



United States Department of the Interior
 OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 10/22/22 through 10/28/22
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
 Mail Stop 7228
 1849 C Street, NW
 Washington, D.C. 20240



October 28, 2022

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to send you the following announcements and actions on properties for the National Register of Historic Places.

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 10/22/2022 THROUGH 10/28/2022

Effective (4/10/20), the National Register program launched an electronic-only submission process for the duration of the COVID-19 situation while our staff and the staff of our preservation partners engage in extended telework operations. Instructions for (1) the organization of submissions and (2) how to access and upload submissions via the designated FTP site were distributed to recipients of this distribution list and posted on the National Register Website landing page at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL, Action, Date, Multiple Name

COLORADO, PITKIN COUNTY,

Soldner Home and Studio,
 0501 Stage Rd.,
 Aspen vicinity, RS100006799,
 LISTED, 10/24/2022

FLORIDA, POLK COUNTY,

Evans, John H., House,
 730 Buena Vista Dr.,
 Lake Alfred, RS100008019,
 LISTED, 10/24/2022

GEORGIA, FULTON COUNTY,

Virginia-Highland Historic District (Additional Documentation),
 Roughly bounded by Amsterdam Ave., Rosedale Rd., Ponce de Leon Ave., and the Norfolk Southern Railroad,
 Atlanta, AD05000402,
 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 10/24/2022

IDAHO, ADA COUNTY,

Buckner, Aurelius and Dorothy, House,
 1012 North 19th St.,
 Boise, MP100008287,
 LISTED, 10/24/2022
 (African American Civil Rights in Idaho MPS)

Prefix Codes:

AD - Additional documentation	BC - Boundary change (increase and/or decrease)	FD - Federal DOE property under the Federal DOE project
FP - Federal DOE Project	MC - Multiple cover sheet	MP - Multiple nomination (nomination under a multiple cover sheet)
MV - Move request	NL - NHL	OT - All other requests (appeal, removal, delisting)
SG - Single nomination		

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO
other names/site number THE SOLDNER CENTER / 5PT.1392

2. Location

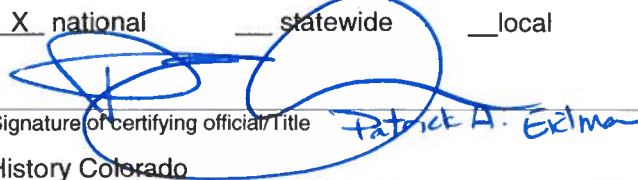
street & number 0501 STAGE RD. not for publication
city or town ASPEN vicinity
state COLORADO code CO county PITKIN code 097 zip code 81611

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national ___ statewide ___ local

 Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 9/7/2022
Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
History Colorado
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____
Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5		buildings
1		sites
1		structures
		objects
7		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / single dwelling

COMMERCE / professional (artist's studio)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / single dwelling

DOMESTIC / secondary structure

RECREATION & CULTURE / museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: CONCRETE, GLASS, WOOD

~~METAL~~ STONE

roof: METAL, WOOD

other:

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary Paragraph (photos 1-3 & 39; site maps and diagram on p. 45-48): The Soldner Home and Studio property is located at 0501 Stage Rd. in Pitkin County, Colorado on the western outskirts of Aspen (SW¼ of Sec. 2, T10S-R85W). More specifically, the site is 2.3 miles northwest of downtown Aspen, southeast of the airport, northeast of Highway 82, and both north and northeast of the golf course, tennis courts and clubhouse of the Maroon Creek Club. The Soldner property was originally a long parcel oriented lengthwise on a north-south axis. This has been legally divided into two lots, with the southern Lot 1 holding the buildings and other features that are being nominated. Lot 2 to the north consists of open conserved land and there are no plans for its development.

Three acres in size, Lot 1 is essentially rectangular in shape and holds the centered historic building complex. This is reached by way of a graveled drive that enters the site from Stage Rd. at the property's southeast corner. The building complex is surrounded by slightly rolling ground covered in natural grasses and sage. A number of Aspen and evergreen trees surround the complex, providing a sense of privacy from its surroundings. In addition, the grounds hold a naturalistic hot tub along with a collection of bonsai trees, placed boulders and outdoor bronze sculptures. Visually isolated from its surroundings, the property has a sheltered appearance and feel even though it is close to the airport and town. Some of the buildings were designed and built to be flexible in use, which is why they were historically referred to by color or shape rather than standard terms such as house or studio. Constructed by their owner, a ceramic artist rather than a building contractor, they convey much about his skills, aesthetic, resourcefulness, and creative use of building materials.

CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

A-Frame Building, 1957-1968 (photos 4-12): This building is located in the north area of the complex on the north side of the entry drive. With entries on the east and west, the two-story-tall A-frame building rests upon a concrete foundation, has a rectangular footprint of 30' x 50', and is built against a low embankment on the north.

The A-frame itself is off-centered, with a lower roof pitch on the north and a steeper one on the south. Supporting the south slope are nine heavy, slightly curved, reinforced board-formed concrete rafter beams, all set on a diagonal. Their bulbous bases rest on a concrete pad and are exposed to view. The north slope is supported by nine massive (6" x 17" x 33') Douglas fir rafter beams that run upward on a diagonal. Rather than coming precisely together at the 20'-high peak, the two slopes are offset as the wood beams rest on top of the concrete ones, leaving a long horizontal gap between the roof slopes at the ridgeline. That gap is closed with narrow fixed clerestory windows that are separated from one another by the exposed metal-capped upper ends of the wood beams.

The roof slopes are finished with standing-seam metal panels on the exterior. Beneath the metal panels are hundreds of 2" x 4" boards stacked horizontally on edge to form the exposed ceilings. These boards are nailed into place and rest against the diagonal roof beams. Horizontal bands of flat 2" x 4" boards were also installed every three feet up the slopes which functioned as a ladder during construction. Diagonal boards box the sides of the roof planes, with metal flashing protecting the upper edges from the elements. Seven solar panels mounted flush with the roof are present toward the west end of the south slope, and the north slope has three skylights.

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Along its east wall, the building is closed with tall vertical panels of slip-form concrete separated from one another by vertical boards. Toward the north end, the lower concrete panels have fieldstones embedded into them. Several tall, fixed single-pane windows with board framing are also present in the two-story wall, and those that abut the roof beam have diagonal upper edges. The entrance is in a small concrete and wood projection, and the door there is constructed of vertical boards with hand-fabricated metal strap hinges. A small piece of ceramic art by Paul Soldner is mounted in the concrete wall adjacent to the door. Atop the entryway roof is a small balcony bordered by an open rail constructed of wood posts and horizontal boards. The balcony is accessed from a second-floor bedroom and the entry contains a vertical board door and wood screen door.

On the west, the two-story-tall wall is partially built with vertical slip-form concrete panels separated by boards. However, these are primarily located toward its north and south ends. The concrete at the south end is smooth, while it is embedded with visible fieldstones at the lower northwest corner. Mounted in the concrete toward the southwest corner is a tall vertical arrangement of six decorative fired ceramic tiles created by Paul Soldner using burlap, brushed on white slip and Egyptian paste clay. Much of the west side of the building consists of a narrow addition with a tall diagonal roofline that runs parallel to the primary north slope but rises about two feet higher. The gap between the two rooflines is closed with six fixed single-light windows that are also set on a diagonal. Enclosing the addition on the west are multiple single-light fixed windows with board framing. The panes along the lower level are much larger than those above. Toward the roof, the windows have diagonal upper edges, and several smaller triangular windows are present. The original west exterior wall with fixed windows and a pair of sliding glass doors remains intact inside the addition.

Three entrances provide access into the west addition. The more prominent of these faces south and holds a pair of large wood doors constructed of horizontal boards on the exterior, vertical ones on the interior, and decorative metal strap hinges. The large metal bell-shaped doorknobs control a hand-made latch system. While the repurposed metal parts used to form the doorknobs is of uncertain origin and use, they appear to have been found in the Aspen area, possibly at one of its abandoned mines. Raised lettering found on the doorknobs reads "TICo. Pat May 18 1897." On the west-facing wall are two single entries, one of which holds a standard glass door with a wood frame. The other also has a wood-framed door although the tall middle space typically occupied by glass has been filled with short boards assembled at varying angles along with a small triangular light. The door has a diagonal top that runs parallel to the roofline.

The building's interior consists of a small number of rooms. These are currently used as a living room and gallery, a smaller gallery space in the west addition, and a dining room, kitchen, bedroom, laundry room, archival storage room, and restroom. Only the living room and gallery, west addition gallery, and dining room are on the main level. Numerous ceramic pieces by Paul Soldner and other prominent ceramic artists from around the world are on display throughout these areas of the building. The bedroom is upstairs, and the kitchen and smaller rooms are down a few steps from the dining room. All of these spaces hold historic features that are exposed to view. The main and lower levels have concrete floors that are colored a rich brown tone, and the high ceilings feature the exposed concrete and wood beams along with stacked boards beneath the roof slopes.

