

## Statement of Significance

### Summary

The Trueman and Virginia Schmidt House is significant for its *historical importance* as the home of Trueman Leopold and Virginia Aetzel Schmidt, both scions of prominent local families, and for being designed by Wohleb & Wohleb Architects, particularly firm associate Gordon Stacey Bennett. An architect who created many of the area's notable mid-century buildings, Bennett is said to have designed the house, which is one of his earliest works, if not his earliest residential commission.

The house is also significant for its *architectural importance*: it embodies the distinctive characteristics of post-war Modern construction, including the siting of the home in its environment and the blurring of interior and exterior spaces, and possesses high artistic values, particularly the use of strong horizontal and vertical themes contrasted by the use of circles in interior ornamentation. Built in 1950, the house is an example of high style residential construction after World War II, a time when building materials were in short supply and the national economy was booming.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

Post-war Olympia was a bustling place. The city's population increased 19 percent from 1940 to 1950, and 16 percent from 1950 to 1960.<sup>1</sup> New buildings sprouted everywhere and were a common feature in *The Daily Olympian*, which admitted it could not keep up with the number.<sup>2</sup> An earthquake in April 1949, while severe, further spurred the construction boom. Several downtown buildings were irreparably damaged and replaced with modern designs. Residents were urged to save bricks, already in short supply.<sup>3</sup> Capitol Lake was dammed in 1950.<sup>4</sup> A "burst of civic pride"<sup>5</sup> accompanied Olympia's centennial celebration in May of that year, and *The Daily Olympian* featured two full-page spreads on the Olympia Brewing Company, owned by the Schmidt family.<sup>6</sup>

Trueman Leopold "Bink" Schmidt (b. 1913) was a grandson of Leopold Schmidt, the founder of the Olympia Brewing Company. Founded in 1896 as the Capital Brewing Company, Leopold's company eventually owned at least five breweries in the Pacific Northwest and California. The renamed Olympia Brewing Company (1902) was famed for its Olympia Beer, with its trademark slogan "It's the Water." The company was run by Schmidt family members until it was sold to Pabst in 1983, and over the years the family became one of the most prominent in the Olympia area.<sup>7</sup>

During Prohibition the family sold the original brick brewhouse and diversified its investments, producing fruit juices and jams at the newer brewery buildings and adding hotels, dairies, and

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Publications," *Census of Population and Housing*, accessed November 23, 2014, [www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html](http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html); "Continued Northwest Growth is Predicted," *The Daily Olympian*, September 14, 1950, 9.

<sup>2</sup> "Fine Homes Constructed Here," *The Daily Olympian*, June 11, 1950, 9; "Beautiful New State Theater Will be Opened This Evening," *The Daily Olympian*, November 22, 1949, 3.

<sup>3</sup> "Save Bricks! Builders Urge," *The Daily Olympian*, April 13, 1949, 1.

<sup>4</sup> "Olympians Urge Quick Start on DesChutes Basin Road Around New Lake's West Shore," *The Daily Olympian*, August 1950.

<sup>5</sup> *Building a Capital City: Olympia's Past Revealed Through Its Historic Architecture* (Olympia: Olympia Community Planning and Development Department, Advance Planning and Historic Preservation, 2000), 69.

<sup>6</sup> "A Graphic Review of a Pioneer Olympia Industry Established 1896," *The Daily Olympian*, May 1, 1950, 1; "Splendid Water Gives Rise to Brewery Here," *The Daily Olympian*, May 1, 1950, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Shanna Stevenson *Olympia, Tumwater, and Lacey: A Pictorial History*, rev. ed. (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company, 1996), 156-183.

transportation investments to its business portfolio.<sup>8</sup> When Prohibition ended, brewing operations resumed, and although the Schmidts were interested in re-acquiring the old brewhouse, they ultimately decided it was not worth the expense of restoring. Leopold had died in 1914, and the business by that time was run by two of his sons, Peter and Adolph Sr., Trueman's father. Trueman—known by his nickname, Bink—graduated from Olympia High School in 1932 and enrolled at Oregon State University, but the Depression and the uncertainty of the family business forced him to return home after less than a year.<sup>9</sup> When Prohibition ended, Bink and his brothers Adolph Jr. ("Bump") and Robert ("Bobby") worked on the construction crew for the new brewing plant. When the building was finished, Bink became the Olympia Brewery's first night shift engineer.<sup>10</sup>

He returned to college in 1936, attending Washington State University to study architectural engineering. Although involved in engineering activities at WSU<sup>11</sup>, he did not graduate. He attended the University of Washington for one quarter in 1939, but illness prevented him from taking his final exams, and then his father invited him to go to Europe. Bink stayed in Europe for four months, returning to Olympia in late 1939.<sup>12</sup> In 1941 he married Virginia Aetzel, the daughter of George and Helen Aetzel, describing her as "a girl I've known almost all my life."<sup>13</sup>

Aetzel (b. 1916) also came from a family with long roots in Olympia. Her grandfather, Rossell O'Brien, moved to the area in 1870. He married Fanny Steele, daughter of Alden Hatch Steele, whose house is the last remaining pre-statehood residence in downtown Olympia.<sup>14</sup> Steele emigrated to Oregon in 1849 and served as surgeon at several military posts in Oregon Territory through the Civil War, then moved to Olympia in 1870 and was active in civic life until his death in 1902.<sup>15</sup> O'Brien, a Civil War veteran and early Olympia mayor, organized Washington's first national guard company in 1883<sup>16</sup> and is reputed to have initiated the custom of standing during "The Star-Spangled Banner."<sup>17</sup> A plaque in downtown

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<sup>8</sup> The Schmidts' Puget Sound Hotels evolved into present-day Westin Hotels, and their Seattle-to-Portland bus line became part of Greyhound (Gary Flynn, "History of the Olympia Brewing Company (1902-2003) Established as the Capital Brewing Company (1896-1902)," *Brewery Gems*, accessed 29 November 2014, <http://www.brewerygems.com/olympia.htm>; and Stevenson, *Olympia, Tumwater, and Lacey*, 178).

