



Ben Margolis Residence - Page 8

 ****Note: This location is on a private gated street.**

Ain and Garrott Office - Page 7

Friedman Residence - Page 6

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Bean-Deckard Residence - Page 9

THE RADICAL PRACTICE OF JAMES HOMER GARROTT:

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND MODERNIST ARCHITECT

*This Trail is made possible in part by a grant from the
City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs.*





TRAILBLAZER ANTHONY FONTENOT

ABOUT ANTHONY

Anthony Fontenot is a professor of architecture at Woodbury University. He holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Louisiana, a Master of Architecture degree from the Southern California Institute of Architecture, and a Ph.D. in the history and theory of architecture from Princeton University. He is the author of *Non-Design: Architecture, Liberalism, and the Market* (University of Chicago Press, 2021) and *Gregory Ain and the Construction of a Social Landscape*, forthcoming (MIT Press, 2022).

BLAZING THE TRAIL

The prolific career of the Los Angeles-based African American architect James Homer Garrott (1897 - 1991) spanned the 1920s to the 1970s. He is credited with designing hundreds of single-family houses, four housing projects, twenty-five churches, three civic centers, numerous schools, libraries, industrial facilities, and medical buildings. Garrott's allies included Black and white progressives such as architects Robert E. Alexander and Reginald D. Johnson, many pioneering women architects, including Julia Morgan, Lillian Bridgman, Edla Muir, Lulah Maria Riggs, and Hazel Wood Waterman, noted modernist architects Richard Neutra, Harwell Hamilton Harris, and Gregory Ain, architectural photographer Julius Shulman, designers Charles and Ray Eames, modernist landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, civil rights attorney Loren Miller, civil liberties activist and housing advocate Frank Wilkinson, and civil rights activist and member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Kenneth Hahn. Garrott and Gregory Ain collaborated on numerous projects in which they explored the relationship between left-wing politics and modern architecture. Garrott was a key postwar modernist architect, "a pioneer in the liberal movement in Southern California, and an ardent worker in the constant fight for the rights of minorities," yet his work remains largely unknown, even in Los Angeles.

The FORT fellowship has provided me with an opportunity to explore the work of the little-known African American architect James H. Garrott. His body of work is distinguished by its prewar and postwar periods, the former marked by an exploration of various styles while the latter was decidedly modern. Most accounts list no more than two dozen buildings (*African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary 1865-1945* lists 24 projects while Wikipedia list only 21 projects). Nonetheless, in 1955, it was reported that Garrott had designed hundreds of single-family houses and numerous other buildings. This project is part of a larger effort to establish Garrott's work in the historical record.

**TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT
ANTHONY**

Books by **Anthony Fontenot**



THE TRAIL



CAUTION

TRAIL RULES

DON'T BE A TRAIL TRASHER!:

Take only pictures *of the outside!* And leave only footprints *on public sidewalks!*

DON'T BOTHER THE RESIDENTS!:

Do not approach owners! Do not ask them to look inside!
Doing so will cause harm to you, them and us!

NO GUARANTEES:

FORT: LA does not guarantee unobstructed views of these locations. We believe that, in many ways, the journey is the destination, and that being in the neighborhood can provide its own pleasures.

YOUR OWN RISK:

You assume all risk for taking this Trail.



DESTINATION 1
JUDGE LOREN MILLER
RESIDENCE

James H. Garrott
1940

ORIGINAL CLIENTS Loren and Juanita Miller

ADDRESS 647 Micheltorena Street
Los Angeles, CA 90026

WHY ON THE TRAIL? This was the home of Loren Miller, an African American journalist, civil rights activist, attorney, and judge, and his wife, Juanita Ellsworth Miller, a social worker who served as Deputy Director of the Department of Social Welfare for the State of California and was the co-founder of the League of Allied Arts. Both were members of the NAACP and protagonists in the national struggle for racial equality. Miller was a lifelong activist who fought against housing discrimination and served as vice president of the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing. He argued some of the most historic civil rights cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and was one of the key figures responsible for overturning racially restrictive covenants in the United States. The Millers were close friends with James H. Garrott and Langston Hughes.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS HOUSE? JUMP TO OUR DISCOVERY CENTER ENTRY ON PAGE 11

DESTINATION 2
FRIEDMAN
RESIDENCE James H. Garrott
1953

ORIGINAL CLIENTS Bernice “Burr” Lee Singer and Harry I. Friedman

ADDRESS 2143 Panorama Terrace
Los Angeles, CA 90039

WHY ON THE TRAIL? The Mr. and Mrs. Harry I. Friedman Residence is an excellent example of mid-century modern residential architecture. Mr. Friedman was the district Supervisor of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Service in Los Angeles while Mrs. Friedman, Bernice (“Burr”) Lee Singer, was an artist noteworthy for her Social Realist paintings that depicted everyday life in the Black community of Los Angeles. This house represents the pinnacle of Garrott’s mid-century modern residential design.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS HOUSE? JUMP TO OUR DISCOVERY CENTER ENTRY ON PAGE 20

AIN & GARROTT OFFICE

DESTINATION 3

Gregory Ain & James Garrott
1949 - 1950

ADDRESS 2311 Hyperion Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90027

WHY ON THE TRAIL? This was the architectural office of James H. Garrott and Gregory Ain. Marking a unique moment in racial relationships in the history of the architectural profession, a Black architect and a white architect working together as equal partners designed and built a structure that they shared as their studio. From the 1940s to the 1960s, Garrott and Ain collaborated on numerous important projects. While this building has been recognized as a modest yet excellent example of modern design, it also deserves to be honored as a national monument to racial equality.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS HOUSE? JUMP TO OUR DISCOVERY CENTER ENTRY ON PAGE 30

DESTINATION 4 BEN MARGOLIS RESIDENCE

Gregory Ain and
James H. Garrott
1951

ORIGINAL CLIENTS Ben Margolis

ADDRESS 5786 Valley Oak Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90068

WHY ON THE TRAIL? This was the house of Ben Margolis, a leading labor and civil liberties lawyer who was involved in some of the most notable cases of the 1940s and 1950s in Los Angeles. At the height of anticommunist hysteria, James H. Garrott and Gregory Ain, working in collaboration, took a bold and uncompromising stance by designing and building this house for Margolis, who was well-known for defending the blacklisted Hollywood Ten, who refused to answer questions regarding their possible communist affiliations, and the group of Latino youth wrongfully accused in the "Sleepy Lagoon murder" case.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS HOUSE? JUMP TO OUR DISCOVERY CENTER ENTRY ON PAGE 42

***Note: This location is on a private gated street.*

DESTINATION 5
BEAN-DECKARD
RESIDENCE

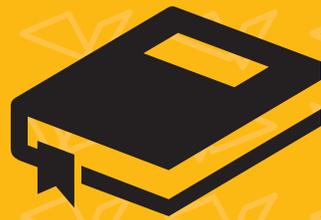
James H. Garrott
1950

ORIGINAL CLIENTS Verna Deckard and John W. Bean

ADDRESS 2436 Gramercy Park
Los Angeles, CA 90018

WHY ON THE TRAIL? The Bean-Deckard Residence is one of the few modern houses designed by James H. Garrott that survives. Also, this house had not previously been identified as a Garrott building. In 1958, a book signing event was held in this house for the poet Langston Hughes. Located in the historic West Adams district, the house is only a few blocks away from "Sugar Hill," the site of the well-known case in which Loren Miller represented African American residents Hattie McDaniel, Louise Beavers, and Ethel Waters, who challenged racially restrictive covenants and won.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS HOUSE? JUMP TO OUR DISCOVERY CENTER ENTRY ON PAGE 53



DISCOVERY CENTER

Compiled by the FORT: LA Research Team

FACTS AND FIGURES

JUDGE LOREN MILLER RESIDENCE

YEAR BUILT 1940

MATERIALS EMPLOYED Stucco, brick, glass, and asphalt shingles

COST TO BUILD Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Mediterranean Revival

Mediterranean Revival emerged in the United States in the late 19th century and became prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s. As its name suggests, the style looks back to architectural styles of the past from the region surrounding the Mediterranean Sea to capture the essence of a Mediterranean villa.