Within the living room and gallery space, the few vertical walls are finished with drywall, rough board-formed concrete, and wood paneling and trimwork. Three closets with pairs of sliding doors are present along the north wall, and shelves and built-in cabinets along the other walls are used to display a sizable

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collection of ceramic pieces created by Paul Soldner. Lighting is provided by three skylights, the narrow clerestory windows at the roof peak, the original western windows and glass doors that separate the room from the adjacent addition, boxed lights along the ceiling, and hanging globe-shaped Japanese paper lanterns.

West of the living room, the addition has a concrete floor and is enclosed by the building's original exterior window wall and entry on the east and the taller window wall and entries on the west and south. Visible overhead is the deep western stacked board eave of the primary north roof slope. The high sloped roof over the addition has exposed plywood decking supported by a series of board purlins. At the south end is the pair of large entry doors described above. The north end of the room holds a set of cabinets with doors built with scrap pieces of plywood. An oil drum with a metal door welded to one side is mounted above the floor on 4" x 4" posts. This was used to store towels for the hot tub outside the building. Bronze sculptures by Paul Soldner rest atop plinths in the room.

Just east of the living room is a wide hallway that connects it to the dining room. The north wall of the hallway has a closet with mirrored sliding doors and an adjacent niche. Along the south wall is a massive repurposed horizontal wood beam that rests atop the concrete foundation wall that is filled with visible fieldstones upon which are displayed additional works of art. Another globe-shaped Japanese paper lantern lights this area.

The dining room has tall walls on the east and west that were built with fieldstones and concrete mortar. Built-in cabinets and shelving are present along the north and south walls that display ceramics from 20th century masters and examples of traditional Japanese pottery. A free-standing wood fireplace with a tall metal flue is located in the east end of the room. This rests upon a slightly raised concrete platform. Hand-wrought fireplace tools are mounted to the wall along with an old industrial wheel with gear teeth. Lighting is provided by the window wall on the east, the high windows at the roof peak, recessed light fixtures along the north shelves, and another Japanese paper lantern.

At the west end of the dining room is a unique spiral staircase that provides access to the building's upper floor bedroom. Constructed by Paul Soldner, this is supported by a tall metal pole that rises from the floor to one of the heavy wood roof beams above. Each of the nine treads is T-shaped and fabricated from five short boards. These are connected to the pole at one end by segmented gusset plates that are welded to the metal and bolted to the wood. Other than the pole, there is no other support for the treads and the stairway has no handrail other than a natural Juniper branch mounted at the top.

The building's upper level is confined to its southeast quadrant at the top of the spiral staircase. This holds a long rectangular bedroom, the east half of which is a mezzanine open to the dining room below. This also has direct access to the balcony on the east side of the building. Its wood floor is covered with carpet, and the west wall is formed of rough slip-form concrete with exposed fieldstones. A low wall that runs along the north side where the bedroom overlooks the dining room is constructed of repurposed wood. The room has spaces for two beds, one on the east and another on the west. Between them is a closet enclosed by partial walls clad in repurposed vertical boards. This contains a revolving metal clothes hanger mounted to a vertical central pole that also serves as the vent pipe for the restroom below.

Below the bedroom in the southeast corner of the house is the kitchen, which is sunken and accessed down a couple of steps from the dining room and east entry. This space has a concrete floor along

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with its original concrete countertops, wood cabinets, and a corner sink. Raku tiles made by Paul Soldner are applied to the walls as a backsplash. Another set of concrete steps drops below the spiral staircase in the dining room to reach the smallest rooms in the house, which are also below the bedroom and adjacent to the kitchen. These include a restroom, laundry room, and former darkroom that is now used for archival storage.

The restroom contains a bathtub set into a concrete platform. Above that is a concrete shelf and two windows separated by the lower curved end of the one of the vertical concrete roof beams. Mounted on the slip-form concrete wall with fieldstones is a V-shaped wood towel rack. The front of the door is ornamented with a number of wooden split glass-blowing molds and the back has been fire-treated and contains metal straps and addition towel hooks. The laundry room door is constructed of vertical boards and has a hand-forged metal handle. The door to the former dark room is clad in a collage of multiple short boards and pieces of scrap wood.

Alterations – The building has experienced changes to its exterior, particularly to its south and west sides, that occurred over a period of many years. Historic photographs show that the slightly concave surface of the steep roof on the south originally consisted of a grid pattern of ninety glass panels divided and held in place by board framing. Beneath the glass, rubber tubing was installed to loop back and forth horizontally across the slope. Designed to capture solar rays during the winter months, the slope was calculated to rise at the exact angle needed to maximize solar intake around the winter solstice. This explains why the building is an off-centered A-frame. The rubber tubing held water heated by the sunlight, and from the roof this flowed by gravity into a system of galvanized pipes laid beneath the building's concrete floor.

The radiant solar heat system inside the A-Frame worked well for years. However, over time the rubber tubing on the roof slope deteriorated due the intense heat and caused a black coating to form on the undersides of the glass panels. Soldner replaced all of the glass, and vertical copper tubing was installed in place of the rubber tubes. The system continued to function until the mid-1990s, by which time the galvanized metal pipes beneath the floor had rusted and stopped working properly. At that point, the radiant in-floor heating system was abandoned in favor of hot water baseboards using a propane boiler to heat the east side of the building. The west side was to be heated with seven new solar panels installed on the south roof slope, and these remain there today. From the panels, the heated water runs into a 16' x 16' x 22"-deep insulated reservoir placed beneath the floor of what is now the living room. The intention was to have the heated water in the reservoir radiate through the concrete floor above. However, the mass of the water exceeded what the solar panels could adequately heat, and instead of warming the room the reservoir became a heat sink.

With the solar heating system abandoned on the east side of the building, the glass panels and tubing were removed from the roof slope and it was insulated and covered with metal panels along with the seven solar panels on the west side that remain there today. Looking back at these efforts to heat the building with solar power during a period before commercially manufactured panels were available to purchase, Stephanie Soldner stated that her father "was never afraid of failure and [was] always looking to find better solutions." The tall narrow west addition described in detail above was constructed around 1980. It was designed to serve as a greenhouse, but instead became an entry foyer and gallery space.

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Orange Door Building, 1957-1965 (photos 13-18): This building is located in the south area of the complex, south of the A-Frame Building and entry drive. With entries on the north and south, the tall one-story building rests upon a concrete foundation and has a rectangular footprint of 29' x 52' with a height of 13'. The building's two parallel battered side walls on the east and west were built of slip-formed concrete embedded with exposed fieldstones. Each wall is 3'8" wide at the base tapering to 1'3" at the top.

Seven large board-formed reinforced concrete roof trusses rest upon the walls. Placed at equidistant intervals from north to south, these run on an east-west axis and project a few feet beyond the walls, where their ends are tapered and weathered. Although the trusses run in straight lines longitudinally, they are curved along the tops and bottoms. This was achieved by splitting their long middle segments into upper and lower chords. A short vertical block of concrete connects the chords at their widest center point. Viewed from the side, the trusses are reminiscent of elongated eyes. Inside the building, the trusses are exposed to view and random areas along their sides retain pieces of what appear to be black tar paper that was purposefully left in place. The end trusses on the north and south each have metal plates mounted to the lowest points of their lower chords that tie them into the wood framed end walls below.

Long boards curved to match the upper arches rest on top of the concrete trusses. Atop those is the low-sloped curved roof. Highest at the middle, the roof flares down toward the east and west eaves. Deep eaves with curved slopes and outer edges are also present along the north and south ends of the building. On the exterior, the roof appears to be clad in metal sheeting. Along its underside, including along the eaves, it is finished with hundreds of exposed 2" x 4" boards that run from north to south and are placed on edge next to one another. This stacked-board ceiling technique was also employed on the adjacent A-Frame Building, although there the slopes are much steeper.

The entrance on the north is centered and contains a pair of wide wood doors that are painted orange and constructed of horizontal boards on the exterior and vertical boards on the interior. These are secured with hand-forged metal strap hinges and a vertical bar mechanism that locks the doors into the concrete threshold. On either side of the entry, the walls rest upon low kickplates of slip-formed concrete with fieldstones. Above the kickplates, the lower walls are formed of alternating vertical wood and fiberglass panels, with glass panes mounted behind the fiberglass. A single horizontal band of boards extends along the wall above the entry. The upper area of the wall is filled with six large panes of glass that tip slightly outward, are arched at the tops, and are separated from one another by narrow wood framing.

At the south end of the building is another centered entrance. This contains a pair of wood doors constructed with horizontal boards on the exterior and vertical ones on the interior. The eastern one is a Dutch door that allows the upper half to open while the lower half remains closed. The two halves are secured with a forged metal bolt clasp. Metal strap hinges hold the doors to the frames and the handles were fashioned from small, repurposed metal gears. On either side of the entry, the walls rest upon low kickplates of slip-formed concrete with fieldstones. Above the kickplates, the lower walls flanking the entry are formed of a checkerboard pattern of small, fixed panes of glass divided by wide vertical and horizontal boards, with a single board band stretching across the wall above the entry. As on the north, the upper wall consists of six large panes of glass that tip slightly outward, are arched at the tops, and are separated from one another by narrow wood framing.

