ENVIRONMENTAL LIVING IN POSTWAR HONOLULU: HARRY W. SECKEL'S WOODLAWN TERRACE SUBDIVISION

by

LAUREN ENGLUND

A TERMINAL PROJECT

Presented to the Historic Preservation Program
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science

March 2019

TERMINAL PROJECT ABSTRACT

Lauren Englund

Master of Science

Historic Preservation Program

March 2019

Title: Environmental Living in Postwar Honolulu: Harry W. Seckel's Woodlawn Terrace Subdivision

"The modern Hawaiian house," Harry W. Seckel, FAIA (1906-1978) asserted in *Hawaiian Residential Architecture*, "should be one that is as one with its immediate environment as possible." Published in 1954, the Honolulu architect's book tapped into an important zeitgeist in modernism. Individual architects from Japan to California, reacting against what they perceived as a growing conformity in residential architecture, sought to create more climatically, culturally responsive homes and communities. Charismatic and eloquent, Seckel easily assumed his role from 1950 until 1965 as Hawai'i's unofficial public spokesman for advancing a similar type of regional distinction. Significantly, the release of *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* coincided with the opening of his new Honolulu subdivision, Woodlawn Terrace. From 1954 to 1965, Seckel completed fifty-seven single-family homes along the slopes of the Wa'Ahila Ridge. More than half a century later, fifty-three remain standing with their historic character-defining features largely intact, from tongue-and-groove vertical redwood siding and wide eaves to integrated lāna'is and plate-glass windows with views of the natural environment. Despite his accomplishments, Seckel is a largely obscure figure in Hawai'i; most of his like-minded Honolulu colleagues and their surviving homes are similarly under acknowledged in literature and the media. Vulnerable to redevelopment due to a lack of regulatory oversight, Hawai'i's

mid-century modern houses deserve greater public recognition for their historic significance and continued livability. The following narrative of Harry Seckel's own ideation of the modern Hawai‘ian home provides a more comprehensive understanding of this building type in a historic context, connecting the trajectory of Seckel's cosmopolitan career to key trends in pre- and postwar modern architecture and analyzing the historic functional and aesthetic design components of his Woodlawn Terrace subdivision and 1960 Wallace and Maizie Sanford residence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the current and former residents of Woodlawn Terrace who participated in this project—particularly Claire Sanford, Elizabeth McCutcheon, and Helen Friend—for so generously sharing their extensive knowledge of the early history of the subdivision with me. I would also like to express my appreciation to my academic advisor, Chad Randl, PhD, Albert Narath, PhD (who introduced me to Richard Neutra), and Keith Eggener, PhD for their steady guidance and constructive feedback. Special thanks to Kenneth Leonhardt, PhD and Richard Criley, PhD, who went above and beyond with their on-site survey of the Sanford property, and Edward Stasack, whose memories of Honolulu and Harry were invaluable. I am deeply indebted to Steve Gelé for contributing his talents and so much of his time and effort in producing the CAD drawings for this project. Lastly, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my family for their unwavering patience and support throughout this long but rewarding journey.

For Maizie Sanford and Paul Weissich, in memoriam.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

PREFACE

In the summer of 2012, the Hawai‘i State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD)’s architectural branch launched a long-term intermittent update of its postwar building inventory. Along with five others with backgrounds in Historic Preservation, I was recruited to evaluate the historic eligibility and condition of seven mid-century residential subdivisions on O‘ahu. The SHPD’s goal with the Historic Reconnaissance Level Surveys was to increase the efficiency of their review of proposed alterations, additions, or demolitions of mid-century-era homes. The first week of our internship was devoted to research on the neighborhoods’ developmental histories. The remaining five weeks were spent on the field recording the character-defining features and condition of every property from the public right of way. At the internship’s conclusion, I submitted my final report on two Honolulu subdivisions, Melemele and Woodlawn Terrace, based on our research findings.

During my first visit to Woodlawn Terrace, a sixty-one-home subdivision located in the *mauka hikana*, or northeast inland corner of Mānoa Valley, I noted a strong degree of historic integrity in most of its mid-century houses. A homeowner informed me that an architect named Harry Seckel designed the original subdivision. Building permits from the City and County of Honolulu’s Department of Planning and Permitting’s Data Access and Imaging Branch confirmed his testimony: fifty-three of Woodlawn Terrace’s extant homes, completed between 1954 and 1965, were attributed to the architect Harry W. Seckel, FAIA.

A subsequent review of the 1962 edition of the American Institute of Architects Directory revealed that Harry William Seckel (1906-1978) was a graduate of L’École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and a native of New York City, where he based his private practice from 1947 until his 1950 move to Honolulu. In addition to designing Woodlawn Terrace and a number of

residential and commercial buildings on Oʻahu, Seckel wrote and lectured extensively on contemporary architecture. The 1954 book *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* was his foremost critique on the state of domestic design in Hawaiʻi. It was also his promotion for a more environmentally responsive design approach to Hawaiʻian single-family houses, one that readily embraced the Islands' natural beauty and year-round mild climate.[1] When I compared this type of regional response with the houses he designed at Woodlawn Terrace, the connection between the two was palpable. It was obvious that Seckel's subdivision was a large-scale manifestation of his design intent. Several historic character-defining features pointed me toward this conclusion: protection from the frequent rain by very wide eaves, a careful consideration of site orientation, and an emphasis on the lānaʻi as the most important room of the house.

Continuing my research on Woodlawn Terrace, I was surprised to discover very little written about Hawaiʻi's mid-century modern homes or their architects. One notable exception was *Hawaiian Modern: The Architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff*, the companion catalog to a 2007 exhibition organized by the Honolulu Academy of Arts on Hawaiʻi's dean of architects. Ossipoff's elegant homes and sprawling estates, however, seemed unavoidably constrained by their exclusivity. Primarily marketed to first time homebuyers with young families, with much of its existence owed to the increased demand for single-family housing after World War II, Woodlawn Terrace was more typical of its time. Due to the absence of literature on postwar Hawaiʻi's middle class homes and for other reasons to be specified in the introductory chapter of this study, I decided that Harry Seckel and Woodlawn Terrace deserved a more thorough examination than I could provide for the SHPD in my final Historic Reconnaissance Level Survey report.

---

[1] "Seckel, Harry William," *American Architects Directory*, second edition (Washington, D.C.: R.R. Bowker, LLC, 1962), 629.

Generally, architectural historians resist describing one type of architecture as specific example of a regional expression. One reason for their hesitancy is the creative and subjective nature of architectural design itself, with aesthetic preferences, environmental considerations, collaborations, and other outside influences usually playing some role in the design process. "Regional" architecture is also hard to define because it is complicated by questions of cultural and historic identity. What makes one type of architecture representative and not another?

In multicultural Hawai'i, with its long history of colonialism, such questions are particularly convoluted. It is worth noting here that although Harry Seckel and his like-minded architectural colleagues took their inspiration from contemporary Hawai'i's cultural and physical environment and often used local materials for the construction of their buildings, they were not native Hawai'ian, nor are their single-family homes are indigenous in the literal sense. Indeed, it can be argued that with the *hale pili*, or traditional grass house, Hawai'i's original Polynesian settlers and their early descendants achieved a type of home materially more organic to the Islands than any dwelling type that followed it. Built with a carefully constructed framework covered with locally harvested *pili* grass, the *hale pili* was the consummate work of handicraft.[2] Application of the grass to walls and roofs was a particularly skilled profession and typically entrusted to a *kahuna*, or individual expert. A flat raised platform of rock, bounded by carefully built-up walls and covered with fine sand, was usually the home's foundation. Posts of Hawai'ian hard woods such as *koa* and *mamane* were set upright at corners. Crisscrossed strong poles were firmly lashed with plant fibers for the wall framework. The roof was similarly made so that the *hale pili* without the grass would resemble, with its orderly structure, the conventional appearance of a wood frame house.

---

[2] Catherine Summers, *The Hawaiian Grass House in the Bishop Museum* (Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press, 1988), 3.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

On August 19, 1954, Honolulu's Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum premiered its new exhibition, *Hawaiian Housing*. It was the anthropological and cultural museum's first collaboration with the American Institute of Architects' Hawaii Chapter. The exhibit was relatively spare, with enlarged photographs of modernist single-family homes hung above displays of tapa cloth, *imu*, and other traditional Hawai'ian accoutrements (Figure 1.1). The book published to accompany the exhibit, Harry W. Seckel's *Hawaiian Residential Architecture*, was more explicit about its intent. New housing developments in Hawai'i, the Honolulu architect asserted, need not mindlessly mimic the designs popular in the contiguous United States; more climactically and culturally responsive single-family homes could replace these models of imitation. He coined this design approach "environmental living": treating a home's entire lot as a dwelling, where "certain parts are completely open to the elements and others have various degrees of required protection."[3]

Through his writings, lectures, and other professional activities, Harry Seckel tirelessly promoted a form of modern domestic architecture responsive to the Islands' cultural and climatic conditions throughout the 1950s until his 1965 retirement. In 1967, the American Institute of Architects elevated him to its College of Fellows; he was the sixth architect based in Hawai'i to receive the honor.[4] His principle buildings outside of Woodlawn Terrace include The Pacific Club (1960), which he co-designed with Vladimir Ossipoff and local firm Merrill, Simms, and

[3] Harry W. Seckel, *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* (Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press, 1954), 9.
[4] "Seckel, Harry William, Membership Files (ahd1040201)," American Institute of Architects Archives, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects.*

Roehrig, and the International-style Boulevard Bel-Aire Apartments (1961) in Waikīkī. Despite his numerous accomplishments, Seckel remains a largely obscure figure in Hawai‘i and abroad. Scholarship on most of his architectural colleagues in Honolulu and their surviving mid-century homes is equally scant, with Ossipoff enjoying most of the academic spotlight. Moreover, excluding the Roy and Virginia Collier residence, no Woodlawn Terrace buildings to date have been added to the Hawai‘i or National Register of Historic Places despite the subdivision's obvious historic importance.[5]

With all of Hawai‘i's postwar single-family homes meeting the Secretary of Interior's fifty-year recommendation of historic eligibility, underscoring what makes them historically and stylistically significant is more pressing than ever. Hawai‘i's State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD), the Historic Hawaii Foundation, the local Chapter of Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement (DoCoMoMo), and Mālama Mānoa have responded with educational seminars, walking tours, and lectures. Recent literature on Hawai‘i's mid-century modern architecture includes Fung Associates, Inc.'s *Hawaii Modernism Context Study* (2011), Graham Hart's *Tropical Modern Residential Architecture: Elements, Vocabulary and Language* (2015), and Dean Sakamoto's *Hawaiian Modern: The Architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff* (2007).

More comprehensive studies on these buildings and architects are needed, however, particularly in light of a July 2015 change to Hawai‘i's state preservation law. Act 224, an amendment to Hawai‘i Revised Statues Chapter 6E-42, stipulates that any proposed changes to a private single-family dwelling not on the Hawai‘i or National Register of Historic Places or part of a historic district are exempt from the SHPD's review. Intensifying this unfavorable situation

[5] Don Hibbard, "Roy and Virginia Collier Residence," Hawai‘i Historic Places Review Board, February 9, 2016.

for local preservationists are the considerable developmental pressures O‘ahu faces. With property values eclipsing the values of existing buildings, for many real estate investors, older homes are merely seen as financial obstacles regardless of their condition or stylistic merit.

The study that follows partially rectifies the current gap in scholarship on Hawai‘i’s vulnerable mid-century homes by exploring the significance of Harry W. Seckel and his ideation of environmental living. Specifically, it will explore Seckel’s possible design influences and connect the trajectory of his cosmopolitan career to key trends in modernist architecture, analyze the historic regionally responsive and stylistic features of Woodlawn Terrace and his Dr. Wallace and Maizie Sanford residence, and compare the Sanford residence to formally similar postwar homes designed by architects in the Pacific Rim. Chapter II consists of two parts: a brief history of modernism in architecture and a biographical narrative of Seckel’s education and professional career. Both sections seek to elicit an understanding of his design intent in Hawai‘i by placing it on a historic continuum. More than a decade prior to Woodlawn Terrace’s original period of development, architectural luminaries such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Neutra were already producing single-family homes in harmony with their environment. Houses designed in Honolulu during the Islands’ early Territorial period (1893–1941) also point to an early regional awakening for Hawai‘i’s architects, while the post-World War II era was defined by a definitive movement toward the creation of single-family homes with a site-specific and climatically sensitive design vocabulary decidedly more compatible with Hawai‘i’s environment.

Chapter III explores Woodlawn Terrace’s developmental history, physical setting and climate, the historic character-defining features the Seckel-designed houses retain, the subdivision’s demographic makeup during its original period of development, and Seckel’s client-driven methodology. Chapter IV is a visual and textual analysis of the Wallace and Maizie

Sanford residence's functional and aesthetic components, including its landscape. Incorporated in this analysis are comparisons between its historic character-defining features with those in contemporaneous dwellings designed by Japan's Kenzo Tange and Raphael Soriano, a California-based architect. The study's conclusion identifies ways in which to address some of the current challenges Hawai'i's historic preservationists face with respect to the Islands' mid-century modern homes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & PRESENTATION

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH AND ORAL HISTORIES

Because Harry Seckel appears to have left no personal documents behind, what evidence remains of his life history and architectural contributions came primarily from published material and his AIA membership file. His 1954 book *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* shed light on his very particular design beliefs. Dozens of *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* and *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* articles accessed through Newspapers.com's vast online database also highlighted his leadership role as a AIA-Hawaii Chapter member and his intimate engagement with the local community as a public speaker and patron of the arts.

For research on Woodlawn Terrace's developmental history, I reviewed City and County of Honolulu planning, building records and aerial photos. Remarkably, a trustee of the late Margaret Morris, Seckel's ex-wife, discovered the subdivision's original sales portfolio marketed to prospective builders in its predevelopment phase, which he generously lent to me for the duration of my research. Its contents include a description of the development, the site, photographs of the landscape, and the time schedule and financial details of the project.

For more information on Seckel, Woodlawn Terrace, and the Sanford residence, I also relied on the spoken and written word. I introduced myself to the residents of Woodlawn Terrace in February of 2013 via a questionnaire attached to an informed consent form, along with a description of the project. Every mailing address in the subdivision received a copy. In March and May of the same year, I visited Woodlawn Terrace, spoke with several homeowners in person, and toured their homes. Interviews with former clients and associates of Seckel were conducted in person or via telephone, e-mail, or postal mail, sometimes over a period of several years. The three principal interviewees of this study were Claire Sanford, the daughter of the late Wallace and Maizie Sanford, Paul Weissich, the late landscape architect and director of the Honolulu Botanical Gardens, who worked with Seckel on several projects, and the artist Edward Stasack, for whom the architect designed two homes. Portions of my correspondence with Weissich are located in Appendix B.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Findings from the Historic Reconnaissance Level Survey of Woodlawn Terrace in 2012, which I conducted with five other interns on behalf of the Hawai‘i State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD), formed an integral part in understanding Seckel’s environmental living ethos. The objectives of the Historic Reconnaissance Level Survey were the following:

1. To contribute to a statewide inventory of Hawai‘i’s historic properties for the SHPD;
2. To provide digital photographic documentation of the resources to the SHPD;
3. To evaluate the properties to determine the properties’ current condition, contributing status, and eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

Every property in the subdivision was examined in accordance with the SHPD's Guidelines for Historic Resources Surveys, with survey boundaries determined by historic City and County of Honolulu building permits. The guidelines required photographs and documentation of every home's condition, style, foundation, primary and secondary cladding, framing, roof style and material, primary and secondary windows, number of stories, site features, building features, National Register of Historic Places eligibility and criteria designation if eligible, and historic integrity. This information was partially recorded on a Trimble GPS Unit with the remaining data entered into the SHPD's online Geographic Information Systems database remotely with the visual aid of digital photographs taken on the field.

