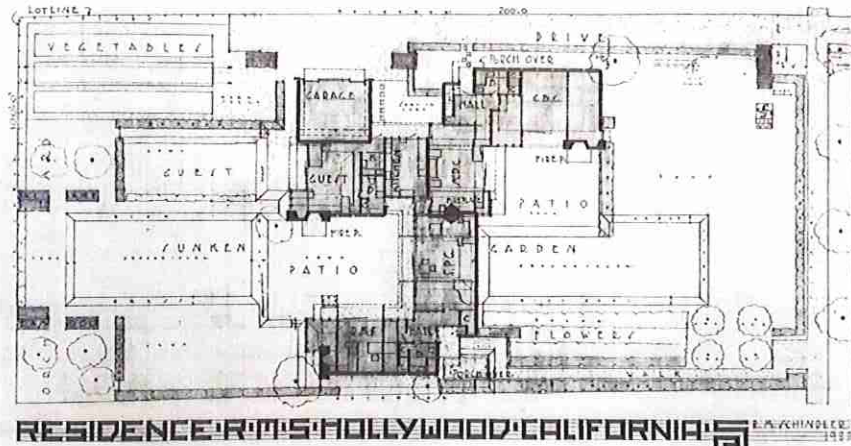
^{6, 7 & 8} <http://archinect.com/features/article/133573310/completing-mies-van-der-rohe-s-brick-country-house>
Mies after Wright: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe; 'A Brick Country House' (project only – 1923)

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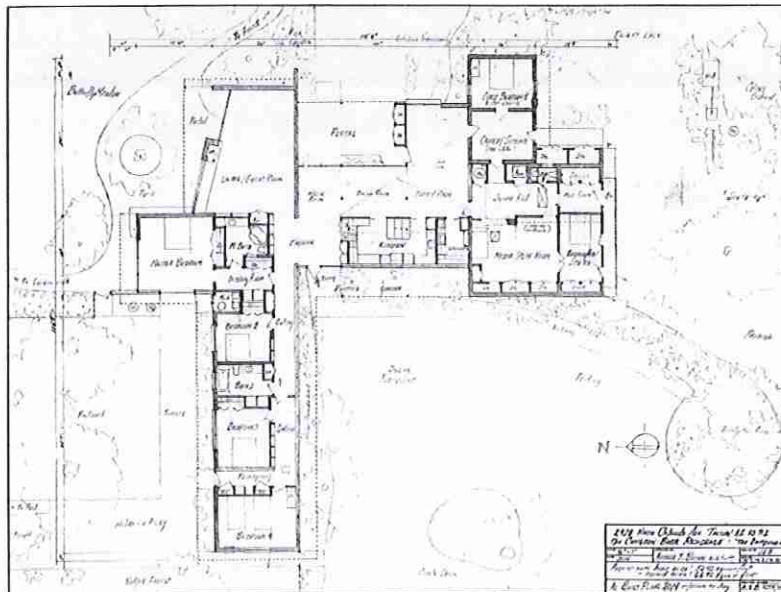
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Another step towards closing the circle came with the arrival in the US of two Austrian-born architects, Rudolph Schindler (1887–1953) and Richard Neutra (1892–1970), both of whom came to the US and apprenticed themselves to FL Wright. Schindler, five years older than Neutra, arrived in 1917. Wright was then spending a lot of time in Japan, first designing and then overseeing construction of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. Hence Wright sent Schindler to Los Angeles to oversee construction of the Barnsdall House (aka The Hollyhock House). Schindler stayed on in LA and started his own practice. The first house he built was his own, in 1922, heavily influenced by Japanese architecture with sliding walls and compact spaces (*ironically, Wright by this time was designing in a decidedly Mayan Revival style, in both Japan at the Imperial Hotel and in LA at the Hollyhock House – this just a few years after the first archeological discoveries in the Yucatán revealed the richness and grandeur of Mayan culture*).⁹



Schindler Residence, Hollywood California (1921 - 1922) Floor Plan – Rudolph M. Schindler, Architect



Congdon House, Tucson Arizona (1957 - 1962) Floor Plan – Arthur T. Brown, Architect

⁹ Gebhard, David: Schindler. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1971

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Richard Neutra emigrated to the US in 1923 and was apprenticed to Wright from 1925 to 1927. There he absorbed Wright's lessons from Japan, and went on to his own brilliant, influential career in southern California, where he became known for fastidiously designed homes such as the Miller House in Palm Springs (1937), described as "a compact, orthogonal house, completely open to the surrounding countryside... the interior can be partitioned by sliding screens reminiscent of Japanese architecture."¹⁰ Thus European Modernism arrived to the American West – courtesy of Frank Lloyd Wright, who had learned of the open plan from Japan, and introduced it to the European Modernists in 1910. The circle was complete. Schindler's and Neutra's work set a standard for Modernist design in Southern California that was to have a far-reaching influence.

