

State of California – The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_

HRI # \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_

Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of ??

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 3820 Chiles Road

**P1. Other Identifier:** 3820 Chiles Road

**\*P2. Location:**  Not for Publication  Unrestricted \*a. County Yolo

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

**\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad** Davis **Date** 2012 **T** T8N ; **R** R2E ; **SESW** ¼ of **Sec** 12 ; **Diablo** B.M.

c. Address 3820 Chiles Road City Davis Zip 95618

d. UTM: (give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 10 ; 612936 mE/ 4267581 mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate) Assessor Parcel Number 069-070-022-000

**\*P3a. Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

The two story mid-century modern office building in a New Formalism style is located in south Davis along a highway frontage road. The rectangular building is approximately 180 x 100 feet, symmetrical in design, with the main, public entrance on the long side of the building facing north. An employee and deliveries entrance is off a parking lot on the east. A 40 x 70 foot interior courtyard, towards the northwest corner of the building, opens through both building levels. The flat-roofed building is completely surrounded on the upper level by concrete arches that rest on a base cantilevered four feet out from the lower level walls. The arches are flush with the roof line, presenting a flat and smooth exterior. The arch openings, nine each on the building's longer sides and five each on the shorter, are rectangular with rounded corners and are silhouetted against a background of dark gray tile and tinted windows. The lower level is hidden from street view by a ten foot high berm that completely surrounds the building (continued page 3)

**\*P3b. Resource Attributes:** (List attributes and codes) HP6: 1-3 story commercial building

**\*P4. Resources Present:**  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5b. Description of Photo: (View, date, accession #) Photograph 1: South facade of building, camera facing north, photograph taken November 11, 2013.

**\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:**

Historic  Prehistoric  Both  
1966. Events surrounding the grand opening of the building were reported on by the Davis Enterprise on 30 September 1966, and the Sacramento Bee on 2 October 1966.

**\*P7. Owner and Address:**

Richard Garcia  
4320 Earnscliff Avenue  
Fair Oaks, California

**\*P8. Recorded by:** (Name, affiliation, address)

Kara Brunzell  
1613 B Street  
Napa, California 94559

**\*P9. Date Recorded:** Nov. 11, 2013

**\*P10. Survey Type:** (Describe) Intensive

**\*P11. Report Citation:** (Cite survey report and other

sources, or enter "none.") Newton Booth Neighborhood Historic Context Report & District Nomination

**\*Attachments:** NONE  Location Map  Sketch Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure, and Object Record  Archaeological Record  
 District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  Artifact Record  Photograph Record  
 Other (list) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 3820 Chiles Road

B1. Historic Name: Intercoast Life Insurance Company Building

B2. Common Name: 3820 Chiles

B3. Original Use: Corporate Headquarters B4. Present Use: University Administration

\*B5. Architectural Style: New Formalism

\*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alteration, and date of alterations) Building completed in September 1966. The lettering on the architecturally-significant company sign in front of the building was changed in 1971, following the acquisition of Intercoast Life Insurance Company by Pacific Standard Life Insurance Company. The sign was removed at an unknown date, likely following the failure of the firm in 1989. Three flagpoles atop the building's promontory were also removed at an unknown date, likely post-1989.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features: \_\_\_\_\_

B9. Architect: Silvio Barovetto of Barovetto & Thomas, Sacramento b. Builder: Campbell Construction Company, Sacramento

\*B10. Significance: Theme Commercial Development Area Davis

Period of Significance 1945-75 Property Type Corporate Headquarters Applicable Criteria HP6

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

The building meets the criteria for listing on the Davis Register of Designated Historic Resources as an individual landmark. It is eligible for its local historical significance, its association with significant persons in Davis history, and for its architecture. It is eligible to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), for its historical significance. It is an exemplary example of the mid-century modern commercial development occurring in Davis during the transitional post-war decades, and it is the most ambitious work created by the architect, Silvio Barovetto, who designed most of the city's public buildings in the 1960s, helping to give Davis a more modern and cosmopolitan identity.

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes)

\*B12. References:

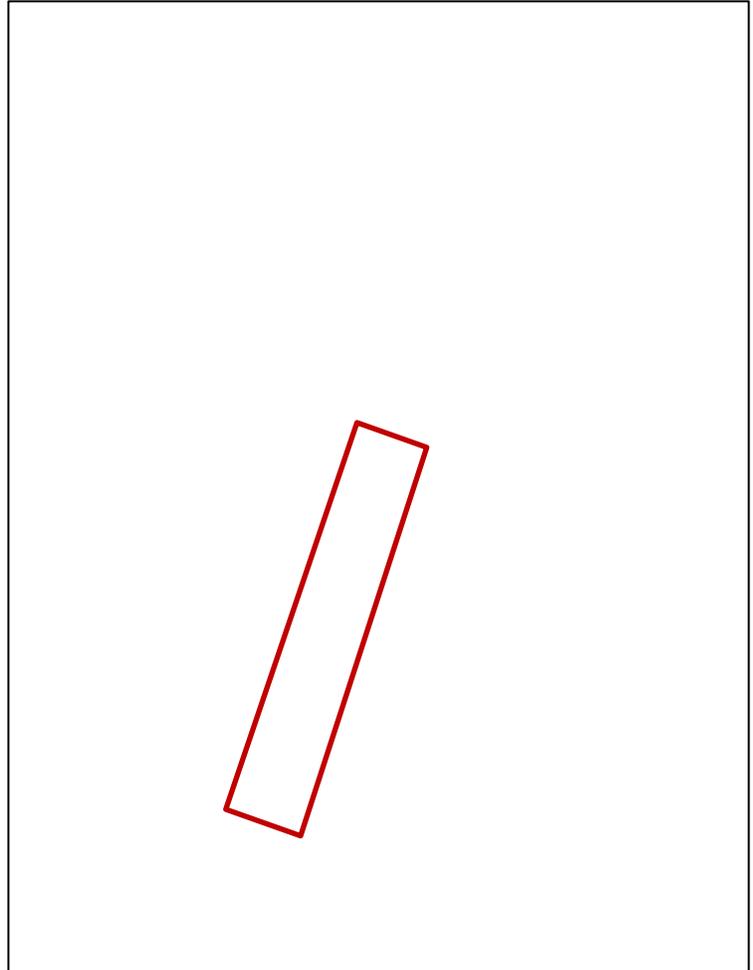
(See Footnotes)

B13. Remarks:

\*B14. Evaluator: Kara Brunzell

\*Date of Evaluation: November 21, 2013

(This space reserved for official comments.)



**Description (continued):**

with the exception of a narrow opening off the east parking lot. Windows on the lower level are smaller and irregularly placed. Separate from the main building is a single story promontory structure, approximately 50 x 10 feet, that juts out from the front entrance, with flights of stairs on both sides. A 40 foot bridge connects the promontory to the main building's public entrance on the top floor. On top of the promontory, linearly arranged along the long axis, are the bases for three flag poles. The three original 60 foot flag poles are no longer present, having been removed at an unknown date. The promontory is a closed structure with no interior space and no doors or windows, but with a decorative bronze seal on front.

The building sits on a parcel of approximately 15 acres. The building and employee parking lot are set back from the frontage road by about 200 feet, with a large lawn area in front. The berm that surrounds the building extends from the front, north side an additional 600 feet to the east, creating a long, low revetment that conceals the employee parking lot and originally provided a base for the company sign. The sign was made from 30 separate letters, each approximately 3 x 5 feet, that were spaced along the berm and individually lit at night. The sign is no longer present and was likely removed following the failure of the insurance company in 1989.

**B10. Significance (continued):**

Property History

The 3820 Chiles Road building is now located well within the city boundaries of Davis, but when planning for the structure first began in 1964, the site was still on Yolo county land, some two miles east of Davis. Five years prior, in 1959, a local developer, Bruce Mace, and his sons, Herbert and C. Fredland, had begun developing the El Macero Country Club outside of Davis city limits. They intended the development to eventually include several hundred homes, a championship-grade golf course, and an extensive, up-scale commercial district located just off of Interstate 80.<sup>1</sup> By July of 1964, construction had begun on a Standard Oil service station, and the Mace family announced plans to convert 23 acres of bean fields into a 250-room motel, the Voyager Inn, and the new home offices for the Intercoast Life Insurance Company.<sup>2</sup>

The Intercoast Life Insurance Company began business in 1932 as a health insurance provider for employees of Sutter Hospital in Sacramento. The business incorporated in 1936 as the Intercoast Hospitalization Insurance Association and began to expand its coverage. In 1947, the company purchased a home office at 3140 J Street in Sacramento and began issuing life insurances policies in addition to its health plans. In 1961, the firm issued stock, becoming a publicly traded company under the name of Intercoast Life Insurance Company. By 1964, Intercoast was doing business in twelve states and had 250 employees.<sup>3</sup> It had outgrown its Sacramento headquarters and began searching for a new property. The company favored a large site with low land costs that would allow for later development, while also looking to remain closely connected to Sacramento. The Mace family property met these needs and additionally offered high visibility from a heavily traveled interstate which had recently been broadened to six lanes and had much improved access to Sacramento because of a newly expanded causeway. The nearby UC Davis campus also was an attraction as it could provide the sort of skilled employees that an insurance company would require.<sup>4</sup> The president of Intercoast, Homer Martin, sealed the deal by relocating his own home to the El Macero Country Club, purchasing a lot along the 18th fairway.<sup>5</sup>

The architectural firm selected for the design job was Barovetto & Thomas, with Silvio "Slim" Barovetto as lead. The firm was based on Alhambra Blvd in Sacramento, but Barovetto lived in Davis, at 237 Rice Lane, and he belonged to a family that has left an indelible mark on the city.

Silvio Barovetto's father, Giovanni Barovetto, was an Italian immigrant who had left the northern city of Coconato for the US in 1907 at the age of 30, accompanied by his bride, Giuseppina (Josephine) Barovetto (né Rocca). A viticulturist by training and trade, Barovetto was recruited as an assistant by Professor Frederic Bioletti, who was then managing a private vineyard in Hollister, California. Silvio, Giovanni's first and only child, was born there on 21 September 1908. In 1910, Professor Bioletti returned to working for the University and he persuaded Barovetto to follow him, accepting an appointment in 1912 as a viticultural assistant for the University Farm in Davis. There, Barovetto maintained the vineyards in which Professor Bioletti ran a grape breeding program and experimented with introducing new grape varieties into California. In 1922, in the midst of prohibition, Barovetto took a leave from the University to travel for six months in Italy with his family. When he returned, he accepted employment laying out vineyards for Count Leonardo Bonziin the town of Monticello (now inundated beneath the Lake Berryessa reservoir). But at the solicitation of Professor Bioletti, Dr.