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Inside the building, the space has a concrete floor and is open to the exterior walls and curved roof trusses. A block-shaped structure occupies the north-central area, and this contains a restroom and storage room. Its walls were built of slip-form concrete and concrete blocks, all capped by flat board-formed concrete with inset fiberglass panels that allow light into the structure. The restroom has a concrete floor and walls with inset stones, and its west-facing door was constructed by Soldner using multiple strips of scrap wood fastened vertically and held in place by a wood frame. The storeroom door, which faces north, is fire-treated plywood. Off the south end of the structure is the open kitchen, which has colored concrete counters and a long shelf formed from a thin concrete strip. A long, framed closet projects to the south from the kitchen to partially enclose a bedroom space. The closet's three sliding doors and side panels are fire treated.

A number of additional historic features are found inside the building. Within the north entry is a steel grate set into the floor, which is paved with flat stones and concrete blocks. The grate was placed there to remove snow and dirt from shoes. Along the east concrete wall are niches that serve as shelves. The west wall has a large triangular niche that is occupied by a handmade metal fireplace. It has a raised base with a concrete hearth, atop which is a single layer of fire bricks held in place by metal straps. Catenary-arched sheet metal similar to Soldner's kilns encloses a metal drum that lays on its side with a door secured to the lid. This serves as the firebox. Sheet metal panels enclose the area above the drum, some of them reportedly scavenged from the body of a pickup truck. Capping the structure are three vintage iron pipe segments, possibly scavenged from an area mine, with a central metal flue rising upward to pierce the board ceiling. All three of the pipes were originally used but two were eventually abandoned. The triangular fireplace is lined with metal bars along the edges and across the middle. Also present are three fireplace tools that were hand-forged by Paul Soldner.

Alterations – The building is not known to have experienced any significant alterations since its period of construction.

Round Building, 1965-1970 (photos 19-26): This two-story-tall circular building, shaped like a beehive or barrel cactus, stands west of the A-Frame Building. Resting upon a concrete foundation, the building has a diameter of 37' and its exterior walls are constructed of stacked cinder blocks that are exposed on the interior and covered with stucco on the exterior. The wide entrance on the east was intended to allow for autos to be parked in the building, although this never happened. The entry originally held doors cobbled together from scrap wood, but these were replaced after 1977 with four sliding glass doors with wood frames. Resting on metal rails, they telescope to the north to create a three-quarter-wide opening. There are no other entries or windows on the building.

The corbeled roof rests on the concrete block walls and was formed by the diagonal placement of wood beams and planks in tiers whose distance around a central point decreases as the structure rises in height. This resulted in a roof shaped like an inverted, flared cone. The tiered beams and planks are exposed to view on the interior and the gaps between them are filled with triangular sheets of plywood decking. Due to leakage, the woodwork is clad in metal flashing on the exterior to ensure proper drainage. Despite the cladding, the complex structure remains fully visible inside and out. A hexagonal skylight caps the roof at its peak.

On the interior, the building retains its poured concrete floor and a raised concrete foundation with fieldstones, which is not visible on the exterior but forms a shelf around the perimeter. Also visible are

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the curved cinder block walls and tiered roof structure. Four pairs of diagonal walls hung with paintings by Ginny Soldner face toward the middle of the room. Behind the walls, the small partially enclosed spaces contain work benches, shelving, peg boards and storage space for items such as hand and power tools, electrical cords, and various supplies used for maintenance and fabrication on the site.

The loft in the upper half of the building is reached by way of a steep spiral metal staircase hidden behind one of the pairs of diagonal walls. Extending around the perimeter, the loft has a large circular opening in the middle that overlooks the main floor below. To create that opening, the floor cantilevers out toward the middle of the room and is supported from below by an octagonal system of posts, beams and joists. Metal gusset plates connect the beams to one another at their meeting points above the posts. Shorter horizontal beams tie the inner ring to the outer walls of the building to provide structural stability. These stabilizing beams rest upon a series of large curved triangular concrete and fieldstone supports that project into the building from the outer walls. Each triangular support has a circular metal plate mounted to its face. These appear to be repurposed discs from a vintage harrow plow.

The loft floor above the post and beam structure has its own unique characteristics. Resting upon the beams are numerous straight and slightly curved wood joists that are either paired or in sets of three. These extend from the curved outer walls toward the middle of the building, where they terminate to form the circular loft opening. At their outer ends, the joists rest upon wood blocks mounted to the cinder block walls. Their inner ends are bolted to one another where they cantilever toward the interior opening. The floor above is finished with what appears to be vintage tongue-in-groove flooring, although in at least one area this has been replaced with plywood. Above that, much of the floor is covered with carpeting except for the inner ends of the joists. Mounted around the perimeter of the loft opening is an open rail formed by numerous rebar wheels that were originally fabricated for use in Soldner pottery kickwheels. These stand on end and are welded to one another and to a metal handrail along the top. The rail was installed after 1977.

Alterations – The building is not known to have experienced any significant structural alterations since its period of construction other than cladding of the roof structure's exterior in metal.

Studio Building (Long Building), circa 1974-1978 (photos 27-34): This building is located in the southwest area of the complex, just west of the Orange Door Building and south of the Round Building. It rests upon a concrete foundation, has a footprint of 14' x 60', and its south wall is built against a low embankment. The exterior walls were built of slip-form concrete panels with embedded fieldstones of varying sizes and shapes. Vertical timbers placed at regular intervals divide the slip-form panels from one another, and a number of these appear to be repurposed railroad ties. At the northeast corner of the building is a single panel of fieldstones with minimal concrete mortar. The north exterior wall in this area contains an embedded nude female ceramic figure along with broken beer bottles. Brickwork with weeping concrete mortar rises above the north and east concrete walls.

On the west is the larger enclosed studio area of the building. The primary entrance is found on its east wall, and this holds a glass sliding door with a wood frame. Adjacent to that are two large, fixed lights with metal frames. Several fixed horizontal windows with wood frames are present along the south and east walls. These are separated by short concrete and fieldstone pillars that rest upon the foundation wall and support two bands of heavy horizontal timbers along with smaller panels of slip-form concrete and fieldstones. Heavy timbers serving as roof beams rest on top of the horizontal

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timbers on the south, and along the north they rest on the lower concrete wall panels. The difference in height between the north and south walls cause the beams to sit on a diagonal, allowing for the placement of windows along the south wall. The ends of the beams project from both walls. Plywood decking was placed atop the beams to enclose the shed roof, which is finished with standing seam metal panels.

Within the enclosed studio space are a number of historic features, including all of Paul Soldner's art supplies and equipment. The room features a concrete floor, concrete, stone and brick walls, the windows along the south, and exposed roof beams and decking. Light comes from the windows along with bare bulbs mounted with conduit along the undersides of the beams. It holds shelving, worktables, a number of potter's wheels that were patented and fabricated by Soldner, an antique electric oven and stove, a barrel still filled with raw clay, an area set up for photography, and various supplies for adding color and patterns to ceramic pieces. The studio appears as if the artist might return at any time to resume his work.

To the east is the slightly taller, partially enclosed porch extension that was built to serve as sheltered studio space. Known as the Kiln Yard, this has a concrete floor and is entered through openings in the walls on the north and south. Within the space is a Soldner patented and marketed clay mixing machine along with an overhead gantry. Also present are two Soldner kilns of very different sizes. Built with fire brick platforms, metal frameworks, and catenary-arched sheet metal roofs, they were designed to roll open and closed along metal rails. The structure has slip-form concrete with fieldstone walls and brickwork on the north and east, and the enclosed studio on the west. Its shed roof is constructed with several large timbers running on an east-west axis, with their ends projecting from the east wall. On top of these are smaller timbers. These together with smaller boards support the corrugated metal roof.

Alterations – The building is not known to have experienced any significant alterations since its period of construction.

Wine Cellar, circa 1980-1995 (photos 35-37): This building is located in the northwest area of the complex, northwest of the A-frame Building and north of the Round Building. Constructed both above and below ground, its full dimensions and use are not apparent based upon its exterior appearance, but the bunker-like building actually has a footprint of 22' x 29'. Visible from the exterior is what appears to be a large earthen mound covered with native grass along with a large, squared opening on the east and a tall slip-form concrete wall on the south. A vertical vent pipe projects from the peak of the earthen mound. An open wood deck is on the ground to the south.