In the post-WW2 years – the war ironically fought against Germany and Japan, those countries who together gestated Modern architecture – a wave of optimism swept the victorious United States. Southern California seemed the land of promise, sunshine and orange groves. American servicemen who had passed through the Ports of Los Angeles or San Diego on their way to the Pacific theater returned to seek their fortunes and raise their families in this sunny paradise. A burgeoning suburban culture, driven by readily affordable assembly-line automobiles and inexpensive gasoline, sprawled across the landscape of the Golden State. Into this landscape stepped architects and developers prepared to design and build for 'the good life.' Prominent among these was Cliff May, credited with developing and spreading the Mid-century Ranch house in southern California and – thanks to the promotion of *Sunset* magazine (*'The Bible of the West'*) – throughout the Southwestern United States. In addition to advocating modern design for modern living, May claimed inspiration from the early California ranch houses of the Spanish Colonial era, thus injecting a regional and historicist element into post-war Modernism. The resulting hybrid was the Southern California 'contemporary' style.¹¹

Arthur T. Brown, architect of the Congdon House

Arthur T. ('Art') Brown (1900-1993) was among Tucson's first Modernist architects. He arrived from Chicago in 1935, in the midst of the Great Depression. While in Chicago, Brown had met Frank Lloyd Wright, with whom he maintained an acquaintance over the ensuing years. Interestingly, when late in his life Frank Lloyd Wright contemplated relocating Taliesin West from Scottsdale to Tucson – owing to the encroachment of power lines into the view shed – it was Art Brown who showed Wright around Tucson, looking at potential building sites including Pima Canyon and the west end of the Catalina Mountains.¹² Art Brown went on to design over 300 buildings in southern Arizona, including houses, schools, churches and hospitals over a 60 year career. Brown received multiple recognitions from the American Institute of Architects (being named a Fellow in 1961) and published his work widely, including in the *Architectural Forum* and European journals on housing and religious architecture. In recognition of his importance, the University of Arizona College of Architecture published an extensive monograph on his work: ARTHUR T. BROWN, FAIA: Architect, Artist, Inventor (©1985, University of Arizona, Tucson). Brown worked in the Modern Style during that period in Arizona's architectural history influenced by the Southern California 'Contemporary' movement.¹³

¹⁰ Favole, Paolo: The Story of Modern Architecture. Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2012.

¹¹ Weinstein, Dave: Bible of the West "The CA Modernist" Weblog [Blog]

¹² Wayne, Katherine M. (Ed.): Arthur T. Brown Architect, Artist, Inventor. Tucson: University of Arizona, 1985.

¹³ Wayne, Katherine M. (Ed.): Arthur T. Brown Architect, Artist, Inventor. (op. cit.)

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Brown's fellow regional practitioners of the 'Contemporary' style included Ralph Haver and Al Beadle, both of Phoenix, with whom Art Brown has been compared. Their careers parallel one another's, and together they comprise the Arizona expression of the 'contemporary' style in the Desert Southwest.¹⁴

The Congdon House

The 1959 Congdon House represents a magisterial example of this regional style, realized at the height of the period and of the architect's powers. It embodies each of the key precepts of the Southern California 'contemporary' style:

- (a) A sheltering, shallow pitched roof form, distinguishing the West coast and Southwestern version of Modernism from the mainstream 'International Style' as seen in the flat roofs of Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius in the Midwest and Eastern US.
- (b) An open plan, where spaces flow freely from one room to another and between interior and exterior through sliding glass doors and steel sash window walls.
- (c) Exposed roof structure composed of heavy-timber post and beam framing and rough-sawn 2 x 12 fir decking, stained rather than painted.
- (d) Use of natural and indigenous regional materials (rough-sawn wood and burnt adobe) for wall construction, harkening back to Cliff May's Spanish Colonial ranch house precedent.
- (e) Continuous clerestory glass from top of wall to roof structure.
- (f) Deep roof overhangs and porches creating outdoor rooms as an extension of indoor space.
- (g) Integration of site and house, in a unity of design.

In summation, the Congdon House, located near the historic Fort Lowell in Tucson, embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Southern California 'contemporary' modernist style, as practiced in southern Arizona in 1959, with regional influences integrated by the architect, Arthur T. Brown.

¹⁴ Ralph Haver, Mid-century Phoenix Architect
<http://www.midcenturymoderngroovy.com/?p=8634&>

Al Beadle: A Midcentury Master Finally Finds His Way to Palm Springs.
Pilar Viladas -- February 1, 2017 <https://www.palmspringslife.com/meet-the-beadle/>

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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<http://www.eichlernetwork.com/article/bible-west>

Previous documentation on file (NPS): Not Applicable

Primary location of additional data:

X State Historic Preservation Office ("ROPE" - Recommendation Of Potential Eligibility, AZ/SHPO)

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.6 A

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 32.260039

Longitude: - 110.886953

Or

UTM References (N/A)

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

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

Pima County, Arizona, Assessor's Parcel Number: 110-10-031D

Legal Description: SWLY PT NW4 SE4 NW4 1.68 AC SEC 35-13-14

The boundary of the Stephen Congdon and Persis Hart Browne House includes the entire 1.6 acre parcel at 2928 N. Orlando Avenue in Tucson, Arizona.