Mediterranean Revival structures often incorporate elements borrowed from the following architectural styles: Spanish Colonial, Spanish Renaissance, Beaux-Arts, French Colonial, Italian Renaissance, Venetian Gothic, Moorish architecture from Southern Spain, and the architecture of Mexican farmhouses and haciendas. This eclecticism made the style dynamic and exciting, which explains its popularity.

IDEAS AND PROCESS
THAT WENT INTO THIS
STRUCTURE

The Loren Miller Residence is a 1,972-square-foot two-story house containing two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a fireplace. Because photographs of the house when it was first built are unavailable, it's difficult to tell if the structure standing today bears a strong resemblance to James Garrott's original design. The record shows that the house was remodeled in 1943, two years after the Millers moved in, perhaps to accommodate their growing family.

Although the Black architect James Homer Garrott was incredibly prolific, his work has gone mostly unrecognized until recently. From the 1920s to the 1970s, Garrott designed and remodeled over 200 structures in the Los Angeles area, including single-family residences, multi-family housing projects, civic centers, schools, libraries, medical buildings and twenty-five churches.

Garrott was born in Montgomery, Alabama in 1897, and his family moved to Los Angeles in 1903. He acquired his early knowledge of design and construction from his father, James Henry Garrott, who had been a builder in Alabama. After graduating from the Los Angeles Polytechnic High School in 1917, Garrott found employment in the office of the Pasadena architect George P. Telling, and later worked for the Cavagliere Construction Company.

In 1928, without formal training, Garrott took the examination of the State Board of Architectural Examiners and became a licensed architect, which enabled him to start taking commissions, mostly for small houses and renovations in the Period Revival styles that were popular at the time. One of his larger early commissions was as co-designer of the headquarters of the Black-owned Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, a building that is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He then decided to further hone his skills by studying architecture at the University of Southern California.

In 1940, Garrott started a partnership with the modernist architect Gregory Ain. However, since there was very little work available to architects during the Second World War due to building restrictions, he had to find supplemental work at Douglas Aircraft in Santa Monica for a time. In February 1942, Garrott married his second wife, Helen Duncan, in Yuma, Arizona. The couple remained childless.

After the war, Garrott shifted his focus towards modernism, and in 1946, he became the second Black architect admitted to the American Institute of Architects (AIA)—his partner, Ain, sponsored his application. From the 1940s to the 1960s, Garrott and Ain collaborated on multiple projects, working independently and together, and they jointly designed and built a studio from which they both worked. A Black architect and a white architect collaborating as equals was unheard of at the time.

Garrott was also known as a civil rights activist and “ardent worker in the constant fight for the rights of minorities.” He was an active member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League, and belonged to a group of progressively-minded designers that included architect Richard Neutra, landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, and architectural photographer Julius Shulman. Through this work, Garrott also befriended the liberal Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, which led him to receive nine architectural commissions in various parts of the county.

Garrott worked and contributed to various architectural publications consistently until 1970. In 1974, he received emeritus status from the American Institute of Architects, and in 1975, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award by The Minority Architects and Planners of Los Angeles. James H. Garrott died in Los Angeles in 1991, at the age of 94.

ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURE
THAT ARE TYPICAL OF
ARCHITECT'S WORK

This modest house is a perfect example of Garrott's prewar period, during which he explored a variety of period-revival styles before shifting his focus to modernism. With its low-pitched hip roofs, smooth stucco walls, first-floor bay window, and covered porch with a wrought-iron railing, the house clearly borrows from the Spanish and Mission Revival styles, but it lacks the terra cotta tile roof or arched entryway that would place it firmly in the Spanish Colonial Revival category.

ORAL HISTORIES AND OWNERS

ABOUT THE ORIGINAL OWNERS

Loren and Juanita Miller

Loren Miller was born in Pender, Nebraska, on January 20, 1904. The son of a Black former slave and a white woman, he was the second of seven children and he grew up in extreme poverty but his parents fostered his intellectual development, encouraging him to read.

In 1913, the family moved to Kansas, where Miller attended both Kansas University and Howard University. He wanted to be a writer but decided to study law out of a sense of duty. After graduating from Topeka's Washburn Law School in 1928, Miller practiced law in Kansas for less than a year before joining his mother and siblings in Los Angeles, where they had moved years earlier.

In California, Miller pursued his first interest: journalism. He began to write for the *California Eagles*, a weekly Black newspaper, and regularly contributed to Communist-leaning publications. As a result, along with a group of other left-wing Black artists and activists, he was invited to tour the Soviet Union by people who wanted to make a documentary film about the Black experience. The film project never materialized, but the trip was life-changing for Miller, who saw a part of the world where he and his Black colleagues were treated as equals and even celebrated. Throughout the trip, Miller acted as a foreign correspondent, contributing stories about his journey to multiple American publications.

When he returned to Los Angeles in 1933, Miller married his fiancée, Juanita Ellsworth, a social worker who served as Deputy Director of the Department of Social Welfare for the State of California. They would have two sons: Loren Jr. (who later became a Los Angeles Superior Court judge, as did his daughter) and Edward. A few years later, Miller co-founded the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, a free paper for Black Angelenos, and, after passing the California bar exam in 1936, he set up a small law practice in South Central, specializing in civil rights litigation.

In the wake of World War II, many Black workers had left the South to seek economic opportunity in California, only to face discrimination on every level, particularly with regards to housing. Racially restrictive covenants were put in place to prevent these new arrivals from living anywhere outside designated "Negro settlements."

In 1944, Miller represented a Black Pasadena family who had bought a nonrestrictive lot but was sued by white neighbors anyway. He won the case, which made him the go-to lawyer for Black Angelenos seeking to push back

against housing covenants that prevented them from purchasing or renting property in certain neighborhoods.

The following year, Miller was approached by a group of prominent Black entertainers, including the Oscar-winning actress Hattie McDaniel, who lived in an upscale area of West Adams popularly known as Sugar Hill (an homage to the legendary Black neighborhood of the same name in Harlem). Their white neighbors were suing to have them evicted from their homes, insisting that if racially restrictive covenants were not enforced, their own properties would lose value. After Miller argued that government enforcement of restrictive covenants violated his clients' Fourteenth Amendment rights, the judge threw the case out of court, which paved the way for a national end to restrictive covenants.

In 1951, Miller purchased the *California Eagle*, the newspaper that had given him his start as a journalist twenty years earlier, and that continued to campaign for the integration of Black Americans in every sector of society. Nicknamed "Mr. Civil Rights," Miller also sat on dozens of social justice boards, and later served as an advisor to President John F. Kennedy. In 1964, he was appointed to the California Supreme Court, where he earned a reputation as a relentless fighter for the rights of minorities to have equal access to housing, employment, and education.

A lifelong heavy smoker, Miller died of pulmonary emphysema on July 14, 1967, at 64 years old.

RESEARCH AND REPRESENTATIONS

CURRENT PHOTOS



(courtesy of **Michael Locke**)



(photo by FORT: LA)

HISTORIC PHOTOS



Loren Miller
(courtesy of **The Huntington**)



Juanita Ellsworth Miller
(courtesy of **UCLA Collections**)



James H. Garrott
(courtesy of **UCLA Collections**)



James H. Garrott
(courtesy of **Blackpast**)

WIKIPEDIA *James H. Garrott*

Loren Miller

FURTHER EXPLORATION

"647 Micheltorena St, Los Angeles, CA 90026." **Redfin**.

Hassan, Amina. "Loren Miller: Civil Rights Attorney and Journalist." *University of Oklahoma Press*, 2015.

"James H. Garrott," ***Negro Who's Who in California***, Los Angeles, 1948.

"Judge Loren Miller, 64, Dead; Backed Open Housing on Coast." ***The New York Times***, July 16, 1967.

"Judge Loren Miller Residence, James H. Garrott AIA 1940." ***The Silverlake News***, August 1, 2015.

"Loren Miller." ***Negro Who's Who in California***, Los Angeles, 1948.

"Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement. Context: African American History of Los Angeles." ***SurveyLA***, November 2017.