<sup>1</sup> "Long Awaited Golf Course for Davis Area is Outlined," *Davis Enterprise*, 8 October 1959.

<sup>2</sup> "Ground to Break; El Macero has Growing Pains," *Davis Enterprise*, 23 July 1964; U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Aerial Photos of Yolo County*, 1:20,000, Photo #ABB-3EE-171, 18 June 1964.

<sup>3</sup> "Intercoast Grows," *Davis Enterprise*, 29 July 1965; "History of Interstate Shows Great Growth," *Davis Enterprise*, 30 September 1966.

<sup>4</sup> "Selection of Davis Came After Careful Study," *Davis Enterprise*, 30 September 1966.

<sup>5</sup> "Ground to Break; El Macer has Growing Pains," *Davis Enterprise*, 23 July 1964.

A. J. Winkler, and Professor Harry Jacobs, he was lured back to the University in 1925 and remained there until his retirement in 1946. Barovetto was not on the faculty of the university and had no teaching or research responsibilities, but he served as a long-term and highly-skilled agricultural supervisor in a field critical to the university's early success. His death on 18 September 1948 was treated as the lead news article in that week's *Davis Enterprise*, where he was hailed as "one of the foremost authorities in his line of work" and "a substantial citizen" of the town.<sup>6</sup>

Around the time of his move to Davis, Giovanni Barovetto had purchased two lots at the corner of A and 2d Street, a half block from the university. Shortly after, he had a Craftsman residence and a water tank tower built on the site. It is unclear to what extent Giovanni Barovetto played a direct role in designing and/or building the two structures, though he was believed to be personally responsible for later overseeing the conversion of the water tank into a tank house residence. Through most of Silvio Barovetto's childhood, the family lived in the converted tank house and rented the Craftsman home to boarders. Both properties have since been designated as Merit Resources by the City of Davis as 209 and 209½ - 213 2nd Street.<sup>7</sup>

After growing up in Davis, Silvio Barovetto attended UC Berkeley to study architecture. He graduated in 1931, near the depths of the Depression, and chose initially to travel rather than seeking work. Booking steerage passage across the world, he traveled for a year through Europe and the Middle East with a sketchbook in hand. When he returned to California, he found work with the Federal Housing Administration as an architect. He married Madelyn Doran in 1936 and relocated for a time to Coalinga before returning to Davis for good in 1941. He spent the war years designing housing for military families, doing such work as converting medical buildings into residential apartments at a Salt Lake city airbase as a single example.<sup>8</sup>

After the war, in 1946, he co-founded the architectural firm of Barovetto & Thomas. The initial work performed by the firm is not clear, but by the early 1950s, they were receiving regular commissions for work on the UC Davis campus. The first assignments were for small scale agricultural buildings, including a Beef Barn and Shelter (1953), Sheep Field Laboratory (1953), and Vegetable Crops Machinery Shed (1959). The first large commission was for Hoagland Hall (1959), home of the Soils and Plant Nutrition departments, followed by Titus Residence Hall (1959), the Young Hall Addition (1962), and the Hickey Gym addition (1963).<sup>9</sup> The firm also devised a 1956 Master Plan for the UC campus.<sup>10</sup> By the early 1960s, the firm was receiving commissions for various commercial and education buildings throughout the greater Sacramento area. These projects included at least three branch banking buildings in a Modern style in Sacramento, and the complete design from the ground up of American River College. Later projects included the Sacramento Community Center, the expansion of the Sacramento Medical Center (later UC Davis Medical Center), and the remodeling of the Senator Hotel and the Weinstocks building in Sacramento.<sup>11</sup>

It was in Davis during the 1960s that the firm made its greatest impact. Barovetto & Thomas received the commission for nearly every public facility built within the city during the decade. These included Davis High School (1960); Holmes Junior High School (1966); the elementary schools of North Davis (1957), Birch Lane (1962), and Pioneer (1966); the Davis Branch of the Yolo County Library (1968); and the master plan for Davis Community Park.<sup>12</sup> Through these buildings, Barovetto left a legacy of Modern architecture in the city that is an essential element of Davis's optimistic identity through the decade. It was in the midst of this era that Barovetto received the commission for the Interstate Life Insurance Building, the only large corporate project that he would attempt in Davis.

