

WARGIN HALL
CHAFFEY COLLEGE
5885 Haven Avenue
Rancho Cucamonga
San Bernardino County
California

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
909 1st Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
CHAFFEY COLLEGE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

- Location:** Wargin Hall is Building 17 on the Chaffey College campus at 5885 Haven Avenue, Rancho Cucamonga, San Bernardino County, California. The building is located east of the old Administration Building.
- Present Owner:** Chaffey Community College District
- Present Use:** Wargin Hall is in use as lecture halls, classrooms, and offices.
- Significance:** Wargin Hall is significant under the themes of Education and Architecture. Wargin Hall exemplifies Mid-Century-Modernism, as shown in the simple geometric volumes of the round plan, the flat roof with wide overhang, concrete and brick materials, and direct expression of its structural system in the exposed concrete beams. Additionally, Wargin Hall is a good example of the work of master architect William E. Blurock, with its round plan and unusual configuration of lecture halls and classrooms that represents the architect's reputation for innovative school design as a means of influencing teaching and learning methods. Therefore, Wargin Hall is recommended individually eligible under Criterion C. The period of significance is 1968, the year of construction of the building.
- Historian(s):** Marilyn Novell, M.S., Historian and Architectural Historian; Shannon Davis, M.A., RPH, Architectural Historian and Historian; ASM Affiliates, Inc. Report completed April 2022.
- Project Information:** The historical report and reproduction of architectural plans were prepared by ASM Affiliates. Large format photographs were prepared by Stephen Schafer. The project was supported by PlaceWorks, as one of the mitigation measures undertaken to lessen the adverse impacts of the demolition of Wargin Hall.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. **Date of construction:** Wargin Hall was constructed in 1968, from plans drawn and approved in 1967.
2. **Architect:** Wargin Hall was designed by William E. Blurock.
3. **Original and subsequent owners, uses:** The building is an element of the Rancho Cucamonga campus of Chaffey College, which has been owned and operated by the Chaffey Union Junior College District (later known as the Chaffey Community College District) since its construction.
4. **Original plans and construction:** The original plans and construction documents are on file at Chaffey College Rancho Cucamonga campus; selected original architectural drawings are included with this document.
5. **Builder, contractors:** Wargin Hall was built by Martin & Associates, Los Angeles, California, Structural Engineers; Nack & Sunderland, Pasadena, California, Mechanical Engineers; and Henry Hickok & Associates, Corona Del Mar, California, Electrical Engineers
6. **Alterations and additions:** With the exception of infrastructure improvements, Wargin Hall does not appear to have been altered since construction.

B. Historical Context¹

The Development of Chaffey College

Chaffey College was established in Ontario, California, in 1883, when city founders and George and William Chaffey donated land and established an endowment for a private college. Chaffey had a long history as an agricultural institution. The school was founded as the Chaffey College of Agriculture of the University of Southern California (USC). The cornerstone of the new school was laid on March 17, 1883, at Fourth and Euclid in Ontario; it opened on October 15, 1885. The original institution included a secondary school and was run by USC until it closed in 1901. In 1906, the Chaffey endowment was legally separated from USC and reorganized to benefit the newly created Chaffey Union High School District. In 1916, the Chaffey Junior College of Agriculture was added as a postgraduate department to the high school. The first class had 15 students, taught by a faculty of two. The first graduates were two young women. When the State legislature met in 1917, Chaffey was one of 16 high schools in California offering postgraduate courses (Winter 1964:4). Chaffey Junior College was outstanding in

¹ Portions of this historical context section are excerpted and adapted from the *Historic Context Statement for the City of Rancho Cucamonga, California* prepared by Chattel Architecture, Planning & Preservation, Inc. (Chattel 2010).

pomology, the culture of citrus fruits (Winter 1964:3). A separate junior college district was created in 1922.

Plans for establishing a college in Alta Loma (later Rancho Cucamonga) began in earnest in 1956, when the school district hired a team of professional consultants to study the need for expansion. The team was composed of Dr. Robert Haas and Dr. William S. Briscoe, professor emeritus at the University of California Los Angeles Graduate School of Education. The scope of the survey included a study of the population in local districts and predicted growth over 10 years. The aim was to determine future school locations and provide advice regarding when new schools would be required, considering financial resources and educational requirements (*Pomona Progress Bulletin* 1956a).