Martinez, Dai'quiriya. "James H. Garrott." ***Black Past***, November 27, 2017.

Meares, Hadley. "The LA lawyer who won housing rights for all Americans." ***LA Curbed***, April 18, 2018.

"National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building," United States Department of the Interior, ***National Park Service***, May 29, 1998.

Wallet, Steve. "From South Los Angeles to West Hollywood: James Garrott, Rudolph Schindler and the Bethlehem Baptist Church." ***Steve Wallet***, Architect. June 17, 2014.

TALES AND TIMELINES

RELEVANT DATE 1940

The Loren Miller Residence is built.

1941

Loren and Juanita Miller move in.

1943

The Millers renovate the house, though the extent of these renovations is unknown.

July 14, 1967

Loren Miller passes away after living in the house for 27 years.

September 23, 1993

The house sells for \$166,000.

ANECDOTE ABOUT THE STRUCTURE

The Millers were close personal friends of the Garrotts. James Garrott (whom Miller called "Jimmy") designed two parcels of land on Micheltoarena Street: one for the Miller family and the one next door for himself to live in with his wife, his mother and his brother. Although the parcels were purchased in 1938, it took two years of design and construction before the two families were able to move in. When Loren Miller passed away, James Garrott was one of his pallbearers.

FACTS AND FIGURES

FRIEDMAN RESIDENCE

YEAR BUILT 1953

MATERIALS EMPLOYED Cinder blocks, steel, glass, and wood.

COST TO BUILD Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Mid-Century Modern

Mid-Century Modern is a term used to describe the post-World War II iteration of the International Style in residential and commercial design. Postwar architects developed a modernism that matured into a regional style, fostered in part by *Arts + Architecture* magazine's Case Study House Program. The style gained popularity because the use of standardized, prefabricated materials permitted quick and economical construction. Character-defining features of the style include expressed, post-and-beam construction in wood or steel, simple geometric forms, unadorned wall surfaces, flat or low-pitched roofs, and generous use of floor-to-ceiling glass windows and doors.

IDEAS AND PROCESS THAT WENT INTO THIS STRUCTURE

This 1,999-square-foot residence has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a few unique features that were custom-designed for its original owner, a professional artist. Notably, the house includes a painting studio with floor-to-ceiling windows to ensure good natural light, as well as an entire wall of built-in cabinets, flat files, art supply storage and a sink to wash paintbrushes. Since, by all accounts, Singer and Friedman had no children, it also makes sense that the master bedroom, which is located on the main floor, has direct access to the swimming pool.

BIOGRAPHY OF ARCHITECT

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ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURE THAT ARE TYPICAL OF ARCHITECT'S WORK

The Friedman Residence displays all the design elements of a quintessential mid-century modern home. It consists of a simple, low-slung structure with a flat roof whose second story is located under the main floor. The open-plan living room and the kitchen featuring minimal built-in wood cabinetry are bordered by a glass wall that opens up to a covered terrace with views of the surrounding hills, creating an effortless indoor-outdoor flow. The ceilings are high throughout the house, and an abundance of windows, including louver windows, ribbons of clerestory windows, and skylights, let fresh air and natural light into every room. The property also features a fireplace, a swimming pool and a grassy backyard, giving residents direct access to the four elements of nature (earth, air, fire and water) on a daily basis.

ORAL HISTORIES AND OWNERS

ABOUT THE ORIGINAL OWNERS

Bernice “Burr” Lee Singer and Harry I. Friedman

Bernice “Burr” Lee Singer was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on November 20, 1912. She studied painting at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Art Students League in New York, as well as studying privately with the painter Walter Ufer in Taos for several years.

Burr eventually became known for her watercolors, oil paintings and lithographs depicting circus themes, city dwellers, and scenes from the lives of Black working-class Americans. One of her best-known paintings of the early 1940s, “Only on Thursday,” depicts the Pasadena public pool, where Black people were only allowed to swim on Thursdays, before the weekly draining and cleaning of the pool on Friday mornings, until the pool was integrated in 1944.

Singer married her childhood sweetheart, Harry Friedman, and they moved to California in 1939. There, Friedman became the District Supervisor of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Service, which supports employment and independent living for people with disabilities, while Singer exhibited her work frequently throughout the state and nationwide. In 1942, one of her lithographs was included in the group show *Artists for Victory* at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, and in 1983, some of her prints were exhibited at the Library of Congress.

Singer died of cancer in Los Angeles on November 18, 1992. She was 79 years old.

RESEARCH AND REPRESENTATIONS

CURRENT PHOTOS



(courtesy of **Realtor.com**)



(courtesy of **Realtor.com**)



(courtesy of **Realtor.com**)



(courtesy of **Legacies of LA**)



(courtesy of Legacies of LA)



(courtesy of Legacies of LA)



(courtesy of Legacies of LA)



(courtesy of Legacies of LA)



(courtesy of Legacies of LA)



(courtesy of **Legacies of LA**)



(courtesy of **Legacies of LA**)



(courtesy of **Legacies of LA**)



(courtesy of **Legacies of LA**)



(courtesy of **Legacies of LA**)



(courtesy of **Legacies of LA**)



(courtesy of **Legacies of LA**)



(photo by FORT: LA)



(photo by FORT: LA)

HISTORIC PHOTOS



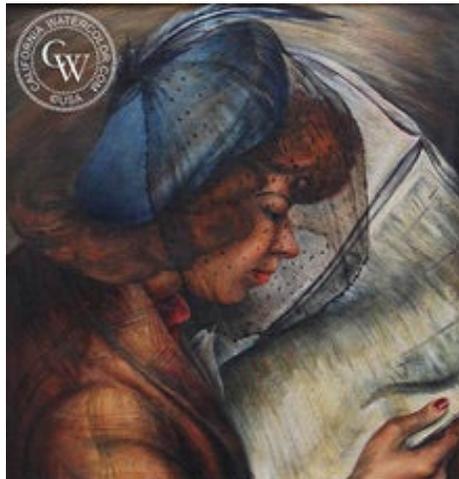
James H. Garrott
(courtesy of **UCLA Collections**)



James H. Garrott
(courtesy of **Blackpast**)



Bernice Lee Singer
(courtesy of **Early California Antiques**)



The Evening News, c. 1944 — a painting
by Burr Singer.
(courtesy of **California Water Color**)

WIKIPEDIA *Burr Singer*

James H. Garrott

FURTHER EXPLORATION

"2143 Panorama Terrace," *Redfin*.

Ades, Brian. "Notable Sale: 2143 Panorama Terrace, James H. Garrott, AIA." *Legacies of LA*, October 8, 2014.

"Burr Lee Singer." *Missouri Remembers: Arts in Missouri Through 1951*, 2021.

"Obituary: Burr Singer; Portraitist, Lithographer." *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1992.

"Burr Singer: Drummer Girl." *Early California Antiques*, 2021.

"James H. Garrott," *Negro Who's Who in California*, Los Angeles, 1948.

Martinez, Dai'quiriya. "James H. Garrott." *Black Past*, November 27, 2017.

"National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building," United States Department of the Interior, *National Park Service*, May 29, 1998.

Pascal Demeester, 2021.

Wallet, Steve. "From South Los Angeles to West Hollywood: James Garrott, Rudolph Schindler and the Bethlehem Baptist Church." *Steve Wallet*, Architect. June 17, 2014.

Ward, Bill. "Going on the Offensive." *Star Tribune*, August 03, 2007.

TALES AND TIMELINES

RELEVANT DATE 1953

The Friedman Residence is built.

November 2003

The house sells for \$900,000 to the fashion and beauty photographer Pascal Demeester.

October 15, 2010

The house is put on the market and sells in seven days for \$1.1 million, above the asking price. The new owners modernize the interiors.

FACTS AND FIGURES

AIN & GARROTT OFFICE

YEAR BUILT 1949 - 1950 (Year is 1949, as indicated by most written sources, but for the 2311 N. Hyperion property, Zima lists 1950.)

MATERIALS EMPLOYED Wood, stucco, glass

COST TO BUILD \$4,000 (as indicated in Certificate of Occupancy for 2311 Hyperion, dated Dec. 28, 1949.)