VISUAL INTERPRETATION

The Sanford residence was selected as a case study due to its strong historic integrity, its particularly seamless integration with its immediate and surrounding environment, and the availability of twenty-seven of its original blueprints. With local architect Steve Gelé, I created six CAD drawings in order to better illustrate the complex narrative and symbiotic functionalism of the home's character-defining features, with a particular emphasis on its response to the immediate and surrounding environment. The drawings depict a broad topographic and climactic profile stretching from the crest of the Wa'Ahila Ridge to the Pacific Ocean 10.1 miles away; a floor plan of the Sanford residence detailing the landscape design, sun angles, circulation, and cross-ventilation wind patterns; a second floor plan highlighting its use of social, private, and utilitarian space; and a north-facing sectional view of the house centered on its area of division.

Figure 1.1 The AIA-Hawaii Chapter's 1954 *Hawaiian Housing* exhibition. Courtesy of the Bishop Museum Library and Archives.

CHAPTER II
HARRY W. SECKEL

TOWARD A MODERN ARCHITECTURE OF ASSOCIATION

In the 1910s and 1920s, a new architecture had begun to emerge in Europe, one whose leading figures sought to create a modern built environment for the machine age. In the buildings they designed, they abandoned the ornamental "artifice" and eclecticism of Victorian-era architecture in favor of a considerably more streamlined approach. Among the most influential European architects to emerge from this period were Germany's Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the avant-garde Le Corbusier, Finnish designer and architect Alvar Aalto, and Richard Neutra, who, along with fellow Austrian Rudolf Schindler, would take the design principles of modernism and transplant them to the Southern California desert.

If the modernist movement had any one leader prior to World War II, it was Le Corbusier. The architect's Parisian home Villa Savoye (1929) is a particularly striking embodiment of what he called the "Five Points of Architecture": "pilotis, or ground-level supporting columns, elevating the building; a flat roof terrace, [which] reclaims the area of the building site for domestic purposes, including a garden area; a free plan, made possible by the elimination of load-bearing walls; horizontal windows to provide illumination and ventilation; and a freely-designed facade of a thin skin of wall and windows."[6] For Le Corbusier, the home was peaceful, practical, healthy, hygienic, and beautiful, and he wanted others to live this life, too.

---

[6] "Villa Savoye: A Machine for Living," Ultimate House: Architectural Spaces, New Build Design, and Contemporary Interiors," accessed February 9, 2019, https://web.archive.org/web/20110820232706/http://www.ultimatehouse.tv/article.php?id=2

In the United States during World War II, the Navy's techniques of rapid construction using standardized parts, tightly controlled suppliers of goods and services, and a workforce with highly specialized skills contributed to the rise of large, master planned residential communities. The war encouraged builders to streamline the construction process for the rapid assembly of inexpensive, large-scale defense worker housing, prefiguring postwar suburbia through the use of technology, scale, and community planning. In this newly developed building methodology, modernists saw an opportunity to produce functional, middle-class single-family homes capable of duplication. *Arts & Architecture* editor John Entenza's Case Study House Program, launched in California in 1945, sought to do just that; Elizabeth Gordon of *House Beautiful*'s rival Pace Setter House Program was unveiled the same year. Case Study House collaborators included leading progressive architects such as Richard Neutra, A. Quincy Jones, Pierre Koenig, and Edward Killingsworth, all of whom would design for the Program modular steel-framed structures characterized by flat roofs, open floor plans, and great expanses of glass.

In prewar Territorial-era Hawai‘i (1898-1959), the dark interiors and irregular forms of Victorian-era domestic architecture exemplified in the Queen Anne-inspired Lorrine Thurston mansion (1899) in Honolulu's Nu‘uanu Valley were gradually supplanted by homes more sympathetic to the local culture and climate. For the Jessie Eyman-Wilma Judson residence (1931), prominent Honolulu architect Charles Dickey incorporated some of the environmental features Seckel would use in his Sanford residence in 1960, including then-state-of-the-art plate glass windows, a lānaʻi entered through sliding glass doors, and projecting eaves designed to keep out precipitation and offer protection from the sun. The home's "Dickey roof," however, an unusual double-pitched, hipped gable with extended eaves utilized in many of his designs,

conveys a decidedly picturesque effect—a stylistic approach Seckel derided as "superficial."[7] It was only after the end of World War II that a concern to create a local residential style for Hawai'i was widely debated and conceptualized.

HARRY SECKEL

Harry Seckel's own interest in architecture appears to have bourgeoned early. He was born on May 6, 1906 in Tarrytown, New York to Harry William Seckel, Sr., a clothing salesman, and Emeline Garraway Seckel.[8] After graduating from the Evander Childs High School in The Bronx in 1925, he attended the School of Design and Liberal Arts while working as a junior draftsman for John Gurd's architectural firm on Park Avenue.[9] From 1930 to 1934, he studied at L'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

Founded in 1816 under the patronage of France's Restoration government, the prestigious university represented the last word in the teaching of art in nineteenth-century Europe. Prospective students from the United States were admitted either through a semiannual competition or through winning the prestigious Paris Prize. Of the 503 Americans who attended, only 144 obtained the ultimate achievement: an *architecte diplome par le gouvernerment*, or terminal degree; Seckel was among them.[10]

---

[7] Harry W. Seckel, *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* (Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press, 1954), 16.
[8] Ancestry.com, *New York State, Birth Index, 1881-1942* (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc.), accessed November 15, 2015, http://www.ancestry.com/
[9] "Seckel, Harry William, Membership Files (ahd1040201)," American Institute of Architects Archives, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects.*
[10] Jean Paul Carlhian and Margot M. Ellis, *Americans in Paris: Foundations of America's Architectural Gilded Age* (New York City, NY: Rizzoli, 2014), 251.

The study of architecture at the school began at the outset of the student's education, with the "problem method"—project-based exercises—the continuing focus of the curriculum. [11] While classical architecture and the modernist ethos Seckel promoted in his lectures, writings, and buildings may seem an incongruous match, modern art and architecture were, in fact, embraced by the school, whose largely self-governing students, steeped in the spirit of freedom and competition, were encouraged to experiment with new design influences.[7] Seckel was also informed by the school's curriculum of the importance of producing a functional and legible plan, one with an emphasis on problem-solving and thoughtful analysis.

Although L'École des Beaux-Arts played a substantial role in influencing the pedagogy of architecture programs in the United States, the Neoclassical Beaux-Arts style had an even greater impact on America's late nineteen-century landscape. The Columbian Exposition at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, with its Greek and Roman-inspired White City, particularly helped generate the proliferation of similar buildings from the National Mall in Washington, D.C. to Main Streets across the country. This bend toward classical formalism was not well-received by everyone. One of its fiercest critics was the Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. Although not as widely known as his one-time protégé, Frank Lloyd Wright, Sullivan had a seminal impact on twentieth-century architecture. He believed that buildings must evolve in harmony with their intended use—that form must follow function, which became a central tenant of modernism.

In Seckel's 1938 profile in the *North American Review* of Wright, he makes his own position on the Classical Revival style transparent when referring to the 1893 Fair: "The architecture of Greece and Rome had no business in Chicago, but it was looked at rather than thought about. It was imported and sophisticated. The Fair-goers loved that. It was like having

[11] F.H. Bosworth and Roy Childs Jones, *A Study of Architectural Schools* (New York City, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1932), 113.

finger bowls and speaking French."[8] Seckel did not entirely denounce classicism, however; in a 1956 letter to the editor of *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, for instance, he extolls Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and University of Virginia campus.[12] It seems that he simply didn't think such architecture belonged in the present.

While a student, Seckel worked at the Paris office of Jens Frederick Larsen's architectural firm from 1932 to 1933 as a general draftsman, likely for the Châteauesque Maison Internationale building, a dormitory at the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris (1935).[13] By 1934, the year of Seckel's graduation, the Great Depression that began in the United States had spread to France, and Paris's position as the world capital of the arts seemed tentative. After a sojourn across Europe, the twenty-eight-year old returned to his native Manhattan by the end of 1934. After working as a draftsman for New York architect Vahan Hagopian from 1934 until 1937, he was hired as a designer for the Manhattan firm of Delano and Aldrich.[14] Chester Aldrich and William Delano are most widely associated with the Beaux-Arts-style Knickerbocker Club (1915) and the Otto H. Kahn estate on Long Island (1919). Although no employee records from their firm are known to exist at the time of writing, Edward Stasack recalled Seckel mentioning his position on a design team tasked with planning the LaGuardia Municipal Airport from 1937 to 1941.[15] While Delano is credited with designing fourteen buildings, including the National Register of Historic Places-designated Art Deco Marine Air Terminal (1939), the timeline of LaGuardia's first period of development does coincide with the years of Seckel's employment at the firm.

---

[12] Harry W. Seckel, "Jefferson Also An Architect," *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, May 22, 1956.
[13] "Maison Internationale," accessed January 15, 2018, https://structurae.net/structures/maison-internationale The building's co-architect was Lucien Bechmann. Construction began in 1932 and concluded in 1935.
[14] "Seckel, Harry William, Membership Files (ahd1040201)," American Institute of Architects Archives, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects.*
[15] Edward Stasack, in discussion with the author, January 2, 2018.

Shortly after the beginning of the United States' involvement in World War II, Seckel joined the H.K. Ferguson Company, a Cleveland, Ohio-based corporation. He was the chief engineer for the development of Camp Detrick (now Fort Detrick) in Fredericks, Maryland, as well as the project leader for the Wolf Creek Ordnance Plant in Milan, Tennessee.[16] From the Wolf Creek Ordnance Plant's predevelopment phase to construction completion, approximately four hundred buildings were produced between March of 1941 and January 5, 1942.[17] Although the full extent of his involvement cannot be verified, for the main headquarters of the Army Quartermaster's Division (1942), Seckel transformed "a former four-classroom schoolhouse into a 44,000-square-foot building with a four-wing complex" (Figure 2.1).[18] In 1947, he left his position as the chief architect for the company's Eastern District in New York City to start his own practice there.[19]

By the time Seckel moved his private practice from the Fisk Building in Manhattan to 1410 (now 1400) Kapiolani Boulevard in Honolulu in 1950, many of Hawai'i's most prominent architects, including Vladimir Ossipoff, Kenneth Roehrig, Alfred Preis, and Richard Dennis, were already moving away from allusions to formal historic architectural genres and toward a more progressive design approach. One of the benefits of Hawai'i's relative geographical isolation in the post-World War II era was that it attracted a wide assortment of architects with many ideas that were readily and openly exchanged in a climate marked by the absence of

---

[16] Camp Detrick was headquarters to the U.S. Army Biological Warfare Laboratories from 1943 to 1969, responsible as a center of research for the development of pathogens that included bio-containment, gaseous sterilization, and agent purification. See: Norman M. Covert, *Cutting Edge: A History of Fort Detrick: 1943-1993* Maryland", 4th Edition (Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Garrison Headquarters, 2000); "New Members April 1-30, 1944," *The Military Engineer* 36 (1944): 208.

[17] *Wolf Creek Fuse and Booster*, May 27, 1941.

[18] William Hunter Wieland, *A History of the Construction of the Wolf Creek Ordnance Plant and Milan Ordnance Depot in Milan, Tennessee* (Memphis, TN: University of Memphis Press, 2001), 38.

[19] An extensive search for more information on his practice, including associated projects, was unfruitful, with the exception of an excerpt in the 1949 issue of the journal *Chemical Industries*, which notes the expansion of his practice and move into the Fisk Building at 250 57th street (1922).

formality. This break with the past allowed these men the considerable freedom to devise the overall form of their buildings, although most seemed to share a similar vocabulary: a preference for open floor plans, windows with expansive views of the natural environment, and lānaʻis to connect the indoors to backyard gardens. Many local architects also enlisted artists, wood carvers, master Japanese carpenters, and craftsmen in metals for their commercial and residential projects; often the services of architectural design and interior decoration were provided by one organization.

Much like the shared opinion that united early modernists—that architecture could improve the world—idealism was the driving force behind the tight-knit AIA-Hawaii Chapter's move toward a design philosophy in tune with the Hawaiʻian physical and cultural environment. Discussions on architecture were more dynamic than abrasive, and a consensus developed about the need to connect people to nature through architecture and design. In a recent interview with the author, the artist Edward Stasack recalled this spirit of interdisciplinary collaboration:

> The culture in the arts then crossed a lot of boundaries. Everyone went to every event, every art exhibit, every party. That prevailed in the broad sense in Hawaiʻi until probably the late 1960s. After that, there was less collegiately where you worked together, you talked to people from different disciplines.[20]

Seckel was actively involved in supporting the local art community, serving as a member of the jury at the 1953 Artists of Hawaii exhibition held at the Honolulu Academy of Arts; proceeds from the AIA-Hawaii Chapter's first annual home tour he launched in 1953 were given to the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra.[21] As a de-facto public spokesman of the Chapter throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, he helped organize the *Hawaiian Housing* exhibition at

---

[20] Edward Stasack, in discussion with the author, January 2, 2018.
[21] Ben Norris, "Island Artists Exhibit Works At Art Academy," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, July 12, 1953; "Architects Will Play Host At Tour of 4 Modern Homes," *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 12, 1953; "Plan A.I.A House Showing," *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 16, 1953.

the Bishop Museum, established the Chapter's Annual Design Awards in 1958, and, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, wrote *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* (1954) as well as the foreword of *A Guide to the Architecture of Honolulu* (1957), a largely pictorial survey of some of the city's architect-designed postwar commercial buildings, homes, and residential communities, including Woodlawn Terrace and Alfred Preis's neighboring Melemele subdivision. He also penned several columns on domestic architecture for *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser* and lectured regularly at the University of Hawai‘i.

Although his audience was primarily local, Seckel was also globally minded and internationally ambitious. His creation of the Pan Pacific Architectural Citation Awards, sponsored by the AIA-Hawaii Chapter, and first awarded in 1958 to the preeminent Japanese architect Kenzo Tange for his delicate Children's Library in Hiroshima, is the most conspicuous example of his desire not only to promote the work of other architects in the Pacific Rim region but to also transform Hawai‘i into the cultural hub of the Pacific.[22] A year later, he opened the first session of the AIA California Council's pluralistic First Pacific Rim Conference in Waikīkī with a lecture on the influence of climate on architecture beside the geographer and explorer Paul Siple, who co-developed the wind chill factor.[23]

Seckel's most well-known building in Hawai‘i is The Pacific Club at 1451 Emma Street in downtown Honolulu (1960). Vladimir Ossipoff was the project architect, with Seckel's office

---

[22] Simon Reeves, "Gromboyd goes Hawaiian: Roy Grounds, Robin Boyd and the 'Exclusive Pacific Fellowship of Talent,'" *Fabrications* 22, no.3 (2012): 64. Other Pan Pacific Citation Award recipients included the Australian firm of Grounds, Romberg and Boyd (1959), Filipino architect Leandro Locsin (1960), Hectore Mestre of Mexico (1961), Canada's Arthur Erickson (1962), and Japan's Kikutake Kiyonori (1963). A country was selected, then entries were solicited by architects from the country and judged by a committee of past AIA-Hawaii presidents.

[23] "The Wellsprings of Design" was the theme of the First Pacific Rim Conference, which was held from October 8-14, 1959. Each individual session focused on the physical, social, and cultural aspects of design. The conference ended with a panel of speakers from each session with backgrounds in architecture, art history, climatology, sociology, and anthropology. For a copy of the concluding address, see "The Wellsprings of Design" by John A. Kouwenhoven in the April 1959 issue of the journal *Architectural Record*.

handling the drawings and the Honolulu firm of Merrill, Simms and Roehrig responsible for the specifications.[24] For their efforts, Seckel and his co-collaborators were honored with the AIA-Hawaii Chapter's Annual Design Award in 1964. The stylish yet understated clubhouse's lobby entrance opens up to a surprisingly informal series of lānaʻi-like dining and recreational areas. Two of the main dining room's walls were omitted altogether, with the area only lightly protected over a roof with wide, overhanging eaves. Native *koa* frames the property's perimeters, mitigating traffic noise and producing an inward facing view.[25]

Although Dean Sakamoto credits Ossipoff with the landscape design in *Hawaiian Modern: The Architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff*, an item in *The Honolulu Star Bulletin* on a preview of the still-unfinished grounds suggests that Seckel seemed to also have played at least some contributory role. [26] The article notes that as members and their guests lunched, "great signs of activity proceeded on the grounds outside with [local landscape architects] Catherine and Robert Thompson and Harry Seckel discussing leveling and planting with workmen."