Boundary Justification *(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)*

The boundary includes the entire 1.6 acre parcel, because this is the historic property line, and the site includes mature landscaping and the swimming pool. The house extends out into the landscape, making house and site a continuum.

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11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Bob Vint, Architect
Organization: Vint & Associates Architects, Inc.
Street & number: 312 East Sixth Street
City or town: Tucson State: AZ
Zip Code: 85705
e-mail: bob@vintarchitects.net
telephone: (520) 882-5232
Date: 11 November, 2017

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. Please see attached detail excerpt of 7.5 Min. USGS Map, Tucson North, Arizona, 2014

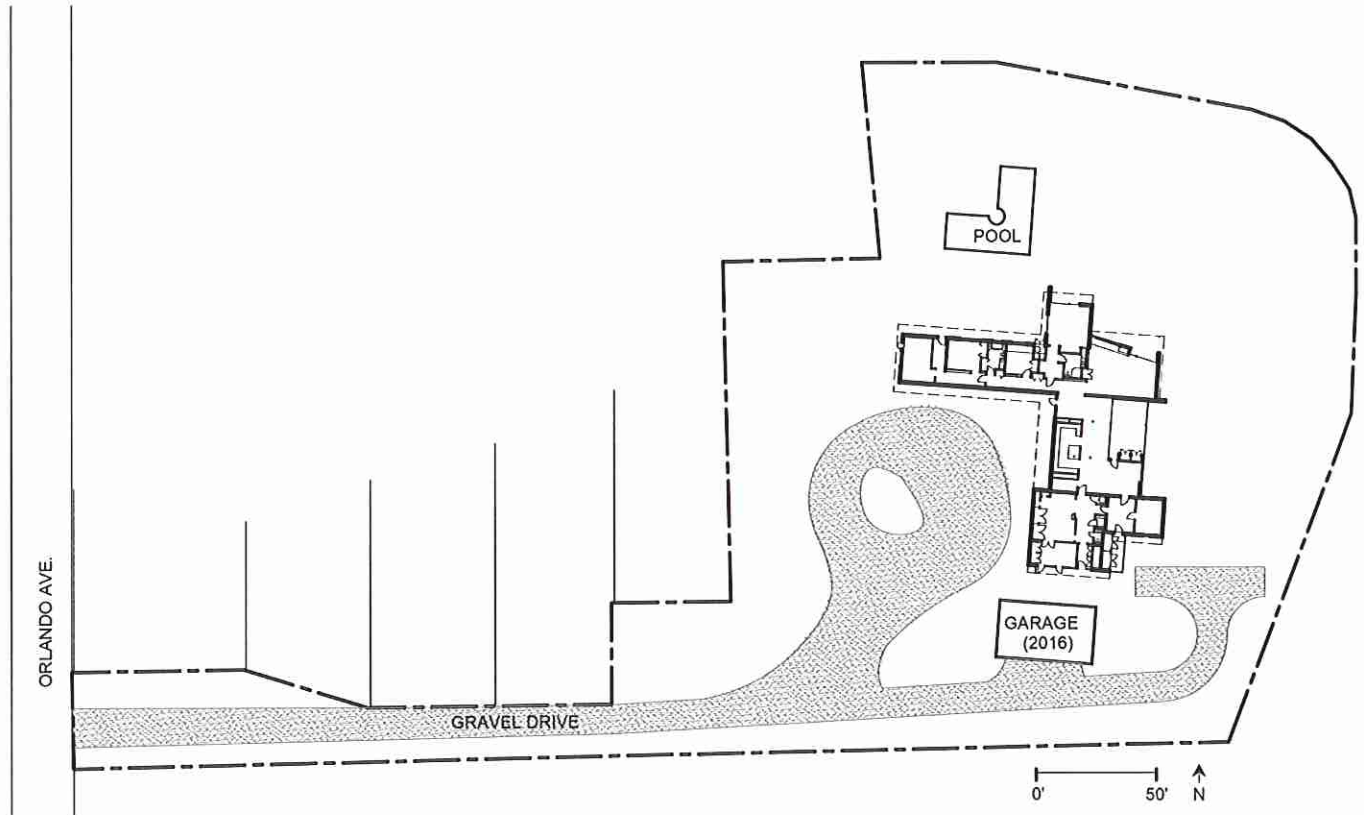


Map #1: Site Aerial Photo – Arrows indicates location of, and access route to, the Congdon House, 2928 N. Orlando Ave. Tucson, AZ
©2015 Pima County GIS Map Guide/Pima County DOT

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*Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
Key all photographs to this map.*

