Gordon Drake Records 2012-15

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Biographical Note
Gordon Drake (1917-1952)

Gordon Drake was born March 19, 1917 in Childress, Texas to Pearl and G. Drake. Less than a year after his birth, due to his father serving overseas during World War I, his mother moved to Fresno, CA and later to San Diego with Gordon and his older brother Max. After graduating from high school, Drake spent a year in Hawaii, living and working with his brother who was now married and serving in the Navy. While helping his brother build a home, he received his first look into the world of design and construction. A year later, in 1937, Drake enrolled in the architecture program at the University of Southern California, where he was known for being a dedicated athlete and serious student, who did not do outstanding work. In order to overcome this impression Drake worked closely with his good friend Edward Killingsworth, who, at the time, had the highest academic record in their class. Both graduated from USC in early 1941. While at USC, Drake was influenced by Harwell Hamilton Harris and Carl Birger Troedsson, first as a student and later as a draftsman. Troedsoon instilled in him an unconditional commitment to the socially oriented tenets of modern architecture and Harris provided him with insight into construction and building materials, best suited for California-style indoor-outdoor living.

In late 1941, Drake married Joanne Richards and a few months later left San Diego as a Marine combat leader for the South Pacific beachheads. While away at war, Drake dreamed of returning to California where he would work to relieve the housing crisis. Before he could do so he received his first professional request for architectural work, a theatre for service men on the island of Maui. Although construction was at a standstill it needed to be completed within a short-time. Drake was asked to take over the job, and three weeks later the Haleakala Theatre was open. In 1946, he was released from the Marine Corps and returned to California where he joined fellow marine and engineer, Louis Soltanoffff, and several other friends to put some of their housing ideas to the test. Within four months, the group had purchased a plot of land in Los Angeles and designed, and constructed a house for only $4,500. This basic house for veterans included built-in furniture, and for an extra $300, standing chairs, tables, a bed, and paintings. For their efforts they won the Progressive Architecture First Annual Award. While in Los Angeles, Drake worked to further his design ideas. Now with recognition and exposure for his environmental consciousness, Drake became a visiting critic at USC and also began to produce a plethora of designs for clients. Drake’s designs reflected his interest in climate control, materials carefully selected sites, indoor-outdoor living spaces, and structural assemblies.

Drake’s firms had a number of names including Gordon Drake Designs and MADAC Design Associates (Modern Architecture Design and Construction). In 1948 Drake relocated from Los Angeles to Monterey Bay and in 1949 to San Francisco where he opened a small office on Washington Street. Drake credited his success to media exposure and considered it his most effective tool to promote his work. He regularly submitted drawings and sketches of designs for housing and furniture to Sunset Magazine and Better Homes and Gardens Magazine. In 1951 he began to work for Architect Ernest J. Krump of San Francisco, but kept his small office on Washington for evening and weekend work.

Gordon Drake died at the age of 34 in a skiing accident at the Sierra Resort in northern California on January 15, 1952. Maggie and Douglas Baylis, friends and fellow designers wrote the “California Houses of Gordon Drake”, in 1956, which was reprinted in 2011.
Sources:

System of Arrangement
The collection is arranged into 3 Series: Personal Papers, Office Records, and Project Records.

Scope and Contents
Personal Papers are limited and include biographical material and correspondence. Office Records primarily consist of correspondence, publicity files, and non-specific building details. Project Records contain notes, specifications, sketches, and correspondence for specific projects as well as designs for houses, furniture, screens and arbors as prototypes. Projects include residences in southern California, Drakes various offices, and projects commissioned for Women’s Home Journal, Sunset Magazine, and Better Homes and Gardens.

Custodial History
The records were collected and held by Maggie and Douglas Baylis and given to William Stout to use for a new edition of California Houses of Gordon Drake. The monograph with an introduction by Pierluigi Serriano was published by William Stout Publishers in 2011, after which the collection was donated to the Environmental Design Archives.

Project Index
The following is a list of architectural projects from the Gordon Drake Records. For more complete information about collection contents for each project download the complete Project Index in an Excel spreadsheet format by going to the Gordon Drake Records page. For instructions on interpreting the Project Index, see The Guide to the Project Index.

The project list below, derived from the Project Index, is arranged alphabetically by Project/Client Name and contains information, where available, about the location, date, project type, collaborators, photographers, and formats for each project in the collection.