<sup>9</sup> "Bink Schmidt Feature," *The Evergreen State College*, accessed 29 November 2014, <http://archives.evergreen.edu/1986/1986-03Newsreleases/Scans/1974/1974-477.pdf>. Schmidt was founding chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Evergreen State College and served until 1977. He recalled that his "expertise in architectural engineering what what [I] hoped to contribute to Evergreen, which did not yet have a site, much less any buildings" ("Bink Schmidt Feature," "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, New Four Year State College," August 30, 1967, *The Evergreen State College*, <http://www.evergreen.edu/trustees/docs/minutesarchive/67BOTminutes083067.pdf#August 20, 1967 Minutes>; and Minutes of Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of The Evergreen State College, April 6, 1976, *The Evergreen State College*, <http://www.evergreen.edu/trustees/docs/minutesarchive/76BOTminutes040676.pdf>).

<sup>10</sup> "Bink Schmidt Feature."

<sup>11</sup> "Ball Tickets Go on Sale Tomorrow." *Washington State Evergreen*, March 2, 1938, 1. Schmidt was a member of the committee for the annual Engineers' Ball.

<sup>12</sup> "Bink Schmidt Feature;" and *Olympia, Washington: Polk City Directory* (Detroit: R.L. Polk Co., 1939), 283. Schmidt is listed as student, living with Adolph Schmidt, Sr. at 1616 Water Street.

<sup>13</sup> "Bink Schmidt Feature."

<sup>14</sup> "Steele House," *Olympia Historical Society and Bigelow House Museum*, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://olympiahistory.org/wp/steele-house/>; and T.R. Ingham, "Some of the Early Doctors of Olympia," *Olympia Historical Society and Bigelow House Museum*, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://olympiahistory.org/wp/early-doctors/>.

<sup>15</sup> "Details: Alden Hatch Steele Papers, 1849-1884," *Oregon Historical Society Research Center*, Accessed November 30, 2014, <http://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/collection/data/62784784>.

<sup>16</sup> "Selected Transcriptions and Images from Olympia Tribune Souvenir Issue 1891," *Olympia Historical Society and Bigelow House Museum*, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://olympiahistory.org/wp/selected-transcriptions-from-olympia-tribune-souvenir-issue-1891/>.

<sup>17</sup> Paula Wissel, "Tacoma Man the Reason We Stand for Star Spangled Banner," radio (July 4, 2013: KPLU, Tacoma), accessed

Tacoma honors this initiative.<sup>18</sup> O'Brien's youngest daughter, Helen, married George A. Aetzel.<sup>19</sup> They lived in a house at 201 Union Street built by Rossell O'Brien, now the site of Centennial Park and the Daniel Evans Centennial Redwood Tree.<sup>20</sup> Aetzel was vice president of the Olympia Door Company, which provided the cedar shingles used on the Governor's Mansion<sup>21</sup> and was considered a "leading industrial establishment" of the city.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the 1941 marriage of Bink Schmidt and Virginia Aetzel joined two prominent families of the region.

In late 1942, Bink served as warrant officer in the United States Navy Reserve, posted to Althorp, Alaska. Virginia moved back to her family home on Union Street, and their son, Nick, was born there in 1943. In mid-1944, Bink was posted to Corpus Christi, Texas, and Virginia and Nick moved there until the war ended. Their daughter, Judi, was born there in 1945. In 1946, the Schmidts returned to Olympia, living in the Aetzel home, and Bink took up a post as construction engineer at the brewery, where he worked the rest of his career.<sup>23</sup>

Since the end of Prohibition, the brewery had been expanding. New buildings began going up in the 1930s and more were added regularly through the 1960s.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps reflecting the national economic expansion and optimism, a three-story fermentation and storage building was added in 1949.<sup>25</sup> As construction engineer and later superintendent of construction, Bink would have been heavily involved in expansion plans and building design decisions,<sup>26</sup> which would have brought him into contact with Joseph and Robert Wohleb, the father and son principals of Wohleb & Wohleb Architects.

Joseph Wohleb is regionally famous as "Olympia's architect." He came to Olympia in 1911 and filled a need for an architect for the next four decades. Many of Olympia's most notable buildings were designed by Wohleb, including several on the Capitol campus, the Thurston County Courthouse, the Olympia Armory, the American Legion Hall, the Lord Mansion, and the McCleary Mansion.<sup>27</sup> His son, Robert, graduated from the University of Washington in 1939 with an architecture degree, and joined his father's practice in 1946. He developed a specialty in brewery design, and in 1949 became a partner;

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November 30, 2014, <http://www.kplu.org/post/tacoma-icon-reason-we-stand-star-spangled-banner>; and Thomas Fleming, "Why We Stand for the Star-Spangled Banner," *Boys' Life*, January 1986, 21.