Seckel's involvement in landscape design did not end with The Pacific Club. In 1960, he created an elaborate master plan for the Foster Botanical Garden with Paul Weissich, the Garden's young director. The plan was to include "a 240-seat lecture hall without walls, a planetarium framed by massed flower banks" and a winding path through the gardens.[27] There was also to be "a spice garden with Braille labels for the blind," and "a rice paddy to show Island children how rice is grown." Although never realized due to a lack of funding, two remnants of the original project remain standing: the rustic Lilʻuokalani Garden Comfort Station (1960), one

---

[24] Don Hibbard, *Buildings of Hawaii* (Charlottesville, NC: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 105-106.
[25] Dean Sakamoto et al, *Hawaiian Modern: The Architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 80.
[26] "Oldest Becomes Newest," *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, May 24, 1960.
[27] Patrick D. Hazard, *The Dolphin Guide to Hawaii* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 152.

of a host of park facilities designed by local architects in the 1960s, and a pathway connecting the Foster Botanical Garden to Lili‘uokalani Botanical Garden.[28] Seckel also produced the Streamline Moderne-inspired Boulevard Bowl (1954, non-extant) on Honolulu’s Dillingham Boulevard with local firm Lemmon, Freeth and Haines and the Mānoa Valley Recreation Center (1960, non-extant).

Outside of Woodlawn Terrace, Seckel’s largest project in Hawai‘i is the ten-story Boulevard Bel-Aire Apartments (1961) at 2015 Ala Wai Boulevard in Waikīkī. The boutique apartment building seemed to be the architect’s answer to a question on the minds of many of his fellow colleagues in rapidly growing Honolulu: how does one meet the housing needs of a growing population on an island where developable land is so finite? For Seckel, the solution was to create a mid-rise building with a “living lāna‘i” in each unit (Figure 2.2). The wraparound lāna‘is not only integrate into the interior spaces, they are also exceedingly functional: with the lāna‘is facing northeast with newer high rises built up round them, residents are protected from *kona* storms, while their views of the Ala Wai canal, Ala Wai Community Park and the Ko‘olau Range over Mānoa Valley are also relatively unobstructed.[29]

Despite his numerous contributions to Honolulu’s built environment, Seckel’s primary focus in his practice was on the single-family home. He completed his first two in Hawai‘i in the Diamond Head area within a few years of his arrival. Although both have since been demolished, some photographic evidence remains. The first home Seckel built was his own residence on 220 Ka‘alawai Place (1951, non-extant, Figure 2.3). He and his wife Margaret hired Weissich, a recent graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, as a landscape architect (Figure 2.4).

---

[28] “Seckel, Harry W. Membership Files (ahd1040201),” American Institute of Architects Archives, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects.*

[29] “Boulevard Bel Air Is Open For Inspection,” *The Honolulu Sunday Advertiser*, May 7, 1961.

For a year, they studied the two-acre beachfront property's climatic and geographic conditions before basic plans were drawn. In place of a traditional indoor living room and dining room, the expansive backyard lānaʻi overlooking the lush grounds and ocean functioned as both, with a cozy study offering protection from the occasional *kona* storm. Seckel supplemented the Walter Lamb outdoor furniture with a few simple wooden tables of his own design.[30]

His most well-known home, William A. Barlow residence at 3000 Mākālei Place (1952, non-extant), graces the cover of the October 1957 issue of *Sunset* magazine (Figure 2.5). Tucked into a semiarid *ewa*, or beachside foothill on Diamond Head, the contractor for the Barlow home was Shuji Miura, who worked with Vladimir Ossipoff frequently. Landscaping was directed by Richard Tongg—widely considered Hawaiʻi's "dean of landscape architects."[31] The basic plan in *Sunset* reveals a concept of flowing space and subtly changing levels, while magazine cover illustrates Seckel's decision to eliminate a wall between the living room and the lānaʻi in order to take full advantage of the idyllic climate. Interestingly, the posts supporting the lānaʻi are Hawaiʻian *ʻōhiʻa* logs, a local rot-resistant hardwood that Seckel would utilize later in at least two of his Woodlawn Terrace houses. The following year, he produced homes for Milton Ballengee and H.B. Stanley in Wahiawā, a slightly rainier central Oʻahu town with an elevation of 942 feet.[32] At the time of writing, both remain standing in apparently good condition at the end of a quiet street overlooking a ravine.

Located in areas ranging from level to hilly and semiarid to inclement, these early houses, developed before he embarked upon his Woodlawn Terrace project, could perhaps be seen as the

[30] "People and Parties," *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, December 11, 1950.
[31] "Barlow Home Erected on Ancient Hawaiian Site," *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, December 28, 1952.
[32] "Functional House Nestles Into Trees Above a Ravine at Wahiawa," *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 4, 1953; Hope Dennis, "Milton Ballengee House is Small, Simply Planned," *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, November 2, 1953.

recently arrived Manhattan transplant's attempt to hone a site- and climate-specific Hawai‘ian design vocabulary. With their open views, expansive lāna‘is, and landscape designs sympathetic to their local topography, it is certainly evident that Seckel's chief concern was in turning the lifestyle of his clients toward a connection with the total environment, a philosophy he would turn to repeatedly in his career, and one realized to its most ambitious extent with Woodlawn Terrace.

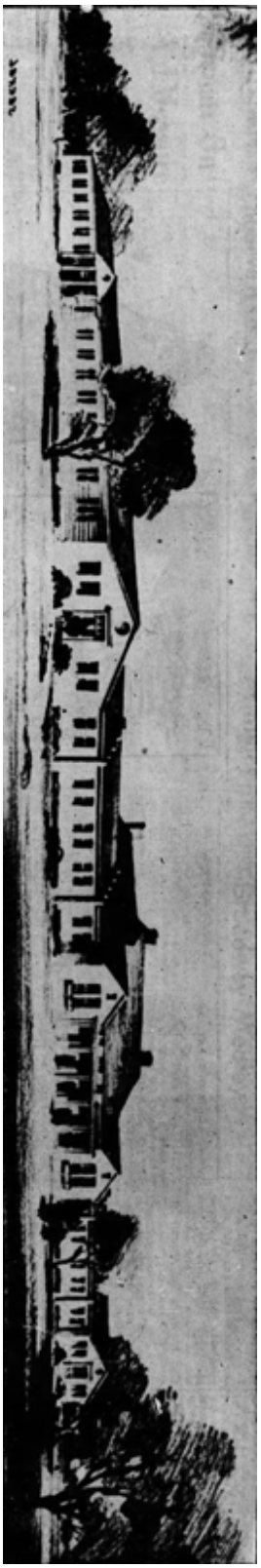
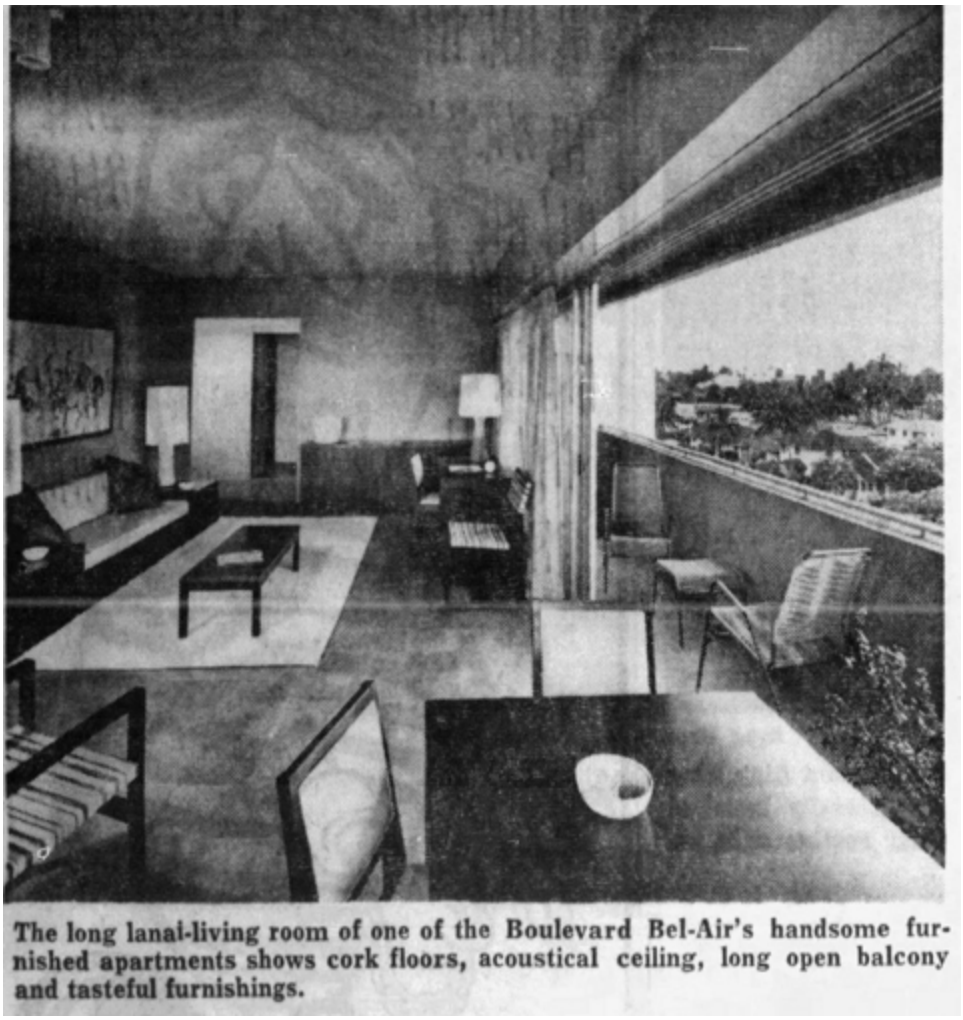


Figure 2.1 Rendering of Harry Seckel's Wolf Creek Ordnance Plant Administration Building, 1941.



The long lanai-living room of one of the Boulevard Bel-Air's handsome furnished apartments shows cork floors, acoustical ceiling, long open balcony and tasteful furnishings.

Figure 2.2 Lānaʻi in Seckel's Boulevard Bel-Aire Apartments, 1961. Photographer unknown.

Figure 2.3 Harry and Margaret Seckel residence at 220 Ka‘alawai Place, 1955. Photo by Margaret Seckel. Courtesy of Gene Polk.

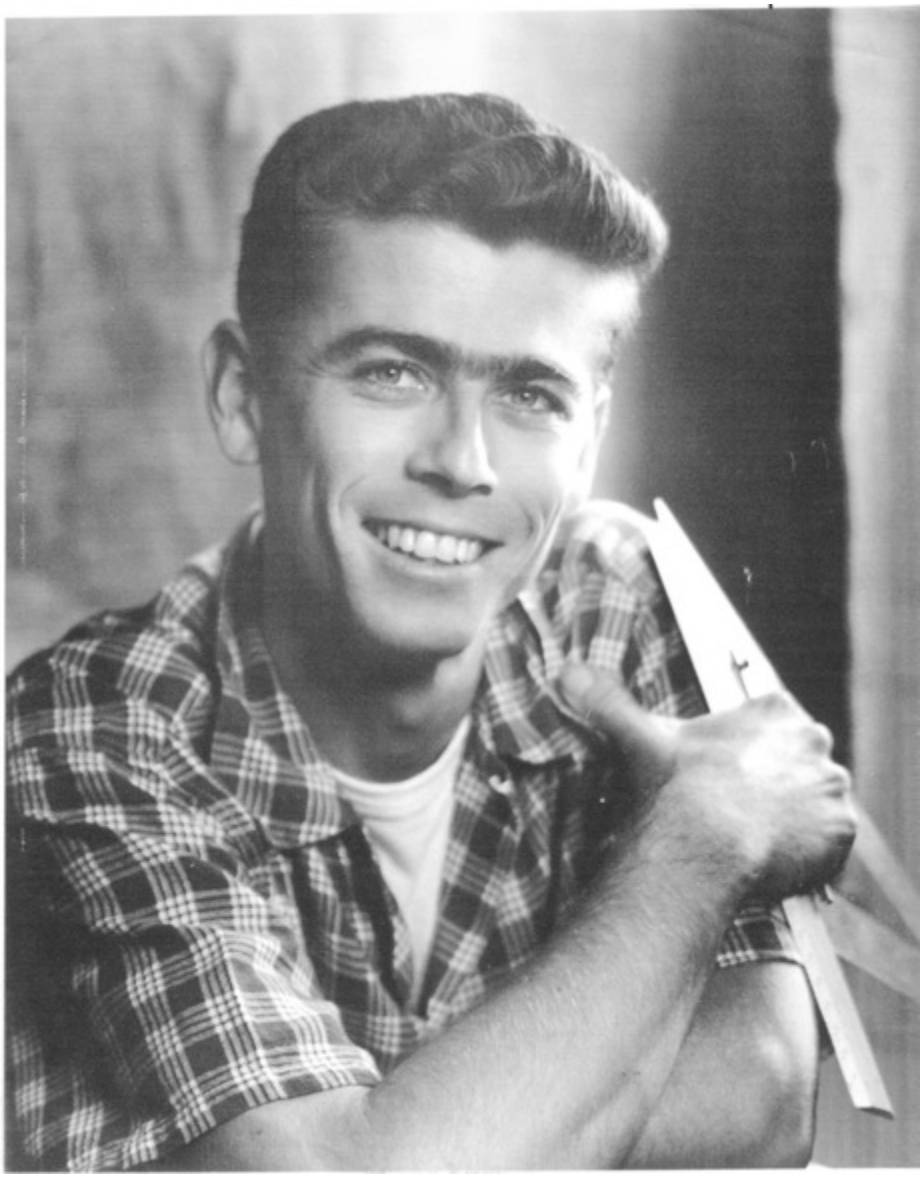


Figure 2.4 Paul Weissich, landscape architect and director of the Honolulu Botanical Gardens from 1957 to 1989, circa mid 1950s. Courtesy of Paul Weissich, Jr.

Figure 2.5 *Sunset*'s September 1957 cover featuring the William Barlow residence. Courtesy of the Stanford University Library.

CHAPTER III
WOODLAWN TERRACE

> Only when the intuitive architects and planners are accomplishing full scale contemporary housing projects, neighborhoods, communities—when they have set the stage by manifest examples of recreated human environment—can art regain its fertile prestige, bud and bloom into the consciousness of a broad audience, and of society itself.[33]

> Since we moved into Mānoa I've not wanted to escape
> the Koʻolau at the head of the valley
> They rise as high as atua as profound as their bodies
> They've been here since Pele fished these fecund islands
> out of Her fire and gifted them the songs
> of birth and lamentation.
>
> Every day I stand on our front veranda
> and on acid-free paper try and catch their constant changing
> as the sun tattoos its face across their backs.[34]

DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

When Harry and Margaret Seckel moved to Honolulu in 1950, the architect came with the advantage of education, work experience, and an uncommon ability to connect with clients. With Margaret funding the Woodlawn Terrace project, having purchased the land for its development, not having the pressure of financial concerns allowed him to produce an entire subdivision centered on a type of ethical architecture that architecture critic Paul Goldberger defines in *Why Architecture Matters* as an aesthetic "deeply connected to a larger social idea."[35] As with Neutra,

---

[33] Richard Neutra, *Architecture of Social in Regions of Mild Climate* (Sao Paulo, Brazil: Tipografic Edanee LTDA, 1948), 218.
[34] Albert Wendt, "The Koʻolau" in *From Mānoa to a Ponsonby Garden* (Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press, 2012), 3.
[35] Paul Goldberger, *Why Architecture Matters* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 39.

Wright, Hamilton Harris, and a host of other like-minded contemporaries, Seckel's aim was to create an architecture centered on environmental harmony in order to improve the quality of life for modern families and individuals.