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE American Modernism

American Modernism has its roots in the modernism movement that originated in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The movement's aim was to free art and design from prevailing traditions in order to better reflect existing social, economic, and technological currents. The architects most influential in shaping American trends include Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier. In 1932, a major touring exhibit, *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, curated by the Museum of Modern Art, played an important role in introducing the style to the masses.

As noted by one historian:

"The International Style forced a general redefinition of modern architecture in the United States. 'Modern' architecture, in the eyes of those Americans who knew anything about it, became a style quite unlike the art deco storefronts, simplified classical government buildings and revival-style skyscrapers called 'modern' during the 1920s. The new modern architecture utilised flat roofs, cubic volumes, asymmetrical compositions, white walls and an abundance of concrete, glass and steel. It allowed virtually no applied ornament or overt historic references, emphasising functional and structural expression instead." (Source: Eggener)

The movement's regional expression, California Modernism, was most popular from the 1930s to the 1960s. Hallmarks of this style are attention to indoor-outdoor living, open plans, rectilinear structures often constructed with steel frames, and extensive use of glass.

OTHER FACTS AND FIGURES

Some sources indicate that Ain and Garrott had a “loose partnership.” For example:

“James H. Garrott was an African-American architect with whom Ain established a loose, temporary partnership. They were alternately ‘Garrott & Ain’ or ‘Ain & Garrott,’ depending on who was responsible for design.” (Denzer dissertation, p. 394)

And elsewhere:

“Several...buildings credited to the partnership were in fact designed by Garrott. These included the Westchester Municipal Building (1958-60), which would occupy a prominent site in one of Los Angeles’s postwar bedroom communities. As Robert Kahan explained, the original plans for Westchester were designed by Ain: ‘It was gorgeous, and the city turned it down on the grounds that it would be too expensive to build.’” (Denzer dissertation, p. 400)

Also:

“Garrott was ‘politically well connected’ and the Westchester project was one of nine commissions he received from the Los Angeles County Government during this period. According to Dorothy Kahan: ‘Jimmy Garrott had the contacts for these things, and he wanted Greg’s input, Greg’s talent, Greg’s genius.’ Ain also assisted him on small director’s buildings for two Los Angeles County parks between 1958-60. These were simple brick structures with gabled roofs, with very little detectable critical content. For Ain, the projects complemented his academic life by keeping him anchored in ‘real world’ issues. He also undoubtedly saw a larger social purpose in aiding his friend’s professional success.” (Denzer dissertation, p. 401)

RELEVANT/INTERESTING PRIMARY SOURCE

Los Angeles County Assessor (for 2311 Hyperion Avenue)

BIOGRAPHY OF ARCHITECT

Gregory Ain, an architect with a social vision, is best known for his low- and medium-cost modernist residences built in Los Angeles and surrounding areas in the mid-20th century. He was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but relocated to the Boyle Heights area of Los Angeles with his family when he was three years old. When Ain was eight, his father, a Russian-born socialist, moved the family again, to a utopian-style commune in the Antelope Valley, the Llano del Rio. After a year, however, his father grew disenchanted with the experiment and the family returned to Los Angeles.

Ain’s interest in architecture began early. At Lincoln High School, he took drafting and woodshop classes, and even built a garage behind the family home. After studying mathematics at UCLA, he attended architecture school at USC, but left early because he was not interested in the school’s Beaux Arts curriculum. At first, he worked as a draftsman for various firms, but soon he

was working alongside many of the influential modernist architects of the day, including Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler.

In 1935, Ain opened his own architecture practice. His aim was to create dwellings and planned communities for “the average earner,” rather than for those living on posh estates. For his first major project, known as the Dunsmuir Flats, “he was tasked with squeezing four townhouse units onto a narrow and deep lot in Carthay Circle just south of San Vicente Boulevard.... The flats kicked off a ten-year series of designs for low-cost housing.” (**SAH Archipedia**)

In 1940, Ain received a Guggenheim grant to continue his research into low-cost housing, which no doubt informed his later projects. Ain’s socially conscious concerns, however, did have their drawbacks: He was caught up in the Red Scare of the 1950s and labeled a communist, negatively impacting his career and reputation for a time. He later taught architecture at USC, and from 1963 to 1967, served as Dean of the School of Architecture at Pennsylvania State University.

In a *Los Angeles Times* article, Sam Hall Kaplan offers this assessment: “What marked his work, and for which I am confident he will be remembered, was its motivation: The belief that design could, and should, be socially and environmentally responsible; indeed, that in its use there is an obligation to better serve mankind.” (Kaplan)

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James Homer Garrott is the second African-American person admitted to the American Institute of Architects (after Paul R. Williams). Originally from Montgomery, Alabama, he and his family moved to Los Angeles when Garrott was six years old. He attended Los Angeles Polytechnic High School and, following graduation, worked first in a Pasadena architecture office and then at a construction company. In 1929, he passed the California architect licensing exam and opened his own practice. Early commissions included the headquarters of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company (now listed on the National Register of Historic Places) and numerous other residential and commercial buildings. In 1940, Garrott formed a partnership with Gregory Ain and they worked on many projects together while also taking on solo commissions. When Garrott was 48 years old, he enrolled in architecture school at USC, but left the program before graduating. It was at this time that Ain and Williams sponsored Garrott for admittance into the American Institute of Architects. In 1949, Garrott and Ain, who had been occupying various offices, designed and built their own office building in Silver Lake.

In a 1955 interview which appeared in the *Negro History Bulletin*, Garrott noted that his accomplishments in residential planning had included “four housing projects consisting of 750 homes in one, 30-four-family apartment buildings in another, 40 [double] dwellings in a third, and 75 single dwellings in another.” Also noted were designs for 25 churches, 200 other single-family dwellings, four medical buildings, and numerous public buildings. (Cartwright)

"A testament to the high regard in which Garrott was held was evidenced by the Minority Architects and Planners of Los Angeles, which honored him with its 'Award for Lifetime Achievement' in 1975... [In 1974], Garrott was elevated to emeritus status in the American Institute of Architects." (Wilson)

ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURE THAT ARE TYPICAL OF ARCHITECT'S WORK

The building has been described as an "excellent example of Mid-century Modern commercial architecture in Hollywood; work of noted architect James H. Garrott." (***Historic Places LA***) As included in the Historic Places LA Survey, it "retains the essential character defining features of Mid-Century Modernism from the period of significance." In addition, "integrity aspects" noted are location, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

The building's rectilinear shape, flat roof, lack of ornamentation, and ribbon of windows are expressions of modernist design.

When the office was up for sale in 2005, *Curbed Los Angeles* described it as having an open plan with "flexible interiors...organized by mobile space dividers. The plan provides for reception, a private office, conference room, studio, bath, and kitchen." (Williams, J.)

MORE INFO

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ORAL HISTORIES AND OWNERS

ABOUT THE OWNERS

Ain and Garrott built the office for themselves and were the original owners. Assessor records list four changes in ownership since 1967. The current owner is Antony (Tony) Unruh.

A *Los Angeles Times* article notes the following:

“As a young architecture student driving the streets of L.A. on his way to the Southern California Institute of Architecture in the late '70s, Unruh noticed a building on Dunsmuir Street that intrigued him. He would come to find out that it was designed by Ain.

‘No one knew who he was,’ Unruh said, but the building spoke to him. He wanted to buy it, but as a struggling student, he could not get the money together. About 10 years later, Ain’s architecture office in Silver Lake came on the market, and Unruh’s purchase cemented his connection with Ain’s work.”
(*LA Times*)

Unruh was born in South Africa, and is a graduate of the Southern California Institute of Architecture. His firm, Unruh Boyer Inc., has been in operation for approximately 25 years.

From Unruh’s **website**: “Principals Antony Unruh and Trish Boyer have a strong background in residential projects ranging from ground-up construction, additions and renovations, interior design and furnishings. Commercial projects include restaurants, retail, offices, condominium renovation, hotel and hospitality, post production and recording studios.”

QUOTES FROM OWNERS

“I feel like I’m living inside Gregory Ain’s brain,” Tony Unruh states in the above *Los Angeles Times* article.