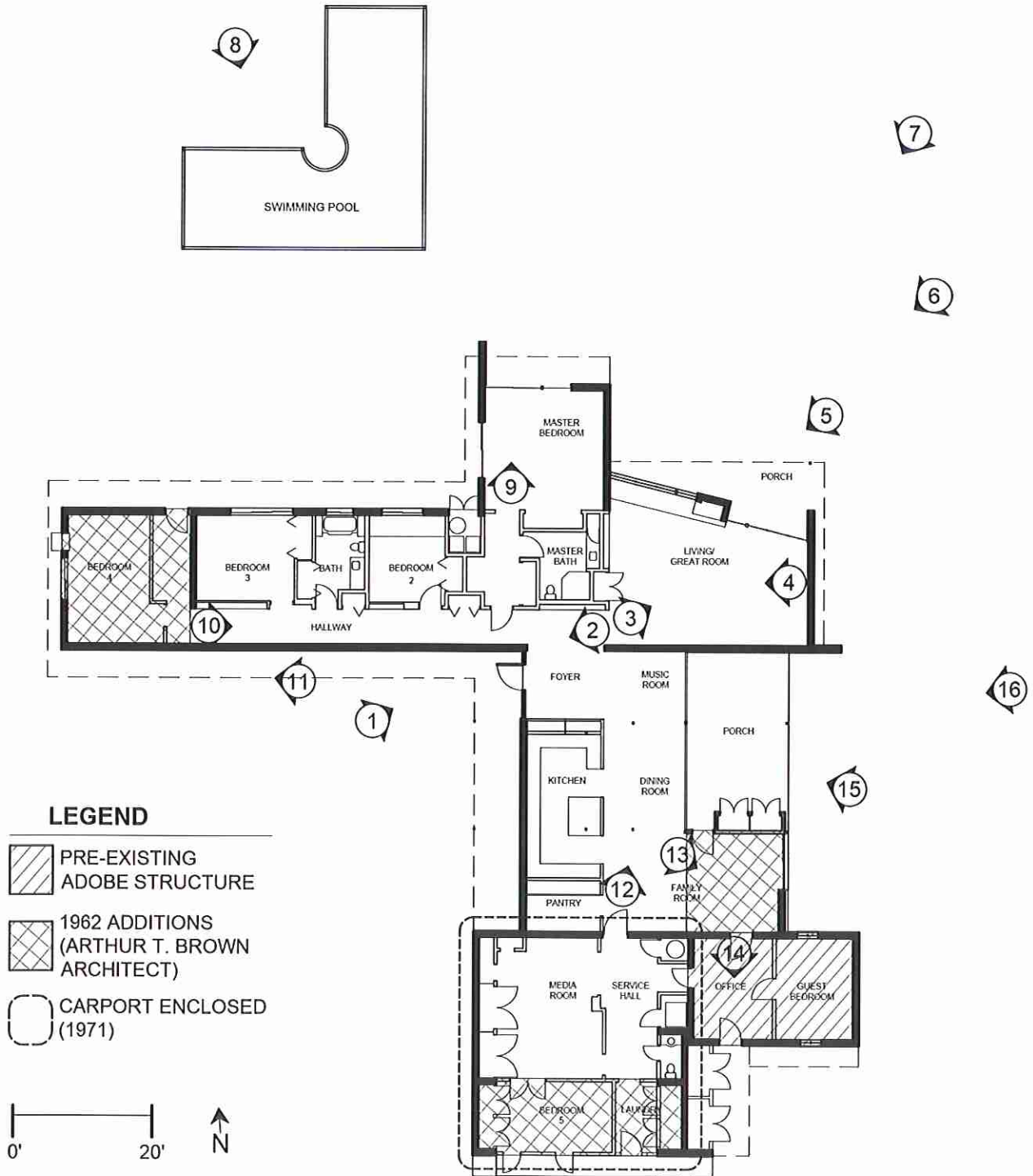


Sketch Map #1: Site Plan of Congdon House, showing house footprint, driveway and property outline. Vint & Associates Architects, Inc. 2017

- **Additional items:**
Floor Plan Diagram follows.

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Sketch Map #2: Floor Plan of Congdon House. Photos are keyed to this plan.
Vint & Associates Architects, Inc. 2017

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600 x 1200 pixels (minimum), 3000 x 2000 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: #1 of 17.

Name of Property: Congdon House

City or Vicinity: Tucson

County: Pima

State: Arizona

Photographer (unless noted otherwise): Tim Fuller

Date Photographed: June, 2015

Photo #1: View looking east towards front entrance, located at intersection of the two legs of the 'L' plan. Note continuous high clerestory under deep heavy-timber overhangs, with unbroken planes of burnt adobe masonry beneath. This creates a strong horizontality, a defining characteristic of the Southern California 'contemporary' movement.



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Photo #2: View of foyer looking west, back toward front door -- which is disguised by the application of battens, blending it in with the interior partitions. Hallway at right extends to bedroom wing. Note continuous clerestories above both masonry and frame walls, and heavy-timber roof structure with lapped rough-sawn 2 X 12 planks. Light fixtures are non-original, but are readily reversible. Note scored concrete floor, exposed mortar-washed burnt adobe walls and 'driftwood gray' stained wood -- all natural materials, honestly expressed.