Woodlawn Terrace's original homeowners were generally well-educated, with unusually high number of professorial and creative residents who remained in the neighborhood for decades and encouraged a close-knit sense of community. Much of the subdivision's demographic makeup can be explained by its proximity to University of Hawai'i-Mānoa, which was rapidly expanding at the time. Consequently, many newly hired faculty were drawn to the new subdivision. Among them were Botany professors Wallace Sanford and Douglas Friend, English professor Elizabeth McCutcheon, and Edward Stasack, who served as chairman of the Art department from 1969 to 1972. In addition to designing a home at 3626 Woodlawn Terrace Place (1960) and 3502 Paty Drive (1965) for Stasack and his family, Seckel also designed a backyard studio in exchange for an oil painting by the artist. The plywood-clad studio, no longer standing, was built in seven working days with the help of some of Stasack's neighbors and looked southward toward the ocean (Figure 3.1).[36] Further up the hill at 3609 Manamana Place lived Jo Taylor, a modern dancer, teacher, and choreographer who studied under Martha Graham and choreographed performances based on Hawai'ian mythology throughout the 1940s and '50s.[37]

Woodlawn Terrace was not the first modernist residential development in the area. To the subdivision's south, less than a quarter mile away, is Honolulu architect Alfred Preis's fourteen

[36] "Home A Backdrop for Art," *The Sunday Advertiser*, May 21, 1961.
[37] "Spotlight Date Idea," *The Honolulu Star*-Bulletin, April 28, 1963.

single-family-home Melemele, which Preis began construction on in 1946 (Figure 3.2).[38] Seckel's timing in building his own subdivision was opportune. As with many metropolitan areas in the continental United States after World War II, Honolulu experienced a substantial increase in housing demand in the 1950s and '60s. Historically agricultural Mānoa's development in particular reflected Hawai'i's shift away from a largely plantation-based economy and toward suburban development. New subdivisions spread over former rice and taro farms once tended to by Japanese, Chinese, and other Asian immigrants. Honolulu's bourgeoning middle class, rising labor and building supply costs, and the lack of adequate existing housing to meet the growing population's needs all encouraged a reorientation toward low- and mid-cost single-family homes in Upper Mānoa Valley.

In 1848, the Republic of Hawai'i's King Kamehameha III divided the land under a more Western style of governance, an episode known as the Great Mahele. Prior to this monumental event, the windward corner of the valley was part of the *ahupua'a*, or subdivided land of Waikīkī. This subdivision extended from Mānoa to Niu Valley in the east, and the Ko'olau mountain range to the sea. The synergic Hawai'ian *ahupua'a* system, which took into account a potential home site's proximity to life supporting watered valleys, where taro, bananas, guava, and other plants could grow, was designed in part to ensure Hawai'ians could survive, thrive and prosper on their own.[39]

In 1882, Benjamin Franklin Dillingham began buying shares in Upper Mānoa Valley as cattle grazing lands for his Woodlawn Stock and Dairy company.[40] Dillingham was one of

---

[38] American Institute of Architects: Hawaii Chapter, *Oral Histories of 1930s Architects* (Honolulu, HI: Hawaii Society, AIA, 1982), 139.

[39] Doris D. Lawyer, "Woodlawn Rainbow Power," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, August 19, 2001.
[40] Charles Bouslog, *Mānoa: The Story of a Valley* (Honolulu, HI: Mutual Publishing, 1994), 187.

Hawai‘i’s most successful businessmen at the turn of the century, thanks to a shrewd series of investments in the railroad, pineapple, and sugarcane industries. In 1910, he decided to convert the grazing land into a more lucrative residential development.[41] In one the earliest advertisements for what would become the Woodlawn neighborhood, developer Charles S. Desky extolled the virtues of the one-acre lots for sale:[42]

> [The lots] command a view so varying in character that it rests the eye, with an elevation above the educational institutions erected here because of many advantages and a climate that braces because the air is uncontaminated and fits the residents for work or play.[43]

In February of 1952, under their joint limited partnership, Projects Hawaii, Harry and Margie Seckel purchased the nineteen-acre, undeveloped site above Woodlawn Drive from investors Shunshin Higa and Robert Senichi.[44] Projects Hawaii was formed in November of 1951, with Harry as the general partner and Margaret as a limited partner. A 1952 aerial photograph indicates that the area was one of the last to be developed in the eastern corner of Upper Mānoa (Figure 3.3). In 1953, Seckel completed the first two homes in the subdivision, located at 3653 and 3657 Woodlawn Drive (Figures 3.4, 3.5). Model houses for the development, both remain standing at the time of writing, although they are altered considerably with several additions. Positioning model homes at strategic points in new or to-be-developed neighborhoods was a common practice used by real estate developers in the 1950s.[45] This tactic

---

[41] “Lawn Party for Distinguished Visitor,” *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 27, 1912.
[42] Charles Desky holds a status of some significance as a developer in Territorial-era Honolulu. His most prominent contribution is the Orpheum Block on Fort Street, the site of Honolulu’s first brick veneer building, built by H.L. Kerr & Company (1899). “On the Upper Fort: New Orpheum Block with Stores and Rooms,” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 9, 1899.
[43] “Woodlawn: A Section of Beautiful Mānoa,” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, July 27, 1912.
[44] Projects Hawaii, “Woodlawn Terrace: A Development by Projects Hawaii.”
[45] Catherine Wollack, “Dream Home: Remodeling American Expectations with Model Houses,” *Journal of American Culture* 32, no.4 (December 2009): 332.

was employed to attract future residents, who were often free to tour these houses, where modern appliances and interior furnishings were displayed for their inspection.

Structural engineering consultants K.D. Park and Alfred Yee of Park and Park, Incorporated surveyed the rest of the site before construction began.[46] By January 23, 1954, the tract was ready for development, with Woodlawn Terrace Place, Anela Place, and Manamana Place completed and underground utilities installed. B.K. Murphy and the Bonded Reality Company were brokers for the project. [47] After the completion of the two model homes, six additional houses were built in succession beginning in August of 1953. Forty-eight custom-designed residences followed between 1954 and 1965; as of March 2019, fifty-three are extant.

The homes and parcels were purchased fee simple at prices ranging from $20,000 to $30,000.[48] The basic minimum floor area, exclusive of garages, lānaʻis, and terraces, was an average of 1,500 square feet. The intent was to subdivide sixty-four lots of 10,000-square feet minimum in area in order to afford as much privacy as possible for the residents. There were also height restrictions for houses, fences, hedges and, where applicable, retaining walls, as well as 10-foot setbacks. Further protection was provided by covenants relative to alterations and additions, although it is not known when these covenants expired.

---

[46] Projects Hawaii, "Woodlawn Terrace Development: A Development by Projects Hawaii." Notably, Park and Park, Inc. was Hawaiʻi's first engineering firm with expertise in pre-stressed concrete, according to an interview with K.D. Park in AIA-Hawaii's *Oral History of 1930s Architects* (Honolulu, HI: AIA-Hawaii Chapter, 1982), 129. They were also involved with Vladimir Ossipoff's Diamond Head Apartments (1957, extant).

[47] "Tract Offers Protection to Home Owners," *The Saturday Star-Bulletin*, January 23, 1954.

[48] Projects Hawaii, "Woodlawn Terrace View Lots" (1962).

CLIMATE AND SETTING

Located in the *hikina akau*, or northeast corner of Upper Mānoa Valley, hilly terrain, winding roads, and dense layers of tropical and subtropical vegetation characterize the Woodlawn Terrace subdivision. Perched along the slopes of the Waʻ Ahila Ridge in a tropical microclimate, the average annual rainfall is 136 inches. In traditional Hawaiʻian culture, the rain in this portion of Upper Mānoa Valley, which "moves along like an old lady," is called *luahine*.[49] As the site slopes to the southwest, the direction of the prevailing trade winds and rain parallels the slope of the site toward the view. The homes face away from the rain, while the sun sets behind high mountains on the opposite side of the valley before its late afternoon swing to the southwest.

Rather than what Seckel called in *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* "a nightmare of chopped up land parcels established in contradiction to the natural rise and fall of the terrain," the property lines in Woodlawn Terrace conform to the topography.[50] The subdivision's terrain is largely undulating and steep, with an elevation ranging from approximately 300 to 500 feet above sea level. The nearest shoreline lies 10.1 miles away. Woodlawn Terrace Place is the subdivision's only thoroughfare and connects to Woodlawn Drive to the southeast. The street begins at this access point and winds up a steep slope, first in a southerly, then in a northerly direction, creating an elongated "S" that conforms to the irregular topography (Figure 3.6). This distinctive shape is interrupted only by the short, appendage-like Anela Place and Manamama Place. The steep inclines are mitigated by deep transverse grooves, which increase the friction between the road and tires and funnel water off the roadway. Woodlawn Terrace Place remains relatively flat until the north end of 3648 Woodlawn Terrace Place, when it rises again with the

[49] Collette Leimomi Akana, *Hānau Ka Ua* (Honolulu, HI: Kamehameha Publishing, 2015), 166.
[50] Harry W. Seckel, *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* (Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press, 1954), 14.

steep topography and curves to face north, then flattens once more. Manamana Place and Anela Place run northeast and southeast, respectively, with Anela Place ending in a cul-de-sac and Manamana Place at a dead-end.

Bordering the subdivision to the east, a trail begins at the top of St. Louis Heights and descends 500 feet into the Woodlawn area, ending at Alani Drive. An unnamed gulch runs parallel to Manamana Place, following the contours of Woodlawn Terrace Place and descending in elevation until it crosses below Woodlawn Drive. Once or twice a year during high intensity rainfalls, the dry creek bed at the bottom of the gulch floods and feeds into Mānoa Stream. Across from Manamana Place on the other side of the gulch is a heavily wooded, steep parcel visible only from the rear of the houses. This undeveloped lot and another on Anela Place were purchased by Margaret Seckel to be preserved in perpetuity. In addition to views of the natural environment, some of the built environment—including the distant downtown Honolulu skyline—is also visible. From the upper portion of Woodlawn Terrace Place facing southward, a section of Melemele can be seen.

As the most *mauka*, or inland development on the Diamond Head side of Upper Mānoa, Woodlawn Terrace is more intimately connected to nature than most homes in the Valley. Seckel's decision to develop the site could not have been taken lightly, given the difficult terrain and tropical microclimate. However, the hands-on knowledge and experience he acquired at L'École des Beaux-Arts and through his work as a chief engineer for large projects like the Wolf Creek Ordnance Plant would have given him the confidence to make the attempt. Perhaps he also saw in the site's rugged topography a challenge to solve. The university's stress on the problem method in its pedagogy certainly gives credence to this supposition. Undoubtedly, the majestic, almost visceral beauty of the site—with its superb views of the Pacific Ocean, verdant Mānoa

Valley, and surrounding rainforest—must have played a substantial role in influencing the architect's decision to build there.

Key reminders of Woodlawn Terrace's close proximity to nature are indicated in the lush mixture of native and exotic vegetation. Palm trees, paperbark trees, bamboo, *koa*, *hapuu* ferns, Cattley guava, lychee, and several Australian varietals are some of the more common plants in the subdivision (Figure 3.7). Vegetation sits up against the exterior walls of most of the original buildings (Figures 3.8, 3.9). Much of this vegetation must constantly be monitored and pruned accordingly in order to deter rapid overgrowth. As one longtime resident noted with the wisdom acquired from decades of backyard gardening: "Mānoa is capricious. You don't plant things here. Things grow. The things that survive are what are accepted into your life."[51]

DESIGN

The subdivision and fifty-three extant homes Harry Seckel designed exhibit a core idea of modernism: the essential unity of building design, landscaping, and community planning. All of the houses sit on a slope with an optimum arrangement that serves to not only take advantage of views of the surrounding environment but to also harness the cooling Pacific Ocean trade winds (Figure 3.10). Predominant historic character-defining features include wide, projecting eaves, horizontal building forms, flat or low-pitched, extended gable rooflines, and plate-glass windows over redwood or glass jalousie blinds covered with wired screening to keep out insects (Figures 3.11, 3.12, 3.13). Sliding glass doors or wall panels open up to expansive lāna'is and exhibit Seckel's preference for treating the entire lot as a dwelling. A particularly good representation of

[51] Helen Friend, in discussion with the author, January 12, 2018.

this inside/outside design approach is at 3623 Manamana Place, a home featured in the February 1959 issue of *Paradise of the Pacific* (Figures 3.14, 3.15).

In 2013, I was allowed access inside ten Seckel-designed houses, where I observed open, informal floor plans, exotic hardwood flooring, and vertical tongue and groove siding stained either light grey or brown.[52] In five of the homes, rooms were divided by *shoji*, or Japanese sliding doors; all were designed for Japanese-American homeowners. The most visibly Japanese interior was in the home at 3682 Woodlawn Terrace Place. Although Seckel was the architect, the original owner, Kuniki Hamao, an *issei*, or first-generation Japanese-American, apparently built it himself.[53] Components included a built-in ancestral shrine of sugi wood, *shoji* doors, and a traditional crane carving in the living room (Figures 3.16, 3.17).

The most common external alterations visible from the public right of way at the time of writing included additions, wood board and batten siding, wood paneling, and vinyl and bay windows (Figures 3.18, 3.19). In the home at 3607 Woodlawn Terrace Place, cross braces were added sometime in the 1970s to prevent warping when a bedroom addition was constructed on what was a previously open lower level. Aside from these modifications, in scale, massing, and form, the homes remain sufficiently intact to identify them as mid-century modern at a casual glance from the street. Woodlawn Terrace also retains many of the hallmark characteristics of a middle-class suburban neighborhood, with modestly sized, low-density single-family housing and wide roads that allow for unobstructed two-way traffic and on street parking (Figure 3.20).

Although each parcel is approximately 10,000-square feet in area, due to the steep terrain, there is a limited amount of suitable land for development. It is conceivable that this limitation of

[52] Visits were made on May 18, 2013 to the following homes on Woodlawn Terrace Place: 3607, 3618, 3614, 3634, 3645, 3648, 3682, 3686, and 3694. I also viewed the homes at 3623 Mananama Place and 3624 Anela Place.
[53] Marcia Wood, in discussion with the author, May 13, 2013; "Obituaries," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, May 3, 1977.

space has worked in the subdivision's favor with respect to its historic integrity. In the last two decades, just five of the original, modestly sized houses have been torn down and replaced with larger homes, a far more common practice in flatter residential developments such as Waialae-Kāhala, located near Diamond Head's windward side.[54]

CLIENT DIALOGUE AND SELECTION

Seckel's attitude with respect to his clients at Woodlawn Terrace was by all accounts profoundly democratic. On the first page of his portfolio for prospective builders of his subdivision, he made it clear that Woodlawn Terrace would not be burdened by "racial restrictions."[55] Likely due at least in part to the architect's unusually progressive stance, from the beginning, Woodlawn Terrace attracted a racially and ethnically diverse group of homeowners of Caucasian, Japanese, Portuguese, Chinese, mixed Hawai'ian, and English descent—an echo of Hawai'i's multiculturalism. In the postwar United States, there were few exceptions to the general rule of suburban racial exclusion.[56] California real estate developer Joseph Eichler, who was deeply opposed to racial discrimination and whose company, Eichler Homes, built several housing tracts in the San Francisco Bay Area and greater Los Angeles, was one prominent outlier. Neutra, who completed three single-family homes for Japanese-American clients in his Argent Place subdivision in Los Angeles, was another. Their housing developments could not compare with Woodlawn Terrace's diversity, however, where *nisei*, or second generation Japanese-Americans

---

[54] The subdivision's initial period development began in 1949 and ended in 1951. "Contractor's Sunday Din Shatters Quiet," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, July 10, 1951. In the last few decades, most of these homes have been replaced with large mansions. Nancy Keates, "Honolulu's Kahala Avenue Begins a New Chapter," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2014, accessed February 5, 2019, http://www.wjs.com/articles/honolulus-kahala-avenue-begins-a-new-chapter-14079710389

[55] Projects Hawaii, "Woodlawn Terrace Lots" (1962).

[56] Michael Jones-Correa, "The Origins and Diffusion of Racial Restrictive Covenants," *Political Science Quarterly* (Winter 2000-2001), 541.

comprised nearly one-third of the original homeowners, a reflection of their socioeconomic rise in postwar Hawai‘i and their newly acquired status as the largest single ethnic group on the Islands.

