Descriptive Summary

Title: Reginald D. Johnson Collection

Dates (inclusive): approximately 1906 - approximately 1947

Collection Number: archJohnson

Creator: Johnson, Reginald D.

Extent: 3 flat boxes, 1 tube box, 2 oversize folders

Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Architecture Collections

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San Marino, California 91108
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Email: reference@huntington.org
URL: http://www.huntington.org

Abstract: Reginald D. Johnson (1882-1952) was an architect who worked primarily on residential and commercial projects in Southern California from about 1910 through the 1940s. Johnson was best known for the English and Mediterranean style mansions he built for wealthy clients in Pasadena and Santa Barbara in the 1920s. He later embraced more progressive and inclusive ideas about housing which included planned communities such as Baldwin Hills Village. The collection spans the years 1906 to 1947 and consists primarily of plans, photographs and drawings of Johnson's architectural projects in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, California.

Language: English.

Note:
Finding aid last updated on July 1, 2014.

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

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Preferred Citation

Reginald D. Johnson Collection. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

The collection was assembled from various sources:

- The drawing of the S. W. Forsman house was received as the gift of F. G. Forsman, date unknown.
- The drawing of the Episcopal Home for the Aged was received as the gift of Nancy Impastato in 1988.
- The two albums were received as the gift of Frances J. McLucas, Kathleen J. Garrett and Joseph A. Johnson in 1993.
- The photographs and blueprints of the "Penjerrick" residence were received as the gift of Peter and Sally Letchworth in 2011.

Biographical Note

Reginald Davis Johnson was born July 19, 1882, in Westchester, New York. In 1895, his father, the Right Reverend Joseph Horsfall Johnson, was appointed the first bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Southern California Diocese. Johnson's first years in California were spent in a mansion on Grand Avenue in Pasadena, California, before attending Morristown School in Morristown, New Jersey. During his childhood, the family made trips to Europe, and he later claimed to have studied architecture in Paris (though it is unclear where). He completed his education first at Williams College and then at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating from there in 1910. Johnson returned to Pasadena shortly thereafter to embark on his own architecture practice in 1912.

Having gained significant experience apprenticing in the offices of both Hunt & Grey (Myron & Elmer) and Robert Farquhar, Johnson's practice thrived from the beginning. His clients tended to be people of high social standing and wealth, and his projects reflected this in both proportion and style. Most of his early work was English, Anglo-Colonial and Mediterranean in style, with special attention paid to the site and its relationship to the building. Johnson became one of the leading architects in Los Angeles by 1920 and he received multiple commissions throughout Pasadena and Santa Barbara during this period. One of the most acclaimed houses he designed in the Mediterranean style was for John Percival Jefferson, an
estate in Montecito called "Mira Flores." For this, he won a gold medal in 1920 from the American Institute of Architects as an example of the most outstanding residential architecture in the nation, the first such recognition for a Southern California architect. He continued to practice architecture throughout Pasadena, Los Angeles and Santa Barbara during the 1920s, going into practice briefly in 1922 with two other architects, Gordon B. Kaufmann and Roland E. Coate (Johnson, Kaufmann & Coate). The firm was responsible for two major church commissions, All Saints' Episcopal Church in Pasadena and Saint Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Los Angeles. The firm dissolved by 1924 and each architect went on to form individual practices.

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, Johnson moved away from designing for the wealthy as he became increasingly interested in small, affordable housing solutions. He won another award in 1931 for the best small house built in the United States for the gardener's cottage on the William R. Dickinson property in Hope Ranch. Throughout the remainder of his career, Johnson focused almost exclusively on government and mass housing, including the 300-unit Harbor Hills project in San Pedro (1941) and Baldwin Hills Village (1940-1942) in the Baldwin Hills area of Los Angeles. For the latter project, Johnson collaborated with the firm Wilson, Merrill, and Alexander and Clarence Stein served as planning consultant. A community of 627 units on 88 acres was formed, and, after its opening in December 1941, lauded by critics as an outstanding example of a planned community. Johnson died on October 28, 1952.

**Scope and Content**

The Reginald D. Johnson Collection spans the years 1906 to 1947 and consists primarily of plans, photographs and drawings of Johnson's architectural projects in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, California. The collection includes material that was acquired as two separate donations between 1988 and 1993: an album of photographs and drawings of the Baldwin Hills Village planned residential community in the Baldwin Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles; an album of photographs of residential projects in Pasadena and Santa Barbara, and three drawings for buildings in San Marino, Pasadena, and Alhambra. An additional donation made in 2011 includes blueprints and photographs of "Penjerrick," the residence of Pierre E. Letchworth in Covina, California, built in 1915.