Project/Client Name (location, date, project type) Collaborator (role), Photographer [Format - Ms=Manuscripts, Dr=Drawings, Ph=Photographs]
- Barr, James (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Dr]
- Baylis, Doug & Maggie (1951-56; residential) [Ph]
- Bedford, Lee (Long Beach, CA; 1945; residential) [Ms, Dr]
- Berns, Robert (Malibu, CA; 1950; residential) [Ms, Dr, Ph]
- Byam, Wallace (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms, Dr]
- Cook, Emery (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms, Dr]
- Dammann, Thomas (Beverly Hills, CA; 1947; residential) [Ms, Dr, Ph]
- Da Roza-Ribal Inc (Monterey, CA; 1948; residential) [*see Mesa House]
- Design: Basic House (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Dr, Ph]
- Design: Better Homes & Gardens: Arbors, Plants, Containers [Ms, Dr]
- Design: Cabins [Dr]
- Design: Misc [Dr, Ph]
- Drake Office, Gordon (Carmel Woods, CA; 1948; commercial) [Ms, Dr, Ph]
- Drake Office, Gordon (Los Angeles, CA; 1946?; commercial) [Ms, Dr]
- Drake, Gordon & Janie (Pacific Palisades, CA; 1947; residential) [Dr]
- Fitch, Luther (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms, Dr]
- Gerber, Ludwig (Los Angeles, CA; 1951; residential) [Dr]
- Haleakala Theatre (Maui, HI; 1946; commercial) [Ph]
- Hanna, Bill & Shirley (Sherman Oaks, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms, Dr]
- Harris, Coleman (Castellammare, CA; 1947; residential) [Ms, Dr]
- Hodgins, Robert (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Dr]
- Jenkins House (AZ; 1946; residential) [Ms]
- Malibu House (Malibu, CA; 1950; residential) [Ph]
- Lee, Lyman (Gustine, CA; 1950; residential) [Dr]
- Lewis, Robert (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms, Dr]
• Mesa House (Carmel, CA; 1948; residential) [Dr, Ph]
• Nathan (residential) [Ms]
• Noble, Charles (Ann Arbor, MI; 1947; residential) [Ms, Dr]
• Norman, Ben (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Dr]
• Pallock, Joseph (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Dr]
• Poe, James (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms, Dr]
• Presley, David (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms, Dr, Ph]
• Professional Group (Monterey, CA) [Ph]
• Reed, Robert (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Dr]
• Riordan, Emmet (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms, Dr]
• Rose, Norman (Hollywood, CA; 1946; residential) [Dr]
• Rucker House (Los Angeles, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms]
• Scribner Garden House (Hayward, CA; 1950; residential) [Ms, Dr, Ph]
• Smith Thor (Ranch House) (Burlingame, CA; 1951; residential) [Ms, Dr]
• Spillman (Los Angeles, CA; 1947; residential) [Ms, Dr, Ph]
• Stubbs, Charles (Haiku, HI; 1945; residential) [Ms, Dr]
• Sunset Magazine - furniture/screen design/bbq grill (Menlo Park, CA; 1947-1952) [Ms, Dr]
• Sunset Magazine - book cases (1947-1952) (Menlo Park, CA; furniture) Collaborator: Baylis, Douglas [Ms]
• Sunset Magazine - Mountain & Beach Schemes (Menlo Park, CA) [Ph]
• Unit House [*see Scribner House]
• Vacation House (Carmel, CA; 1948; residential) [Ms, Dr, Ph]
• Woman's Home Companion (New York, NY; 1949; residential) [Dr]
• Weiner, Martin (Sherman Oaks, CA; 1946; residential) [Ms]

SERIES I. PERSONAL PAPERS 1917-1956

Physical Description: .5 Cubic Feet: Box 1
Scope and Contents
Letters and notes written after the death of Gordon from various friends and family members to Maggie and Doug Baylis concerning the book California Houses of Gordon Drake and subsequent essays written about Drake.

A. Biographical Information

Box 1, Folder 1
- Portrait
- Written Note Found on Drake at Time of Death
- Address Book
- Biographical Essays

B. Correspondence

Box 1, Folder 4
- Correspondence
SERIES II. OFFICE RECORDS 1946-1950

**A. Correspondence**

Box 1, Folder 1  
**Correspondence 1947**

**B. Publicity Files**

Box 1, Folder 2  
**Arbors & Screens**

Box 1, Folder 3  
**Cabins 1950**

Box 1, Folder 4  
**Design: Basic House 1946**

Box 1, Folder 5  
**Gordon's Second House**

Box 1, Folder 6  
**Fireplaces, Sunset Mag**

Box 1, Folder 7  
**Mesa Residence 1948**

Box 1, Folder 8  
**Misc. Magazines and Newspaper Mentionings**

Box 1, Folder 9  
**Presley House, David 1946**

Box 1, Folder 10  
**Unit House (Scribner House) 1950**

Box 1, Folder 11  
**Spillman Residence, George 1947**

Box 1, Folder 12  
**Vacation House 1948**

**C. Specifications**

Scope and Contents  
Non-specific building details grouped and organized by various Drake office locations.

Box 2, Folder 13  
**Madac: Office Specifications**

Box 2, Folder 14  
**Misc. Specifications**

Box 5, Folder 15  
**Washington St (San Francisco): Office Specifications**

Box 5, Folder 16  
**Sunset Boulevard (Los Angeles): Office Specifications**

Box 5, Folder 17  
**Carmel: Office Specifications**

SERIES III. PROJECT RECORDS 1945-1956

Physical Description: 5 Cubic Feet: Boxes 2-5, Flat Files
Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by project.

**A. Files**

Physical Description: **see Project Records**

**B. Photographs**

Physical Description: **see Project Records**

**C. Drawings**

Physical Description: **see Project Records**