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Photo Log: #3 of 17.

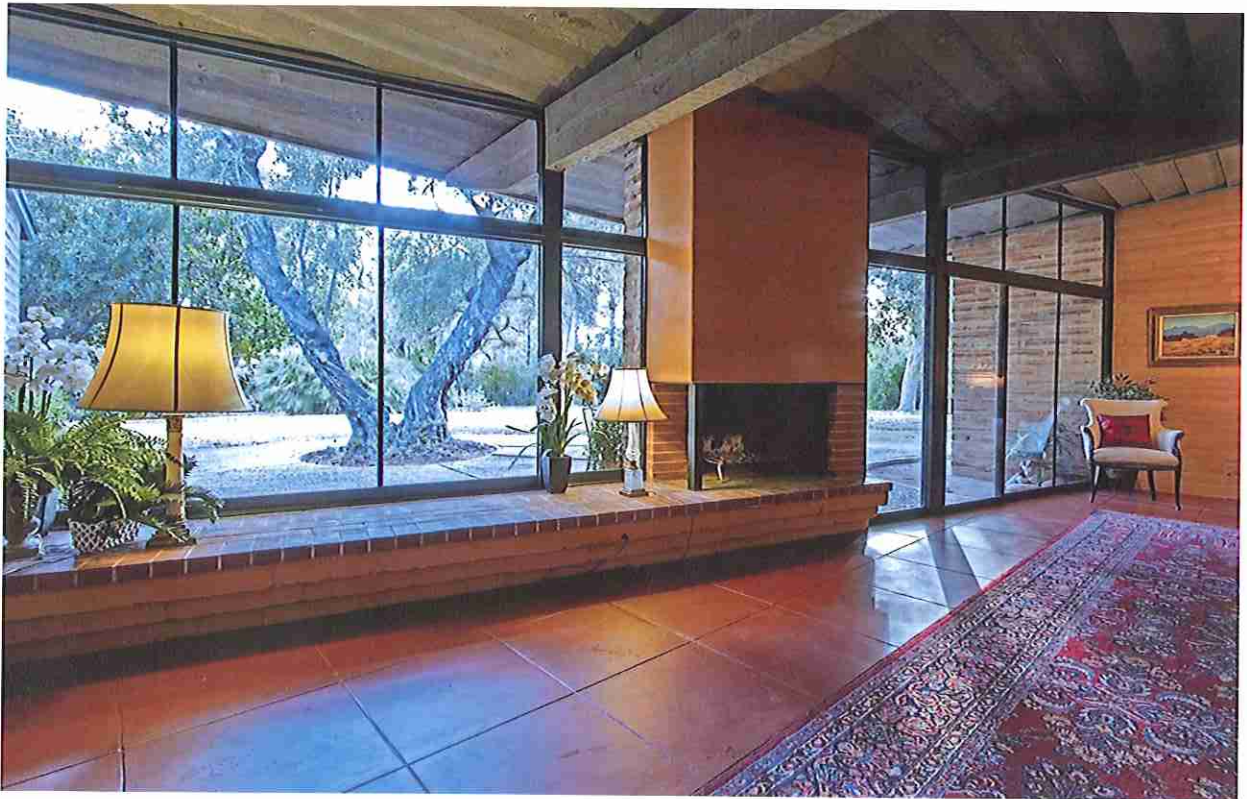
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Photo #3: Interior of living room, looking northeast. Note fireplace with open corner, built-in masonry bench (known as a *banco* in Spanish) and heavy-timber roof structure with lapped rough-sawn 2X12 planks. Continuous window wall at north meets continuous masonry wall at east (right).



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Photo Log: #4 of 17.