Although there are apparently no surviving notes detailing their exchanges, Weissich testified that Seckel was sincerely interested in understanding and addressing his clients' needs in order to determine exactly what they wanted.[57] As noted in the previous chapter, he was also keen in cultivating a wider appreciation of the arts. In his view, architecture and art were both ways to re-connect with nature and culture. Stasack describes this aesthetic sensibility:

> I was thinking of our first house [3626 Woodlawn Terrace Place] in the midst of all of this. The master bedroom was part of the living space, but it was up the stairs. There were these large sliding panels to separate one space from the other. On one side was the outer wall, the other side was the room. Anyway, Harry took a look at the panels one day and suggested something: "Well, you're an artist. You can create art on panels." I think his original or creative idea was that as an artist I could handle the surfaces on the living room side or on the bedroom side in any way that I chose. He did the creative part by presenting the opportunity to me before I even had a chance to think about it.[58]

Evelyn Shon, who purchased the lot at 3626 Anela Place (1959) with her husband Isaiah Shon, recalled the informality of the process:

> When we went up there [to view the lot] and meet him, he wanted to get to know us better, so he asked us to have dinner with him and his wife at his [Ka‘alawai Place] home. We liked each other immediately. He went over everything. At the end of the dinner, the deal was sealed.[59]

She continues with making note of his most important requirement for potential clients in Woodlawn Terrace:

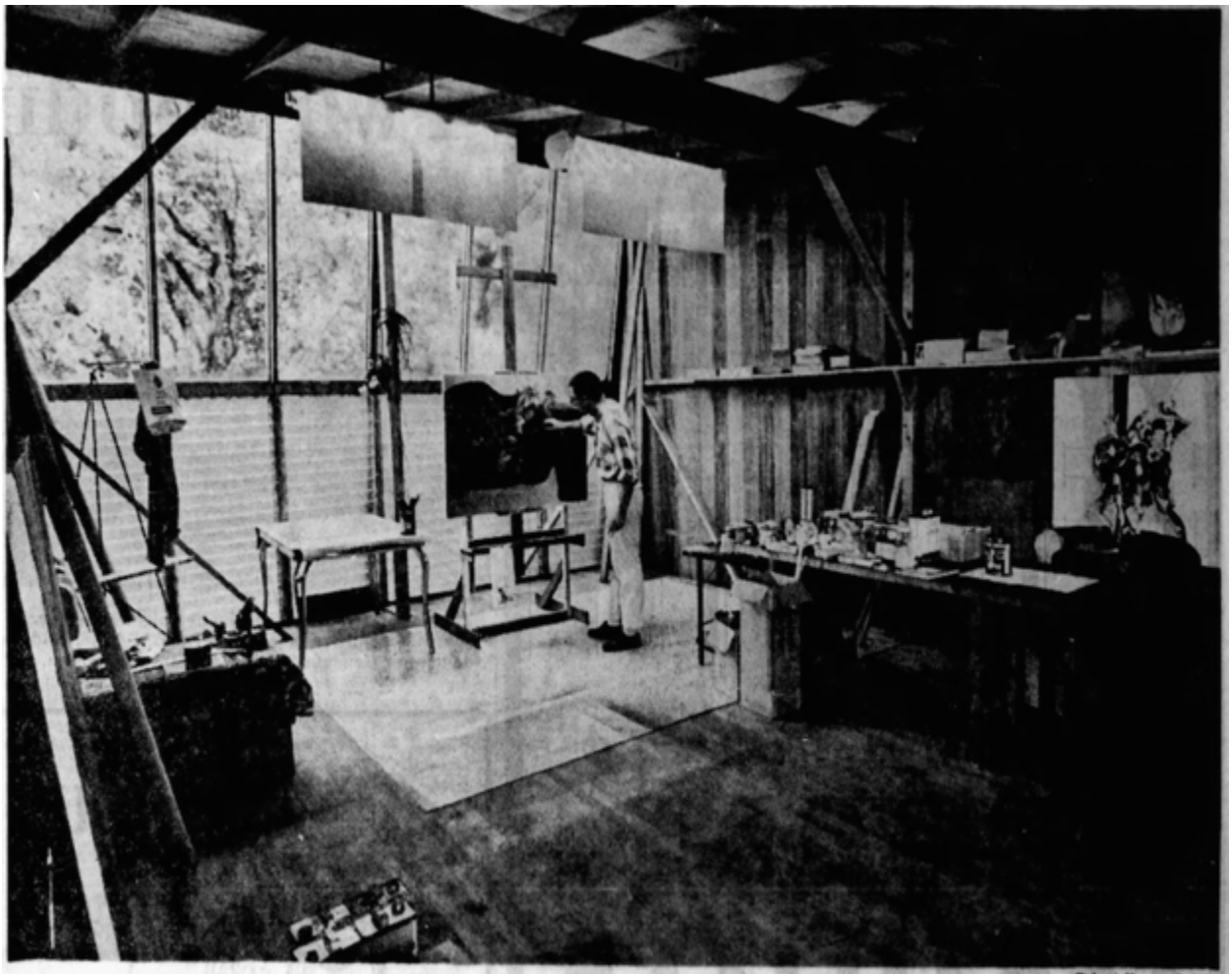
> He was really focused on *lifestyle* more than anything. For instance, he asked if we were rowdy, because he didn't want whoever occupied the lot to bother the neighbors already

[57] Paul Weissich, in discussion with the author, May 3, 2013.
[58] Edward Stasack, in discussion with the author, January 16, 2018.
[59] Evelyn Shon, in discussion with the author, March 5, 2018.

> living in the house above it. He also wouldn't permit us to have certain parts of the house without a view.[60]

Seckel's concern with views as well as the lifestyle habits of his potential clients demonstrate that he was not just selling a house; he was attempting to create a community intended to improve people's lives, in part by connecting them more closely to nature. What drew and continues to draw his Woodlawn Terrace houses together is a particular kind of consciousness that connects climate, culture, and geography. Simple, straightforward, and modest, the homes could be interpreted as austere, but the way in which they respond harmoniously with their surrounding environment *is* their defining aesthetic.

[60] Ibid.



Robert Young photos

Adequate work space has now been achieved by artist Edward Stasack who built this studio on a steep cliff above his residence at 3626 Woodlawn Terrace Place. Closing out a panoramic view of sea and city it peacefully focuses on a grove of trees.

Figure 3.1 Edward Stasack's studio at 3626 Woodlawn Terrace Place, 1961. Photo by Robert Young.

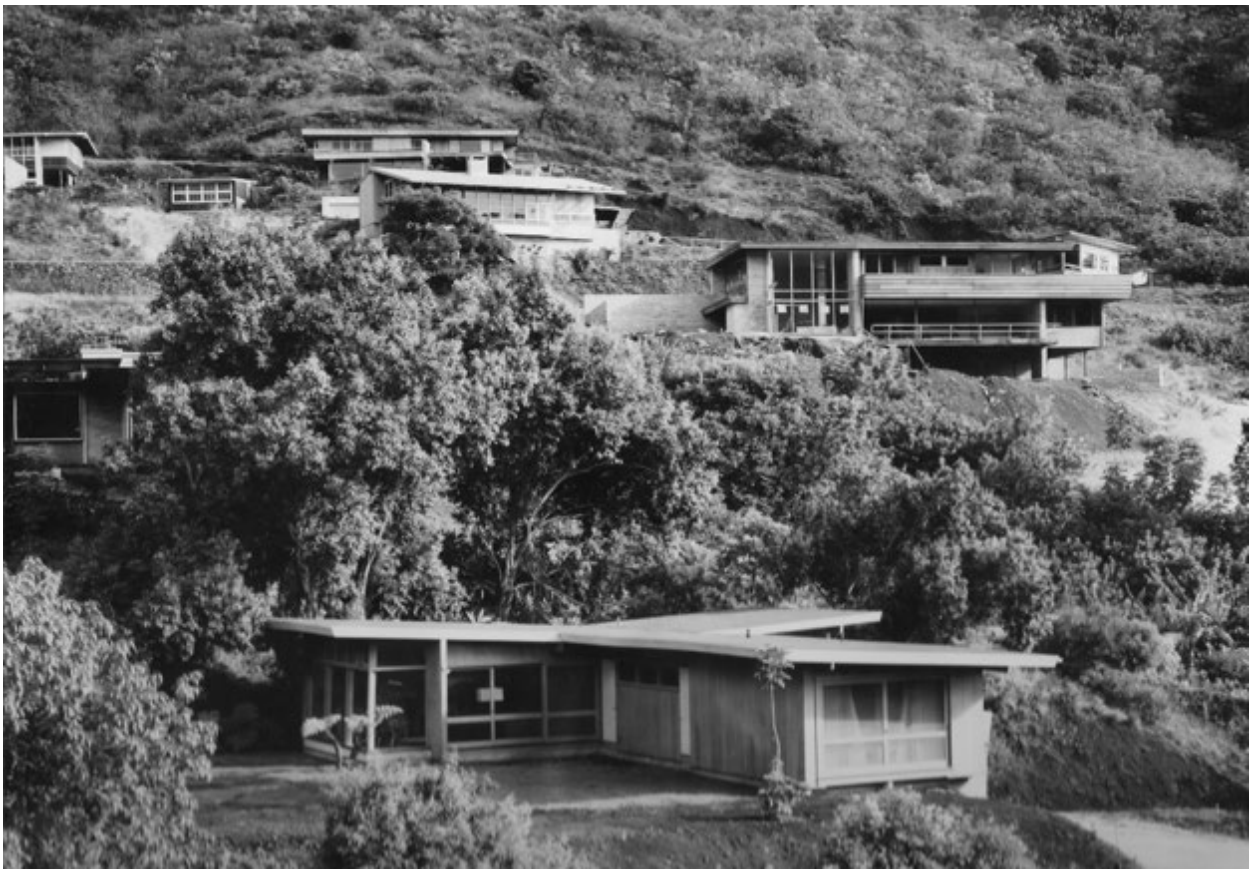


Figure 3.2 Alfred Preis's Melemele subdivision, circa 1953. Photographer unknown.

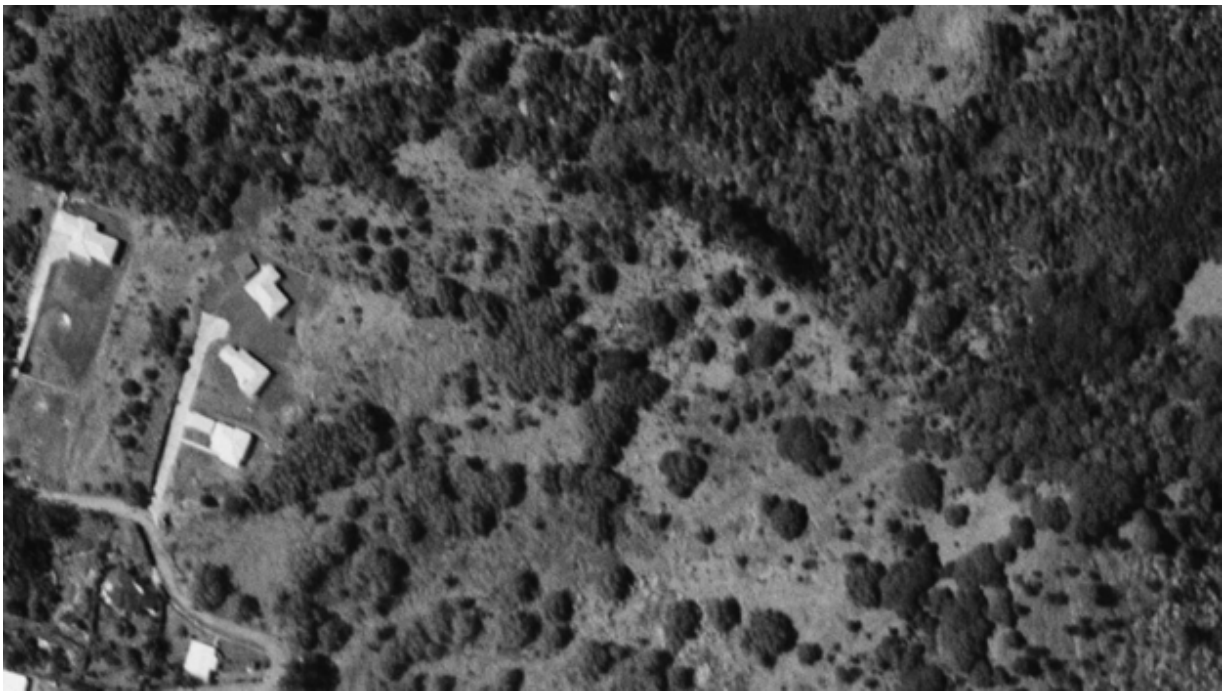


Figure 3.3 Undeveloped land on the future site of Woodlawn Terrace, April 8, 1952. Courtesy of the United States Geological Survey.

Figure 3.4 Woodlawn Terrace model home at 3653 Woodlawn Terrace Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.5 Woodlawn Terrace model home at 3657 Woodlawn Terrace Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.6 Aerial photograph of Woodlawn Terrace, 2019. Google Earth.

Figure 3.7 3607 Woodlawn Terrace Place, backyard subtropical foliage, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.8 Foliage surrounding 3622 Anela Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.9 Foliage at 3605 Manamana Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.10 View of the ocean facing southwest from 3600 Manamana Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.11 3610 Woodlawn Terrace Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.12 3618 Woodlawn Terrace Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.13 Low-pitched, extended gable roof at 3609 Manamana Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

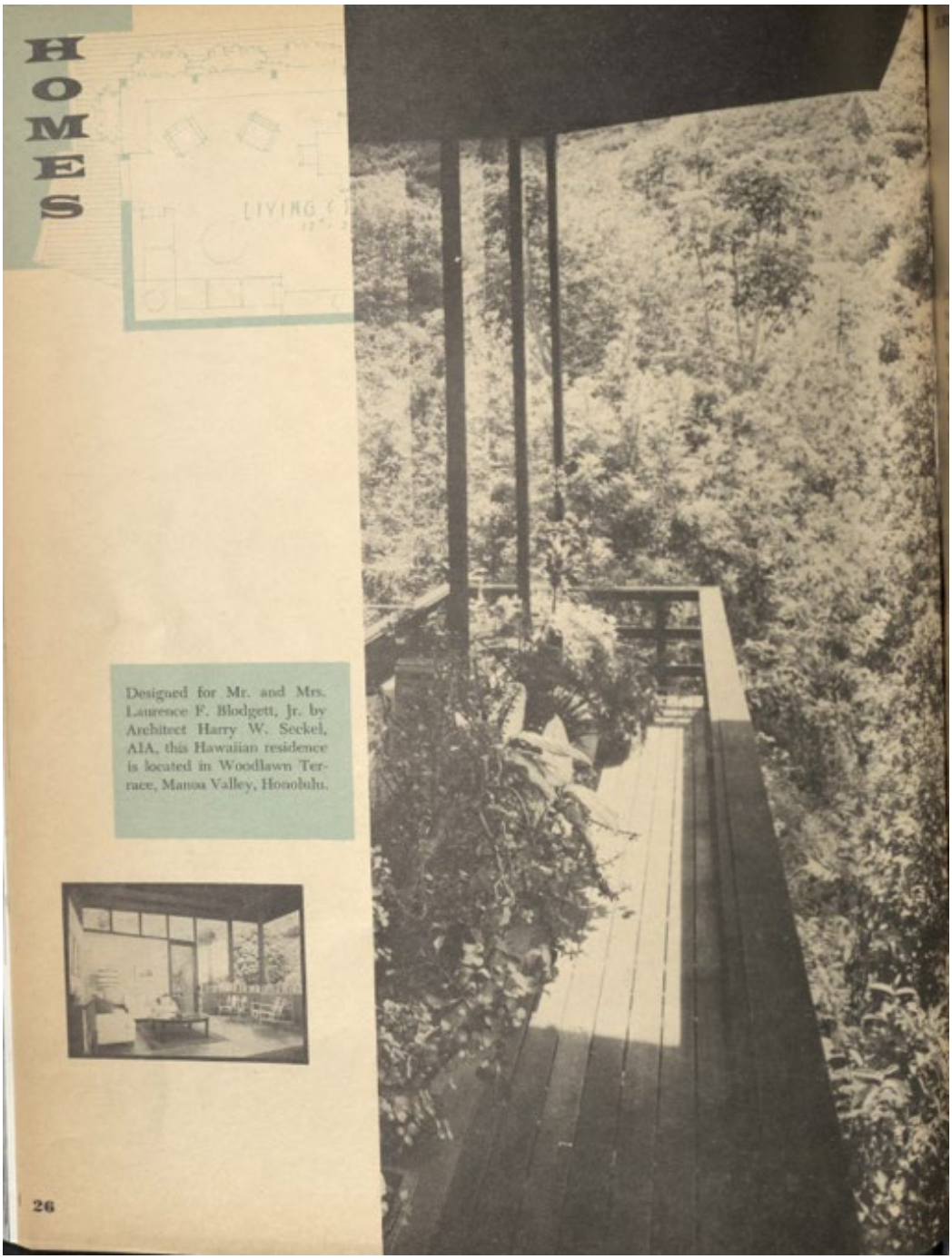


Figure 3.14 Living room and living room window facing southeast, 3623 Manamana Place – February 1959 issue of *Paradise of the Pacific.* Photographer unknown.