It was also during these years that the Barovetto family made another large impact on the Davis community. Silvio's son, John Barovetto, the oldest of his four children, has come to be recognized as a hometown hero for Davis and is commemorated today with a public park near the eastern edge of the city. A 1956 graduate of Davis High School, John Barovetto was a stand-out athlete in several sports. He initially followed in his father's footsteps, studying architecture at UC Davis while playing quarterback and running back for the football team, but after two years he transferred to UC Berkeley to study history and military science while competing on the championship rugby team. He graduated in 1964 and was commissioned into the Army as the war in Vietnam was escalating. He served an initial combat tour during 1966. A letter home to his parents that mentioned the plight of Vietnamese internal refugees led to the idea of "Operation Helping Hands," in which Davis residents sent food, soap, and other essential goods to Captain Barovetto for distribution. Silvio and Madelyn did the work in Davis of coordinating the reception of more than 2,000 pounds of aid to be sent overseas. When he

<sup>6</sup> G. T. Barovetto obituary: "Well Known Davis Resident Passes Away in Sacramento," *Davis Enterprise*, 24 September 1948; "Regents Increase Faculty," *San Francisco Call*, 14 June 1912; Historical Resource Associates, "Historical Resource Analysis Study of 201 2nd Street/200 A Street and 209/209½-213 2nd Street, Davis, Yolo County, California 95616," November 2014 (Revised February 2015), 20-26.

<sup>7</sup> Historical Resource Associates, "Historical Resource Analysis Study of 201 2nd Street/200 A Street and 209/209½-213 2nd Street."

<sup>8</sup> Silvio Barovetto obituaries: "Silvio Barovetto Designed Dozens of Area Landmarks," *Sacramento Bee*, 17 October 1996, and "Silvio 'Slim' Barovetto," *Davis Enterprise*, 15 October 1996; "Work Begins at S.L. Air Base," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 May 1946.

<sup>9</sup> Verne Stadtman ed., *The Centennial Record of the University of California, 1868-1968* (Oakland: Regents of the University of California, 1967), 157-67.

<sup>10</sup> EDaw, "UC Davis Landscape Heritage Plan: Vol. 2. Cultural Landscapes Inventory," April 2009, 2-11.

<sup>11</sup> Silvio Barovetto obituaries; Sacramento bank information from the *Sacramento Bee* Photo Morgue accessed through the Center for Sacramento History.

<sup>12</sup> Silvio Barovetto obituaries; Construction dates: John Lofland, *Davis: Radical Changes, Deep Constants* (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 129-30.

returned to Davis after the tour, the marquee of the landmark Varsity Theater was changed in to a welcome home message to him from the entire community. During his second tour, the donation project expanded and it was adopted by the Kiwanis Club and the Davis Senior High School Key Club. John Barovetto was serving with the First Cavalry Division in January 1968 when he was killed while directing an armorer personnel carrier that was attempting to rescue the crew and passengers of a downed helicopter. It was the second time that the death of a Barovetto made the front page of the *Davis Enterprise*. In his honor, Davis high school continues to annually award a John Barovetto Memorial scholarship. In 2005, the Davis school district considered John Barovetto's name for a new elementary school in Mace Ranch before narrowly passing it over in favor of the name Fred Korematsu Elementary. A year later the city decided to apply his name to the new park as a way of ensuring that his memory would not be lost.<sup>13</sup>

The firm of Barovetto & Thomas continues to the current day, though its name has changed several times. The firm was known as Barovetto & Thomas from 1946-67; then Barovetto, Carissimi and Rohrer from 1967-69; Carissimi · Rohrer · Associates from 1969 till a date after 1994; and is now known as CRM Architects & Planners, still based in Sacramento.<sup>14</sup> Over the years that he ran the firm, Silvio Barovetto gave many new architects a first start. His obituary in the *Sacramento Bee* credited him with launching the careers of at least six of Sacramento's premier architects, including James Dodd, Sacramento's first licensed African American architect. Silvio Barovetto was remembered as a highly personable figure who cultivated life long relationships with those he had mentored. He was a member of the Faculty Club at UC Davis and the Sutter Club in Sacramento. A devoted golfer, he was a charter member of the El Macero Country Club, a connection that might have helped land him the Intercoast Life Insurance Company contract.<sup>15</sup>

For the Intercoast building, Silvio Barovetto produced his boldest design to date, and perhaps ever. His earlier buildings for the university campus were large scale projects (Hoagland Hall was budgeted at \$1.7 million), and they proudly exhibited their Modern inspirations, being largely in an Internationalist style, composed in strong horizontal forms.<sup>16</sup> Yet they were still primarily functional buildings, designed to provide lab and classroom space for agricultural science departments. They needed to fit into a larger campus design and could not showcase themselves in the same way that the Intercoast building would allow. When work on designing the Intercoast building began, it seemed initially that it too would be a more modestly functional building than the one that eventually resulted. The company's directions to the architects called for a "Dignified, Functional, Economical building that would create an aesthetically pleasing visual symbol for their Company."<sup>17</sup> In July of 1964, a year before groundbreaking, the Intercoast president reported that he had been reviewing designs and was "pretty sure it will be a one story building."<sup>18</sup> There was little in those comments that suggested a building as boldly modern as what Barovetto was planning.