RELEVANT/INTERESTING PRIMARY SOURCE

Curbed Los Angeles

MORE INFO Schneider, Iris. "New Life for Gregory Ain House in Silver Lake." *Los Angeles Times*, 2 Aug. 2013.

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"Unruh Boyer, Inc." *Buzzfile*, 2020.

RESEARCH AND REPRESENTATIONS

CURRENT PHOTOS



(courtesy of **Michael Locke**)



(courtesy of **Michael Locke**)



(courtesy of **Entasis Architectural Tours**)



(photo by **FORT: LA**)

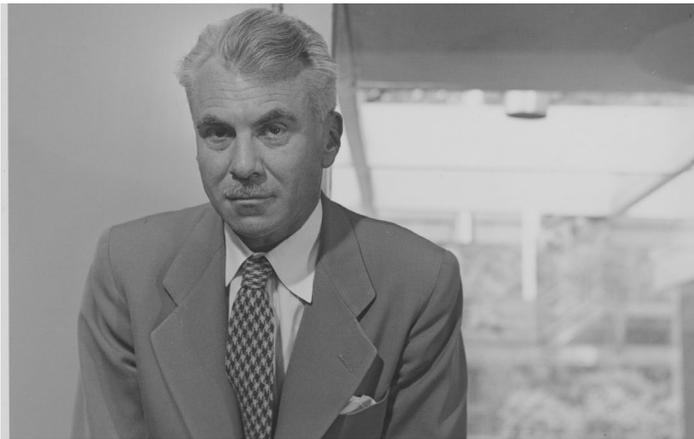
HISTORIC PHOTOS



Gregory Ain
(photo by Homer Page)



James H. Garrott
(courtesy of **Blackpast**)



Gregory Ain
(photo by Homer Page, courtesy of **MoMa Archives**)



Gregory Ain
(courtesy of **John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation**)

| | |
|--|---|
| CITY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING AND SAFETY | |
| Address of Building | 2305 Hyperion Ave. |
| Permit No. and Year | 22504 1948 |
| Certificate Issued | 11/28/49 19 |
| CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY NOTE: Any change of use or occupancy must be approved by the Department of Building and Safety. | |
| This certifies that, so far as ascertained by or made known to the undersigned, the building at above address complies with the applicable requirements of the Municipal Code, as follows: Ch. 1, as to permitted uses; Ch. 9, Arts. 1, 3, 4, and 5; and with applicable requirements of State Housing Act,—for following occupancies: | |
| 1 Story, Type V, 18' x 40' G-1 Occupancy | |
| Owner | Gregory Ain, Joseph Johnson, Alfred Day |
| Owner's Address | 2404 W. Seventh Street Los Angeles 5, Calif. |
| Form B-85a-20M-0-49 G. E. MORRIS, Superintendent of Building By <u>Faye Greenberg</u> | |

| | |
|--|--|
| CITY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING AND SAFETY | |
| Address of Building | 2311 Hyperion Ave. |
| Permit No. and Year | LA 3220 - 1950 |
| Certificate Issued | May 9, 1951 |
| CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY NOTE: Any change of use or occupancy must be approved by the Department of Building and Safety. | |
| This certifies that, so far as ascertained by or made known to the undersigned, the building at above address complies with the applicable requirements of the Municipal Code, as follows: Ch. 1, as to permitted uses; Ch. 9, Arts. 1, 3, 4, and 5; and with applicable requirements of State Housing Act,—for following occupancies: | |
| 1 Story, Type V, 34 x 46 Office Building, G Occupancy | |
| Owner | James H. Garrott |
| Owner's Address | 653 Micheltorena Los Angeles 26, Calif. |
| Form B-85a-20M-1-50 G. E. MORRIS, Superintendent of Building By <u>John D. Miller</u> | |

Architect Garrott Moves Office; Takes on Partner

Announcement of the removal of his office to 672 South Lafayette Park place near Wilshire boulevard and association with Gregory Ain, Guggenheim award winner for 1940, was made this week by James H. Garrott, prominent local architect.

A practicing architect for the past 12 years, Mr. Garrott has designed numerous fine residences, apartment houses and commercial buildings throughout the city and his environs. He has just completed plans for a \$50,000 twenty four unit apartment building for Grace F. Marquis to be built on the corner of Fifth and New Hampshire streets and

residences for prominent Angelinos, including George A. Beavers, Jr., vice president of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance company, Attorney Loren Miller and Ruth Holloway. To his credit on the west side are the Bessie Bruce and William L. Hill residences.

Outstanding buildings in this community designed by Mr. Garrott include the Golden State office building, St. Philips Episcopal church, Mount Zion Baptist church, Pilgrim Baptist church and many others. Many of the large open front markets throughout the county were designed by him for Gertmenian and Fitzsimmon stores.

| | | | |
|--------|---|-----------|--------------|
| 2-2921 | 2122 Hyperion Wood Alton r. | NO 2-5076 | 2732 Hyperio |
| 5-7260 | 2122 1/2 Hyperion Av Waddingham Walter F | NO 5-5004 | 2732 Hyperio |
| 3-5464 | | | 2734 Hyperio |
| 1-7920 | 2124 Hyperion Av Coast Burglar Alarm Co | NO 4-2968 | 2738 Hyperio |
| 5-7763 | 2140 Hyperion Av Smith-Hudson Co | NO 3-3933 | 2738 Hyperio |
| 2-8793 | 2143 Hyperion Av Arviso Meta | NO 2-0308 | 2738 Hyperio |
| 2-0376 | 2207 Hyperion Pettibon's Portable Shaft Grinding | NO 2-9494 | 2738 Hyperio |
| 2-0376 | 2210 Hyperion Av Chamberlin Co of America | NO 5-5701 | 2800 Hyperio |
| 2-0376 | 2210 Hyperion Av Chamberlin Weather Stripping Co of America | NO 5-5701 | 2801 Hyperio |
| 3-4404 | 2211 Hyperion Brandt Emmi C. | NO 4-0897 | 2801 Hyperio |
| 5-0671 | 2231 Hyperion Av Schmidt Frances | NO 3-2820 | 2801 Hyperio |
| 2-9329 | 2300 Hyperion Av Advance Automotive | NO 5-8807 | 2801 Hyperio |
| 3-3661 | 2305 Hyperion Av Cox Robt T. | NO 1-4323 | 2802 Hyperio |
| 3-7650 | 2305 Hyperion Av Johnson Jos L archt. | NO 3-4639 | 2804 Hyperio |
| 4-0230 | 2305 Hyperion Av Reichardt Walter L archt | NO 3-4639 | 2808 Hyperio |
| 2-0780 | 2306 Hyperion Av Silverlake Bindery | NO 3-9641 | 2808 Hyperio |
| 3-1780 | 2310 Hyperion Av Bannon Electric | NO 4-6424 | 2808 Hyperio |
| 2-7609 | 2311 Hyperion Av Ain Gregory archt. | NO 1-1449 | 2810 Hyperio |
| 4-8394 | 2311 Hyperion Garrott Jas H archt. | NO 1-1449 | 2811 Hyperio |
| 1-3565 | 2316 Hyperion Av Lilly Red Plumbg. | NO 4-2906 | 2811 Hyperio |
| 5-0812 | Day & Night call. | NO 4-2906 | 2812 Hyperio |
| 1-7569 | 2316 Hyperion Av Red Lilly Plumbg. | NO 4-2906 | 2812 Hyperio |
| 2-4761 | Day & Night call. | NO 4-2906 | 2813 Hyperio |
| 5-6197 | 2322 Hyperion Av Prichard L E. | NO 3-7170 | 2813 Hyperio |
| 2-8746 | | | |

YOUTUBE RELATED LINK

Lecture by Woodbury professor Anthony Fontenot (architect & historian) – delivered at Getty Conservation Institute, Dec. 10, 2013

WIKIPEDIA

Gregory Ain

James H. Garrot

MORE INFO

From South Los Angeles to West Hollywood: James Garrott, Rudolph Schindler and the Bethlehem Baptist Church

FURTHER EXPLORATION

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Martinez, Dai'quirya. "James H. Garrott (1897-1991)." **Blackpast**, 27 Nov. 2017.