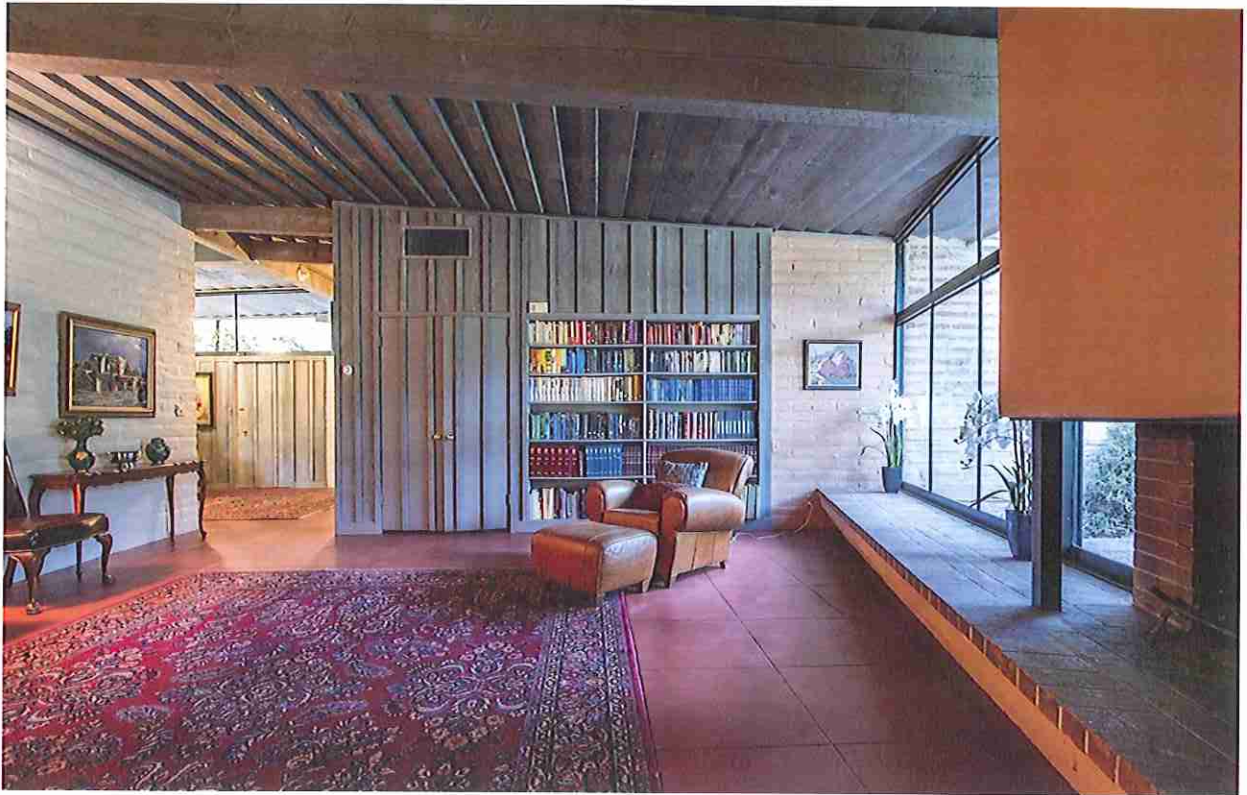
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Photo #4: View of living room looking west. Note mortar-washed burnt adobe walls and contrasting wood board-and-batten partitions with built-in book shelves, typical of the 'contemporary' movement.



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Photo #5: View looking southwest toward north wall of living room, illustrating the alternation of solid masonry planes and transparent window walls, allowing the continuous flow of interior and exterior space.



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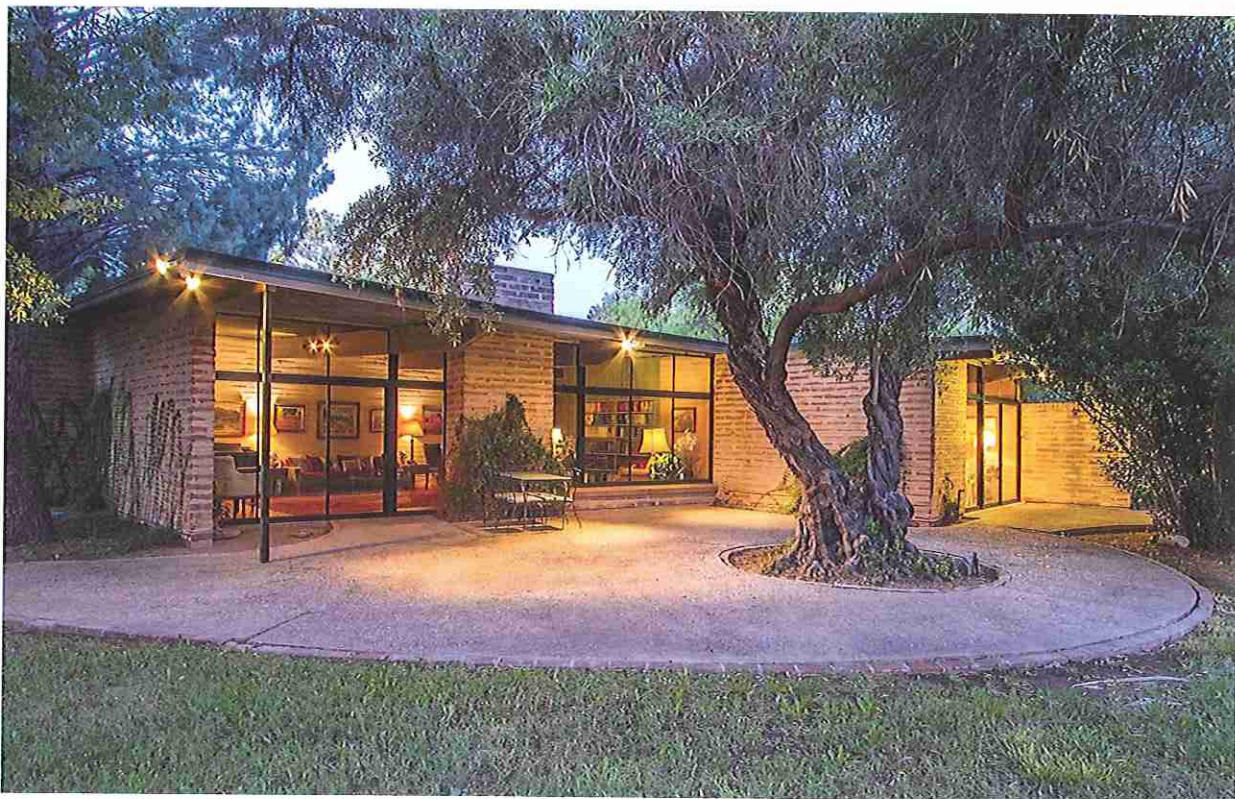
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Photo #6: Medium-distant view looking southwest toward north wall of living room. Master bedroom at right; note free-form patio paving and olive tree.