Barovetto's inspiration for the Intercoast building drew primarily from works in the New Formalism style that rejected the stark minimalism of the Internationalist style and welcomed the return of classical forms, albeit in a more abstracted, less decorative manner. Common distinctive features of the style were a symmetrical plan; the prominent use of arches or colonnades; the setting of the building upon a podium; and the use of large screens of concrete or metal. Like most works of Modern architecture, New Formalism designs were also characterized by clarity and simplicity of form; smooth surfaces; restrained use of ornamentation; and the exuberant use of new building materials and techniques. Architectural histories credit Edward Durell Stone's New Delhi American Embassy (1954) as being the first work in a New Formalism style, and the lines of continuity between that work and Barovetto's Intercoast building are clear at a glance. The style also was used regularly in high profile cultural centers such as the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., and the Lincoln Center in New York. It appeared frequently on college campuses for use in libraries, auditoriums, and museums. In smaller cities, it was used occasionally for major public buildings and banks, but it was little used for smaller commercial buildings or residences. In selecting a style associated with some of the most significant recent cultural and institutional architecture, Barovetto was making a strong claim for the importance,

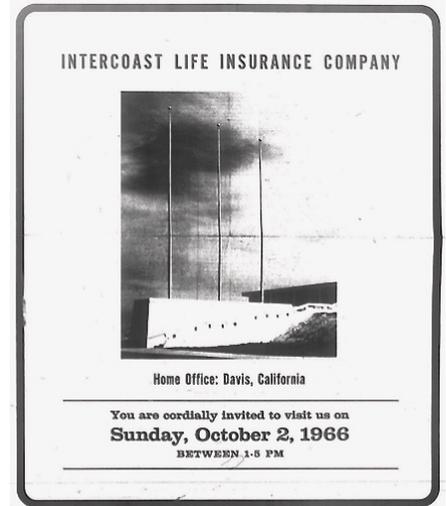


Figure 1: The promontory of the building featured in the grand opening invitation.

<sup>13</sup> "Capt. Barovetto Dies in Vietnam," *Davis Enterprise*, 10 January 1968; John Donnelly, "Death Valley," *Newsweek*, 29 January 1968, 32-3; "Korematsu is Name for New School," *Davis Enterprise*, 16 September 2005; "Captain John Barovetto was a Hero Long before He Paid the Ultimate Price," *Davis Enterprise*, 20 September 2009; Rich Rifkin, "Let's Not Delete Giovanni Barovetto from Davis History," *Davis Enterprise*, 4 March 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Carissimi · Rohrer · Associates, "Statement of Qualifications to Provide Architectural Services for the Alumni Center, CSUS Campus," 9 May 1994, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Silvio Barovetto obituaries; James C. Dodd obituary, *Sacramento Bee*, 10 February 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Stadtman ed., *The Centennial Record of the University of California*, 160.

<sup>17</sup> "Dignified, Functional, Economical . . . Architect's Aim," *Davis Enterprise*, 30 September 1966.

<sup>18</sup> "Intercoast President Say Firm will be Ready to Move to Davis," *Davis Enterprise*, 23 July 1964.

strength, and longevity of the Intercoast Company.<sup>19</sup>

Barovetto's design cast the building site in a series of long, low lines. This was done cleverly in the building itself by surrounding the lower level, housing a print shop and storage rooms, with a ten foot high berm that all but concealed it from street view. The building thus seemed to have only a single story that appeared to float free above an earthen podium. The continuation of the revetment across the site, topped with the large individual letters of the company sign, further enhanced the horizontal site design. These features were crafted with the freeway in mind so as to establish "maximum visual contact" with travelers as they passed parallel to the building and its sign. In its length and lowness, the building also paid tribute to the geography of the Central Valley and the seemingly endless fields of beans and sugar beets that had last occupied the location. The linearity of the plan was interrupted only by the jutting promontory at the front of the building. The vertical element here was highlighted by the three 60 foot tall flag poles that provided a dramatic centerpiece for the building.<sup>20</sup> Because the length of the building is difficult to capture effectively in photographs, the promontory and flag poles provided the stage for the publicity photos used in the building's unveiling in 1966.<sup>21</sup>