Credited photographers represented in the collection include William M. Clarke, E. M. Pratt, the Padilla Company, and the Gill Engraving Company.

- William M. Clarke Architectural Negative Collection (photCL 415)
- Maynard L. Parker Collection (photCL MLP)

**Arrangement**

The collection is arranged in the following two series:

Series I. Project Records
- A. Albums
- B. Drawings

Series II. Additional Donations

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.

**Subjects**

Architects – California.
Architecture -- California -- Los Angeles.
Architecture -- California -- Pasadena.
Architecture -- California -- Santa Barbara.
Architecture -- Designs and plans.
Planned communities -- California -- Los Angeles -- Designs and plans.
Johnson, Reginald D.
Baldwin Hills (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Photographs.
Covina (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Montecito (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santa Barbara (Calif.) -- Photographs.

**Forms/Genres**

Architectural drawings.
Photographs.
Series I. Project Records

A. Albums

Box 1, Volume 1

**Album of the Village Green Housing Development, Baldwin Hills, approximately 1940s.**

**Historical Note**
The Baldwin Hills Village (initially known as Thousand Gardens) was a planned residential apartment community designed by Reginald D. Johnson and the architectural firm of Wilson, Merrill, and Alexander in the late 1930s, and completed in 1942 in the Baldwin Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles, California.

**Scope and Content Note**
Bound album compiled by Reginald D. Johnson containing 26 black-and-white photographs, 10 original drawings, and 12 Photostat copies of apartment plans of the Baldwin Hills Village Green Housing Development residential community. The album measures 20 1/2 x 18 inches.

Box 1, Volume 2

**Album of residential projects in Pasadena and Santa Barbara, approximately 1920s.**

**Scope and Content Note**
Bound album containing black-and-white photographs of residences designed by Reginald D. Johnson in Pasadena, Montecito, and Santa Barbara, California, including his own Pasadena home. The album measures 20 1/2 x 18 inches.

Note: Three separated pages from the album depicting the house of Harry J. Bauer are housed in Box 2 (1-3).

(1-7) **House of Harold Chase, Santa Barbara, California. Photographed by E. M. Pratt.**
The "Las Terrasas" villa at Hope Ranch was completed in 1925.

(8-9) **Residence of Reginald W. Rives, Montecito, California. Photographed by William M. Clarke.**
"Casa del Sueno" was completed in 1916.

(10-13) **Residence of Edward Lowe, Montecito, California. Photographed by William M. Clarke.**
"El Elisio" was constructed around 1922.

(14-15) **House of E. M. Gould, Montecito, California. Photographed by William M. Clarke.**
Edwin Gould's house was constructed in 1918.
Series I. Project Records

A. Albums

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archJohnson

   The "Mira Flores" estate was constructed in 1915, 1918.

   The Lombardy Road house was constructed around 1927.

(27) Small sketch of unidentified modern house.
   Box 2, Items (1-3) House of Mr. Harry J. Bauer, Pasadena, California, approximately 1928.
   Photographed by William M. Clarke.
   The Hillcrest Avenue house was constructed in 1927-8.

B. Drawings

Box 4, Roll 1 Blueprint for Bay Tree Boxes [possibly for Franklin Baldwin residence, San Marino].
Box 4, Broadside folder 1 South elevation for S. W. Forsman, Pasadena, March 30, 1928.
Box 4, Broadside folder 2 Proposed Development, The Episcopal Home for the Aged, Alhambra, approximately 1930.

Series II. Additional Donations

A. Pierre E. Letchworth residence, “Penjerrick,” Covina, California, approximately 1914-1915

Historical Note
Reginald D. Johnson built the residence, known as "Penjerrick Ranch," for Pierre E. Letchworth and his family in 1913 on the Letchworths' ten-acre orange grove in Covina, California.

Letchworth Family Photograph Collection (photCL 540)

Box 3 Photographs and publications
Box 3, Folder 1 (1-25) Exterior photographs
Scope and Content Note
Black-and-white snapshots of various sizes showing the exterior of the residence and the surrounding orange orchards. Some photographs credited to Gill Engraving Co.

Box 3, Folder 2 (1-7) Interior photographs
Scope and Content Note
Black-and-white photographs of various sizes showing the interior of the residence. Some photographs credited to C. W. Tucker.

Box 3, Folder 3 (ephemera) Related publications, 1914-1915
Scope and Content Note
Three publications with articles on the Letchworth residence consists of an article tear sheet from the August 25, 1915, issue of American Architect; the November 21, 1914, issue of Town & Country; and article from the December 1914 issue of Country Life in America.

Box 4, Roll 2 Blueprints, approximately 1915
Box 4, Sheet 1 Foundation Plan
Box 4, Sheet 2 First Floor Plan
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