The entrance on the east is flanked by boulders and cylindrical concrete piers. Its large rectangular opening is capped by a massive bolted and riveted metal structure that appears to have been scavenged from a mining, milling or industrial site. With its visually striking curved and squared openings, metal screens, and finial-like projections at the top, this was placed there purely as a decorative feature. Just below the metal structure is a horizontal board with a metal plate mounted to its face. This is inscribed with the Soldner logo, which includes the family name along with the Japanese symbol for the word "sol," which means "hand." The opening provides access to a stairway with concrete slab treads that drop into the ground. Along the sides of the stairway, the walls are formed of

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large square handmade concrete blocks with recessed centers. A stained plywood door with an arched top provides access into the building.

The interior of the wine cellar consists of two rooms, one upper and the other lower. The first room entered is rectangular with a concrete floor, stuccoed concrete south wall, slip-form concrete north wall with a centered opening to the lower level, and a barrel-arched board-formed concrete ceiling with vertical board banding. This room holds wooden work benches for winemaking. Some of Soldner's wine along with bottles and other equipment used in the process are still stored there. A tall catenary-arched opening in the north wall is lined with two wythes of brick. These originated in a large kiln that stood in the Kiln Yard that was disassembled and repurposed. The opening encloses a short set of concrete and brick steps that drop to the lower level of the wine cellar.

The long, cylindrical lower room is essentially a cold storage cellar for wine. It was formed from a large historic riveted rotary lime kiln that was brought to the site, placed on its side, and buried. An arched opening was cut into its south wall to allow for access from the upper level. The floor in this room was formed with plywood planks and the kiln's circular east and west end walls are finished with concrete embedded with logs placed on end. Bottles of wine produced by Paul Soldner are still stored in the lower room.

Alterations – The only alteration to this building involved the construction in 2011 of a small area of non-structural concrete wall with embedded fieldstones at its southeast corner that replaced a pile of dirt. This was erected for a memorial celebration of Paul Soldner's life, and one of his bronze wall pieces is mounted in the concrete.

CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

Hot Tub, 1975 (photo 38): This structure is located in the landscaped space between the A-Frame Building and the Round Building. It also has the Wine Cellar to the north and the Studio Building to the south. Constructed by Paul Soldner for the family's enjoyment and that of their guests, the hot tub was formed by hand to be natural looking rather than something purchased from a manufacturer. Soldner shaped the tub's walls and floor using a ferro-cement technique that involved a combination of thin-shell concrete reinforced with wire mesh and rebar. The resulting hot tub has three curving lobes with a deep flat floor in the middle. It is entered from the concrete and stone walkway to the north by way of concrete steps, with a seat platform in the south lobe. The lip of the tub is lined with rocks, boulders and plantings.

Alterations – This structure is not known to have experienced any significant alterations since its period of construction.

CONTRIBUTING SITE - LANDSCAPING

Grounds Around the A-Frame Building: Outside of the east entrance is a small sunken patio with a concrete floor and low concrete walls with embedded fieldstones. It is reached from the driveway by a set of wide concrete steps with inset fieldstones and board treads formed by repurposed railroad ties. The metal pipe handrail along the stairs is formed from three repurposed potter's wheel frames. A boulder and small depression at the patio's northeast corner have been turned into a running water

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feature with a fifty-year-old evergreen bonsai. The east lawn is bordered by a long pile of boulders on the north and a low concrete and fieldstone wall on the south. The boulders were brought to the site by the Soldners and placed there. In addition to grass, the area is planted with mature Aspen trees, evergreens, and bonsai plants. A large rectangular slab of scrap marble from the Yule quarry at Marble rests horizontally on the ground. Several of Paul Soldner's bronze sculptures are displayed on concrete plinths. Two large, rusted radiator sculptures are located along the building's east wall and these were used to support stacked firewood. On the west side of the building is the hot tub. Reached by way of a stone pathway across the grass, the hot tub is surrounded by large boulders of various hues along with bonsai plants, Aspen trees, and another of Soldner's abstract sculptures displayed on a concrete plinth.

Grounds Around the Orange Door Building: On the north side of the Orange Door Building is the end of the graveled driveway along with a concrete sidewalk that runs toward the northwest. Just outside the entrance is a small concrete pad with an embedded ceramic platter made by Paul Soldner. A patio formed by multiple concrete slabs with gaps between them covers the ground outside the south entrance. Grassed areas and mature trees are located to the east and west of the building.

Grounds Around the Round Building: On the east side of this building is the hot tub. This is surrounded by large boulders of various hues along with bonsai plants, Aspen trees, and one of Paul Soldner's bronze sculptures displayed on a concrete plinth. Concrete and flagstone pathways run across the grass toward the A-Frame Building to the east and the Studio Building to the south. Planted grass and native grasses surround the rest of the building.

Grounds Around the Studio (Long) Building: To the north of this building are the landscaped grounds between the A-Frame Building and Round Building. The area to the east is essentially the west end of the driveway between the A-Frame Building and the Orange Building. The open grounds to the south and west are covered with native grasses and trees.

CONTRIBUTING OBJECTS

Outdoor Sculptures, 1980s-1990s (not included in resource count; photos 40-43): Many of Paul Soldner's abstract sculptures are displayed within the buildings and on the surrounding landscaped grounds. A few are also found at the main entry to the property, along the entry drive, and on the open ground south of the Studio Building. Most are mounted on concrete plinths of various shapes and sizes. While Soldner was primarily known as a ceramic artist, the outdoor sculptures are predominantly bronze copies he created of his ceramic works and date from the later years of his career. One additional outdoor sculpture is neither ceramic or bronze but was formed from heavy repurposed timbers and stacked vintage steam radiators. As with the buildings themselves, this sculpture is indicative of Soldner's artistic flair for using found materials. The two circular metal sculptures south of the Studio Building were placed there by Paul Soldner but consist of repurposed industrial or mining equipment found in the area.

INTEGRITY

The Soldner Home and Studio property retains all of its historic characteristics from its long period of construction and use. These features include the building complex, surrounding landscaped grounds,

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and various structures and objects. Evaluation must be considered in light of the seven aspects of integrity, as defined by the US Department of the Interior:

Location – The historic buildings, structures and objects on this property have not been moved and the aspect of location is excellent.

Setting – The property was developed in the countryside just west of Aspen and is situated to take advantage of its visually isolated setting. With higher ground to the south and west, the view from the site in those directions is limited. To the north and northeast, open ground leads to views of the mountains in the near distance. Due to the rolling terrain, few houses or buildings can be seen from the Soldner complex other than those that are higher and more distant on the hillsides. The property is bordered on the south by an earthen berm that runs along the north side of the road, and to the east is a log post-and-rail fence. Upon entering the property at its southeast corner, the building complex is largely obscured behind mature trees. As a whole, the landscaping on the site has matured over the years, effectively making the property seem even more protected from its surroundings. The grounds around the buildings are landscaped as described above. In general, the aspect of setting is excellent.

Design – The buildings and structures on the property were constructed by hand over a period of many years, without plans prepared by a design professional and with various improvisations made along the way. Its design features reflect the owner's creativity and resourcefulness. Although limited historic and non-historic alterations have occurred, the property is largely intact and exhibits an excellent level of integrity in the area of design.

Materials – As the buildings and structures were erected, the owner employed a combination of manufactured and repurposed materials, some of them gathered from historic mining, milling and processing sites in the area. These include extensive use of slip-form concrete with embedded fieldstones, board-formed concrete, repurposed metal and heavy timbers, cinder blocks, and dimensional lumber. How the materials were used reflect his sense of creativity, vision and improvisation. Most of these remain visible and apparent, and the property exhibits an excellent level of integrity in the area of materials.

Workmanship – The skills that it took to construct the buildings and structures on the site remain apparent and reflect the owner's determination and creativity even though he was an artist and not a professional builder. It is clear that the workmanship employed to develop these resources was a remarkable achievement. The property continues to exhibit an excellent level of integrity in the area of workmanship.

Feeling – The property continues to read as a historic residential and art studio complex dating from the mid- to late-twentieth century and conveys a clear sense of feeling in relation to its origins and use. Because of this, it exhibits an excellent level of integrity in the area of feeling.

Association – This property possesses unique architectural characteristics and a history of development and use that is directly associated with the life and work of prominent ceramic artist Paul Soldner. Because it is so intact from his long period of occupancy and use, it exhibits an excellent level of integrity in the area of association.

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In general, the property conveys a clear sense of its historic age, architectural styles, and history of use between 1957 and 1995 (the period of significance for the purpose of this nomination). This is the era when Paul Soldner constructed the buildings, developed the landscape, and pursued his artwork and business enterprise. Throughout this entire period, it was owned and occupied by the Soldner family and used as a primary residence and art studio. Consequently, the property's integrity supports its historic significance.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ART

ARCHITECTURE

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

SOLDNER, PAUL

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Period of Significance

1965-1995 (ART)

1957-1995 (ARCHITECTURE)

Architect/Builder

SOLDNER, PAUL

Significant Dates

Period of Significance: The period of significance for this resource under the category of Art extends from 1965 to 1995, covering much of the period when Paul Soldner used the property as his primary residence and art studio (although this use ran for another decade beyond the end date). Under the category of Architecture, the period of significance runs from 1957 to 1995, covering the period when development work on the site began and construction came to an end.