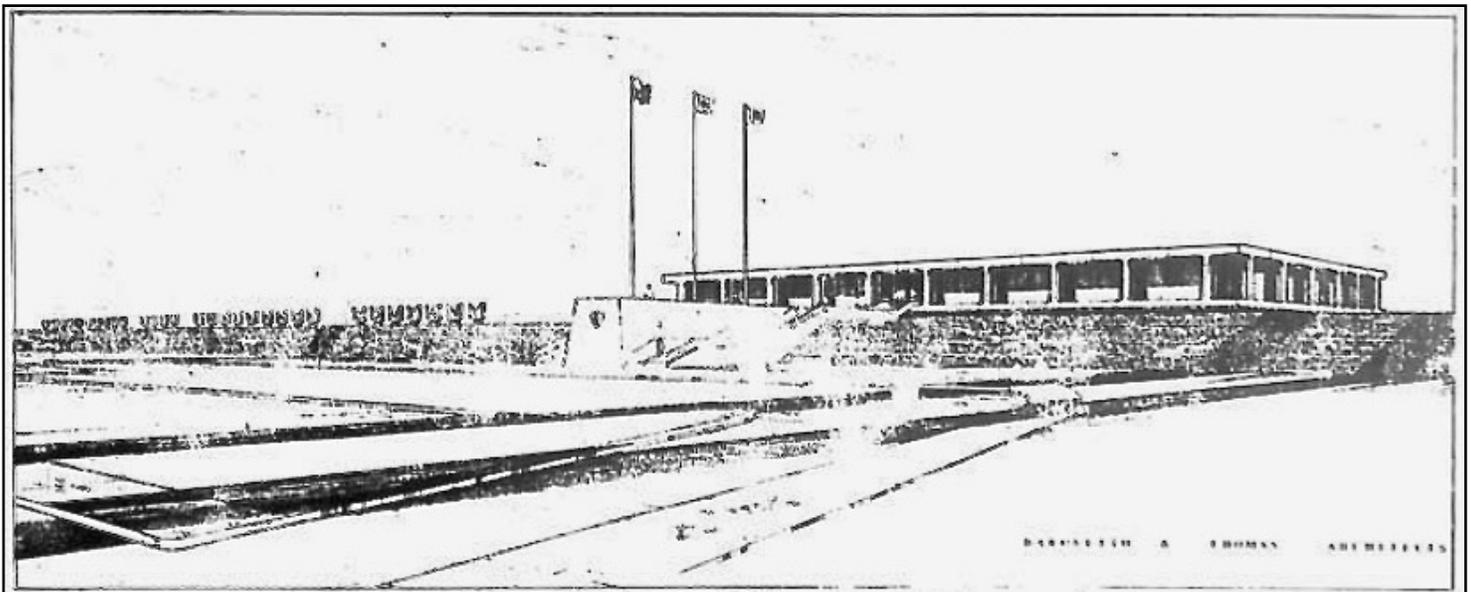


Figure 2: Architectural sketch showing the building, promontory, and company sign atop the revetment.

In its black and white coloring, simple forms, and contemporary design—all of which were powerfully emphasized when the building was floodlit at night—Barovetto's final design presented the company with a somewhat different vision than that with which the planning started. Interstate embraced the newer look and declared the final result to be a "Bold and Dignified Architectural Expression" that was "ultra modern in appearance."<sup>22</sup> Their publicity surrounding the building's grand opening in late September and early October 1966 played up the futuristic elements in the building's design, which included a glass-walled room off the reception area that hosted banks of Minneapolis Honeywell computes and data processors.<sup>23</sup> In the building's exterior, the distinctive shape of a rectangle with rounded corners that was formed by the white arches set against a black tile background was largely without precedent and it evoked a mood of techno-futurism. The inspiration for the form is not known, but it might have drawn from such images as the rounded monitor screens that appeared in rows in NASA's Mission Control Center, constructed in 1962-3. That Barovetto's work inspired such an "out-there" reading at the time is made clear by a caption that the *Davis Enterprise* affixed to a photograph of similar arches under construction

<sup>19</sup> Planning Resource Associates, "Mid-Century Modernism, Fresno Historical Context," September 2008, 78; "Edward Durell Stone" in Paul Heyer, *Architects on Architecture: New Directions in America* (New York: Walker and Company, 1966), 172-83; "New Formalism" in *Wikipedia*, retrieved 14 March 2015.

<sup>20</sup> "Dignified, Functional, Economical . . . Architect's Aim," *Davis Enterprise*, 30 September 1966.

<sup>21</sup> "Gateway to Intercoast" and "Intercoast Dedication," photo captions, *Davis Enterprise*, 30 September 1966 and 1 October 1966.

<sup>22</sup> First quote: "Dignified, Functional, Economical . . . Architect's Aim," *Davis Enterprise*, 30 September 1966. Second quote: "Ground Breaking for Intercoast Set," *Davis Enterprise*, 20 July 1965.

<sup>23</sup> "Data Processing," photo caption, *Davis Enterprise*, 30 September 1966.

at the Barovetto-designed branch library. “Avant Garde Sculpture?,” the writer asked rhetorically, before reassuring readers that the new library’s final lines would be “clean and straight and not as far-out as it might look now.”<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 3: Honeywell computers on display at the grand opening.**



**Figure 4: The “Avant Garde Sculpture” of the Davis branch library.**

At the building’s opening, the implied connection to the future was made explicit by burying a time capsule at the site (presumably in the promontory, though this can not be definitively established) that was to be opened in the year 2032, which would have marked the 100th anniversary of Intercoast’s founding. State and local officials, along with leaders of industry, particularly from the aerospace field, deposited items in the time capsule and a color guard from McClellan Air Force Base performed at the ceremony.<sup>25</sup> Later in the week, Intercoast sponsored a symposium at Sacramento’s Memorial Auditorium on California life in the year 2032. Presenters included the UC Davis chancellor, the dean of the UC Berkeley school of medicine, the publisher of the *Sacramento Union*, and an executive of Douglas Aircraft Company. They predicted, among other things, that all future Californians would live on a guaranteed income while few would work; the common cold would be cured; there would be permanent bases on the moon and manned trips to Mars; and the daily newspaper would come packed with enough embedded calories and vitamins for readers to subsist off its pages.<sup>26</sup>

