

State of California--- The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Primary # _____

HRI _____

BUILDING, STRUCTURE AND OBJECT RECORD

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*NRHP Status Code 5S3B1. Historic Name: Bird PathB2. Common Name: Bird WalkB3. Original Use: TrailB4. Present Use: Trail*B5. Architectural Style N/A*B6. Construction History Created circa 1927, based on Los Angeles Times article; unspecified rehabilitation work in the mid-1980s, based on Los Angeles Times article; signage installed in 1993, based on Calabasas Historical Society rededication ceremony program.*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____*B8. Related Features: Clubhouse, driving range, practice facilities, paved parking lotB9a. Architect: N/Ab. Builder: N/A*B10. Significance: Theme Park Moderne and Artists in Residence Area CalabasasPeriod of Significance: 1931 - ?? Property Type: Recreational Applicable Criteria: A

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

History of the Bird Path and Park Moderne¹

The Bird Path is part of the original Park Moderne housing development. Park Moderne was the brainchild of William Lingenbrink, a real estate developer and early patron of modern architecture. He was born in Holland in 1870 and moved to the United States as a child in 1882. In the early 1920s, he developed the Silver Strand and Hollywood Beach areas in Ventura County. According to community folklore, he and C. Henry Taylor traded Samuel Cooper Jr. a bathtub for his tract of land. In reality Lingenbrink, Taylor, and Cooper were partners in the subdivision they called Park Moderne. Having subdivided the Calabasas Highlands in 1924, Cooper had some previous experience in real estate development in the area. Envisioned as an artist colony, Park Moderne was subdivided in 1927 and included 174 lots organized along narrow meandering streets named for birds that inhabited the area: Blue Bird Drive, Black Bird Way, Humming Bird Way, Meadow Lark Drive, Wren Crest Drive, and Sparrow Dell. Oil was used to suppress the dust on the unpaved streets. To attract artists the developers hired avant garde architects Rudolf Schindler and Jock Detloff Peters to design model homes and other features for the community, such as footpaths, pools, fountains, and a pump house. The first improvements on the land came in 1931.

Due to the Depression, few houses were built and the area remained mostly undeveloped until the 1960s. The ownership of many of the unsold parcels reverted to Samuel Cooper Jr. and his wife Rose. The area was briefly marketed as "Hollywood Ranchitos," and lots were offered for \$175 each. Of the three houses Schindler designed for the development, one remained an un-built project, one was built but subsequently demolished, and one remains. The designs anticipated his Schindler Shelters, a series of low-cost prototypes, on which he worked from 1933 to 1939.

Peters, best known for his designs for the first three floors of the Bullocks Wilshire department store, was responsible for the design of the clubhouse and swimming pool and a series of fountains and ponds to complement Schindler's model homes.

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B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) None*B12. References: City of Calabasas Historic Context Statement, prepared by Christopher A. Joseph Associates, April 7, 2009; updated by Galvin Preservation Associates, July 8, 2010.B13. Remarks: None*B14. Evaluator: Laura VanaskieGalvin Preservation Associates Inc.1611 South Pacific Coast Highway, Suite 104Redondo Beach, CA 90277*Date of Evaluation: June 2010

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch Map with north arrow required.)



Subject property outlined in red. Image courtesy of Google Earth.

¹ Portions excerpted from *City of Calabasas Historic Context Statement* prepared by Christopher A. Joseph Associates, April 7, 2009; updated by Galvin Preservation Associates, July 8, 2010.

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***P3a. Description:**

Vegetation along the path consists primarily of tall Italian cypress trees lining its north and south sides. There are 10 on one side and 11 on the other. Additional vegetation on the path consists of low grasses and shrubs. The only surrounding landscapes include those on the adjacent residential properties. These consist of Italian cypress trees, other low trees, shrubs, and plantings, on modest-sized lawns.

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***B10. Significance:**

Although the community's original 174-unit plan was never completed, Park Moderne became a weekend retreat and a quiet place for artists to live and work. One of the first residents was the famed sculptor Jan de Swart. His wife Ursula was the daughter of Jock Peters. Other notables included woodcarver Andy Anderson, cowgirl Jane Reed, artists Robert Witt Ames, Paul von Kleiben, and Olinka Hardy, songwriter Dick Colburn, authors Margaret Larson and Laura Gaye, and designers Walter Dorrer and Charles Gretz.

The origins of the Bird Path are unclear, but it appears on tract maps dating back to 1929, and it was likely part of the original subdivision in 1927. The original plans for the community included footpaths, pools, fountains, and a pump house, the designs for which Jock Peters was responsible. Consequently, it is possible that he designed the Bird Path. However, as essentially a dirt path stretching uphill from Blue Bird Drive to Meadow Lark Drive, it is possible that it was not a designed landscape at all and just left as open space. In the late 1970s, the Calabasas Historical Society was founded, largely due to interest in the history of Park Moderne and fear of its demise from encroaching development. While the society was unable to stop most of the new development, it was able to restore the Bird Path in the mid-1980s. They erected the wooden signs that mark its entrances in 1993 as part of their efforts. Today, the Bird Path serves as an important landmark within the community and as a reminder of its past as a rural artists colony.