<sup>18</sup> "Rossell Galbraith O'Brien," *Irish Heritage Club of Seattle*, accessed November 30, 2014,

<http://www.irishclub.org/RGOBrien.htm>. A recent history of the national anthem disputes this story: "Though the story about O'Brien enjoys widespread credence, the likelihood of it being true is almost nil" (Marc Ferris, *Star-Spangled Banner: The Unlikely Story of America's National Anthem* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014], 74).

<sup>19</sup> "Biographies: Dr. Alden Hatch Steele," Thurston County, Washington, Genealogy and History, *Genealogy Trails*, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://genealogytrails.com/wash/thurston/bio2.html>; and Georgiana Mitchell Blankenship, *Early History of Thurston County, Washington* (Olympia: N.p., 1914), 243.

<sup>20</sup> "Centennial Park/Evans Centennial Tree/Rossell O'Brien House Site," *Olympia Historical Society and Bigelow House Museum*, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://olympiahistory.org/wp/centennial-parkevans-centennial-treerossell-obrien-house-site/>.

<sup>21</sup> "Governor's Mansion," *HistoryLink*, accessed November 30, 2014, [http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file\\_id=9048](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=9048).

<sup>22</sup> Edward Garner Jones, *The Oregonian's Handbook of the Pacific Northwest* (Portland, OR: The Oregonian Publishing Company, 1894), 338; "With the Washington Sawmills," *The Timberman*, March 1910, 27; "Commercial and Industrial Interests," *The Coast*, March 1909, 163-166.

<sup>23</sup> "Bink Schmidt Feature," *Olympia, Washington: Polk City Directory* (1946), 306, (1947-48), 309, (1949), 342.

<sup>24</sup> Dawn Maddox, "Joseph Wohleb: Resident Architect of the State's Capital," *Landmarks III*, no. 4 (1985), 9.

<sup>25</sup> "Brewery Constructs New Addition." *The Daily Olympian*, 24 October 1949, 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Olympia, Washington: Polk City Directory*, (1947-48), 309; (1949), 342; (1951-52), 294.

<sup>27</sup> "Joseph H. Wohleb, 1887-1958," *Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation*, accessed December 20, 2014, <http://www.dahp.wa.gov/learn-and-research/architect-biographies/joseph-h-wohlebl>; Maddox, "Joseph Wohleb."

the firm's name changed to Wohleb & Wohleb. Robert Wohleb's noteworthy designs include the State Theater (1949), houses in the Stratford Place Addition, and Olympia City Hall (1966).<sup>28</sup>

The relationship between the Wohlebs and the Schmidt family dates to at least the mid-1930s, when Joseph Wohleb designed the 1935 brewhouse and office building and the 1939 bottle house.<sup>29</sup> Robert Wohleb worked with the Schmidts on new cellars and brewhouses in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>30</sup> After World War II grains rationing was lifted, the brewery grew rapidly, producing nearly 600,000 barrels in 1950 and triple that in 1960.<sup>31</sup> In August 1950, the brewery began producing beer in cans, adding a new option to its kegs, quarts, and iconic "stubby" bottles.<sup>32</sup> By the mid-1950s, Bink was a vice president of the brewery and had one patent to his name, for a cardboard carton designed to make can removal easier.<sup>33</sup> His brother Bump had succeeded their uncle Peter as president.<sup>34</sup>

Bink and Virginia saw several of Bink's relatives, especially his brothers, reside in the same southeast area where they would eventually build. In 1938, Trueman's uncle Frederick had built a large, English revival house using concrete construction and radiant heat on Eskridge Road in the Stratford Place Addition. (Robert Wohleb designed several homes there as well, including one that he lived in after his marriage.) Brother Adolph lived at 3016 Maringo in a house built in 1939, and brother Bobby lived a block away at 703 Governor Stevens, built in 1941 (he had lived across the street at number 718 for a few years in the early 1940s, too).<sup>35</sup> Straddling the Olympia-Tumwater border, the area was convenient to the brewery, located three-quarters of a mile south on Capitol Boulevard. A new sewer system was planned to accommodate development—by that time, relatively few lots were unbuilt—and everything from groceries to hardware to gasoline was available within a half-mile.<sup>36</sup>

Bink and Virginia led active social lives in Olympia, appearing numerous times in society columns. They are listed as chairing the decorating committee for the 1949 New Year's Eve dance at the Olympia Country and Golf Club, a mention noteworthy because it describes them as selecting "a modern decorators theme. Panels in chartreuse, American Beauty and turquoise will be used with painted branches."<sup>37</sup> The colors alone suggest the Schmidts were interested in modern design and they asked Gordon Stacey Bennett, an associate with Wohleb & Wohleb Architects, to help them realize a truly modern home.

Bennett had finished his war-interrupted architecture studies at the University of Oregon in 1946, and worked for the Wohlebs during summer vacation, joining the firm full-time in 1947.<sup>38</sup> Early designs with

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<sup>28</sup> Michael C. Houser, "Wohleb, Robert H. 1916-1966." *DOCOMOMO-WEWA*, accessed December 20, 2014, [http://www.docomomo-wewa.org/architects\\_detail.php?id=120](http://www.docomomo-wewa.org/architects_detail.php?id=120).