TALES AND TIMELINES

RELEVANT DATE 1940

Garrott and Ain form a partnership.

1949-1950

Garrott and Ain, who had been occupying various offices, design and build their own office building in Silver Lake.

November 1949

Ain, Johnson, and Day file a Certificate of Occupancy for 2305 Hyperion Avenue with the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety.

May 1951

Garrott files a Certificate of Occupancy for 2311 Hyperion Avenue with the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety.

October 2010

2305 Hyperion Avenue is listed as a Historic Place in the Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey.

ANECDOTE ABOUT THE STRUCTURE

The office at 2311 Hyperion Avenue was within walking distance of Garrott's residence, which he designed, located at 653 Micheltorena Street. It is pictured ***here***.

MORE INFO

Locke, Michael. "James Garrott Residence." ***Flickr***, 26 July 2015.

FACTS AND FIGURES

BEN MARGOLIS RESIDENCE

YEAR BUILT 1951

MATERIALS EMPLOYED Wood, steel, and glass.

COST TO BUILD Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Mid-Century Modern

Mid-Century Modern is a term used to describe the post-World War II iteration of the International Style in residential and commercial design. Postwar architects developed a modernism that matured into a regional style, fostered in part by *Arts + Architecture* magazine's Case Study House Program. The style gained popularity because the use of standardized, prefabricated materials permitted quick and economical construction. Character-defining features of the style include expressed, post-and-beam construction in wood or steel, simple geometric forms, unadorned wall surfaces, flat or low-pitched roofs, and generous use of floor-to-ceiling glass windows and doors.

IDEAS AND PROCESS
THAT WENT INTO THIS
STRUCTURE

The Ben Margolis Residence is located on the west end of Valley Oak Drive, a private street inside a gated community. The 2,883-square-foot house contains four bedrooms, four bathrooms and large, open living and dining spaces. Like most of Gregory Ain's projects, the residence was photographed by Julius Shulman when it was newly built in the early 1950s.

Although the house underwent a major renovation in 1992, many original details remain intact, including a sliding glass wall, clerestory windows throughout, and an open floor plan that creates a seamless indoor-outdoor flow.

In the early years of the 21st century, a lap pool and guest house designed by architect Pierre Koenig were added to the property. Sited on a hill behind and slightly above the main house, the steel and glass guest house with concrete floors and a telescoping glass wall overlooks the pool and the city beyond. It was one of Koenig's last projects before he passed away in 2004.

Gregory Ain, an architect with a social vision, is best known for his low- and medium-cost modernist residences built in Los Angeles and surrounding areas in the mid-20th century. He was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but relocated to the Boyle Heights area of Los Angeles with his family when he was three years old. When Ain was eight, his father, a Russian-born socialist, moved the family again, to a utopian-style commune in the Antelope Valley, the Llano del Rio. After a year, however, his father grew disenchanted with the experiment and the family returned to Los Angeles. Ain's interest in architecture began early. At Lincoln High School, he took drafting and wood shop classes, and even built a garage behind the family home. After studying mathematics at UCLA, he attended architecture school at USC, but left early because he was not interested in the school's Beaux Arts curriculum. At first, he worked as a draftsman for various firms, but soon he was working alongside many of the influential modernist architects of the day, including Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler.

In 1935, Ain opened his own architecture practice. His aim was to create dwellings and planned communities for "the average earner," rather than for those living on posh estates. For his first major project, known as the Dunsmuir Flats, "he was tasked with squeezing four townhouse units onto a narrow and deep lot in Carthay Circle just south of San Vicente Boulevard.... The flats kicked off a tenyear series of designs for low-cost housing." (SAH Archipedia)

In 1940, Ain received a Guggenheim grant to continue his research into low-cost housing, which no doubt informed his later projects. Ain's socially conscious concerns, however, did have their drawbacks: He was caught up in the Red Scare of the 1950s and labeled a communist, negatively impacting his career and reputation for a time. He later taught architecture at USC, and from 1963 to 1967, served as Dean of the School of Architecture at Pennsylvania State University.

Although the Black architect James Homer Garrott was incredibly prolific, his work has gone mostly unrecognized until recently. From the 1920s to the 1970s, Garrott designed and remodeled over 200 structures in the Los Angeles area, including single-family residences, multi-family housing projects, civic centers, schools, libraries, medical buildings and twenty-five churches.

Garrott was born in Montgomery, Alabama in 1897, and his family moved to Los Angeles in 1903. He acquired his early knowledge of design and construction from his father, James Henry Garrott, who had been a builder in Alabama. After graduating from the Los Angeles Polytechnic High School in 1917, Garrott found employment in the office of the Pasadena architect George P. Telling, and later worked for the Cavagliere Construction Company.

In 1928, without formal training, Garrott took the examination of the State Board of Architectural Examiners and became a licensed architect, which enabled him to start taking commissions, mostly for small houses and renovations in the Period Revival styles that were popular at the time. One of

his larger early commissions was as co-designer of the headquarters of the Black-owned Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, a building that is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He then decided to further hone his skills by studying architecture at the University of Southern California.

In 1940, Garrott started a partnership with Gregory Ain. They worked on many projects together (as Ain and Garrott or Garrott and Ain, depending on who had initiated the original design) while also taking on solo commissions. After the war, Garrott shifted his focus towards modernism, and in 1946, he became the second Black architect admitted to the American Institute of Architects (AIA)—his partner, Ain, sponsored his application. From the 1940s to the 1960s, Garrott and Ain collaborated on multiple projects, working independently and together, and they jointly designed and built a studio from which they both worked. A Black architect and a white architect collaborating as equals was unheard of at the time.

Garrott was also known as a civil rights activist and “ardent worker in the constant fight for the rights of minorities.” He was an active member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League, and belonged to a group of progressively-minded designers that included architect Richard Neutra, landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, and architectural photographer Julius Shulman. Through this work, Garrott also befriended the liberal Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, which led him to receive nine architectural commissions in various parts of the county.

Garrott worked and contributed to various architectural publications consistently until 1970. In 1974, he received emeritus status from the American Institute of Architects, and in 1975, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award by The Minority Architects and Planners of Los Angeles. James H. Garrott died in Los Angeles in 1991, at the age of 94.

ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURE THAT ARE TYPICAL OF ARCHITECT'S WORK

The house's rectilinear shape, flat roof, lack of ornamentation, and ribbons of windows (including an interior sliding glass wall) are distinctive expressions of Mid-century modern design.

Although the guest house was built in the early 2000s, its box-like steel and glass structure is reminiscent of Pierre Koenig's best-known Mid-century modern designs.

ORAL HISTORIES AND OWNERS

ABOUT THE ORIGINAL OWNERS

Ben Margolis

Ben Margolis was a civil rights attorney best known for representing the defendants in two famous cases of the 1940s and '50s: the group of Latino young men wrongfully accused in the "Sleepy Lagoon" murder case, and the Hollywood 10, a group of film directors, producers and screenwriters who refused to answer questions about their Communist affiliations.

Margolis was born in New York in 1910, the son of Russian socialists who had fled the persecution of Jews in their native country. The family moved to Santa Barbara, California, when Ben was a teenager, and he began attending a high school that offered law lessons. After taking a class in commercial law, Margolis decided to become a lawyer. He studied at the Hastings Law School and opened his own law firm in San Francisco in 1933. Three years later, he married Valerie Charlotte Kayly, with whom he would have three sons.

In 1941, the family moved to Los Angeles and Margolis started a partnership with lawyer John T. McTernan that would last for the next fifty years. Their firm would represent many labor unions and work on cases involving racial justice and restrictive housing covenants.

A few years after settling in Los Angeles, Margolis appealed the "Sleepy Lagoon" murder case, in which 22 young men were convicted of the murder of a 21-year-old man who had been beaten and left for dead near a swimming hole. The press had called the swimming hole the "Sleepy Lagoon" after a then-popular song, and portrayed the defendants—most of them Mexican Americans—as dangerous gang members. During their trial, the defendants hadn't been allowed to shower or to wear clean clothes, and were confined to a "prisoners' box" that prevented them from communicating with their lawyers. Margolis succeeded in reversing the convictions on the grounds that the defendants had been denied the right to consult with their attorneys.