In September, the report was released, recommending that the Chaffey district purchase sites for five additional high schools and prepare for a boom that would push Chaffey College enrollment to 6,000 students. The report also recommended that the college be separate from the high school at a site near the geographical center of the district. The site was considered ideal because of its proximity to an educational market, population growth, a skilled labor force, excellent transport facilities, and availability of industrial sites. The team cited the healthy economic future of the proposed site, noting that the question of parking alone made the current Euclid Avenue site impractical. The proposed plan allotted 30 acres for buildings, 50 acres for setbacks and parking, 50 acres for recreation, and 20 acres for an air strip (*Pomona Progress Bulletin* 1956b). The report mentioned outstanding programs already developed by the college in agriculture, business, electronics, dental assisting, nursing, lithography, and librarianship “to meet the vocational needs of its students and the community.” According to the report, “the aeronautics program has been particularly well received” (Chaffey College Home Bulletin 1956).

The plan for development of Chaffey College included land use (residential commercial and industrial and basic land use patterns), public facilities, and circulation; “the location and future growth of Chaffey College will unquestionably affect the development of adjacent land,” according to the 1961 San Bernardino Master Plan for the community.² Pertinent data was collected regarding subdivisions, population, history, geography and topography, land values, traffic, and agricultural production. The setting for the Chaffey College study area comprised approximately 17 square miles. Boundaries were from Foothill Blvd on the south to the San Bernardino National Forest Line on the north, and from the east fork of the Cucamonga Wash to the extension of Milliken Avenue, the west slope of the San Gabriel Mountain Range, and the northwest section of the Upper Santa Ana River Drainage basin. Soil was described as an aggregate of decomposed granite, sand, and finer mineral material deposits by streams originating high in the mountains. Deposits have formed a fan-shaped area bounded by major storm water courses, Cucamonga Canyon on the west and the confluence of Deer and Day canyons on the east. The area was well situated for the development of citrus. The communities of Cucamonga and Alta Loma developed to serve the surrounding citrus economy, which formed the economic base of the area. The study area lay in the path of anticipated residential growth moving out from the Los Angeles Metro area, less than 40 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, along the foothills and alluvial

² San Bernardino County Planning Commission, “A Master Plan for the Chaffey College Community” (June 1961).

fans formed at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains; the highlands had already fostered prestige residential development from Pasadena to Upland.³

In response, the college quickly set out to seek funding for a new campus, and on February 1, 1957, voters approved a \$5 million bond for acquisition of a site and construction of a new campus for 2,000 or more students. A 200-acre site was selected and a Master Plan developed to provide for 3,000 students and future expansion.⁴ The new campus was intended to be located “at the apex of a horseshoe of projected population in the West End of San Bernardino County.” Groundbreaking took place on March 17, 1958, marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the college in Ontario by the Chaffey brothers. By that time, the first phase of the campus had already been planned and architectural plans prepared by a team of architects.⁵ Twelve buildings were to be constructed: Campus Center, Administration, Library, Social Science, Language Arts, Creative Arts (Theatre), Life Science (Health Science West), Physical Science, Aeronautics, Electronics and Shop, Gymnasium, and Business Education.⁶

By August 1958, plans for the new campus were already in full swing. Designs for four buildings by architects Neptune & Thomas had been approved, with plans for four more buildings by Jay Dewey Harnish to be approved the following week (*San Bernardino County Sun* 1958a). The next month saw the acceptance of a \$1,101,500 bid for construction of the first four buildings by Carter Construction Co. of Los Angeles, consisting of two shop buildings, the administration building, and the gymnasium (*San Bernardino County Sun* 1958b). By September, construction of the four buildings had begun (*Pomona Progress Bulletin* 1958a). In October, the Board held a meeting under eucalyptus trees on the site to issue a call for bids on seven additional new buildings (*Pomona Progress Bulletin* 1958b). Within a few weeks, the concrete foundation for the new aeronautics building was poured, with the electronics building next on the agenda (*San Bernardino County Sun* 1958d). A photo of the Administration building under construction and described as the first of 12 buildings was published in a local newspaper in December. The story described 41 olive trees 20 feet or more in height to be moved to site. The mature trees were given to the college by the county road commission after they were removed from the east side of Haven Avenue to allow widening to four lanes. Meanwhile, the trees were being stored in large wooden tubs at a nearby ranch (*San Bernardino County Sun* 1958d).

By February 1959, 14 buildings were under construction and scheduled for completion by October of that year, to be occupied by February 1, 1960. By October, eight of the original 14 buildings were completed, with six more to be finished by the end of the year. Meanwhile, the landscape architect was drawing up plans for trees, shrubs, lawns, gardens, and sidewalks. The move to the new campus from the existing college in Ontario was scheduled for one week between semesters in January

³ San Bernardino County Planning Commission, “A Master Plan for the Chaffey College Community” (June 1961).