<sup>29</sup> Maddox, "Joseph Wohleb," 9; Shanna Stevenson and Jennifer Schreck, "Olympia Brewery Report," January 2006, accessed November 30, 2014, [http://www.trpc.org/grants/awardedtotrpc/Documents/OlympiaBreweryReport\\_DAHF.pdf](http://www.trpc.org/grants/awardedtotrpc/Documents/OlympiaBreweryReport_DAHF.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Stevenson and Schreck, "Olympia Brewery Report."

<sup>31</sup> Stevenson and Schreck, "Olympia Brewery Report," 19.

<sup>32</sup> "Beer in Cans for Brewery Here Reported," *The Daily Olympian*, August 14, 1950, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Trueman L. Schmidt, 1956, Paperboard Can Carton, U.S. Patent 2754047 A.

<sup>34</sup> Stevenson, *Olympia, Tumwater, and Lacey*, 183; *Olympia, Washington: Polk City Directory* (1954), 317, (1955), 272. (1957), 409.

<sup>35</sup> *Building a Capital City*, 72.

<sup>36</sup> "Carlyon Area Sewer Job Bids Asked," *The Daily Olympian*, March 17, 1950, 1; "Tumwater Square Shopping District" (ad), *The Daily Olympian*, April 7, 1950, 3; "Wildwood Grocery" (ad), *The Daily Olympian*, October 19, 1950.

<sup>37</sup> "Here and There," *The Daily Olympian*, December 29, 1949, 5. See also "Here and There" on these dates: April 17, 1949, 10; September 4, 1949, 7; May 17, 1950, 9; August 6, 1950, 15; September 10, 1950, 19; and April 22, 1951, 18.

<sup>38</sup> "G. Stacey Bennett," *History and Organization: Wohleb & Wohleb and Associates, Architects and Engineers, Olympia, Washington, 1955*, Wohleb & Wohleb, Architects Reference File, Box 14, University of Washington Special Collections; and "Bennett, Gordon S. (1916-1998)," *DOCOMOMOWEWA*, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://www.docomomo->

Wohleb & Wohleb include Miller’s Department Store, which opened just after the 1949 earthquake, and Goldberg’s Furniture Store, which replaced a quake-damaged building.<sup>39</sup>

Bennett would go on to “set the architectural standard” for Olympia during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>40</sup> In 1961, he left the Wohleb firm (after the 1958 death of Joseph Wohleb, Robert had continued the firm as Robert Wohleb and Associates) and opened his own practice. The next year, he partnered with Steve Johnson to form Bennett & Johnson. That firm eventually became BJSS in 1983, and today is called Ambia.<sup>41</sup> Notable Bennett designs from the 1950s and 1960s in Olympia include:

- G. Stacey Bennett House, French Road NW (1952)
- Norman and Isabelle Benner House, 512 Sherman Street SW (1959)
- Medical Arts Building, 1015 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue (1961)
- John Berschauer House, 2606 Fir Street SE (1961)
- Truman Price House, 1705 5<sup>th</sup> Street SW (1961)
- Henry Berschauer House, 504 East 18<sup>th</sup> Street (1961)
- Edward Duley House, 3220 French Lane NW (1963)
- Dick Lewis Pontiac-Cadillac Dealership, 1100 Plum Street (1964)
- Carriage Inn, 1211 Quince Street (1965)
- L. P. Brown Elementary School, 2000 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW (1965)
- Capital Center Building, 410 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue (1966)
- Olympia Federal Savings & Loan, 421 Capitol Way N. (1967)
- Washington Mutual Savings Bank, 825 Capitol Way S. (1968)
- Washington State Employees Credit Union, 502 Union Avenue SE (1968)
- Pioneer Elementary School, 1655 Carlyon Avenue SE (1969)

A New Hampshire native, Stacey Bennett studied structural engineering at Boston’s Wentworth Institute, graduating in 1938. He began architecture studies at the University of Oregon in 1939, but was interrupted by World War II. He eventually finished his BA in Architecture in 1946, receiving his Washington license the same year. Bennett was active in the Washington State architecture community, serving on the State Legislative Committee of the American Institute of Architects; the Washington State Architectural Registration Board; and the State Administration Committee of the Washington State Council of Architects.<sup>42</sup>

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[wewa.org/architects\\_detail.php?id=94..](http://wewa.org/architects_detail.php?id=94..)

<sup>39</sup> “Miller’s: Olympia’s Modern, New Department Store” (ad), *The Daily Olympian*, April 28, 1949, 22.

<sup>40</sup> *Mid-Twentieth Century Olympia: A Context Statement On Local History And Modern Architecture, 1945-1975*, Olympia Heritage Commission, 2008, 58.

<sup>41</sup> “Bennett, Gordon S. (1916-1998),” *DOCOMOMO-WEWA*.

<sup>42</sup> National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, “Information Submitted by Applicant as to Training, Experience, and Professional Practice,” September 18, 1961, Collection of Michael Houser, Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. In addition to architecture, Bennett was passionate about fly fishing (“G. Stacey Bennett,” *The Olympian*, December 25, 1998; “Anglers Prepare Gear for the Big Catch,” *The Daily Olympian*, August 6, 1950, 13.)