Criteria Considerations: Criteria Consideration G states that properties are excluded from the National Register if they are less than fifty years old or have achieved significance within the past fifty years. Initial development of the Soldner property occurred more than fifty years ago between 1957 and 1971, a period that represents the first fourteen years of Paul Soldner's professional art career. In that span of years, the A-Frame Building, Orange Door Building and Round Building were constructed by Paul Soldner. Both the Orange Door Building and Round Building were initially used, starting in 1965, as Soldner's ceramics studios. In other words, from 1965 on, Aspen was where he primarily lived and created his art, and Claremont was where he taught during the school year (although teaching also took place in Aspen and through workshops held throughout the country). The A-Frame Building provided residential space as well as a workshop where the family's patented Soldner Electric Wheels were assembled. This was the period during which Soldner became known both nationally and internationally for his impact upon the field of ceramic arts.

Between 1971 and 1995, Soldner continued to expand the complex through his construction of the Studio Building, Hot Tub and Wine Cellar. The landscaping was also installed and plantings matured during this period. As it was completed, the Studio Building became Soldner's final dedicated space, both inside and out, for the creation of his ceramic pieces. The Hot Tub and Wine Cellar served as focal points of the family's frequent entertainment of students, friends and fellow artists, including those who visited regularly from the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass. It should be noted that the Soldners never lived at Anderson Ranch, and his studio remained within the Aspen complex that is the subject of this nomination. Soldner's creation of art, energetic engagement in the field, and ongoing teaching through frequent workshops held across the United States continued throughout the period of significance.

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Considering the standards developed for Criteria Consideration G, the property is exceptionally significant as the home and studio of artist Paul Soldner and his wife Ginny. It is eligible under Criterion B and C even though construction continued for years into the fifty-year period.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary Paragraph

The Soldner Home and Studio is significant on the national level under **Criterion B** in the area of **Art** for its association with the life and work of internationally renowned American ceramic artist Paul Soldner. Due to the innovative quality of his Abstract Expressionist artwork, which deviated from the more functional ceramics of the past, Soldner began to be recognized in the art world by the time he graduated with his MFA in 1956 from the Los Angeles County Art Institute (LACAI). He became known as the “Father of American Raku” for the Japanese-inspired ceramic technique he pioneered in 1960 and began teaching to students. In addition, Soldner pioneered the art of creating continuously thrown pots, a technique also known as “extended throwing,” with some of his pieces reaching remarkable heights of more than seven feet. He also perfected the technique of low-temperature salt fuming, which added distinctive colors and textures to ceramic works.

Between the mid-1950s and his death in 2011, Soldner’s fame grew beyond the states of Ohio, Colorado and California, all places he had lived and worked, as he became recognized on a national and then international level as a master of the ceramic arts. He produced numerous pieces that ended up in private collections and museums all over the world, and greatly impacted subsequent generations of artists. His work and legacy continue to inspire them today.

Soldner’s impact upon the world of ceramics was described in a 2004 documentary produced for the Aspen Hall of Fame: “For students and curators, his work was raw and exciting, a jazz-like stream of consciousness, reducing ceramic traditions to their basic elements. He found his place in an art world that was ripe for earthy, honest innovation. The usual assumptions about symmetry and purpose for pottery were thrown out.”¹

Although the Soldner family maintained a home in Claremont, California, where he was engaged in teaching at Scripps College for many years, the Aspen home and studio became his primary residence and studio in 1965, as soon as the buildings could be occupied year-round. From 1957, when Soldner began construction on the site, through the period prior to his death in 2011, this was where he spent much of his time living, innovating, and creating art. Consequently, the property’s period of significance under this category runs from 1965, when he began to create artwork on the site, to 1995 when the wine cellar was completed and most of the outdoor sculptures were installed.

The property is also significant on the local level under **Criterion C** in the area of **Architecture** for the complex of organic Modernist, or perhaps Neo-Expressionist, buildings and landscaping that Soldner designed and constructed to serve as a family home and art studio. Built of concrete, stone, wood and metal, much of it scavenged, he viewed the buildings as his largest sculptures. The property’s period

¹ Paul Soldner, Aspen Hall of Fame, Biography and Documentary Film, Located Online at www.aspenhalloffame.org.

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of significance under this category runs from 1957, when it was acquired and development began, through 1995, when the wine cellar was completed. Research suggests that no known examples of similar organic architecture from the middle decades of the 20th century are known to have survived to the present day in the Aspen area, making the Soldner property a rare local example of the style.

In 2022, the National Trust for Historic Preservation added the Soldner Studio to the Historic Artists' Homes and Studios (HAHS) program. Founded in 1999-2000, the program is a coalition of more than forty homes and working studios of nationally significant American artists. Among them are the Andrew Wyeth Studio, Charles M. Russell Museum, Daniel Chester French Home and Studio, Edward Hopper House Museum, Georgia O'Keeffe Home and Studio, Grant Wood Studio, N. C. Wyeth House and Studio, Thomas Hart Benton Home and Studio, and the Winslow Homer Studio. The Soldner house was added to the program in the same cohort as Norman Rockwell's studio in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.²

Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion B – Art: The nominated property is significant under this criterion for its association with prominent twentieth-century ceramic artist Paul Soldner, who was active in the field from 1956 until shortly before his death in 2011. Soldner's Colorado studio is the most appropriate site for listing associated with his artistic legacy because of the long period of association, the high degree of integrity of the studio, and the fact that Soldner quite literally built the studio from scratch. The site is thus a reflection of his artistic vision and a work of art unto itself.

After growing up the son of a Mennonite minister in the Upper Midwest, Soldner declared conscientious objector status and served as a medic in World War II. During the course of his service, he participated in the Battle of the Bulge and the liberation of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp, both moving and even traumatic experiences for American soldiers. His experiences during the war changed the course of his life and he returned home dedicated to becoming a professional artist.

After attending the University of Colorado, Soldner moved to California in 1954 to complete an MFA in ceramics at the Los Angeles County Art Institute (LACAI). However, ceramics was widely viewed as a functional craft rather than an art form. For centuries, potters had made pots, along with other useful items such as plates, bowls and cups. While many of these pieces exhibited beauty and reflected a variety of cultural features, in the end their functionality was the key underlying element, and this restricted potters to those forms that could be used or would sell on the market.

At LACAI, Soldner was the first MFA student to study and graduate under the guidance of Peter Voulkos, who had just been hired to develop the ceramics department. A skilled and barrier-breaking artist himself, Voulkos instilled in his students the the notion that it was high time to break the mold of the past and create non-functional ceramic works that would undoubtedly be viewed as art. Voulkos brought Abstract Expressionism to the art of ceramics and Soldner took off running. From the beginning of his career to the end, he influenced the field in a variety of ways.

² Valerie Balint, "Historic Artists' Homes and Studios Program Names Seven New Sites Celebrating Diversity in Artistic Legacy," *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, Website. <https://savingplaces.org/press-center/media-resources/historic-artists-homes-and-studios-program-names-seven-new-sites#.YxJs-nbMLtQ>

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By the time Soldner graduated in 1956, he was producing monumental floor pots that were continuously thrown and reached heights of seven feet or more. He pioneered this technique, which took much experimentation working with the clay and kickwheels so the remarkably tall pieces could be formed without collapsing or toppling to the ground. This was something new in the field of ceramics and art critics, galleries, exhibit organizers and collectors began to notice his work by the time he graduated with his MFA. Soldner's pioneering techniques encouraged others to take ceramics in directions they might not have considered before.

Over the following years, Soldner developed a Zen-like approach to life and art through which openness to life's varied experiences and learning from mistakes were paramount. By 1960, he had encountered Japanese raku pottery and the ancient techniques used to create pieces used in tea ceremonies. That year, during a demonstration of kiln firing at the Lively Arts Festival in Claremont, he stumbled upon a technique that not only changed the course of his career but also that of numerous ceramic artists around the world. Removing a red-hot pot from a kiln rather than letting it cool down first, Soldner rolled it in some nearby pepper tree leaves to see what might result. The burning, then smothered organic material left a smoky glaze on the pot along with subtle patterns from the leaves. This dramatic approach also lent itself well to ceramics demonstrations.

Soldner refined the technique to perfection using a variety of materials to create the smoky effect. The approach became known as American Raku and it is still practiced today. Although Soldner was not the first American artist to discover Japanese Raku work or the first to explore what could be done with it, "his contribution rests on his sustained enthusiasm and ubiquitous presence, which inspired many to embrace the technique. It was through Soldner's engagement that the technique developed an American slant and became grafted onto studio ceramics practice across the country." Soldner understood early on that his technique was not the same as the ancient Japanese one used to make tea bowls. Initially uncomfortable with the term American Raku, which was quickly embraced by the American arts community, Soldner continued to use it to describe his own method of smoking pots and other ceramic pieces.³

Soldner also pioneered the technique of low temperature salt fuming. This involved firing ceramics in a kiln using a combination of fire, oxygen and salt to create textures and splashes of color without the use of a glaze. To accomplish this, Soldner placed a mound of salt the size of a large orange in the path of each burner within the kiln. To achieve various effects, the salt was mixed with minerals and compounds such as copper carbonate to cause the surface of the ceramic piece to take on colors.