By the late 1940s, when Congress began to investigate Communist activity in the film industry, Margolis had developed a reputation as a champion of dissidents. A group of Hollywood screenwriters, directors and producers prosecuted for their alleged support of the Communist Party sought his advice on how to handle their appearances before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Margolis became one of the principal defenders of the Hollywood 10, urging them to answer any question about their political affiliations the same way: "None of your business." While the Hollywood 10 were ultimately cited for contempt of Congress and sentenced to spend up to a year in federal prison, Margolis was recognized as a fierce defendant of the first Amendment. When Margolis himself was questioned by Congress a

few years later, he said, "I feel nothing but contempt for this committee and I'm proud of it. This committee has no right to tell people how to think."

In the second half of the twentieth century, Margolis took on several cases that broke ground in the prosecution of slumlords. He also mentored multiple generations of civil rights attorneys, often giving workshops for the American Civil Liberties Union.

Margolis died of congestive heart failure in Portland, Oregon, on Jan. 27, 1999. He was 88 years old.

RESEARCH AND REPRESENTATIONS

CURRENT PHOTOS



Front façade
(courtesy of **Zillow**)



Front façade
(courtesy of **Michael Locke**)



Back façade
(courtesy of **Michael Locke**)



Living Room
(courtesy of **Michael Locke**)



Living space divided by glass wall
(courtesy of **Michael Locke**)



Guest house designed by Pierre Koenig
(courtesy of **Michael Locke**)



Backyard pool
(courtesy of **Zillow**)

HISTORIC PHOTOS



Interior of Ben Margolis Residence
 (photo by Julius Shulman, courtesy of J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles - 2004.R.10)



Interior of Ben Margolis Residence
 (photo by Julius Shulman, courtesy of J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles - 2004.R.10)



Interior of Ben Margolis Residence
 (photo by Julius Shulman, courtesy of J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles - 2004.R.10)



Interior of Ben Margolis Residence
 (photo by Julius Shulman, courtesy of J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles - 2004.R.10)



Interior of Ben Margolis Residence
 (photo by Julius Shulman, courtesy of J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles - 2004.R.10)



Ben Margolis with the Sleepy Lagoon defendants and Alice McGrath, 1944
 (courtesy of **Online Archives of California**)



James H. Garrott
(courtesy of **UCLA Collections**)



James H. Garrott
(courtesy of **Blackpast**)



Pierre Koenig,
designer of the pool house addition
(courtesy of **Architectuul**)



Attorney Ben Margolis on the witness
stand at the Tenney Committee Hearing
(courtesy of **Calisphere**)



Communist Party activist Mrs. LaRue McCormick and
her attorney, Ben Margolis, on October 2, 1950
(courtesy of **Calisphere**)

YOUTUBE RELATED LINK **5786 Valley Oak Drive**

WIKIPEDIA **Ben Margolis**

James H. Garrott

FURTHER EXPLORATION **Ame Austin**

Denny, Philip R. "The Architect, the Red Scare and the House That Disappeared." **New York Times**, August 9, 2017.

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Reed, Christopher. "Ben Margolis obituary: The price of free speech." **The Guardian**, February 9, 1999.

Wallet, Steve. "From South Los Angeles to West Hollywood: James Garrott, Rudolph Schindler and the Bethlehem Baptist Church." **Steve Wallet**, Architect. June 17, 2014.

Woo, Elaine. "Ben Margolis Dies; Defense Lawyer in 'Hollywood 10' Case." **Los Angeles Times**, February 6, 1999.

TALES AND TIMELINES

RELEVANT DATE 1951

The Ben Margolis Residence is designed by Gregory Ain and built by James H. Garrott.

1992

The house undergoes a major renovation.

Circa 2000-2004

A lap pool and guesthouse designed by architect Pierre Koenig are added to the property. It's one of Koenig's last projects before he passes away in 2004.

2011

The house is put on the market and priced at just under \$2 million.

2012

The house sells to the British former model and designer Aime Austin Max.

October 2, 2020

The house sells for \$3.3 million to the Koppany Family Trust.

FACTS AND FIGURES

BEAN-DECKARD RESIDENCE

YEAR BUILT 1950

MATERIALS EMPLOYED California redwood, steel, glass.

COST TO BUILD Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Mid-Century Modern

Mid-Century Modern is a term used to describe the post-World War II iteration of the International Style in residential and commercial design. Postwar architects developed a modernism that matured into a regional style, fostered in part by *Arts + Architecture* magazine's Case Study House Program. The style gained popularity because the use of standardized, prefabricated materials permitted quick and economical construction. Character-defining features of the style include expressed, post-and-beam construction in wood or steel, simple geometric forms, unadorned wall surfaces, flat or low-pitched roofs, and generous use of floor-to-ceiling glass windows and doors.

BIOGRAPHY OF ARCHITECT Although the Black architect James Homer Garrott was incredibly prolific, his work has gone mostly unrecognized until recently. From the 1920s to the 1970s, Garrott designed and remodeled over 200 structures in the Los Angeles area, including single-family residences, multi-family housing projects, civic centers, schools, libraries, medical buildings and twenty-five churches. Garrott was born in Montgomery, Alabama in 1897, and his family moved to Los Angeles in 1903. He acquired his early knowledge of design and construction from his father, James Henry Garrott, who had been a builder in Alabama. After graduating from the Los Angeles Polytechnic High School in 1917, Garrott found employment in the office of the Pasadena architect George P. Telling, and later worked for the Cavagliere Construction Company.

In 1928, without formal training, Garrott took the examination of the State Board of Architectural Examiners and became a licensed architect, which enabled him to start taking commissions, mostly for small houses and renovations in the Period Revival styles that were popular at the time. One of his larger early commissions was as co-designer of the headquarters of the Black-owned Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, a building that

is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He then decided to further hone his skills by studying architecture at the University of Southern California.

In 1940, Garrott started a partnership with the modernist architect Gregory Ain. However, since there was very little work available to architects during the Second World War due to building restrictions, he had to find supplemental work at Douglas Aircraft in Santa Monica for a time. In February 1942, Garrott married his second wife, Helen Duncan, in Yuma, Arizona. The couple remained childless.

After the war, Garrott shifted his focus towards modernism, and in 1946, he became the second Black architect admitted to the American Institute of Architects (AIA)—his partner, Ain, sponsored his application. From the 1940s to the 1960s, Garrott and Ain collaborated on multiple projects, working independently and together, and they jointly designed and built a studio from which they both worked. A Black architect and a white architect collaborating as equals was unheard of at the time.

Garrott was also known as a civil rights activist and “ardent worker in the constant fight for the rights of minorities.” He was an active member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League, and belonged to a group of progressively-minded designers that included architect Richard Neutra, landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, and architectural photographer Julius Shulman. Through this work, Garrott also befriended the liberal Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, which led him to receive nine architectural commissions in various parts of the county.

Garrott worked and contributed to various architectural publications consistently until 1970. In 1974, he received emeritus status from the American Institute of Architects, and in 1975, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award by The Minority Architects and Planners of Los Angeles. James H. Garrott died in Los Angeles in 1991, at the age of 94.

ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURE THAT ARE TYPICAL OF ARCHITECT'S WORK

At 2,677 square feet, the Bean-Deckard Residence contains two bedrooms and two bathrooms, and features all the elements of a typical mid-century modern home. The structure is a combination of flat, boxy volumes stacked on top of each other at right angles and perforated by glass walls and clerestory windows that let natural light into every room. The flat roof with broad eaves shade the windows from the year-round California sun, and whether or not the decorative grills on some of the upper windows are original, they fit the early-fifties style perfectly.

ORAL HISTORIES AND OWNERS

ABOUT THE ORIGINAL OWNERS

Verna Deckard and John W. Bean

Verna Deckard was born in Tatum, Texas, in 1906. Her father, Jule, owned a blacksmith shop and a garage, and taught Verna to drive when she was only seven years old. In 1924, at the age of seventeen, she drove from Texas to California with her family, in pursuit of business opportunities in the West. Since she had driven all this way, she was allowed to keep using the car, a new Ford coupe, making her one of the only Black teenage girls in Los Angeles to have a car.