Bink and Virginia's daughter, Judi Schmidt, recalled that her parents worked closely with Bennett on the design of the house at 2932 Maringo. Attention was lavished on every detail, and materials were used creatively because even four years after World War II ended, some materials were in short supply. "They were so proud of that house," she said.<sup>43</sup>

Together, Bennett and the Schmidts created a post-war residence that is extraordinary in its attention to detail and innovative for its time. Its cutting-edge details, many of which survive intact, included radiant heat, cork floors, one of the earliest dishwashers in Olympia, an intercom system, a sprinkler system, landscape lighting, a ventilation system that combined louvered screens with a whole-house fan, motorized drapes, an automatic coat closet light, and extra-thick walls in the main living area that muted sound in the bedroom wing. According to the third owner, the house was considered a "showplace" when it was built.<sup>44</sup>

Post-WWII Housing. The house is a two-story structure that exemplifies high-end Modern design. Built into the southwest edge of a glacial kettle—a deep depression formed as glaciers retreated from Puget Sound during prehistoric times<sup>45</sup>--the house both sits on the kettle's rim and is built into its side. The land drops so steeply into the kettle that the view from the main floor is into the middle and upper canopies of surrounding mature trees. The topographic sketch shows the situation clearly; from west to east, the land dropped more than 10 feet in elevation.

From the street, horizontal lines and natural materials dominate the Modern Ranch style house. The roof is low-slung and angled, following the reverse "S" shape of the house. Exterior walls are clad in vertical cedar shake and brick with minimal ornamentation. Horizontal windows with integrated screens project from the house and are tucked under the large overhanging eaves, mitigating the strong western summer sun. These windows admit light and air, but maintain privacy; the house is oriented toward the glacial kettle and woods in back. Two banks of floor-to-ceiling windows provide an asymmetrical, Modern element to the front entry, which is recessed under large overhangs and angled away from the street.

The unusual siting of the house contributes to its significance. In addition to the innovative use of the glacial kettle, the house is situated within one block of Capitol Boulevard, the major thoroughfare serving Olympia. A small shopping center built in the late 1930s continues to serve the area today, and a larger shopping center about a half-mile south provided comprehensive services, including groceries, pharmacy, hardware, variety store, and gas station. The neighborhood is considered a suburb of downtown, and is about halfway between the downtown core and the Olympia Brewing Company, a major employer at the time and the family business of Trueman Schmidt. As Olympia experienced a building boom in the years after World War II, this house was an example of the influence of Modernism in residential structures, exemplified by the blurring of interior and exterior spaces and strong geometric themes.

Blurring of exterior and interior. The blurring of exterior and interior is typical of Modern style, which makes explicit the connection between inside and outside spaces. The exterior is seen as an extension of interior living, and while this is relatively easy to accomplish in sunny California, it is more difficult in the

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<sup>43</sup> Judi Schmidt, telephone conversation with author, 24 April 2014. Schmidt was married in Olympia in September 1968 and held her wedding reception in the house. Her husband, Roger Pearsall, was music director for KABC in Los Angeles. The station sent a film crew to Olympia, and *Good Day L.A.* host Jerry Dexter narrated a ten-minute segment about the wedding and reception that includes interviews with Judi, Virginia, and others. (Adolph Schmidt, *Roger Pearsall & Judi Schmidt Wedding Day*, video, 9:48, November 28, 2012, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-9aIUygi\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-9aIUygi_8)).

<sup>44</sup> Neumaier, "The House"; "Home on Range," 13.

<sup>45</sup> O'Connell, "Three Geologic Features."

maritime Pacific Northwest, where most of the year features a rainy, albeit temperate, climate. This blurring is achieved in a number of ways:

- Large, plate-glass windows dominate the back of the house on both stories, drawing the eye outdoors. Even on rainy days, the view is not oppressive but blends with the interior to create an atmosphere of tranquility. In the master bedroom, the outside wall is angled so that a large window looks straight into the trees. The room is designed so that the bed must be placed on the opposite wall, where occupants wake every morning to a forest view.
- Materials and colors flow seamlessly from inside to out. The flagstone of the front walkway continues on the back patio. (A singular dark green stone in the front walkway appears to be the same material as the living room hearth.) The flagstone grout is tinted pale gray-green and matches the tile in the front entry and the tinted concrete of the front porch. Exterior siding continues to the interior. Brick features in the living room, rec room, master bedroom and laundry room; vertical cedar shake is found in the living room and rec room.
- Windows in the dining room, downstairs bedroom, rec room, utility room, and master bedroom feature louvered screens designed to allow fresh air to circulate through the home. Ventilation panels were placed underneath the projecting windows in the children's bedrooms, master bathroom, and children's bathroom; according to an account written by the third owner, these did not function as planned and the windows were replaced by double-pane sliding and casement windows.<sup>1</sup> The projecting windows are smaller than those in the living areas, reflecting the private nature of the rooms they grace and to offset the strong western sun in the summertime.
- The house features six exterior doors: four on the main level and two on the lower level. In addition to the striking front door and side entry door, four exterior doors open to the rear of the house (two onto the patio and two into the lower garden).
- When open, the windows and doors admit the musical sound of the waterfall in the pond anchoring the northeast corner of the property. The pond serves as a focal point in the lower garden, attracting birds and other wildlife; the concrete Japanese lantern is original.
- Eave overhangs of at least four feet over the patio and front porch provide shelter in inclement weather year-round. Large overhangs on the west and south sides of the house provide shade and minimize overheated bedrooms in the summertime.