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Photo #7: Distant view looking southwest towards living room and master bedroom. Note how landscaping is used to define space – swimming pool is beyond “wall” of oleanders at right of photo.



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Photo #8: View looking south from swimming pool towards north wall of bedroom wing.



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Photo #9: Interior of master bedroom looking north. Note contrast of unbroken planes of masonry, alternating with floor-to-ceiling window walls with sliding glass doors: interior space flows seamlessly to the exterior.



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Photo Log: #10 of 17.

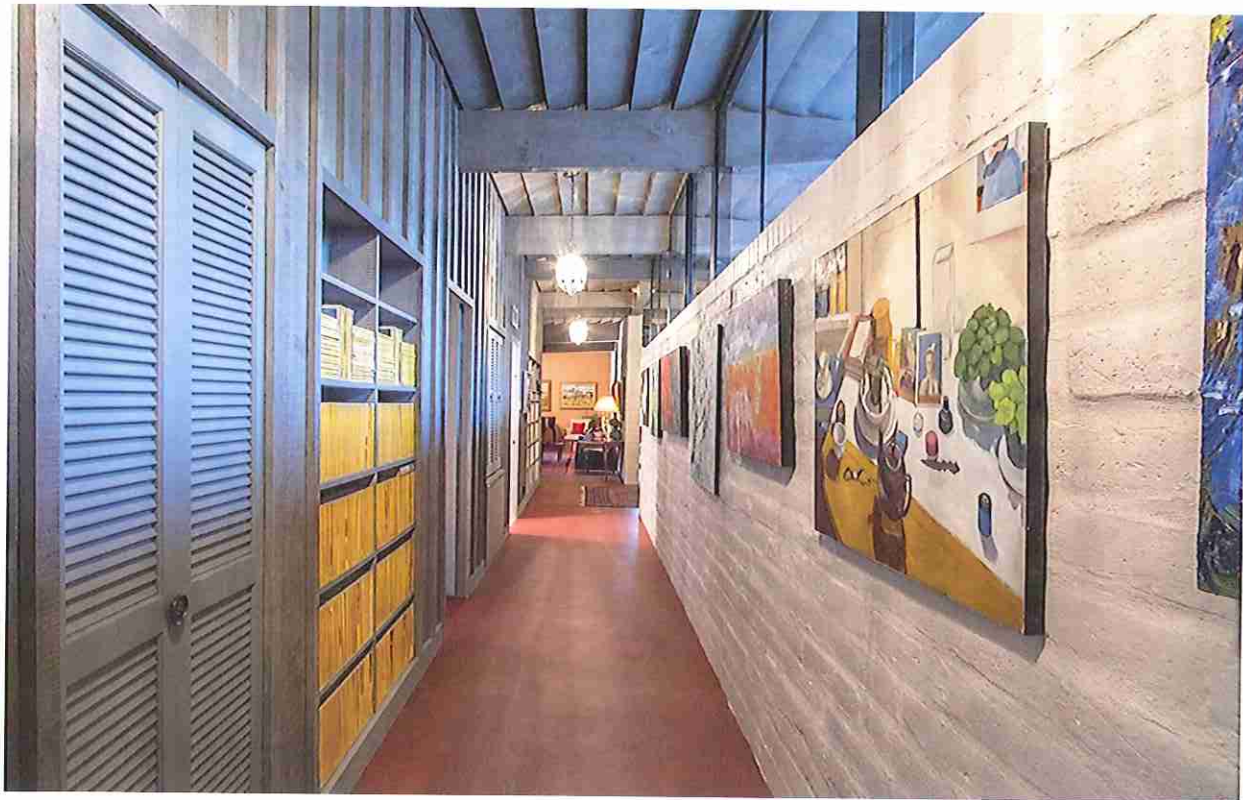
Name of Property: Congdon House

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Photo #10: View looking due east along hallway of bedroom wing. Note built-in shelving and board and batten siding at frame partition, as well as continuous clerestory above masonry wall at right.



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Photo Log: #11 of 17.