Deckard married her first husband, Arthur A. Lewis, after knowing him for just a month. Her parents had decided to go back to Texas so getting married was the only way for her to stay in California. They had a son, Arthur Jr., and Deckard dropped out of high school to be a full-time wife and mother. Lewis died of tuberculosis three years later, leaving Deckard a widow and single mother at the age of twenty. Against the advice of friends and family members, who suggested that she apply for public assistance, she decided to get a job. Although employment opportunities for Black women were severely restricted at the time, she was eventually hired as a cashier by the Japanese owner of the Gayety Theater, located on South Central Avenue. She was the first Black cashier in Los Angeles. All the local papers wrote about it.

Deckard eventually finished high school and attended night school to get her real estate license. In the 1930s and '40s, most of the houses that she sold to African American buyers were located east of Avalon Boulevard since the west side had racially restrictive covenants, although, sometimes, a Black family would buy a house in a restricted area and rent it out to white tenants.

In 1943, after an unhappy second marriage, Deckard married John W. Bean, a World War II veteran, notary public, hotel owner, and fellow real estate broker. He was born in Arkansas and had moved to Los Angeles as a teenager. Bean was a member of the Masonic Lodge, the Presbyterian Church, and other civic organizations. He loved to play golf and bridge.

In 1946, with the help of a white colleague, Deckard managed to buy an empty lot in a restricted neighborhood, and by the time she had saved enough money to build a house, the racially restrictive covenant had been lifted. In 1949, she commissioned James H. Garrott to design and build her a modern house made of California redwood. Although sources say that Deckard herself bought the lot and oversaw the house's design and construction, the building permit is in John W. Bean's name.

In addition to her career as a real estate broker, which spanned 45 years, Deckard pursued multiple concurrent business ventures. At different times over the course of her life, she was a product demonstrator for Kraft cheese and other brands, wrote the social column for the Black newspaper *The Sentinel*, owned and operated an Orange Julius franchise, and worked as an extra in movies and television shows. She was married a fourth time, in 1964, to the successful businessman Virgil Williams.

The house built on the lot that Verna Deckard bought in defiance of racially restrictive covenants is currently owned by the Titus family.

QUOTES FROM OWNERS

Verna Deckard: "So this vacant lot was for sale over on Gramercy Park, cute little private street, built on a circle. They had a big colonial style house next door to it. And they wanted to sell the house and the lot together and they couldn't do it so they decided they'd sell it separately. They'd sell the lot for \$3,500 and the house for something more. I don't know. But I didn't want the house, I just wanted the lot. So I said, "Oh this is just what I want." Oh I got all excited and I called up the agent. It had a sign on it. I called the agent to buy it. So when I gave her my phone number, it was on the east side, and she assumed that I was colored. Because she couldn't tell by the way I was talking that I was colored, up until I gave her my phone number. Then she said, "Oh, are you colored?" And I said, "Yes." And she said, "Well, we can't sell it to colored." And I got mad, but not to her. She didn't know I was mad. Within myself, I was mad. So I made up my mind. I'm going to get this lot one way or the other. That was in 1946. And the reason I got mad, I said, "I'm sick of these peckerwoods (laughs) trying to keep me from enjoying life and having what I want and I'm willing to work and pay for it."

There was a white fellow [who] was working in our office and he was a speculator. He would buy properties and resell them. And he was very nice. And I went back and was crying on his shoulder, telling him that I really wanted this lot. Well, he said, "Well, Verna, I'll buy it for you." (laughs) So he went and bought it for me.

I put up the money, however. And he bought it in his name, well, in his girlfriend's name. So the woman, the salesperson for the lot, she had been warned ahead of time that this white man had a colored woman over there looking at this lot. Because, see, I took him over to show him the lot. I said, "When you call to talk about buying it, you want to know what you're talking about." So I took him over and showed him the lot. And one of those nosy neighbors, who was a prejudiced white man, saw us. And he called the real estate agent. He took the man's license number from his car and found out who he was and gave the salesperson the man's name and license number and said, "Now if he calls you about this lot, don't you sell it to him because he had a colored woman over there showing it to him."

So sure enough, when the man called about the lot, she knew all about him over there with me looking at the lot. And she said, "Well, I'm sorry. I can't sell you the lot." He says, "Why?" "Because you had a colored woman over there looking at the lot." He says, "A colored woman? What do you mean?"

"Well, one of the neighbors said he saw you over there with this colored woman looking at the lot." He said, "That was no colored woman, that was just a dark-haired white woman. That old man needs to change his glasses." (laughs) It was about dusk, you know. And he could have made a mistake, I'm not all that dark anyway. And so she fell for it. She believed him. She believed him because he got mad. He said, "Oh, she'd get insulted if she knew she was called a colored woman, she's just a dark-haired white woman." And so she went and sold him the lot.

Naturally, when he buys the lot, he signs the deed over the me right away in the same escrow to protect me in case he dies or something, so I've still got my lot, you know. But I didn't record it right away. I waited a while. I waited until the escrow closed and then I recorded my deed. And she kept watching it because she got a little suspicious after she sold it to him. She kept watching it and when my deed was recorded, she found out that I was the lady with the same phone number who had called her before. She was really on the ball all right. And, you know, she called me up and told me, "Well, you bought it but you know you can't live on it, don't you?" It's just a vacant lot. It had nothing on it. I wouldn't expect to live on a vacant lot. And I just said to her, "Well, if I can't live on it, I have some white relatives who can." (laughs) Oh boy, she shut up then. She didn't bother me no more. So that was in '46.

Well, I wasn't able to build yet anyway. I knew the lot was restricted and I had made up my mind, "I'm going to build on it if I have to live there as the maid." Because I was just determined to, that was the last straw that broke the camel's back, because I had been looking for years to buy a lot in a nice neighborhood so I could have the kind of home I wanted. And every time I'd find one that I wanted, they wouldn't sell it to me. And so I decided, "Well, I want to get this lot before I get too old to enjoy it." So I wasn't going to build anyway. But it so happens that I'm saving my money up to build the house and then, two years later, the restrictive covenant was broken down, in 1948. So then I just rejoiced and jumped for joy (laughs) that I could build my dream house now. And I built a modern house out of California redwood. I had always wanted a California redwood [house] because I had been up where they have the redwood trees."

(Kitchener, Amy. "Verna Williams (African American)." *Shades of L.A.: A Search for Visual Ethnic History*. Oral history project, Los Angeles Public Library, 1991.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ORIGINAL OWNERS

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RESEARCH AND REPRESENTATIONS

CURRENT PHOTOS



(courtesy of Google Maps)



(photo by FORT: LA)



(photo by FORT: LA)



(photo by FORT: LA)

HISTORIC PHOTOS



James H. Garrott
(courtesy of **UCLA Collections**)



James H. Garrott
(courtesy of **Blackpast**)



John W. Bean
(courtesy of **archive.org**)



Verna Deckard
(courtesy of **Skyscaper.com**)



Verna Deckard
(courtesy of **Skyscaper.com**)



Verna Deckard
(courtesy of **Skyscaper.com**)

TALES AND TIMELINES

RELEVANT DATE 1946

Verna Deckard purchases the lot on Gramercy Park for \$3500, circumventing racially restrictive covenants with the help of a white real estate agent.

1948

Racially restrictive covenants are lifted, enabling Deckard and Bean to build on the lot.

1949

The building permits are filed by James H. Garrott, with John W. Bean listed as the owner of the lot.

1950

The Bean-Deckard Residence is built.

1958

A book signing for the Black American poet Langston Hughes is held at the house.

ANECDOTE ABOUT THE STRUCTURE

The house is located a few blocks away from Sugar Hill, the site of the 1945 case in which Loren Miller (the owner of another house on this trail) represented Black residents Hattie McDaniel, Louise Beavers and Ethel Waters, who challenged racially restriction covenants, and won.