Horizontal, vertical, and circular geometric themes. From the street, the house appears to be a one-story, low-slung structure with a horizontal emphasis. The low-pitched roof, large overhangs, exterior brick, and projecting windows all contribute to the horizontality. From the back, the long flagstone patio with its strongly defined integrated-seat railing (part of which overhangs the lower garden), large eave overhangs, and brick exterior emphasize the horizontal. Inside, horizontally laid brick is found in the living room, rec room, master bedroom, and utility room. Long bookshelves in the living room and rec room, as well as a ribbon of storage cupboards in the bedroom wing hallway and an uninterrupted counter in the utility room, add horizontal elements. The band of tall windows in the living room creates a panoramic horizontal perspective on the outdoors. The louvered screens throughout the home, as well as the louvered doors of the kitchen pantry, linen closet, children's closet, children's bathroom vanity, and rec room storage all add horizontality.

Verticality is evident in the unbroken cedar shake used inside (living room, rec room) and on portions of the exterior, including both gable ends. A double bank of floor-to-ceiling square windows next to the front door strikes a vertical note, especially as it is paired with a bank of single square windows, these made of translucent pleated glass, in the adjacent powder room (the square theme of the entry and powder room windows is reflected in the square tiles used in the entry (both interior and exterior), in

the cork tiles in the powder room floor, and in the ambient interior and exterior lights installed in the ceiling and overhangs). The grasscloth wallpaper in the entryway has a vertical grain. Vertical elements are also found in the tall china cabinets built into the kitchen wing hallway, the tall windows in the main living room, and the storage cabinets in the dining area. These are set off by tall windows of vertical-grained reed glass that allow ambient light into the hallway and refract artificial light into the dining area at night.

Circles create a contrast to the straight lines that characterize much of the house. The door pulls on the cabinets in the dining area, the kitchen and bedroom hallways, and the living room cabinet are all custom-made in a dish shape. These pulls provide the only ornamentation in the main living spaces beside the simple window and door trim and natural texture of the wall materials. Cupboards set into the wall along the stairs also feature a smaller version of these dish pulls. The striking circular front doorknob, placed in the middle of the door, is matched in miniature by the custom doorbell and provides a focal point for visitors approaching the house. In the rec room, a half-circle copper hood ventilates a replacement gas fireplace. The half-circle is repeated in the shape of the TV shelf on the same wall. The kitchen counter ends in a circular peninsula. This form—although not the counter material—is original to the house.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> “Home on Range,” 13. The photo shows the curved shaped of the kitchen counter.



## Property Description

### Summary

The Trueman and Virginia Schmidt House is a two-story, frame, Modern Ranch style house with an obtuse-angled “S” shape, a low-slung roof with gables at each end, a covered front porch, and a partially overhanging flagstone patio in the rear. The walls are finished with brick and vertical cedar shake, and the foundation and interior supporting walls are concrete. The roof is rolled torchdown synthetic punctuated by two short, brick chimneys and incorporating integrated gutters. An attached garage faces Maringo Road SE at the northwest corner of the lot and is reached by a short, straight driveway from the street. The interior of the house reflects the Modern Movement in its open floor plan, lack of ornamentation, and large windows creating panoramic views. The house is in the Southeast neighborhood, a traditionally middle-class area with a variety of houses from the 1920s through the 1960s. The house fronts southwest onto the corner of Governor Stevens Avenue SE and Maringo Road SE and is set in a landscaped garden featuring a number of large boulders. Behind the house, a steeply terraced garden links the upper and lower outdoor areas. Access between these areas is via two stairways, one composed of stones salvaged from the Old State Capitol after the April 1949 earthquake. A pond provides a focal point in the lower garden. A flagstone patio, part of which overhangs the lower yard, overlooks the rear of the property and provides views into a greenbelt northeast of the house. The property is in excellent condition and has had little alteration since its construction.

### Narrative Property Description

The Trueman and Virginia Schmidt House is a two-story single-family residential dwelling located in Olympia’s Southeast neighborhood. The neighborhood developed east of Old Highway 99, now Capitol Boulevard SE, which was the only highway connecting Seattle with Portland until the construction of Interstate 5 in the 1950s. Streets in the areas are primarily arranged in a grid pattern. Most houses were constructed between 1920 and 1960, and a variety of architectural styles are represented.

**Site and Setting:** The Schmidt House is a two-story structure built into the rim of a glacial kettle, a geographic feature common in Thurston County formed by large chunks of ice that broke off as glaciers retreated in prehistoric times. As the ice melted, it created a deep kettle or pothole filled with water. Today, these kettles may be spring-fed or, as in the case on this site, dry during the summer months and filled during the rainy winter.<sup>47</sup> The kettle lies to the northeast of the house, and the land drops so steeply into it that from the main floor of the home one looks into the middle and upper canopies of surrounding trees.

The house is constructed to take advantage of this challenging site, with the main social spaces opening to the back and the tranquil greenbelt views. The steep slope and the relationship of the corner lot to the kettle presented a challenge that was met by designing the house in an obtuse-angled “S” shape, with the back hugging the side of the slope while maximizing the view. The flagstone patio and its outward-angled bench railing reach toward the kettle, drawing the eye to the outside. The patio itself is angled to promote the view to the northeast, instead of due east as the windows face. The living room’s bank of windows creates a wall-length natural landscape mural that changes with the seasons.

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<sup>47</sup> Emmett O’Connell, “Three Geologic Features in Thurston County that are More Awesome than Mima Mounds,” *Olympia Time* (blog), June 3, 2013, accessed September 14, 2014, <http://olywa.blogspot.com/2013/06/three-geologic-features-in-thurston.html>.