⁴ Chaffey College, *A Progress Report: A College Campus in Construction* (Author, 1959).

⁵ *San Bernardino Sun-Telegram*, “Groundbreaking Tomorrow for New Chaffey College” (March 16, 1958).

⁶ *The Chaffeyan*, Newsletter of the Chaffey Union Junior College District (Vol. 14, No. 2, March 17).

(Chaffey College 1959). Dedication of the new campus took place on March 17, 1960 (*Pomona Progress-Bulletin* 1960).

A later phase of development included a group of buildings consisting of Wargin Hall, the Life Science [now Health Science East] building, and the attached rounded brick Planetarium. The Life Science East building was added to the existing complex of Life Science buildings (now called Health Science West). The site plan and buildings were designed by William E. Blurock, and the buildings were completed in 1968.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural character:** Possibly the most iconic building on campus is the circular Wargin Hall, constructed in 1968. Originally called the Lecture–Educational Media Center, it was designed by William E. Blurock, who was known for his innovative approaches to educational buildings and worked in the Mid-Century-Modern style. The building is located east of the old Administration building. Despite its use of rounded forms, the building echoes the aesthetics of the earlier campus buildings, its red brick exterior walls contrasting with regularly spaced white concrete supports and piers that extend slightly above the roof line. In this way, the building contributes to the coherence of the 1959 master plan of the campus. Each pier is flanked by narrow full-height glass and metal panels. The arc of the circle is periodically segmented, with the segments overlapping to form curved interior corridors. At two locations, the curved wall is broken, allowing the space to open to courtyards, while the arc is continued, as heavy concrete beams with concrete supports follow the curve of the wall.
- 2. Condition of fabric:** The building is in good condition; it is structurally sound and has been well maintained.

B. Architect

William E. Blurock (1922-2012) was a partner in the firm of Pleger, Blurock, Hougan and Ellerbroek, located in Orange County, California, from 1952 to 1959. In 1960 he established his own firm in Newport Beach, California, which he ran until 1974. Although the firm's contribution to the Chaffey College campus was limited to a few buildings constructed in the late 1960s, those buildings are among the most outstanding, including the planetarium and the circular Wargin Hall. A multi-page story about Blurock in the *Los Angeles Times* describes his work at community colleges in the 1950s: "... Blurock plunged into a lucrative business of designing community colleges by associating with a larger Los Angeles architectural company, Neutra & Alexander, to work on the first buildings at Orange Coast College [Costa Mesa, Orange County, California]" (Berkman 1986). Later, Blurock became the lead architect at that Costa Mesa campus. According to the story, Blurock's firm "further enhanced its stature as a community college architect and gained what later would prove to be an important professional association when it joined with [a larger firm] in the 1960s to design Cypress College"

[1966; Cypress, Orange County, California]. Blurock's firm designed buildings at nine of Orange County's 10 community college campuses, according to the story. Notably, the firm joined with eminent Los Angeles firms Pereira & Associates and A. Quincy Jones, Fredrick E. Emmons & Associates to contribute to the original master plan for the University of California Irvine campus (Berkman 1986).

Blurock's firm gained an international reputation for innovative school design primarily because of its association, starting in the 1950s, with an experimental School Planning Laboratory at Stanford University. Blurock said he aimed to bring a home atmosphere to schools and make them look "less like prisons." His firm was one of the first in the country to use carpeting in classrooms when it designed Corona del Mar High School (1962). His most outstanding contribution to modern school design was arguably Estancia High School, which was one of the first schools to have corridors replaced by clusters of classrooms that open into common areas. Blurock's philosophy was to design schools that resemble shopping centers, with mall-like architecture, eye-catching kiosks, bright colors, and murals (1965; Costa Mesa) (Berkman 1986). Blurock served as the director of the American Institute of Architects' national organization in the late 1970s. He also served on the California State Board of Architectural Examiners in Sacramento for 13 years. In addition to Wargin Hall, Blurock designed the Life Science Building (now Health Science East) and the Planetarium at Chaffey College.