As the 1970s drew to a close, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Soldner had become "an influential figure in the revival of salt glazing and various means of decorating pottery, [and] it has been said that his imagery and style is a cross between expressionism and elements of Buddhism and Taoism. Of his work, Soldner said recently 'It reflects what I am doing now. Its success or failure will eventually be decided by others, by the test of time, and by its relationship to its culture.'" The following year, the newspaper wrote that "Paul Soldner enjoys international renown for earth-colored ceramics that combine material honesty with Japanese space. Soldner...was a leader of the West Coast's ceramics revolution that applied Abstract Expressionist energy to clay. Soldner's gentle insistence that clay look like clay and his introduction of Raku firing's iridescent, smoky effects influenced hundreds, probably

³ Martha Drexler Lynn, *American Studio Ceramics: Innovation and Identity, 1940 to 1979*, p. 232-233.

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thousands, of students.” Many of his students went on to become professional artists and educators, expanding his impact through them, and his lectures and workshops across the country were eagerly anticipated and well attended.⁴

Soldner became influential not only as an artist but also as a teacher in both Claremont and Aspen, inspiring a generation of younger artists to pursue their own dreams in the field. He “believed that experience and mistakes lead to progress and innovation,” and that “one of the most important elements in all art is the unexpected, the element of surprise of chance.” Everything, including the mistakes and failures, was an opportunity to learn. Soldner developed a reputation as a barrier-breaking artist and a compassionate, generous, approachable instructor who challenged his students to create their own artistic path. He was quoted as saying, “In the spirit of raku, there is the necessity to embrace the element of surprise. There can be no fear of losing what was once planned and there must be an urge to grow along with the discovery of the unknown. Make no demands, expect nothing, follow no absolute plan, be secure in change, learn to accept another solution and, finally, prefer to gamble on your own intuition.” His obituary published in the Aspen newspaper concluded that this approach to his art also served as his approach to life.⁵

In Claremont, California, Soldner taught during the school years at Scripps College from 1956 to 1966 and then again from 1970 to 1991. His students greatly appreciated his relaxed style of teaching, through which he not only encouraged them to explore new approaches to ceramic work, but also how to build shipping crates, photograph their artwork and design exhibits. In Aspen, Soldner worked in the evolving studio spaces he created within his developing residential complex. Although he would spend the school year in California encouraging burgeoning artists on their journey, from 1965 on his primary place of work in terms of creating sculptural pieces was Aspen rather than Claremont.

Soldner’s two-day ceramics workshops, held all over the United States, were energetic affairs where students and working artists gathered to learn from the master himself. Demand remained high throughout his career and registration filled quickly. Ceramics pieces were shaped the first day and fired the next. The events typically included the installation of a show at a local gallery and an opening party. Known as a showman, Soldner entertained his audiences with movement and energy and rapid-fire information. One of his favorite stunts was to pretend to struggle with a large lump of clay, wondering aloud why it was not shaping to his liking. He would then pull a rope from the mass to the amusement of everyone in attendance.

In Aspen, Soldner is recognized as the founder of the renowned Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass Village, which has been in continuous operation since 1966. Starting with ceramics, the facility expanded over the years to provide hundreds of artists from all over the world with annual workshops in the visual arts. These have expanded from ceramics to include photography, woodworking, digital media, illustration, painting, CAD design and 3D printing, metalworking, animation, textile arts and print making. During its first decade, Soldner served as director of the Anderson Ranch Arts Center. His direct association with the Center was short in comparison to his time at the home studio in Aspen, and his service there was associated more with his legacy as a beloved teacher, rather

⁴ “Contemporary Ceramics Artist Featured at Local Gallery,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 November 1979, p. 18; “Paul Soldner enjoys international reknown [sic]...,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 September 1980, part VI, p. 6.

⁵ “Paul Soldner,” Artist’s Biography, Smithsonian American Art Museum; “Guess What’s in the Oven,” *San Francisco Examiner*, California Living Magazine, 9 November 1980, p. 39-42; “Anderson Ranch’s Paul Soldner, Ceramist, Artist, Teacher, Dies,” *Aspen Daily News*, 4 January 2011.

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than with his importance as an artist in his own right. The Center has also undergone several major building campaigns not associated with Soldner's tenure as director and does not retain the strong integrity of his home studio.

Finally, Paul Soldner's career provides a good example of the business of art through his design, fabrication and marketing of pottery equipment from the mid-1950s through the end of the century. This evolved from his initial fabrication of kickwheels for the ceramics studio at the Los Angeles County Art Institute in 1954 to the establishment of Soldner Pottery Equipment Inc. in the 1960s and the manufacturing and marketing of the firm's Soldner Electric Wheels and Soldner Clay Mixers. While the firm has been sold, the products designed by Paul Soldner remain on the market today and are considered top quality.

Soldner's artwork, divided between wall pieces and pedestal pieces, is found in numerous private collections as well as those of museums worldwide. Among the many institutions that own his work are the following:

American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA
Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ
Australian National Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Charles H. MacNider Art Museum, Mason City, IA
Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, Latvia
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, FL
Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, AL
Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY
National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan
Oakland Museum of Art, Oakland, CA
Racine Art Museum, Racine, WI
Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, CA
Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England

Additional pieces have been reported to be in the art collections of the following American companies:

Chubb Insurance Company, New York, NY
Coca Cola Corporate Art Collection, Atlanta, GA
Johnson Wax Corporation Art Collection, Racine, WI
Packaging Corporation of America, Evanston, IL
Prudential Life Insurance Company, New York, NY
US News & World Report Corporation Art Collection, Washington, DC

Following his death in 2011, the *New York Times* wrote "Mr. Soldner incorporated the lessons of Abstract Expressionism and modernist sculpture in his work, throwing floor pots with expressionistically painted areas that rose to near-ceiling height." The newspaper extolled his revolutionary work with American Raku, his teaching at several universities and numerous workshops across the country, his

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founding of the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass, and his invention, refinement and marketing of better performing kickwheels and clay mixers. The *Times* also noted that his later fractured ceramic works had an interesting resemblance to the shapes of his bonsai plants, a connection not made elsewhere in the literature.⁶

In her monumental scholarly work, *American Studio Ceramics, Innovation and Identity, 1940-1979*, published in 2015 by Yale University Press, art historian Martha Drexler Lynn devotes much attention to the career and lasting impact of Paul Soldner. She notes that “the 1950s marked the emergence of leading potters who by the 1960s would become the ‘stars’ of the field. This select cadre included, among others, Peter Voukos [and] Paul Soldner. Each attracted distinct contingents and adopted clear identities that were reinforced through exhibitions and teaching.” By the 1960s, Soldner and American contemporaries including Jim Leedy, John Mason, Rudy Autio, Jerry Rothman, Henry Takemoto and Ken Shores were pushing the boundaries of traditional ceramics, freeing “potters worldwide to abandon the perfectly thrown vessel and embrace expressive and challenging forms.” Although this was not without some controversy, the door to Abstract Expressionism in ceramics was opened by these early pioneers in the field, Soldner prominent among them. This allowed practitioners of ceramics to navigate the field’s transition from a traditional craft to a modern art form.⁷

While Soldner lived at his Claremont home and worked at the Anderson Ranch Art Center, the house in Aspen is the most significantly associated site to his historic legacy. The Aspen house was his long-term home and studio as well a site he built from local materials. The studio was not only his long-term home and a place where he worked, it is also an expression of his artistic vision and remains a large-scale example of his professional works.

Criterion C – Architecture: The nominated property is significant under this criterion for its remarkable collection of mid-20th century organic Modernist, or Neo-Expressionist buildings and structures, each one unique and designed and built between 1957 and 1978 by Paul Soldner in partnership with his wife Ginny. Because no architect, contractor or construction crew was involved and an effort was made to erect them using inexpensive materials and scavenged objects, the buildings took years to complete. They were constructed without plans and through the creative resourcefulness and problem-solving work of the artist who shaped them as he would one of his ceramic pieces.

In his 2008 book, *Nothing to Hide: Exposures, Disclosures and Reflections*, Paul Soldner wrote about his development of the property and the aesthetic he sought for the buildings and site:

“The Japanese believe that a pot is not finished until it is used. Like old furniture, the patina from use cannot be faked easily. This understanding was an important element in the building of our home in Aspen, Colorado. It became clear to me that in the United States, architecture is built so that it is the best the day you move in. After that, plaster cracks, the paint peels, and it becomes tarnished, requiring endless vigilance and maintenance. We decided to build our home with rubble, rock, concrete, raw wood, and unplastered walls. Sixty [actually fifty] years later, it has mellowed. The sun, wind, rain, and snow are adding patina, making it more beautiful each year.”⁸

⁶ “Paul Soldner, 89, Ceramic Artist and Innovator,” *New York Times*, 8 January 2011, sec. B, p. 8.