Integrity Statement

Little is known about the original appearance of the Bird Path, so it is difficult to assess its integrity. For instance, it is unclear when the railroad ties were installed. They might have been part of the mid-1980s rehabilitation, or they could be much older. However, it is clear from tract maps that the path has existed in some form since the community's early days. Obvious alterations include the Italian cypress trees and the dog-eared cedar and decorative metal fencing along the adjacent property lines. The trees and fences, or fencing in some form, were likely erected when their respective residences were constructed between the mid-1960s and late 1980s.

In terms of the National Register's seven aspects of integrity, the Bird Path retains integrity of location only. Its setting, feeling, and association have all been compromised by surrounding development. Its design and materials have been altered by the construction of fences and new signage and by the planting of non-native plants, such as the cypress trees. Workmanship is not an applicable aspect of integrity, because the Bird Path does not include any evidence of craft.

National Register of Historic Places Eligibility Evaluation

The National Register requires that a historic property retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance. As demonstrated above, the Bird Path does not retain sufficient integrity to convey historic significance from its period of significance. As such, the property is not eligible for listing on the National Register and was not evaluated against the four established criteria.

California Register of Historical Resources Evaluation

Like the National Register, the California Register recognizes seven aspects of integrity. In order to be eligible, properties must not only be significant under an established context; they must also reflect their appearance during their period of significance. Due to the dominating presence of the surrounding housing development and changes to the property over time, the Bird Path does not reflect its appearance during its period of significance. As such, the property is not eligible for listing on the California Register and was not evaluated against the four established criteria.

Local Historic Resource Evaluation

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The aspects of integrity and four criteria for inclusion on the Calabasas Register of Historic Resources parallel those of the National and California registers. However, the Bird Path is an important landmark for the City of Calabasas. It serves as a reminder of what the community of Park Moderne once was and the developers' original intentions. Therefore, it has been evaluated fully as a local historic resource, despite compromised integrity.

Criterion 1

The Bird Path was originally part of Park Moderne, one of the earliest subdivisions in Calabasas. Envisioned as an artists' colony in the mid-1920s, the development transformed into a rustic weekend retreat and attracted numerous artists, writers, and Hollywood personalities. Very little of the original community has survived the decades of new development in the neighborhood that began in the late 1960s. The Bird Path is one of the few physical reminders of the community's bucolic past, and it has become an important landscape for the city's residents. As such, it is significant and eligible for listing on the Calabasas Register of Historic Places under Criterion 1 as a surviving element of Park Moderne, an early, unique, and important community in Calabasas history.

Criterion 2

To be eligible for listing on the Calabasas Register under Criterion 2, a property must be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. Research revealed no reason to believe that any such significant individuals were directly associated with the Bird Path, other than Park Moderne's creators, who are addressed under Criterion 3. Therefore, the landscape does not qualify for the Calabasas Register under Criterion 2.

Criterion 3

The Bird Path was evaluated under Criterion 3 for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or representing the work of a master, or possessing high artistic values. The Bird Path is a dirt path, not a built or engineered resource, so it cannot embody the distinctive characteristics of any type, period, or method of construction. It is also not a work of art, so it cannot possess high artistic values. Therefore, the only aspect of Criterion 3 that might apply to the path is representing the work of a master.

The Bird Path was created as part of Park Moderne, which was subdivided by William Lingenbrink, C. Harry Taylor, and Samuel Cooper and designed by Rudolph Schindler and Jock Peters. Of these men it is unclear who actually laid out or reserved the land for the Bird Path, but it was most likely Jock Peters, because he was charged with creating other non-residential community features, such as fountains and pump houses. Peters was most famous for his designs for the interior of the Bullocks Wilshire department store, but he was also an accomplished artist and architect. As such, if the Bird Path were attributed to Peters, it is very unlikely that it would be considered a representative work when compared to his complete portfolio. Further, the Bird Path has been altered over time by the installation of fences, trees, and new signage, so it no longer resembles its original appearance. Therefore, the landscape does not qualify for the Calabasas Register under Criterion 3.

Criterion 4

Criterion 4 addresses a site's potential to yield or likelihood to yield information important to the prehistory or history of an area. Generally, this criterion pertains to archeological resources. An archeological report prepared in 2008 revealed numerous potentially significant archeological sites within the city limits. The exact locations of these sites were not revealed for their protection. As a result, the existence of potentially significant archeological sites within the Bird Path could not be determined for the purposes of this evaluation. A separate archeological report by a qualified archeologist would be necessary to determine the property's potential significance under Criterion 4.

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View of Bird Path from West Entrance, Looking East



View of East End of Bird Path, Looking East



View of East Entrance of Bird Path, Looking West



View of Bird Path from East Entrance, Looking West



View of West End of Bird Path, Looking West



View of Wood Fencing along South Perimeter

Continuation Sheet

Primary # _____

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View of Metal Fencing along South Perimeter



View of Wood Fencing along North Perimeter



View of Railroad Ties



View of Tall Cypress Trees and Power Lines along Bird Path