For four years, the 3820 Chiles Road building served as company headquarters for the Intercoast Life Insurance Company and provided a place of employment for more than 100 people. During that time, the city of Davis annexed the site from Yolo county in order to better regulate its own growth and to prevent El Macero from developing as an independent, rival city. In 1970, Intercoast merged with a larger firm, Pacific Standard Life Insurance Company, and took the latter’s name. The headquarters building was still attractive, well-situated, and had room to expand, so Pacific Standard elected to relocate its own national headquarters to Davis. The following year the firm submitted plans to the city to alter the lettering on the business sign out front to change it from reading INTERCOAST LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY to PACIFIC STANDARD LIFE INSURANCE CO. Both signs would retain the same number of letters (30), the same font, and the same design.<sup>27</sup> The request, however, touched off a kerfuffle between the company and the city’s planning department that spoke to Davis’s conflicted attitude towards continuing growth at the start of the 1970s. At issue was a city ordinance that limited signs in front of a business to 30 square feet, a figure vastly exceed by the roughly 500 square feet of the original Intercoast sign. Yolo county, which had jurisdiction when the sign was first erected, had approved the design, but now the city planning department sought to assert its authority by rejecting what it called a substantial alteration to the original plan. Architect Ron Carissimi, part of the original design team, testified before the planning commission that the sign was “architecturally integrated into the building and site plan.”<sup>28</sup> The president of Pacific Standard argued that the site owed much of its appeal to its visibility to interstate travelers and an inability to alter the sign would negate that, effectively forcing a loss of

<sup>24</sup> “Avant Garde Sculpture?,” photo caption, *Davis Enterprise*, 25 January 1968.

<sup>25</sup> “Capsule Ceremony is Today,” *Davis Enterprise*, 30 September 1966; “Intercoast Dedication,” photo caption, *Davis Enterprise*, 1 October 1966.

<sup>26</sup> “Sacramentans to Hear about Life in Year 2032,” *Davis Enterprise*, 30 September 1966; “Man of the Future will Live on Guaranteed Income, Newspaper Food,” *Sacramento Bee*, 7 October 1966.

<sup>27</sup> “The Intercoast Sign: An Editorial,” *Davis Enterprise*, 26 June 1971.

<sup>28</sup> “Appeal on Intercoast Sign Denial,” *Davis Enterprise*, 21 June 1971.

\$300,000 on the company, the cost of relocating their headquarters.<sup>29</sup> A city commissioner, however, countered that the county had “botched” development in the 1000 acres near the El Macero Country Club and it was now the city’s obligation to fix the problems.<sup>30</sup>

Public opinion, as recorded in the *Davis Enterprise* and through Chamber of Commerce votes, appeared to strongly favor Pacific Standard’s request. The Chamber unanimously voted support for the company, and the *Davis Enterprise* editorialized that the sign was “shaping up as a symbol for the difficulty people see in getting clean, light, educated, rich and generally classy industry into Davis.”<sup>31</sup> The debate, the paper argued, was over how to ensure “we don’t degenerate into a trashy neon strip community,” versus “how in the world are we going to attract industry into Davis that would pay a lot of taxes and not drive the individual property owners into the poorhouse.”<sup>32</sup> Under pressure, the planning commission backed down and authorized the sign change.<sup>33</sup> The city effectively sanctioned the building site plan as it was, making its peace with at least the high-end commercial development that had already occurred in south Davis.

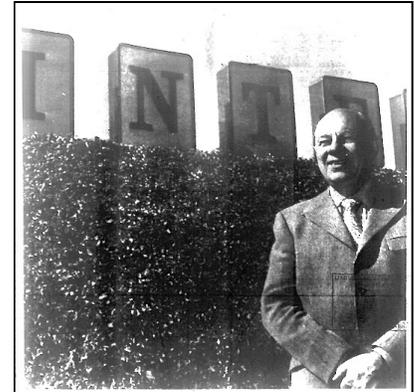


Figure 5: Pacific Standard president, Clifford Gamble, in front of the disputed sign.

Pacific Standard’s eventual demise came as a result of national-level changes that swept through the financial industry during the 1980s. In 1983, at the start of the S & L and junk bond heyday, a Texas real estate maven and corporate raider, Gene Phillips, purchased Pacific Standard for \$30 million. Pacific Standard then had more than \$700 million in assets and employed 225 people at its headquarters. Six years later the company was insolvent—\$43 million in the hole—and had laid off nearly all its staff.<sup>34</sup> In hindsight it was clear that Phillips never intended to run Pacific Standard as an ordinary insurance company, but merely desired to plunder its assets for use in a larger, very risky investment strategy in collaboration with such figures as Charles Keating, head of Lincoln Savings and Loan of Irving, and Michael Milken, who ran the high-yield junk bond department for Drexel Burnham Lambert. After the takeover, Phillips immediately fired Pacific Standard’s investment officers and installed himself as the sole member of the investment committee. He so flagrantly abused the company’s resources for his own gain that state investigators later referred to his actions as a classic example of corporate looting. Cited as but one example of the blatant behavior was Phillips’ sale to Pacific Standard of a \$4 million mortgage that had already entered default, and was thus of negligible value, in order to pocket a large commission on the transaction for himself. Phillips also forged minutes from board meetings to give the false impression that his investment decisions were being overseen and approved by the Pacific Standard board of directors.<sup>35</sup> In the end, Phillips faced a federal criminal investigation for his actions, but was never indicted.<sup>36</sup> In a civil case, he and two other Texas executives were ordered to repay \$11.6 million to the company. Local officials of Pacific Standard were cleared of any direct wrongdoing, but were faulted for their negligent oversight. The president and chief financial officer were ordered to repay \$125,000 to the company.<sup>37</sup>