Downstairs, the rec room opens out into the lower garden. The entry is sheltered by one end of the patio, which projects outward to provide a deep overhang. The lower garden (also flat) retains a cozy feel because its position relative to the kettle is not immediately apparent. In the lower yard, the north and east property boundaries are marked by chain-link fence, and adjoining yards are several feet lower. Construction excavation likely created a higher grade for the lower yard, elevating it above the neighboring properties. A man-made pond with waterfall sits at the far northeast corner, drawing the eye into the glacial kettle beyond, where mature trees create privacy. The terraced garden that joins upper and lower yards features ashlar walls, and the stairway alongside the garden is constructed of stones salvaged from the Old State Capitol after the 1949 earthquake.<sup>48</sup>

**General Characteristics:** The two-story house is built in a modified, obtuse-angled, reverse “S” shape, with the attached garage forming the northwestern end and the master bedroom forming the southeastern end. The front entry is in the middle of the “S” and opens into an entry hall from which the living/dining room, bedroom wing, and kitchen/laundry wing may be accessed. Interior stairs connect the kitchen to the lower story. Exterior walls are clad with brick and vertical cedar shake. The foundation is poured concrete. The low, gabled roof is composed of torchdown asphalt and has integrated gutters. Two short, brick chimneys project from the roof toward either end of the house.

The Schmidt House has a covered entry porch of colored, poured concrete that is reached via a distinctive flagstone walkway that forms an angled approach to the front door. The rear patio features the same varied flagstone surface and partially overhangs the lower yard. It includes an angled wood railing with bench seating.

**Specific Features:** The house includes several types of windows. The living/dining room features a wall of vertical windows looking onto the rear patio and greenbelt beyond the property. These are fixed, single-pane glass with storm windows on the exterior. Several other rooms feature this type of window, including the master bedroom, laundry room, rec room, and shop. The dining room, east wall of the master bedroom, and guest bedroom originally had fixed-pane windows, but they were replaced by vinyl sliders, probably in the 1990s. Several windows feature louvered screens below the frame, designed to promote air circulation. On the street sides (south and west) of the house, two bedrooms and two bathrooms feature projecting box windows that included fixed panes and screens in the floor of the frame. These were designed to promote air circulation, but according to a previous owner were determined to be ineffective.<sup>49</sup> The screens were enclosed soon after the house was built, and the panes were eventually replaced by vinyl sliders and casement windows. A double bank of floor to ceiling divided windows adjoins the front door to the north, and a single bank of pleated, obscured windows is found in the powder room just north of those.

The house has six exterior doors, the most noteworthy of which is the large, wood slab front entry door. It features a centered doorknob with matching custom doorbell. Full-panel windowed doors open onto the rear patio from the living/dining room and master bedroom and onto the lower yard from the rec room. Half glass doors open onto the lower yard from the shop and to the north side entry from the kitchen.

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<sup>48</sup> “Capitol Task To Be Rushed,” *Daily Olympian*, May 4, 1949, 10. The article notes that Wohleb & Wohleb was selected to oversee the repairs, and A.G. Homann was selected as contractor. It was likely Homann who brought the salvaged stones to the Schmidt House.

<sup>49</sup> Roger Neumaier, “The House at 2932 Maringo,” 1999, collection of the author. This detailed narrative was prepared by the third owner of the house.

Large overhangs cover the front porch, west and south sides, rear patio, side entry, and kitchen and dining room windows. Soffit vents are integrated into the overhangs throughout. The front porch and rear patio overhangs measure more than five feet deep and feature recessed lights with copper frames. The two banks of floor-to-ceiling windows next to the front door add a manifestly modern element to the main entry.

**Significant Interior Features:** The house includes 3,260 square feet of living space, including four bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, a large living/dining room, rec room, kitchen, laundry room, shop, and two-car attached garage. The tiled entry hall features grasscloth wallpaper and an overhead light with chrome accents. It opens to the south into the bedrooms wing, to the east into the living/dining room, and to the north to the kitchen wing.

The floor plan separates the private spaces by placing them in a wing on the southern end. This wing includes the master bedroom, dressing room, and bathroom, and two smaller bedrooms connected by a Jack-and-Jill bathroom and internal hallway. The entire wing is separated from the main living/dining room by an 18-inch-thick wall, which creates a sound barrier as well as storage space. The lower wall of the bedroom wing hall includes five storage cupboards with dish-shaped wood pulls (a motif that is echoed throughout the house). Just outside the master bedroom at the far end of the hall, a linen closet is tucked into the space next to the living room fireplace. Just off the entry hall are floor-to-ceiling built-in display shelves.

The living/dining room is the primary public space in the house. Its bank of vertical windows draws the eye to the view of the greenbelt in the rear of the house. The south end of this room is anchored by a fireplace, next to which is a built-in stereo cabinet. This area features built-in bookshelves on the other side of the wall from the storage cupboards that line the bedroom wing hallway. Recessed ceiling lights with copper frames provide subtle light. The center of this room was designed with a piano in mind; a built-in can spotlight is positioned just above where the piano keyboard would sit. The north end of the room projects slightly out over the lower yard, delineating the dining room space from the rest of the room. The west wall, which separates the dining area from the kitchen hallway, features a divided bay of built-in storage cupboards with dish-shaped wood pulls. The southernmost of these cupboards houses swing-out vertical tray storage. The middle and northernmost cupboards feature shelves in different configurations to store serving pieces. All three cupboards are topped with drawers featuring dish-shaped pulls; two of these are lined with felt for storing silver. Above each cupboard is a window of fixed-pane reed glass.