C. Description of Exterior

1. **Overall dimensions:** Wargin Hall has a round plan with a diameter of 135 feet. It has a nearly flat roof and vertical walls, in the form of a drum. Seventeen concrete columns are spaced at nearly regular intervals of approximately 22 degrees or 19 degrees around the perimeter. These columns are generally 17 feet high, reduced in height by approximately 3 feet where necessary to accommodate the slope of the site. The columns measure 12 by 30 inches, with 1 foot 8 inches extending beyond the main wall of the building. The columns rise approximately 7 inches above the top of the roof deck.
2. **Foundations:** The building sits on a concrete foundation.
3. **Walls:** Exterior walls are curved horizontally according to the round plan. They are constructed of red brick masonry capped with a narrow fascia or a curved 36-inch-deep stucco band. Sections at the west and east are each deeply recessed from the main exterior wall. The straight walls within these courtyards are red brick masonry.
4. **Structural system, framing:** The building is of wood frame construction with concrete and masonry.
5. **Courtyards and porticoes:** Cut-away sections from the main exterior wall of the building form open courtyards spanning the space between three concrete columns. The plan of the courtyards is a truncated triangle. The deep stucco band traveling the tops of the exterior walls continues across the columns at the courtyards, forming a type of portico. There is one courtyard at the east side of the building and a second at the west side. Both courtyards have concrete walkways with

a section of earth that likely were intended for plantings. The east courtyard is approached by a set of concrete stairs and houses two entrances. The courtyards include ramps running parallel to the curved exterior of the building. This courtyard contains the entrances to the lecture halls at the west side of the building.

6. Openings

- a. **Doorways and doors:** Entrances to the building are within the recessed courtyards. At the west and northwest façades, arcs of the circle overlap with at least 3 feet 10 inches between, creating hallways leading to recessed doors that are obscured from view and open into a lobby. At the east façade, two entrances are located within the courtyard.
- b. **Windows:** Several of the concrete columns are flanked by full-height 18-inch-wide windows. In a few instances, there is a window on only one side of a column. Other windows are sparse but are located within the courtyards.

7. **Roof:** The roof is flat and built up.

D. Description of Interior

1. **Floor plan:** The interior contains lecture halls, classrooms, and offices. There are three main lecture rooms: two with 90 seats and one with 150 seats. The same red brick used on the exterior is used in the curved corridors and partial partitions of the interior. The three lecture halls and various classrooms and seminar rooms are in the form of truncated pie slices. The lecture rooms are sloped toward the center of the building, with seating on tiered concrete risers. The largest spaces are toward the exterior wall, and several smaller offices are located off a corridor toward the center of the building. At the center are utilitarian spaces for equipment.
2. **Stairways:** As the building is single story, there are no full-length stairways. Changes in elevation created by the lower level of the stages of the lecture halls at the center of the building necessitated short runs of stairs to the ground level rooms. The stairways have hollow metal rectangular railings measuring 6 inches in height by 1.5 inches in width; the railings are connected to the wall or to widely spaced balusters without visible screws.
3. **Flooring:** Flooring is concrete or carpet over concrete.
4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Interior walls are masonry (brick) and plaster. Ceilings are textured plaster.
5. **Openings:** Interior doors are flat metal with aluminum lever-type hardware. Larger doors to lecture halls and exits have panic bar hardware.
6. **Lighting:** Lighting fixtures are of various types, but generally recessed fluorescent in a rectangular form.

- E. **Site:** Blurock's site and grading plan for Wargin Hall includes the nearby Life Science Building and Planetarium, which formed part of the complex now called Health Science.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings

A complete set of original drawings is held by Chaffey College Rancho Cucamonga campus. Sheets showing architectural plans drawn by William E. Blurock include:

1. Wargin Hall reflected ceiling plan, floor plan (Sheet A-1), 1967
2. Wargin Hall exterior elevations (Sheet A-2), 1967
3. Wargin Hall sections (Sheet A-3), 1967
4. Wargin Hall enlarged partial plan of lecture halls (Sheet A-4), 1967
5. Wargin Hall interior elevations (Sheet A-5), 1967
6. Wargin Hall enlarged partial plan (Sheet A-6), 1967
7. Wargin Hall interior elevations (Sheet A-7), 1967
8. Wargin Hall, Life Science, and Planetarium, Site: grading plan (Sheet 2-S), 1967
9. Wargin Hall, Life Science, and Planetarium, Site: roof plan and exterior platform elevations (Sheet 4-S), 1967
10. Life Science (Health Science East) and Planetarium, exterior elevations (Sheet BC-2), 1967
11. Life Science (Health Science East) enlarged partial floor plan and interior elevations (Sheet B-4), 1967
12. Raised Brick Planters, site (Sheet I.03), 1967

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