On 11 December 1989, the state Department of Insurance took over management of the company and placed it in a conservatorship. For four and a half years the state tried to salvage the company, but ultimately admitted the task was hopeless in April of 1994. What remained of Pacific Standard was transferred to a receivership and its final assets were liquidated.<sup>38</sup> The Barovetto headquarters building on Chiles road had sat largely vacant since the company’s demise and executive office phone lines had been inoperable since at least October 1990.<sup>39</sup> As part of the company’s final unwinding, before it was formally declared closed on 30 Dec 1999, the headquarters building was sold to the University of California, Davis. In the summer of 1999, the university relocated 40% of its IT staff into the building. They were joined by the Repro Graphics division, which operated out of the old first floor print shops.<sup>40</sup> These two units continue to occupy the building to date, though their presence is notably low-key with little obvious sign that the building is

<sup>29</sup> “Intercoast Sign Request Denied,” *Davis Enterprise*, 3 June 1971.

<sup>30</sup> “Appeal on Intercoast Sign Denial,” *Davis Enterprise*, 21 June 1971.

<sup>31</sup> “Chamber Supports Sign,” *Davis Enterprise*, 22 June 1971; “Clamor to Tackle the Sign,” *Davis Enterprise*, 23 June 1971.

<sup>32</sup> “Clamor Clarifies the Sign,” *Davis Enterprise*, 25 June 1971.

<sup>33</sup> “Denial Reversed,” *Davis Enterprise*, 1 July 1971.

<sup>34</sup> Kelly Johnson, “Payout Ends Nine Year Ordeal for Pacific Standard Policyholders,” *Sacramento Business Journal*, 24 May 1998; “Davis Insurance Firm Put on Hold,” *Sacramento Bee*, 29 November 1989; “Southmark Plan,” *New York Times*, 6 April 1983.

<sup>35</sup> “Insurer’s Woes Laid to Illegal Acts,” *Sacramento Bee*, 13 February 1990; “CEO Blamed for Insurer’s Woes,” *Sacramento Bee*, 17 October 1990; “Regulators Sue Insurer’s Officers - 5 Looted Davis Firm, State Says,” *Sacramento Bee*, 18 October 1990; Stephen Pizzo, Mary Fricker, and Paul Muolo, *Inside Job: The Looting of America’s Savings and Loans*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), note 7, ch. 26.

<sup>36</sup> “Loan Probe of Failed Davis Firm,” *Sacramento Bee*, 12 July 1991.

<sup>37</sup> “Insurance ‘Looters’ to Pay \$11.6 million,” *Sacramento Bee*, 12 August 1993.

<sup>38</sup> Johnson, “Payout Ends Nine Year Ordeal,” *Sacramento Business Journal*, 24 May 1998.

<sup>39</sup> “Regulators Sue Insurer’s Officers,” *Sacramento Bee*, 18 October 1990.

<sup>40</sup> “PSL becomes 3820 Chiles Road,” *Information Technology Times*, October 1999, 5.

still in use. The flag poles and former company signs have all been removed, and in general, the site's external facilities and landscaping have fallen into a state of lightly maintained disrepair. The building itself remains fully intact with strong integrity.

**Evaluation:**

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR), and Davis Register of Historic Resources (DRHR) require that a significance criterion from A-D or 1-4 be met for a resource to be eligible.

Criterion A/1: 3820 Chiles Road is significant under the NRHP, CRHR, and DRHR Criterion 1 as an individual landmark for its association with the broad patterns of the history of Davis. It is associated with the commercial development of Yolo county and the city of Davis, and with the S&L-associated financial crisis of the late-1980s in California.

Criterion B/2: 3820 Chiles Road is significant under the Davis Register's Criterion 2 for its association with the life of Silvio Barovetto, an architect central to defining the character of Davis during the 1960s. In addition, members of the Barovetto family across three generations have been prominent public figures in Davis. Although Silvio Barovetto also constructed numerous projects in Sacramento and throughout northern California, his work there was less central to the emergence of a sense of place and thus his individual significance is not large enough to merit inclusion for the NRHP or CRHR under Criterion B/2.

Criterion C/3: 3820 Chiles Road is significant under the Davis Register's Criterion 3 for its architecture. It is a standout example of mid-century Modern architecture in a New Formalism style, and thus embodies the distinctive characteristics of that type and period of construction. Its architecture is not distinguished enough to meet the national or state criteria, however, therefore it is not eligible for the NRHP or CRHR under Criterion C/3.

Criterion D/4: In rare instances, buildings themselves can serve as sources of important information about historic construction materials or technologies and be significant under Criterion D/4. 3820 Chiles Road does not appear to be a principal source of important information in this regard.

Eligibility for listing on either the NRHP rests on significance and integrity. A property must have both factors to be considered eligible. Loss of integrity, if sufficiently great, would overwhelm the historical significance of a resource and render it ineligible. 3820 Chiles Road retains its integrity. It is eligible to the NRHP, and CRHR, and to the Davis Register as an individual landmark.