Figure 3.15 Living room window facing southeast, 3623 Manamana Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.16 Japanese ancestral shrine, 3682 Woodlawn Terrace Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.17 Living room with *shoji* panels and traditional Japanese crane carving, 3682 Woodlawn Terrace Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.18 Vinyl windows at 3625 Anela Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.19 Addition at 3638 Woodlawn Terrace Place, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 3.20 Street side view of 3637, 3635, and 3633 Woodlawn Terrace Place, 2013 facing northwest. Photo by the author.

CHAPTER IV

THE WALLACE AND MAIZIE SANFORD RESIDENCE: A CASE STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE

> As a child growing up in England, my family and I lived in several houses, especially during World War II. We saw things being demolished and the ravages of war. When [my husband and I] came here, we felt human again. I was raised to respect every living thing, from a carrot to a lady dying in bed. The environment was, and remains, our religion. People like Harry and that crowd were intelligent and were aware of the importance of connecting with nature and they were able to get heard.[61]

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Shortly after Harry Seckel completed the first ten homes in 1954 at Woodlawn Terrace, a young agronomist inquired about the available lot at 3622 Woodlawn Terrace Place. Wallace Sanford, who worked at the Pineapple Research Institute of Hawaii and later headed the Department of Agronomy and Soil Science at the University of Hawai‘i, was tired of renting in Mānoa Valley.[62] The two men’s collaboration, which evolved into a friendship, seemed a natural fit. Wallace was an avid gardener and bibliophile, with a “very definite attraction to modern architecture,” according to daughter Claire.[63] This admiration extended to modern Danish furniture, which he purchased during research visits to Denmark and shipped back to Honolulu. Construction on the bachelor’s home at 3622 Woodlawn Terrace was complete in 1956.[64] Wallace’s photo of the early phase of his house’s construction indicates that he was clearly in on the process (Figure

---

[61] Helen Friend, in discussion with the author, January 12, 2018.
[62] Claire Sanford, in discussion with the author, March 1, 2018.
[63] Ibid.
[64] “Residential Improvement Information,” City and County of Honolulu, Department of Budget and Fiscal Services: Real Estate Assessment Division, accessed August 13, 2018, http://qpublic9.qpublic.net/hi_honolulu_search.php

4.1). By 1959, however, Wallace was a married man with an infant daughter, Claire, and the family had outgrown the one-bedroom house. On January 21, 1959, building permits for a $39,360 home at 3694 Woodlawn Terrace Place were issued.[65] The couple also purchased two adjacent lots at 3692 and 3670 Woodlawn Terrace Place.[66]

The content and the voluminous number of original blueprints—twenty-seven in all were produced between December 1958 and January 1960—demonstrate Seckel's preoccupation with detailing; even sections of cabinetry, steps, shower, and electrical symbols are included in the drawings. There's no question what he wants from the builders, with everything spelled out in black and white. His rather excessive attention to detail was likely a reflection of his engineering background, and perhaps, too, of L'École des Beaux-Arts pedagogy's stress on precision. Weissich, the landscape architect for the Sanford property, confirmed the architect's close involvement in the many projects the two collaborated on, stating that "Harry was everything—he directed operations, studied the site, combed over every drawing."[67]

Seckel made a few alterations to the Sanford property after its completion per the request of the Sanfords. The most extensive was the enclosure of what Maizie Sanford remembered as an "impractically windy" lānaʻi.[68] The original step down to the lawn was filled in, creating a continuous surface of concrete acid-stained flooring. Staining concrete floors was a popular alternative to floor covering in Hawaiʻi at the time for its durability.[69] A 1960 photograph used to promote an AIA-Hawaii home tour shows the lānaʻi prior to its enclosure (Figure 4.2) and a

---

[65] "Building Permits Listed," *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, January 21, 1959.
[66] Maizie Sanford, in discussion with the author, April 1, 2013.
[67] Paul Weissich, in discussion with the author, February 3, 2017.
[68] Maizie Sanford, in discussion with the author, April 1, 2013.
[69] Claire Sanford, in discussion interview with the author, March 1, 2018.

2013 image depicts the same elevation after the change (Figure 4.3). Between the living room and lānaʻi, sliding glass doors operate in tracks along the edge of the overhang; thus, the entire living area becomes an outdoor room. Seckel also added a backyard wooden deck at the edge of the bank, which extended the lawn space and offered a closer view of the ocean, as well as a built-in bench in the second largest bedroom (Figures 4.4, 4.5).[70] Excluding these modifications, the building is remarkably intact, retaining all of its historic character-defining features.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

What resulted from Seckel's meticulous plans was a 2,816-square foot, two-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bathroom home clad in vertical tongue and groove redwood and concrete siding. He also designed a circa 1960 lath house on the property in collaboration with Weissich, as well as a two-story, one-bedroom cottage at 3670 Woodlawn Terrace Place (Figure 4.6). The Sanford residence shares common features with nearly all of the houses Seckel designed in Woodlawn Terrace: a nearly flat roof of built-up asphalt with 4-foot eaves, views of the natural landscape in every room, an emphasis on cross-ventilation and site planning with reference to neighbors, and the use of natural and artificial building materials (Figures 4.7, 4.8). Sitting directly across from the Honolulu Watershed Reserve at the end of Woodlawn Terrace Place, its 21,300-square foot double lot rises from 338 feet to 538 feet above sea level. With daily rain showers and an average temperature range from 73 degrees to 81 degrees Fahrenheit, the property is conducive to year-round tropical flora and indoor/outdoor living.

[70] Maizie Sanford, in discussion with the author, April 1, 2013.

Like many postwar modernist homes built for the middle class—for instance, the early 1960s Joseph Eichler-built tract-homes A. Quincy and Frederick Emmons designed in California's San Fernando Valley (Figure 4.12)—the Sanford residence turns its interest to views of its garden. Built on the perimeter of the lot, the building's close proximity to the street adds to the advantage of leaving more room in the backyard for private usage. Weissich's landscape plans show a concern with preserving the natural contours of the property as much as possible and conserving magnificent views of the mountains and ocean. Early photographs indicate that the original landscape design was extremely minimal. This minimalist style was likely influenced by Seckel's own carefully balanced approach to landscaping—one that acknowledged the importance of flora for shade, privacy, and aesthetic considerations but with an eye for easy maintenance. Weissich described Seckel's methodology as straightforward, only "just enough" to produce sympathetic architectural elements: "a hedge to block an unfortunate view," or a simple ground cover "to impede erosion, but always of non-visual attractant nature."[71] Nothing, including plants, was to compete with the design intent.

Weissich utilized existing *koa* trees in the front corners of the house and near the bank for shade and protection from winds. In the current landscape, which is described in detail in Appendix A, there are edible plants such as coffee and avocado trees, Hawai'ian *ti* (or *ki*), coconut palms, and hibiscus hybrids (Figure 4.14). There are also a variety of ferns as well as mountain *naupaka*, an endemic flowering plant, which was sown along the slopes early in Woodlawn Terrace's development in order to mitigate soil erosion per Margaret Seckel's suggestion (Figures 4.15, 4.16).[72] Ornamentals were a significant part of the garden for Wallace

[71] Paul Weissich, e-mail to the author. January 6, 2017.
[72] Ibid., phone interview with the author. August 17, 2017.

Sanford. Claire remembers her father as a restless gardener who went through obsessions with plants, particularly exotics:

> There was a point where he was breeding orchids, cross-breeding day lilies. Then he got into roses. I used to describe him as having a very baroque sense of gardening because when he ran out of room he started doing things, like tacking orchids to the fence or to the palm trees. It was his art.[73]

Aside from its surrounding landscape, another striking aspect of the home are its two independent roof lines, which resemble tatami mats—a visual nod, perhaps, to traditional Japanese architecture. Although Seckel left behind no notes or other articles specifying architects who influenced him, he did profess an open admiration for Kenzo Tange, who, in the early part of his career, often looked for ways to incorporate aspects of traditional Japanese architecture with a Westernized modernist aesthetic.[74] In the Sanford residence's interior, Seckel employs a few traditional Japanese architectural features widely used by other American architects, mostly in Hawai'i and California, such as *shoji* front doors and a small sliding panel between the study and living room (Figure 4.9).[75] The floor plan is decidedly Western, however, with boundaries between rooms defined by the explicit physical presence of a wall, whereas the interior of a traditional Japanese home typically consists of one large tatami-floored room with wood panels used to create modular spaces.[76] The traditional Japanese home also has much lighter, more

---

[73] Claire Sanford, in discussion with the author, March 1, 2018.
[74] When asked by architect Robin Boyd for Seckel's statement on why Tange was the recipient of the AIA-Hawaii Chapter's Pan-Pacific Citation Award, Seckel replied: "He is giving appropriate form to the new Japan without diluting the essence of her heritage." Robin Boyd, *Kenzo Tange* (New York City, NY: George Braziller, 1962), 46.
[75] Although the builders for the home are unknown, it is likely that carpenters of Japanese ancestry, who predominated in the demand for craftsmanship in mid-century Hawai'i, were responsible for the cabinetry. For more on the history and techniques of Japanese carpentry in Hawai'i, see Alexander Spoehr, Hisao Goto, and Kazuko Sinoto's "Craft History and the Merging of Tool Traditions: Carpenters of Japanese Ancestry in Hawaii" in *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, vol. 17.
[76] Essentially, the fixed structure of the building is an open space ready to accept sliding and detachable screens that produce a series of connected spaces.

transient nature than the Sanford residence. Tange's since-demolished Tokyo residence (1953, Figure 4.10), for instance, was significantly elevated above the ground—a method that recalls both the Japanese architectural tradition of placing the house a few feet above the ground and the piloti of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye.[77]

The Sanford home, in contrast, seems to meld into its gently sloping terrain, with foliage that offsets the building's sharp geometric lines, allowing the natural landscape to frame it. With its nearly flat roof with wide, projecting eaves and simple, horizontal form, the building is more aesthetically aligned with prominent architect Raphael Soriano's modernist Milton Katz residence in Studio City, California (1947, Figure 4.11). Unlike Soriano and many other California-based modernists, however, Seckel refrains from utilizing floor-to-ceiling glass walls. Instead, most of the home's interior spaces have large, fixed-glass windows bordered by jalousie blinds, which provide the rooms with natural light, views, and adequate ventilation while still offering its occupants some measure of privacy.

"Lanikeha," which in Hawai'ian means "place of heaven," is positioned beside *shoji* doors of glass and redwood; this christening was Maizie's decision, according to daughter Claire.[78] Entering the house, one arrives in a small foyer. To the right, a corridor leads to the study, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a studio. To the left, steps gently ascend into a spacious living room. Seckel's decision to utilize a post and pier foundation for the lower section of the subdivided house and concrete slab for the upper level, rather than post and pier for both, is rather unexpected, given that the soil underneath is red clay, which expands when

[77] Seng Kuan, *Kenzo Tange: Architecture for the World* (Baden: Lars Müller, 2012), 5.
[78] Although her mother was not fluent in Hawai'ian, as a member of the influential Baldwin family, Maizie held a great interest in the Islands' traditional culture. She was also friends with Sam Elbert, one of the writers of the *Hawaiian Dictionary and Place Names*, which certainly gave her access to the language.

hydraulically charged. It may have been an aesthetic choice, as the differentiation allows the low-rise dwelling to avoid disrupting the land's natural continuity.

Beyond the living room is a kitchen, laundry room, maid's quarters, and attached carport. All of the bedrooms have finished Philippine mahogany flooring, while the floors of the living room, hallway, and air-conditioned study consist of sound-absorbent cork.[79] The walls of the living room, foyer, study, master bedroom and secondary bedroom, hall, and studio are clad in 4-inch, tongue and groove vertical boards of redwood originally stained a subdued light grey. In 1960, they were painted a colonial white, a nostalgic decision made by Maizie, who grew up in a Craftsman-style house in Maui.[80]

Although nearly all of the building materials were imported, Seckel was able to use one material produced in Hawai‘i for the home's eight-feet high ceilings: canec, a pressed fiberboard made from a mixture of bagasse—a by-product of sugarcane—hydrated lime, caustic soda, soda ash, and similar chemicals. Hawaiian Cane Products manufactured canec in Hilo, Hawai‘i from 1930 until 1960; the material was also exported to Manchuria. [81] According to the *Hawaii Modernism Context Study,* the majority of builders on the Islands used canec fiberboard for interior walls and ceilings in single-family homes from 1945 to 1955. Operations at the Hilo plant ceased in 1960.[82]

Illustrations of the Sanford residence's climatically responsive features demonstrate the importance of cross-ventilation in Seckel's design approach. In a broad topographic profile stretching from the crest of the Wa‘Ahila Ridge above Woodlawn Terrace to the Pacific Ocean,

---

[79] According to Weissich, Seckel also used cork in all the main rooms of his seaside Ka‘alawai house, including the study's ceiling, in order to minimize the sound of ocean waves as much as possible.
[80] Claire Sanford, in discussion with the author, March 1, 2018.
[81] *The Friend*, June 1, 1934.
[82] Fung Associates, Inc., *Hawaii Modernism Context Study* (Unpublished, 2011), 123.

cooling trade winds blow into Upper Mānoa from the morning through the early afternoon; in the late afternoon, these winds begin to reverse (Figure 4.17). Seckel took advantage of this air flow by placing low-set jalousie windows in the master bedroom and adjacent bedroom, and a high row of jalousie windows facing the public street in the living room. This arrangement preserves the constant wind, while allowing heat to escape (Figure 4.18).

In the northeast corner of the master bedroom, a solid wood rail—a feature Seckel utilized frequently in Woodlawn Terrace—helps shield and protect the windows from rain. The raised pier and beam foundation underneath the room provides additional cool air flow, with the house floor system and earth working as a natural insulator (Figure 4.19). Picture windows in the master and second largest bedroom are oriented toward views of the garden and Mount Tantalus as well as the morning sun, which allows ample daylight into the interior and reduces the need for electric lights.

In these environmentally responsive features, there is an emphasis on climate, efficiency, human scale, and the unity of the home and the garden. As with the other houses Seckel designed in Woodlawn Terrace, rather than imposing itself on the site, the Sanford residence endeavors to blend in with its immediate and surrounding environment with the natural landscape serving as an idyllic backdrop. It is a functional home rather than a romantic one—reflective of a pragmatic design approach that mediates between the homogenizing tendencies of modern design thinking and the particular identities of climate, topography, and culture.

CONCLUSION

> [It is] an extremely simple, low-lying structure of unpainted cement blocks and natural redwood. Its rather austere, un-decorated lines serve to emphasize the natural beauty and lush greenness of the large, beautifully landscaped grounds. The

> paved entrance court, thick with ground planting, is deeply shaded by artfully pruned trees. Two tall open grillwork doors slide open onto the central "living lāna'i."[83]

Despite its brief length, the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*'s 1960 article on Harry and Margie Seckel's Ka'alawai Place house is unusually revealing. Beside the headline "'Let's Live Outdoors,' Architect Seckel Says" is an image of the architect on the *makai*, or oceanfront side of his beachfront property, coffee cup in hand (Figure 5.1). Several yards behind the swimming pool Seckel sits beside, and beyond a low seawall of volcanic rock, a row of Chinese violets and beach *naupaka* offer just enough protective cover from the public beach. A line of coconut palms and monkeypod trees blanket the sky. There is something unusually candid in Seckel's demeanor, which borders on exuberance. One comes away with the impression that the outdoor living he espouses makes him genuinely happy. He is also pulling out all the stops to persuade you to join him.

