

Rudolph M. Schindler House
833 North Kings Road
Los Angeles
Los Angeles County
California

HABS No. CA-1939

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

RUDOLPH M. SCHINDLER HOUSE

HABS No. CA-1939

Location: Schindler House
833 N. Kings Road
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California

GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural interest and merit:

Rudolph M. Schindler designed this residence for himself and his friend, Clyde B. Chase; begun in 1921, the building was completed in 1922. Tapered modular concrete wall slabs were poured on the floor slab and then tilted into the vertical position. Massive blank walls are relieved by narrow slits of glass between the panels. While serving as a double residence, the building affords privacy to the individual occupants by positioning of the blank walls and bending of the mass to form pockets of outdoor space. Individual rooms open directly onto these outdoor garden patios through sliding glass doors.

Condition of fabric:

The house is in good condition except for some slight deterioration of areas of woodwork. The plans have been altered to accommodate an additional apartment and architects' offices.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

Overall dimensions: about 80' x 80' (3420 square feet) x ca. 14' high

Number of bays: There is no bay system; the house however does follow a four foot module.

Number of stories: Though primarily a one story building, there are two single room masses projecting above the general roof line.

Layout, shape: The plan can be abstracted to a superimposition of the letters J and T. The cross arm of the T is on the north side.

Foundations:

Reinforced concrete foundations are used. The house is built on a reinforced concrete slab. About 8" of the slab footing is exposed at the perimeter of the building in parts.

Wall construction, finish, color:

The walls are of reinforced concrete slabs which were poured atop the floor slab. They were then tilted into the upright position. They are 8" at the base and taper to about 4" at the top; they are 45" wide. The 3" space between the slabs (4' module followed) is filled either with narrow slits of glass or is filled with cement.

The remainder of the exterior walls are of wood and glass. The second floor walls are of frame with vertical siding exposed.

Structural system:

The bearing walls support the 2½" x 7½" beams which in turn carry the 7" wide T/G roof boards. Beams span the openings between the concrete walls and in turn carry the roof beams.

Porches, stoops, patios:

There are small entry pads at all the doors and in the front of the sliding panels. Private garden patios are enclosed for each of the two sections of the building. The one on the east is enclosed on two sides by the house and the other two sides by tall hedges. The one on the west is enclosed on three sides by the house and the other side (west) is open. There is a small concrete patio off the small apartment on the west side. All the terrace patios and the entry slabs are at the same level as the floor of the house.

Chimneys:

The house has four chimney masses, three of which are located on exterior walls and the fourth of which is located on the partitioning wall of the two sections. One of the exterior chimney masses is located at the SE corner of the NE wing; a second is located at the SW corner of the NW wing. Both these masses have two fireplaces - one in the building and one on the patio. The third mass is located at the SW corner of the SW wing. All these masses are of reinforced concrete and are very plain, rising from the ground to the top unbroken. The chimney located along the partitioning wall is square and placed at a 45° angle to the lines of the building. Its round flue has four quadrant metal covers which can be adjusted to control the draft.

Openings - Doorways and doors:

The two main entrances are located on the north and south sides and are set deep under an overhang. A service entrance is situated at the center of the north facade. All the doors are constructed of boards laminated together, the exposed surfaces being 7" wide T/G boards. The doors are 2¼" thick. They are swinging doors set in 2" x 8" wood frames. They have small glass lights measuring 16 x 18 for the main doors and 10 x 14 for the service doors. The doors measure 6'-1" x 2'-10".

- Windows:

Between the large concrete slabs which form the house walls are placed 3" x 5'-2" slits of frosted glass. Large glass areas are strategically placed on the sides of the house that open onto the enclosed patios. The windows are in general composed of a series of horizontal glass panels, and a 2' module is followed. These windows have fixed glass. In addition, there are clerestory windows located at the same location as these wood and glass areas. There are some skylights cut into the roof.

Roof: Shape, covering:

In general the roof is flat and on one level. There are some lower levels which permitted the use of clerestory windows. The roof is finished in 3'-0" green colored rolled tar paper. The paper carries over the edge of the roof and is masked out by the board cornice.