The hallway connecting the entry to the kitchen features a powder room with original cork tile flooring and a bank of pleated, obscured glass floor-to-ceiling divided windows. A large coat closet leads to a luggage storage area accessed through a small door. On the opposite side of the hall, a floor-to-ceiling display shelf mirrors the one in the bedroom hallway, and two floor-to-ceiling china cabinets with dish-shaped wood handles flank the reed glass windows.

The kitchen was remodeled in the early 1990s but retains its original floor plan and counter shape. A swing door separates the kitchen and dining area, and an interior door separates the kitchen and hallway. The spacious, square kitchen features a large window on the east wall above the sink and dishwasher. The north wall contains the stove and built-in cabinets and drawers. The south wall houses the refrigerator and built-in cabinets and drawers. The west wall contains more cabinets and drawers,

including a pull-out cutting board, as well as a distinctively curved counter-height seating area. The counter surface is new, but the original shape of the counter remains as it was when built.<sup>50</sup> On the other side of the west wall is a shallow, built-in pantry that also houses the wiring for the intercom system.

Beyond the counter seating area, four doorways lead to (from north to south): the side entry, the laundry room, the garage, and the lower level. The side entry is recessed under an overhang and is reached from Maringo Road SE via a short sidewalk through a chain-link fence and gate. The laundry room features slab plywood cabinet fronts, a utility sink, a built-in, drop-down ironing board, and long laminate counter with under-cabinet fluorescent lighting. An overhead fluorescent light with chrome detailing illuminates the room. Cabinets range from 12" to 24" deep. A space under the countertop creates a work area and is flanked by built-in file drawers. The garage houses two cars and, beyond the laundry room, has an annex storage room for outdoor tools.

The lower level of the house is reached via the stairs from the kitchen. On the west side of the stairwell are three shallow cupboards designed to hold canned food. Each features the dish-shaped wooden pull found throughout the house, although in a smaller size. At the bottom of the stairs is a tiled bathroom with a stall shower and built-in ventilation system; it is the only room in the house without windows. Directly east of the stairwell is a workshop with steel cabinetry. A guest bedroom is south of the workshop. Between the guest bedroom and the bathroom is the rec room, a large space featuring linoleum floors, built-in bookshelves along the west wall, a gas fireplace with large copper hood on the south wall, and built-in wet bar and billiards storage on the north wall.

The house is heated by a radiant heat system. The boiler is in the workshop, and the copper pipes are labeled with the rooms they serve. Two fireplaces on the main floor are asymmetrically set into walls of painted brick. The living room and master bedroom fireplaces share a chimney and are constructed next to each other on either side of the wall. Several interior utility doors, including those in the Jack-and-Jill bathroom, the linen closet, the kitchen pantry, and under the kitchen sink, are louvered to promote air circulation while concealing the contents inside. The house is designed to open to the back, where it faces a greenbelt beyond the property line. The "S" shape features numerous obtuse angles so that the house fits into the site.

**Other Manmade Elements:** The house comprises two stories of living space, but from the flat front yard, there is no indication of the lower level or the steep dropoff in the rear. The entire lower level opens out into the lower yard, which features a manmade pond with waterfall and at least one original rhododendron. From the rec room, an exterior door leads to a covered patio composed of large concrete pads; these run along the side of the house to the stairway on the north end. This utilitarian stairway goes to the side entry and a walkway continues to Maringo Road SE. On the south end of the lower yard, a stairway composed of stones salvaged from the Old State Capitol after the 1949 earthquake connects to the upper level and a small brick patio.<sup>51</sup> The stairway is slightly angled, leading the eye upward and around to the rear patio. From the top of the stone stairway, the visual line leads directly to the pond, suggesting a stone waterfall from upper to lower yard. A steep, terraced garden

<sup>50</sup> "Home on Range is Gay Kitchen Theme Song for Olympia Housewives," *The Daily Olympian*, June 4, 1950, 13.

<sup>51</sup> According to a former owner, the salvaged stones once supported Theodore Roosevelt, William Jennings Bryan, and other political luminaries when they visited Olympia (Neumaier, "The House"). It is likely these stones were salvaged by the home's builder, A.G. Homann, who also served as the contractor for post-quake repairs to state buildings, including the Old State Capitol ("Capitol Task").

joins the upper and lower exterior areas. The terrace walls are built of ashlar, large square-cut stones used for masonry. On the upper yard, many large boulders punctuate the landscaping.

**Alterations or Changes to the Property:** Although the projecting frames are intact and unchanged, the windows in them were replaced with vinyl sliders and casements sometime in the 1990s. The fixed-pane windows in the master bedroom and dining room were replaced with vinyl sliders at around the same time. The kitchen was updated in the early 1990s and again in the late 2000s, but the floor plan remains original. The master bathroom was changed from a tub to a Jacuzzi sometime in the 1970s, and to a shower in the 2000s. The Jack-and-Jill bathroom was retiled sometime after 1973, and the shower tile was replaced in 2013. Carpet has been laid in the hallways and bedrooms; a former owner wrote that these areas were originally cork tile, which promotes efficient radiant heating.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Neumaier, "The House."

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