As with the Case Study House Program in California, the efforts of Seckel and other members of the AIA-Hawaii Chapter to persuade residents to embrace the regionally responsive modernist home was only a partial success. Although adopted by some, the buildings would never come to dominate the Islands' urban environment. As Seckel emphasized in *Hawaiian Residential Architecture*, only if Hawai'i's inhabitants were willing to embrace "environmental living" could this ethos be successfully realized in domestic architecture on a wide scale.[84] In a way, this study is a medium through which to carry on Seckel's legacy, by emphasizing the aesthetic and functional features that define his homes and make them not only historically and stylistically significant but also livable. I hope that it serves as some small contribution to the

---

[83] Hope Dennis, "'Let's Move Outdoors,' Says Architect Seckel," *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, January 24, 1960.
[84] Harry W. Seckel, *Hawaiian Residential Architecture* (Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press, 1954), 17.

dearth of literature on postwar Hawai‘i’s houses and their architects, and as an impetus for further scholarship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While this study has demonstrated the character-defining features that make Seckel’s homes historically significant, he was just one among a whole school of accomplished Hawai‘ian architects with their own ideations of environmental living. The sustained spotlight in academia and in the media on Vladimir Ossipoff’s mid-century residential work has likely fostered, however unintentionally, a public perception of a definitive “Hawai‘ian” interpretation. Raising the profiles of other postwar residential architects would elicit a greater understanding of and appreciation for their contributions to Hawai‘i’s built environment and would also potentially help their extant homes attract sympathetic buyers. Requesting AIA membership files of these lesser known architects from the AIA’s National Archives would be a useful first step in researching their professional histories. Newspapers.com’s extensive online archive of postwar *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and *The Honolulu Advertiser* articles would also help shed light on their careers. Making photographs and written histories of their buildings based on these research findings publicly available online would be a logical next step. The SHPD or Hawai‘i’s Docomomo Chapter could perhaps initiate such a project.

Without an intensive inventory effort, however, it will be difficult to develop a useful context for Hawai‘i’s environmentally responsive, mid-century modern homes. The only Historic Reconnaissance Level survey of this building type was conducted in 2012. Using the 2012 survey as a model, the SHPD should continue documenting and evaluating the material condition and historic integrity of these resources, particularly in light of their vulnerability.

The proper maintenance of Seckel's Woodlawn Terrace homes is a final area of concern. During my interviews with many residents, a common refrain concerned the replacement of original hardware, cork flooring, as well as structural problems such as sagging roofs from water accumulation. A study or handbook on rehabilitation strategies for Hawai‘i's mid-century modern residences tailored to specific climatic conditions, building materials, and other design considerations would undoubtedly be an invaluable resource for homeowners and preservationists alike.

Figure 4.1 Construction phase of 3622 Woodlawn Terrace Place, southward view, 1956. Photo by Wallace Sanford. Courtesy of Claire Sanford.

Figure 4.2 Sanford residence lānaʻi prior to its enclosure facing northwest, 1960. Photo by Jerry Chong.

Figure 4.3 Sanford residence, rear elevation, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 4.4 Sanford deck addition, designed by Seckel in 1960, 2017. Courtesy of Sotheby's International Realty.

Figure 4.5 Sanford built-in bench addition in second largest bedroom, designed by Seckel in 1960, 2017. Courtesy of Sotheby's International Realty.

Figure 4.6 Sanford lath house facing northwest, circa 1960. Photo by Wallace Sanford. Courtesy of Claire Sanford.

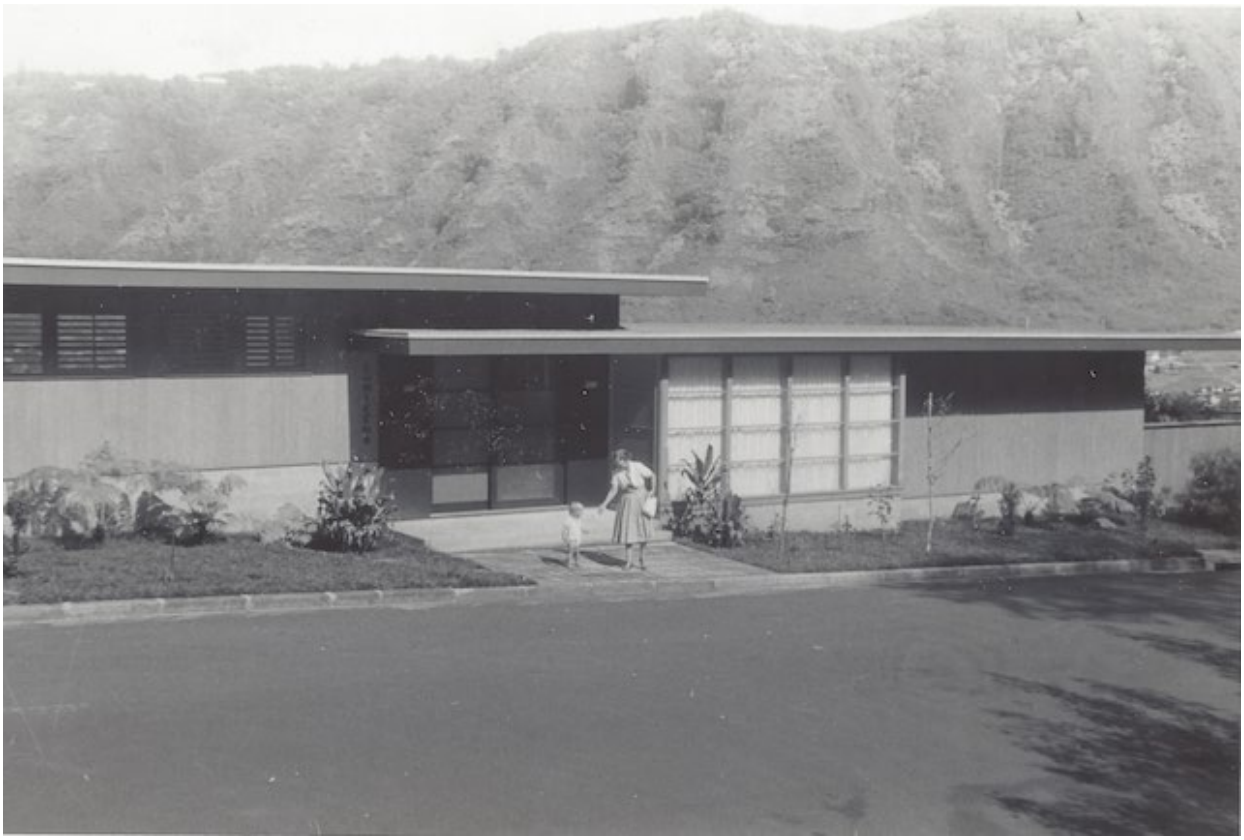


Figure 4.7 Sanford residence, front elevation, 1960. Photo by Wallace Sanford. Courtesy of Claire Sanford.

Figure 4.8 Sanford residence, front elevation, 2017. Courtesy of Sotheby's International Realty.

Figure 4.9 Sanford front entry with *shoji* doors of glass and redwood, 2013. Photo by the author.

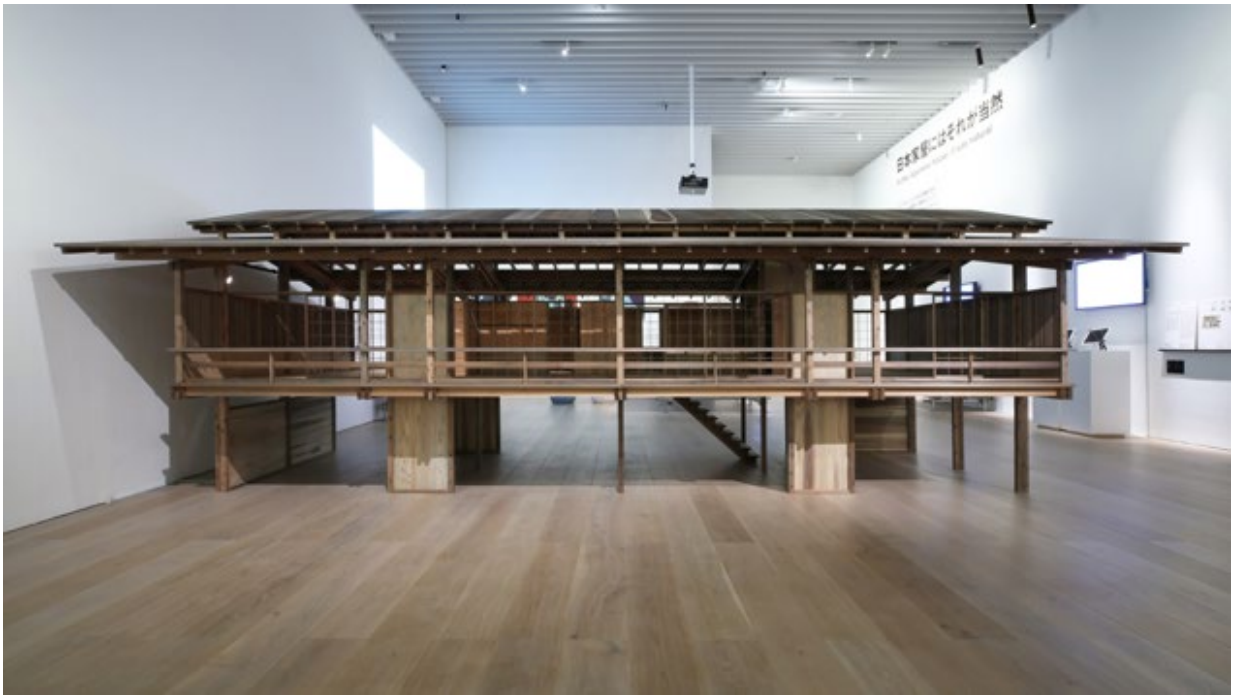


Figure 4.10 Model replica of 1953 Kenzo Tange residence in Tokyo. Architect: Kenzo Tange. Photo by Koroda Takeru.

Figure 4.11 Milton Katz residence in Studio City, California, 1949. Architect: Raphael Soriano. Photo by Julius Schumann. Courtesy of the Getty Research Institute.

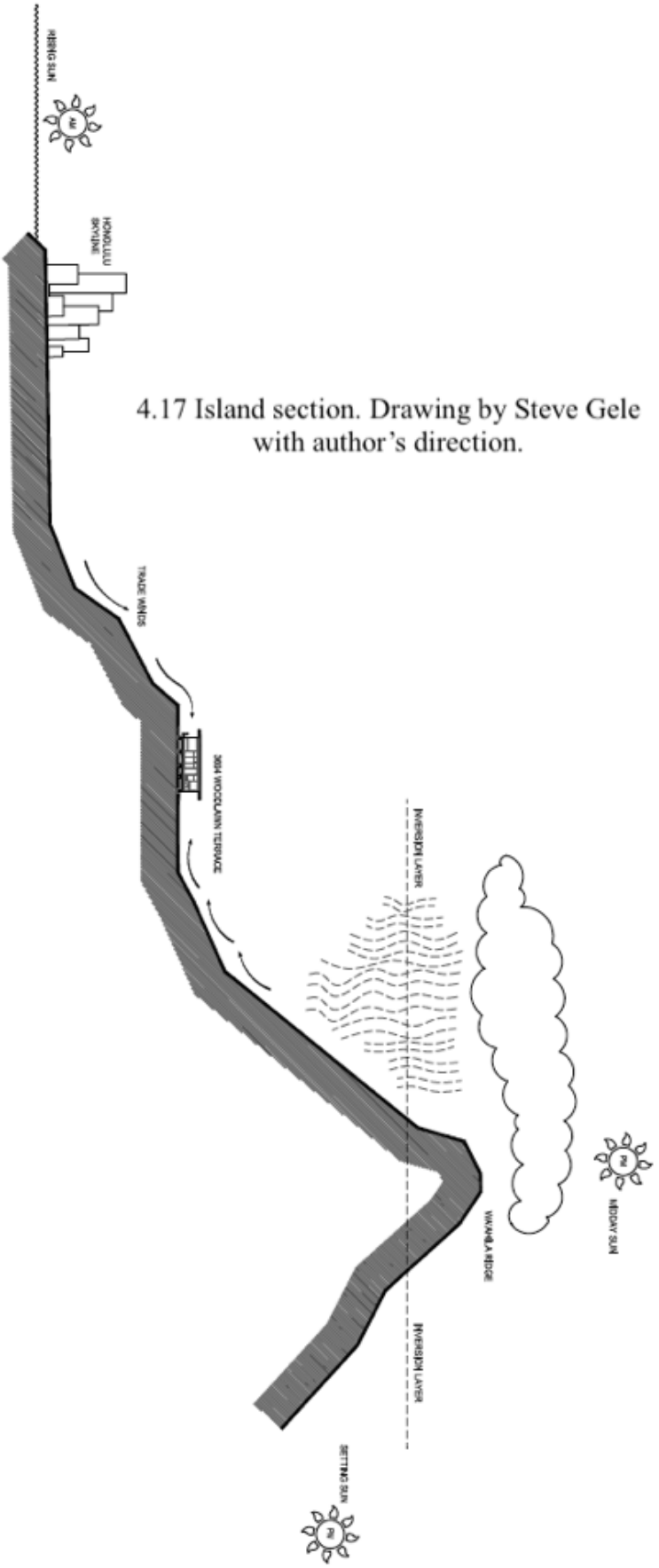
Figure 4.12 Early 1960s Joseph Eichler-built tract home in San Fernando Valley, California, 2010. Architects: A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons. Photo by Thomas S. Haines.

Figure 4.13 Sanford kitchen door and fixed glass window with jalousie blinds, 2017. Courtesy of Sotheby's International Realty.