⁷ Lynn, *American Studio Ceramics: Innovation and Identity, 1940 to 1979*, p. 105 & 191.

⁸ Paul Soldner, *Nothing to Hide: Exposures, Disclosures, and Reflections*, p. 43-45.

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The work of creating art, buildings and landscaping concurrently with one another demanded that Soldner manage his time to make sure that each was progressing as needed. The demands fit his dynamic and seemingly tireless personality, and he put in long days to accomplish all of these tasks. Each day was broken up into useful blocks of time and the developed features on the property began to emerge from the previously vacant site. He was also an early proponent of experimenting with solar energy to provide a building with heat, as he accomplished with the A-Frame Building.

Soldner appears to have been influenced by Claremont, California architect Foster Rhodes Jackson, a Taliesin West fellow who studied under Wright and was applying a similar style to residences he designed in the community where Soldner had attended graduate school and then launched his career as an artist and professor. As the years passed between 1957 and 1995, the buildings were completed one by one. These included the Orange Door Building, A-Frame Building, Round Building, Studio and Wine Cellar. During this period, the Hot Tub was hand-built, the landscaping shaped, and outdoor sculptures were placed throughout the site.

In her 1996 book *The Story of Aspen*, author Mary Eshbaugh Hayes wrote that Soldner's "home is artistic as his sculptures. The compound of organic buildings includes the studio, the kiln under the shed, a solar heated main house, and an office-bedroom little house. Every one a different shape. A different form." Interviewed for the book, Soldner stated that "when I started building, there were no building codes. I built in a style that made sense to me. Building out here in this valley...aesthetically it's like sculpture. The sky, the mountains are so vast. There is the challenge of relating the buildings to space."⁹

Looking back on that time years later, the Soldners' daughter Stephanie wrote that "Ginny was a full partner building their home and studio in Aspen and loved it as much as Paul did. She loved the shapes, spaces and materials of the buildings. While Paul worked on the large projects, she often finished the details. She contributed her own ideas about the interior spaces. Shaping the landscape and yards around the buildings was often her vision. She went on to write that "Paul and Ginny were so involved with living I don't think they ever thought their home and studio was anything special except to them, and at the time others were being innovative too so perhaps they just fit in. The buildings evolved slowly, and I think people just accepted that they were artists 'doing their own thing.' Only later did it become clear that what they had built was remarkable."¹⁰

Although Aspen's list of surviving mid-20th century organic Modernist buildings is very short and at this time only includes the Soldner complex, other properties in the state are recognized for their association with this style. Prominent among these are the handiwork of independent architects Charles Deaton and Charles Haertling, both of whom designed a variety of sculptural residences and other buildings along Colorado's Front Range starting in the 1960s. Deaton's Sculptured House (NRIS.02000385), prominently located in the foothills above Interstate 70 west of Denver, was started in 1963-1966 and completed over the following decades. Another notable project is his 1965-1967 Key Savings and Loan Building (NRIS.16000447) in Englewood south of Denver. More prolific than Deaton, Haertling is known for the numerous organic houses he designed in and around Boulder, many of which remain standing

⁹ Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, *The Story of Aspen*, p. 182-183.

¹⁰ E-Mail Exchanges with Stephanie Soldner, 13 November 2020 and 22 and 26 December 2020.

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today, along with his soaring 1964 St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Northglenn (NRIS.SG100004209).¹¹

Deaton and Haertling were inspired by the curvilinear shapes found in nature among plants, rocks and living creatures, and these forms made their way into some of their buildings using thin-shell reinforced concrete and soaring structures of wood. They also carefully and creatively sited their buildings to reflect the surrounding terrain. Other Colorado architects producing Modernist and even Neo-Expressionist or organic work during the middle decades of the century included William Muchow, Victor Hornbein, James Hunter, Tician Papachristou, and Eugene Sternberg. All were trained architects working professionally in the field and most of their accomplishments were in service to clients in need of a home or other building. This underscores the significance of what Paul Soldner managed to create in Aspen as an artist who applied his creativity and skills to the field of architecture.

Soldner's buildings represent an exceptional local example of post-World War II organic or Neo-Expressionist design applied to an artist's residence and studio in an alpine setting. Form creatively followed function, and Soldner was designing and building in a way that reflected the postwar Neo-Expressionists interest in deconstructing previous notions of what a building should look like. This included the desire to create original and visionary buildings, a turn toward nature and natural objects as inspiration for building shapes, and the view that architecture is a form of art and sculpture.

Expert Comments on Significance

Several noted persons involved in the arts and historic preservation were contacted to provide comments for this nomination. These included two prominent Aspen architects, a program manager with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and six individuals who are nationally-recognized ceramic artists, arts administrators, and educators. The goal of these interviews and email exchanges was to demonstrate the continued national significance of Paul Soldner's career, particularly his impact upon the field of ceramic arts, along with the architectural importance of his home and studio in Aspen. The following comments were extrapolated from these conversations, all of which took place between May and August 2022:

During the early post-WWII years, Aspen became famous as a ski area but was quiet in the summer months. Paul Soldner started coming there during that period and contributed to Aspen's early cultural awakening. His life was all about submersion on any scale, no matter whether that involved ceramic art or architecture. Soldner threw himself completely into every project. He utilized remarkable creativity with concrete and his bow trusses and slip-form walls were innovative in the way that they were fabricated and applied on site. Soldner was also an innovator in passive and active solar energy. The Soldner complex represents an era in time, specifically in the development of Aspen architecture. It represents a hands-on, do-it-yourself approach. There were a few other properties like this from the era that employed Wrightian-organic design and fabrication, but Paul's was the first and his really stands out. No others are known to have survived. Soldner's home and studio are a form of art at a high level. **Harry Teague – Principal, Harry Teague Architects, Aspen**

Paul Soldner's artistic career was one of experimentation. He approached his ceramic work as an exploration of possibility and grew an influential career out of trial and error. The architecture that he

¹¹ "Charles Deaton," Colorado Encyclopedia, www.coloradoencyclopedia.org/article/charles-deaton, Retrieved on 22 August 2022; Ron Sladek, National Register Nomination, *St. Stephen's Lutheran Church*, Northglenn, CO, 2019.

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created at his home compound in Aspen, grew out of the same artistic inclination. The buildings are the result of exploration of form, material, and functionality. He did not concern himself with the conventions of building but saw an opportunity to find form through his hands-on exploration of construction techniques and found materials. Like his ceramics, this collection of buildings makes his hand and his mind visible to the viewer at both large and small scale.

In the late 1950s, Aspen was just coming into being as an artistic and intellectual community with an emphasis on a life in nature. It was the perfect setting for Paul & Ginny's vision for their family compound. The Soldners took on the hard physical labor of construction by responding with the use of repetitive and manageable elements that form the structural components of the Orange Door building, the A-Frame building and the Round building. Each building was an opportunity to devise a different expression of structure and function.

The A-Frame building is home and gallery, essentially a large interior space divided for living and gallery functions with a series of near vertical concrete ribs that support one side of the A recalling an animal skeleton. The long span concrete beams of the Orange Door building support a large horizontally proportioned interior space, which is highly flexible. These beams were engineered to streamline the use of concrete and create a light enough element to be raised into place without heavy machinery. The Round building references early examples of domed buildings where horizontal elements are stacked in such a way as to create a round space, a form created from the same needs, then and now. The Wine Cellar stands beside these others as a powerful space created with a found object, the tank, transformed from an industrial component into an engaging occupiable space.

In all these examples, buildings and space were created with an economy of material and labor that goes beyond practicality and individual elements, into a creative internal dialog that is expressed through the built outcome of these buildings. **Suzannah Reid – Principal, Reid Architects, Aspen / Past Chair, Aspen Historic Preservation Commission / Pitkin County Historic Preservation Officer**

The Soldner property in Aspen is a rare example of a major American artists' extension of his creativity to his living and working environment. Built over a period of several decades, the place itself is a grand work of art that involved the use of humble materials, unfettered experimentation, early sustainability, and drawing inspiration from the landscape to transform the environment at this particular location. It is perfect in its imperfection, the product of an artist who worked and experimented in three dimensions with clay extending himself to three-dimensional architecture, not only in its design but building with his own hands. Visitors to the site are immersed in Soldner's world and come to understand who he was as a person beyond just the product of his work. Unaltered from when Soldner lived and worked there, the complex is the embodiment of his vision, a place of residence, creativity, and teaching. **Valerie Balint - Senior Program Manager, Historic Artists' Homes and Studios Program, National Trust for Historic Preservation**

Stephanie Soldner and Valerie Balint collaborated to have the Soldner Home and Studio listed with the Historic Artists' Homes and Studios program, and in March 2022 it officially joined a select group of more than four dozen properties that have been listed nationwide. Through this designation, the property has entered the realm of houses and studios that were occupied, and in some cases built, by nationally-renowned artistic luminaries including Winslow Homer, Daniel Chester French, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Edward Hopper, Frederick Edwin Church, Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock, Thomas Moran, Andrew Wyeth, N. C. Wyeth, Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, Georgia O'Keeffe, and C. M.

