

**ROBERT AND CHARLES WILSON HOUSES, DESCHUTES RIVER
WARM SPRINGS VICINITY, JEFFERSON COUNTY, OREGON**

E. Walton Potter
Oregon SHPO, June 23, 1997

Developmental history based on information
provided by Bill Rhodes

Property Description

Location and site characteristics

The Contemporary houses designed by Pietro Belluschi and built for Robert and Charles Wilson in 1947 occupy a holding of 27.5 acres on the east bank of the Deschutes River, a little over two miles east of Warm Springs. The property is located outside the easterly boundary of the Warm Springs Reservation, a quarter of a mile downstream from the Warm Springs Bridge, in Section 30, Township 9 South, Range 13 East of the Willamette Meridian. The site is reached by private dirt road of restricted access forking to the north from U. S. Highway 26 at the east end of the Warm Springs Bridge.

The Wilson brothers operated the Warm Springs Lumber Mill established by their father, Ray, in 1943 after a contract was won to cut timber on the Warm Springs Reservation. The mill stands upstream on the opposite bank, below the outlet of Shitike Creek, and inside the Reservation boundary.

Following their return from military duty at the end of the Second World War, the Wilson brothers acquired property adjacent to the Reservation and developed the residential building group in open meadow on a point of land created by the river bend. The landscape is dominated by the stepped-back walls of the Deschutes canyon. Directly above the benchland, to the east, is the old grade of the Oregon Trunk Railroad.

Component features

The Robert Wilson House is the largest of the developed features of the property. It was Robert Wilson, son of the founder of the Warm Springs Lumber Mill, who commissioned noted Oregon architect Pietro Belluschi to design houses for his family and that of his brother, Charles. The houses were built in 1947, more or less contemporaneously with Belluschi's celebrated glass and aluminum-sheathed multi-storied Equitable Building in downtown Portland. The house which the mill operator sought for himself was a part time residence and summer retreat for his family, who lived in Portland, where the children were in school. The Robert Wilson House occupies the lowermost point of the benchland, to the northeast, where it is set off by rows of mature poplars. The California landscape architect Thomas Church is said to have been consulted on the project. The builder and contractor have been identified as J. S. Parr and Henry Nelson.