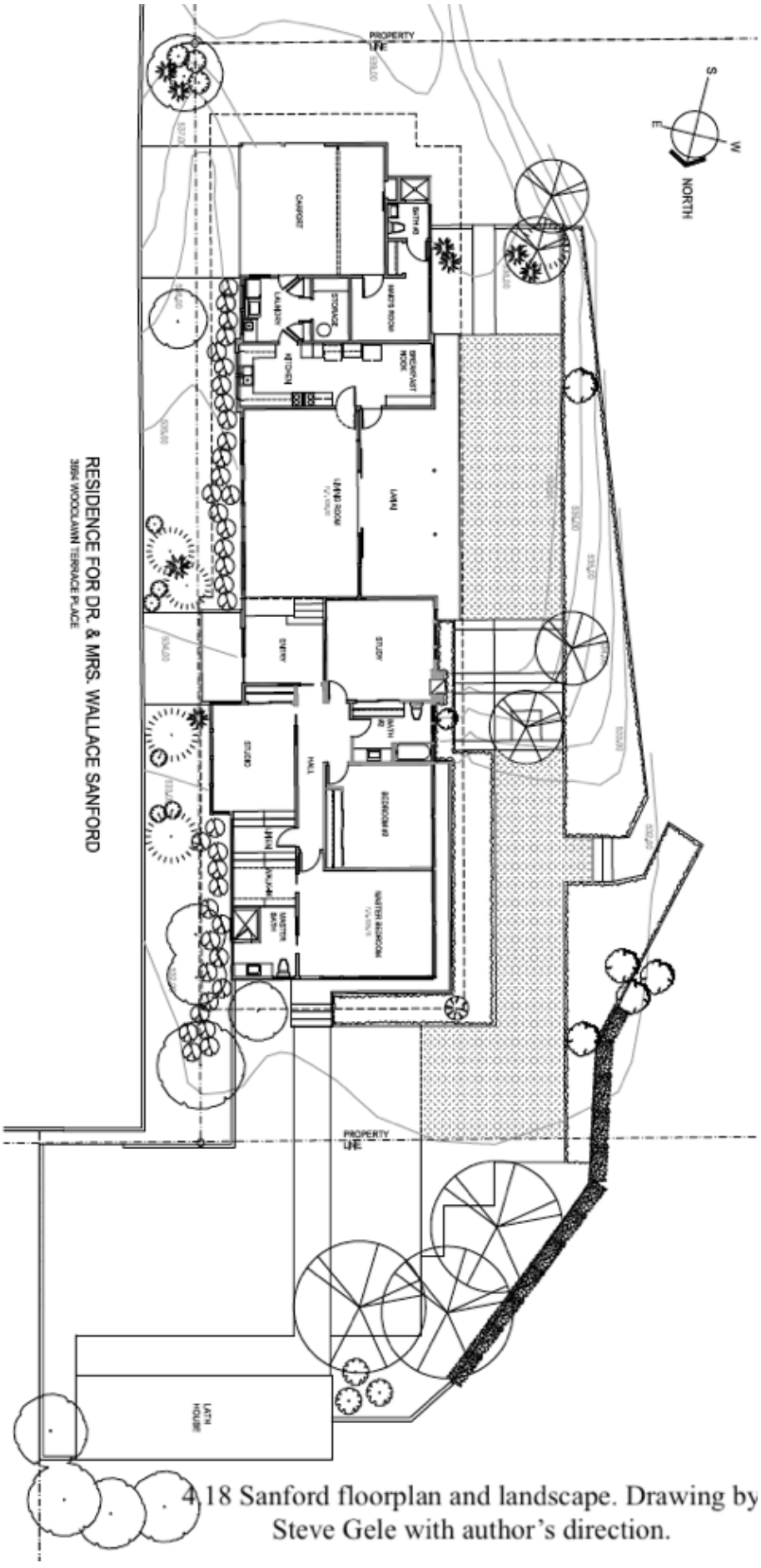
Figure 4.14 Maizie Sanford holding coffee beans, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 4.15 Sanford landscape facing northwest, 2013. Photo by the author.

Figure 4.16 Sanford master bedroom and landscape facing northeast, 2013. Photo by the author.

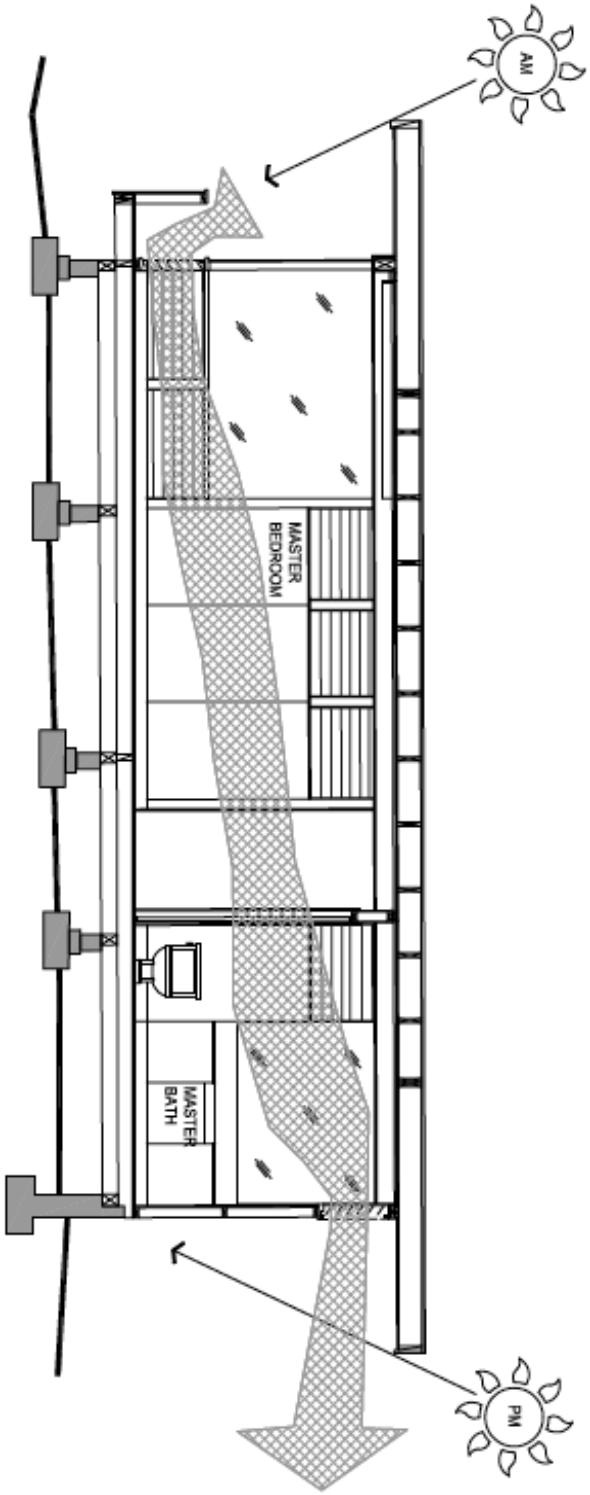


4.17 Island section. Drawing by Steve Gele with author's direction.



4.18 Sanford floorplan and landscape. Drawing by Steve Gele with author's direction.

4.19 Sanford lower level, rear elevation. Drawing by Steve Gele with the author's direction.



T. Umeda

Morning coffee is enjoyed by architect Harry W. Seckel on the lanai of his Kaalawai home. The mild Diamond Head climate allows the Seckels year round lanai living.

Figure 4.20 Harry Seckel at 220 Ka‘alawai in “‘Let’s Live Outdoors,’ Architect Seckel Says” *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* article, January 24, 1960. Photo by T. Umeda.

REFERENCES CITED

Akana, Collette Leimomi. *Hānau Ka Ua.* Honolulu, HI: Kamehameha Publishing, 2015.

American Institute of Architects: Hawaii Chapter. *Oral Histories of 1930s Architects*. Honolulu, HI: Hawaii Society, AIA, 1982.

Bouslog, Charles. *Mānoa: The Story of a Valley*. Honolulu, HI: Mutual Publishing, 1994.

Bosworth, F.H. and Roy Childs Jones. *A Study of Architectural Schools.* New York City, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1932.

Carlhian, Jean Paul and Margot M. Ellis. *Americans in Paris: Foundations of America's Architectural Gilded Age.* New York City, NY: Rizzoli New York, 2014.

Goldberger, Paul. *Why Architecture Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.

Hazard, Patrick D. *The Dolphin Guide to Hawaii.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1965.

Hibbard, Don. *Buildings of Hawaii.* Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011.

Hines, Thomas S. *Architecture of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism 1900-1970.* New York City, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2010.

Kaplan, Wendy. *California Design, 1930-1965: Living in a Modern Way*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011.

Kuan, Seng. *Kenzo Tange: Architecture for the World.* Baden: Lars Müller, 2012.

Neutra, Richard. *Architecture of Social in Regions of Mild Climate*. Sao Paulo, Brazil: Tipografic Edanee LTDA, 1948.

Sakamoto, Dean et al. *Hawaiian Modern: The Architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007.

Seckel, Harry W. *Hawaiian Residential Architecture.* Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press, 1954.

Seckel, Harry W. *A Guide to Architecture in Honolulu.* Honolulu, HI: AIA-Hawaii Chapter, 1957.

Summers, Catherine. *The Hawaiian Grass House in the Bishop Museum*. Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press, 1988.

Wendt, Albert. *From Mānoa to a Ponsonby Garden*. Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press, 2012.

Wieland, William Hunter. *A History of the Construction of the Wolf Creek Ordnance Plant and Milan Ordnance Depot in Milan, Tennessee*. Memphis, TN: University of Memphis Press, 2001.

APPENDIX A

LANDSCAPE STUDY OF SANFORD PROPERTY BY DRS. RICHARD CRILEY AND KENNETH LEONHARDT

SANFORD PROPERTY: PLANT INVENTORY, NOVEMBER 2017

COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	CONDITION
Arrowhead vine	*Syngonium podophyllum*	
Aphelandra	*Aphelandra deppeana*	
Autograph tree	*Clusia rosea*	invasive, naturalized; small plant
Avocado	*Persea Americana*	mature, fruit bearing
Citrus		iron deficient, medium-sized
Coconut palm	*Cocos nucifera*	mature, full head, low bearing fruit
Coffee	*Coffea arabica*	
Coralwood	*Adenanthera pavonina*	large, mature plant
Hibiscus	*Hibiscus*	hybrids, old, lacking vigor
Yellow Justicia	*Justicia aurea*	
Fan palm	*Pritchardia*	tall
Giant bamboo	*Bambusa oldhamii*	large, vigorous
Ixora	*Ixora* species	iron deficient, lacking vigor
Maile pilau	*Paederia foetida*	a weed; growing over other plants
Ming aralia	*Polyscias fruticosa*	
Mondo grass	*Ophiopogon japonicas*	small, sparse clumps
Mountain naupaka	*Scaevola gaudichaudii*	
Paper bark tree	*Melaluca leucadendron*	mature and healthy
Pua-kenikeni	*Fagraea berteroana*	
Surinam cherry	*Eugenia uniflora*	medium-sized, fruit bearing
Ti	*Cordyline fruticos*	two large, others smaller

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL WEISSICH

The following interview is a composite of the author's e-mail correspondence with Paul Weissich in 2013 and 2017.

LE: Can you tell me a little bit about your professional background?

PW: I grew up in Mill Valley, California. Paradise, but I didn't appreciate it then. Now when I go back, I'm overwhelmed by the natural beauty. I first visited Hawaii during World War II when I served in the Navy. Shortly after I graduated from UC-Berkeley with a degree in Landscape Architecture, [Honolulu landscape architect] Richard Tongg hired me, and my family and I moved to Hawaii in 1950.

LE: How did you become the director of Foster Botanical Garden?

PW: [Local author and landscape architect] Loraine Kuck introduced me to [Foster Botanical Garden director] Dr. Harold Lyon. Loraine felt I could learn a lot from him. I fell in love with Foster Botanical Garden. My experience then was with California and I was still learning about tropical plants. Dr. Lyon was impressed by my excitement and interest. One morning, I was called into the park director office. Dr. Lyon had died that night, and unknown to me, had arranged with the Parks Department for me to take over the directorship.

LE: How did you come to work on the Seckels' home on Ka'alawai?

PW: I met Harry and Margie Seckel when I was a young landscape architect fresh out of UC-Berkeley working for Richard Tongg. Richard and Loraine had just published a book on tropical plants [*The Modern Tropical Garden: Its Design, Plant Materials and Horticulture*]. They contacted Richard, Richard sent me.

LE: Can you recall what the property looked like?

PW: A few comments on its design which illustrate the Seckel approach may be revealing: the 30-by-60-feet lanai, mostly under a roof, was the best room in the house. The walls were unpainted hollow tile, with no pictures or other adornments, as they saw the ocean as the main focus; the floor consisted of 2-by-8-by-16-inch unstained pavers, a planter consisted of a piece of concrete sewer pipe about four feet in diameter. Full view of the ocean, one of Harry's hallmarks.

Floor to ceiling glass in living room and dining room (neither much used) had no wood strips, but cleanly intersected the ceiling, which was of thick cork to absorb excessive ocean sounds. The kitchen, maid's quarters, and bathrooms did not have cork ceilings. I well recall the master bedroom, which was positioned to take maximum advantage of the trade winds: exterior walls were cabinets up to almost shoulder height. Above them was screening. Counter-weighted frosted windows, hidden away behind the cabinets, could be raised with one finger. In essence, the design was completely focused on trade wind and the ocean.

The entry was dominated by one monkey pod tree, which was moved in via crane, with exceedingly simple shrubbery. The Seckels admired plants but were not "gardeners." The property, originally three lots, was about an acre in extent and contained over two dozen large coconut palms. These were handsomely uplighted at night with additional Navy surplus searchlights lighting the waves on the distant reef. Absolutely beautiful. A low privacy screen was needed along the public beach front, so I suggested beach *naupaka*, which worked well as it required virtually no care, except for infrequent top pruning to prevent any view invasion of the ocean.

Fronting the *naupaka*, which tended toward legginess, we planted *asystasia*, an invasive exotic which may be found well established on dry Diamond Head. It was kept pruned to prevent encroachment on the lawn area and into the *naupaka*. No nonsense. An unacceptable view of the neighboring property was "plugged" by transplanting a large existing Christmas berry bush. No nonsense!! The Diamond Head area then had lovely homes, well landscaped with a myriad of lush exotics and totally "manicured." Garden Club ladies who visited the Seckels were visibly taken aback upon entering the Seckel domain. And Harry and Margie could have cared less! The house entry also had a parking space for four, with a forecourt enclosed by hedges, paved underfoot, and brightened by flowers and shaded by trees. Absolutely gorgeous property—everything about it.

LE: What was his work methodology like? In the book he wrote, *Hawaiian Residential Architecture*, he seemed to emphasize the importance of a close collaboration between landscape architects and architects. I wondered if that held true for you in your work for him?

PW: Well, I worked *with* him, not for him. I would say Harry was extremely practical. While he was designing the [Ka‘alawai] house, a fellow went over it inch by inch to make sure every aspect of the construction plans met code. Harry was everything, though. He directed all the operations and hired underlings to do the drafting board. When he worked with clients, he studied the site very carefully and worked closely with them to determine exactly what they wanted. Very wisely, all of his homes turned towards the ocean. Everything was pointed in one direction.

LE: Would you say that he designed environmentally?

PW: I would emphatically support the idea that Harry designed environmentally! His houses took full advantage of the trade winds. He designed almost flat roofs with very wide overhangs. There was extensive screening which the overhangs kept dry but permitted easy air flow. He used simple materials, mostly unadorned, hollow tile walls, concrete floors stained in dark, recessive colors—sometimes even black, frequently on a broad “cracked ice” pattern. Some felt that his strongly analytical approach to architecture sometimes developed a coldness. Harry opted for extreme simplicity. No frills, no ornamentation. I feel that he felt architectural ornamentation to be in competition with and destructive to the total design, which included minimal landscaping. Only just enough to produce other sympathetic architectural elements: a hedge to block an unfortunate view, a simple ground cover to impede erosion but always of a nonvisual, attractant nature. Nothing to compete with the design intent. No color.

LE: I understand that you also helped design the landscape for the William Barlow residence on Mākālei Place in 1952?

PW: Yes. Again [like the Ka‘alawai house], it was totally simple. Mrs. [Rosalie] Barlow was quite a character. A swimmer and a surfer. Their house was at the dead end of a rather steep street on Diamond Head. Again, wide roof overhangs, open to the trades, hollow tile and pavers. *No* color but a fabulous ocean view, which, like Harry's own home, was the central, integral part of his design. Landscaping was exceedingly simple. The Barlows were not “plant people.” There were already a lot of *naupaka* on the slopes, which work well inland in lowland hot, dry places like Diamond Head. I believe I recall that the existing *kiawe* trees, which cover much of lower

Diamond Head, were utilized and carefully pruned. There were no neighbors on either side of the property. Just *kiawe* trees! Quite excellent.

LE: I'm also curious to know the extent and nature of his involvement at Foster Botanical Garden if you can recall.

PW: Harry produced a master plan which was never funded and scrapped after my retirement in favor of a new plan, which is actually superior but still not funded.

LE: I understand that he was friends with Alfred Preis.

PW: He was indeed a close friend of Alfred Preis. [Harry] was also friendly with Vladimir Ossipoff. He worked with Ossipoff on the design of the Pacific Club, on the edge of downtown Honolulu. Few walls, wide overhangs, open to the trade winds. The main dining room is wide open on two major sides. *No* air conditioning. Always pleasant. Well done, very simple.

LE: In a 1981 interview, Preis talks about how close he and Harry were. He said they "connected." Do you have any idea, having known both men, why they may have connected?

PW: Well, they were both very articulate, very intelligent, both extremely funny, with a sometimes biting sense of humor. Fred was part of the class of '39, you know. He also designed the *U.S.S. Arizona* Memorial in Pearl Harbor, which was an extremely simple form. I can image Harry and Fred discussing it!