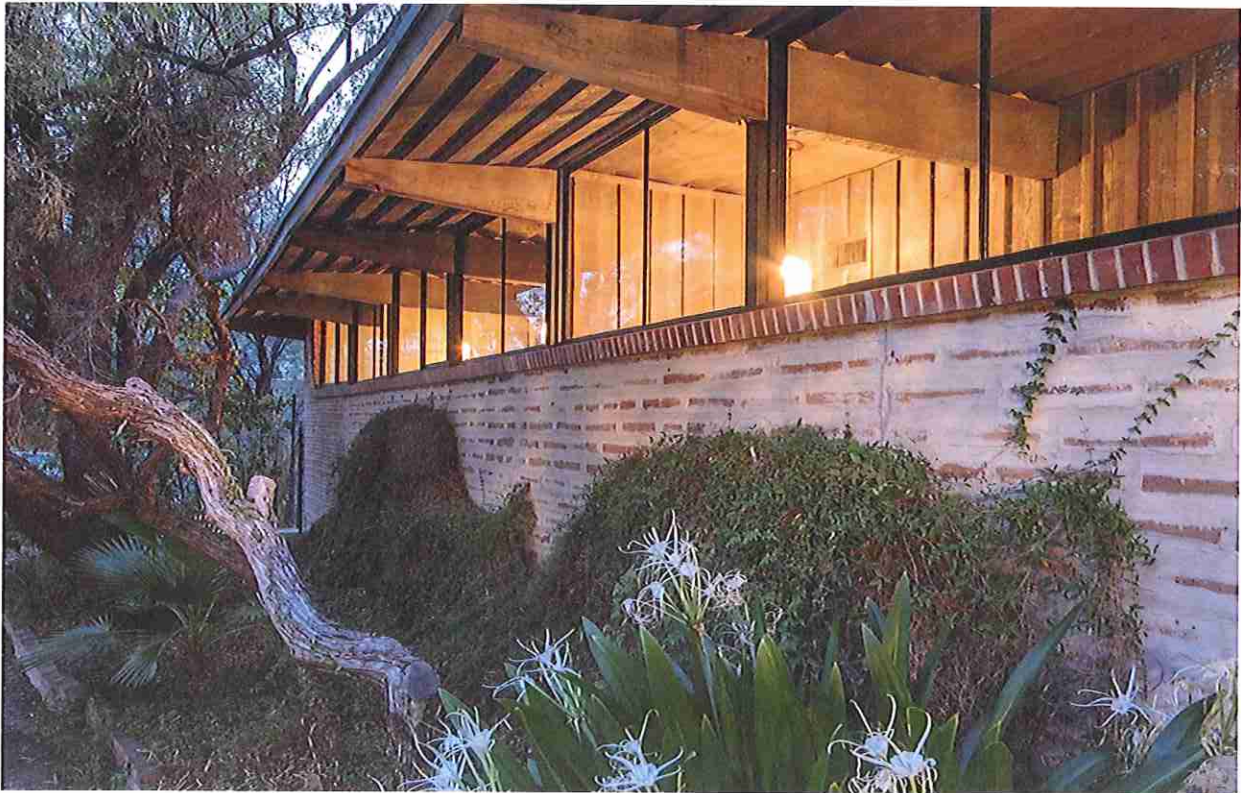
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Photo #11: View looking due west at exterior of bedroom hallway. Note continuous clerestory above masonry wall, and cantilevered heavy-timber beams that provide a protective overhang for south-facing glass.



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Photo #12: View north of dining room, with kitchen at left and outdoor dining porch at right. Note continuously sloping roof, transparency of steel-sash window wall, and flow of interior to exterior space via sliding glass doors. Non-compatible light fixtures are readily reversible.



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Photo #13: View looking southeast into family/sitting room, with pre-existing mud adobe rooms beyond (plastered wall is mud adobe). In the original 1957 design (completed in 1959) this area was an open porch; in 1962, the owners asked the architect Arthur Brown to redesign and enclose this space. Wood parquet flooring is non-original, and yet is readily reversible (as are the incompatible furnishings).



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Photo #14: Interior of office looking south. This is one of two mod adobe-walled rooms that pre-date the 1959 construction (purportedly from the 19th century) and may have been used to quarter officers from the adjacent historic Fort Lowell. Note ceiling lathing of saguaro cactus ribs, which traditionally would support an earthen roof.



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Photo #15: View of east dining porch, looking west. Timber roof structure and burnt adobe walls continue from interior to exterior, defining the porch as an outdoor room.



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Photo #16: View west towards dining porch, illustrating transparency of house and continuous flow of interior to exterior – characteristic of Southern California ‘contemporary.’ Note the varied landscaping: palm tree (beyond), mock orange (left), rose bushes (right) and grass.



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Photo Log: #17 of 17.

Name of Property: Congdon House

City or Vicinity: Tucson

County: Pima

State: Arizona

Photographer: Bob Vint

Date Photographed: June, 2016

Photo #17: Non-contributing 2016 garage (right), and burnt adobe 1962 garage expansion (left).
Note eucalyptus tree in right foreground, and Aleppo pine tree in left background.