Cornice, eaves:

There is a single flat board cornice around the building. It is set vertically with the top edge projecting out. It appears that this board was added later and is merely placed in front of the layered board cornice indicated on the architect's drawings. Where clerestory windows are placed, the cornice is composed of three 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " boards, one atop the next, to mask out the windows. Over the entrances, the same deep cornice is employed. The soffits of the building at the openings are of redwood, as is all the cornice work.

There are no towers, but two projections above the general level of the roof contain sleeping rooms.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

Plans:

In a broad sense, the plan can be described as the superimposition of the letter T over a J. The cross arm of the T being at the northern side, the hook of the J facing west. There are two entrances, one on the north, the other on the south. The southern entrance leads into a hall which contains the bathroom, some storage, and the stairway. Ahead (N) and to the left (W) are the studio rooms which were originally Schindler's, and are now architects' offices. The entrance to the north leads into the same type of hallway except that the stairs to the upper level are located outside and not in the hall. This section of the building belonged to Chase. A kitchen is located to the west of this section of the house. A small apartment with a miniscule kitchen, bath and small bedroom (added later) are accessible from the west. This part of the house was originally the guest chamber. The garage fills out the plan in the NW corner. A new carport is located at the NW corner. The second floor consists of two one room structures, situated over the entrance halls on the north and south. The room at the north end has a miniscule bathroom on its north side. These room additions were built later and took the place of sleeping decks called "baskets".

Stairways:

At the north entrance, the narrow stairway (18" wide between the stringers) is located just inside the door and to the right. They have ten 10" risers and 11" treads with a 3" undercut. On ascending, the person steps up one riser to a landing, turns left for 8 risers to a second landing and turns left for the last riser.

At the south entrance the stairway is located outside the entrance. This stairway is 22" wide and has 10 full risers of 8" and one of 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". The treads are 10" wide. On ascending, the person steps up four risers to a landing, turns left for six more, and finishes with the small riser to the left.

Flooring:

Asphalt flooring is placed atop the concrete floor slab.

Wall and Ceiling finish:

The concrete wall panels are exposed on the interior of the house. The frame partitions either have the studs exposed or are covered with plywood panels as in the living room in the north unit. The ceilings are the exposed 7" wide T/G boards.

Doorways and doors:

Plain wooden doors in simple 2x wood frames are used. Some of the doors have layers of boards. The sliding panels with glazed openings were originally covered with canvas.

Special decoration, trim, and cabinet work:

There are copper panels over the fireplace openings that are located at the partitioning wall. Through the major rooms are double 2 3/4" x 5 1/2" booms, 6'-1" off the floor. This height corresponds to the height of the openings and the lowest part of the clerestory frame. They are used to bring down the scale of the rooms.

There are built in cabinets in many of the rooms. They are plain with hidden hardware, and are built from plywood with the carelessness typical of Schindler's work.

Trim consists of the use of boards overlapped but otherwise without articulation.

The sense of decoration is derived from Schindler's viable use of wood and his knowledge of this material's qualities.

Hardware:

There is very little hardware. The exterior doors have no knobs, only a doorknocker. The swinging door apparatus is hidden from view. Hook and eyes and security locks are the only hardware on the sliding panels.

Mechanical equipment:

The fireplaces were the primary source of heat until wall unit heaters were added.

There are no built-in lighting fixtures. The electric wires were not laid in the reinforced concrete slab walls and therefore are located in the partitions and in the built-in cabinets.

The plumbing fixtures are standard except for the smaller than normal shower stalls. The bathrooms are very small. The water pipes were not laid in the concrete walls and therefore run across the top of the roof.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

General setting:

The low house is set back from Kings Road which is on the east side of the lush green lot. The entries are on the north and south sides. Tall hedges serve as screening devices.

Historic landscape design:

The patios to the west and east are grassed as are the sunken gardens adjacent to them. These areas are blocked from view by tall hedges. A driveway is located on the north side of the lot and is composed of two parallel concrete strips. The driveway services the garage at the NW corner of the building. A sidewalk is located at the south side of the lot.

Outbuildings:

There is a new carport at the NW corner of the building (detached). It is sympathetic to the character of the house.

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