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Russell. The National Trust for Historic Preservation will be highlighting the Soldner House and Studio in a feature article to be published in the fall 2022 edition of *Preservation Magazine*.

According to Ms. Balint, one of the most analogous residences listed with the program is the home and studio of nationally prominent woodworker Sam Maloof and his wife and business partner Alfreda. Located in Alta Loma, California, the house was hand-built by Maloof starting in 1953 and developed over many years without the help of an architect or plan. Featuring extensive woodwork along with recycled and repurposed found materials, Ms. Balint stated that as with the Soldner property, the Maloof house is itself a sculpture that attests to the artist's creative vision.

Early on, Paul wanted to build a home and studio for himself and Ginny that was solar – a way to get off the grid and help save the world by not being a polluter. Paul was way ahead of his time attempting this. There are many aspects we can speak to about his studio and how it functioned and how creatively it was designed. How the mixed aging clay was kept in the center of his studio under the floor – a covered hole in the floor of the studio, literally down in the ground again – a Japanese technique. The studio was like a huge round pinecone shape. The sidewalls formed an interior open square shape as the workplace. Behind each wall was different kinds of equipment and tools. The studio was cool in the summer because of the concrete walls and ventilated well through the ceiling. It was a jewel of a space!

Each space that he designed was completely different and its form in shape and the way it functioned. I think this is one of the unique qualities of this group of buildings is that they're all different. Ginny's studio was for painting and also their offices and bedroom. His studio was for clay and sculpture. The third building was their home that was for enjoying time together, reading, drinking a glass of wine, and having many good friends at the table. The landscaping was native to the area. Paul would even find on his hikes in the mountains what he called natural bonsai trees that were growing between cracks in rocks, and he would transplant them around the hot tub and other areas – another Japanese influence.

*When I first went to see them, there was nothing around their home and studio. The airport was the closest thing with any activity. The home and studio were off the main road and down a little bit of a gravel road, and then you turned into this space and there were these unusual building forms and the beautiful vista of the valley mountains behind. It was and still is Very Special! **Jun and Ree Kaneko – Jun is a prominent ceramic artist, former student of Paul Soldner at Claremont College, and the 2021 recipient of the International Sculpture Center's lifetime achievement award / Ree is an award-winning studio artist, arts administrator and curator, and founder of the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, Nebraska / Together they have founded the KANEKO Institute for Creative Arts***

*Throughout Paul Soldner's artistic and academic career, he fully embraced the idea and practice of valuing both curiosity and innovation in one's life. More than any of his contemporaries, Soldner introduced two methods of firing ceramics, raku and low-salt techniques. These significantly altered the ceramic landscape in the second half of the 20th century and are used by students and professional ceramicists world-wide. Soldner, out of sheer curiosity and an inquisitive mind, managed to look outside of the box for new and interesting ways to express his ideas. It was his strong desire to discover something new that fueled his many interests, including the design of his Aspen home and studio, building kilns and ceramic equipment, making wine, and creating bonsais. He had a way of breaking complex problems down to simple and straightforward solutions. **Kirk Delman – Interim Director, Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, CA / Longtime Colleague and Friend of Paul Soldner***

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Paul Soldner was one of the most important American ceramic artists and educators of the 20th century, most notably for his experimentation with Raku firing techniques. He inspired generations of artists through his teaching at Scripps College and Anderson Ranch in Aspen. In addition, he gave more than 400 workshops, lectures, and demonstrations across the country during his career. Soldner believed that experience, mistakes, and happy accidents led to progress and innovation. **Beth Ann Gerstein – Executive Director, American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA**

Paul Soldner was a leader in the postwar ceramics movement on the West Coast. An innovative artist, inventor, and teacher, he was a creative force in lifting ceramics from craft to art. As an artist who exhibited and taught internationally, he reinterpreted the vessel, giving it novel sculptural form. As an inventor with seven patents, he designed efficient and powerful clay mixers and wheels that benefitted ceramists. As a teacher who inspired thousands of students, he modeled living a creative life that encompassed his art, home, and studio.

Soldner's home and studio in Aspen reveals that architecture was an important part of his aesthetic of living in harmony with the environment. In addition to making art from clay wherever he worked, he designed and built his creative spaces with locally sourced materials of rock and wood that seem to rise organically from the earth, much like his sculptural expressions. Not surprisingly, for decades Soldner's Aspen studio was a mecca for artists and students who learned from his art and example. His artistic compound still embodies a fertile postwar period of artistic innovation in which ceramic arts in the West won an expanded audience and critical attention.

The structures in which Soldner shaped this art certainly deserve recognition through landmarking. A precedent is seen in the historic registration of the home and studio of distinctive Southern California furniture maker Sam Maloof who, like Soldner, created a home and studio now visited by many that blended his artistic vision. It could be argued that Soldner, who gave workshops across the world, had an even larger influence on younger artists that did Maloof. **Mary MacNaughton – Professor Emerita of Art History, Scripps College, Claremont, CA**

Paul Soldner, a nonconventional artist, inventor, and builder, became world renowned for his contributions to the ceramic world both in art and industry. He is recognized historically as a key figure in the contemporary shift of the ceramic medium. Brilliant at understanding the earth's natural resources (minerals, stone, and concrete), Soldner masterfully formed these ingredients into beauty, strength and function best evidenced in his own art and architectural work. With his amazing knowledge and skills, he could simplify mechanics, ingredients, and technique to manipulate and form pots, sculptures, and buildings. Paul's forward thinking for design and ever-present eye for how aesthetics fit into its natural surroundings, led to the building of his Aspen home and studio. It serves as an example of his mastery of materials and vision. **T Robert Pacini – Award-Winning Ceramic Studio Artist / Assistant to the Registrar, Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, CA / Board Member, American Museum of Ceramic Art / Retired Ceramic Technician, Laguna Clay Company, Los Angeles / Organizer of the 2010 Soldner Memorial Raku Workshop, Scripps College / Former Ceramic Technician for Paul Soldner and Pete Voulkos**

Paul Soldner was one of the great ceramic artists of our time. Initially he studied under tutelage of Pete Voulkos at Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles California where together they began a new ceramic arts program. Paul's initial assignment was to put together the equipment the students could use to make ceramic objects such as wheels, mixers, extruders, etc. Paul ended up making most of the equipment and modified a commercial bread mixer to mix the clay.

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After graduating at Otis, Paul was hired at Scripps College in Claremont California to head their ceramics program where he taught the students at Scripps as well as all the students majoring in ceramics at Claremont Graduate School. During his tenure there he developed new low-fire techniques for firing ceramics in a kiln which included American Raku and low-fire salt. As an example of Paul's creative abilities, his first Raku kiln was a 50-gallon oil drum attached to a gas outlet with a vacuum cleaner as a blower system. These new firing methods, which he continued to refine, are now used throughout the United States and the rest of the world. As a result, Paul earned the title "Father of American Raku". Paul was a very inspiring and popular teacher. As a result, students from all over the globe came to study with him and over 200 of them became teachers of ceramic art in colleges and universities all over the world.

During the summer months, spanning over 30 years, Paul spent his time in Aspen, Colorado, where he personally built his home and studio. He designed and engineered a complex of unique structures using concrete and rebar which are a remarkable example of Paul's creative abilities.

I was one of Paul's students and because of his influence, my entire professional career has centered around ceramic art. After earning my MFA in ceramics, I was continually bothered that most museums here in the United States considered ceramics to be a craft, not an art form. However, that kind of thinking has been changing and has been greatly influenced because of Paul and others who have encouraged individual expression and innovation from their students.

In 2003, I founded the American Museum of Ceramic Art in Pomona, California so ceramic artists could exhibit their own individual ceramic creations. Our very first exhibit featured the work of one of the greatest innovators of them all, the ceramic art of Paul Soldner.

One of the most talented ceramists in the United States during his lifetime, Paul's impact extended far beyond his own work. He became one of the strongest proponents of ceramic art. As educational cutbacks were being made in schools all over the country, ceramics programs were being deleted because of the expense to keep them going. By traveling and conducting workshops Paul was able to reach thousands as he fought to keep ceramics programs going in our colleges and universities.

*Today, Paul's work, ceramics and otherwise, is his legacy for us now and an inspiration for the generations of the future. **David Armstrong - Founder, American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA / Student of Paul Soldner, Late 1950s-Early 1960s and Again Around 1990 / Collector of American Ceramic Art, Including Around 100 Pieces of Soldner's Artwork***

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Paul Soldner's Early Years (1920s-1950s): Paul Edmund Soldner was born in 1921 in the small Mennonite farming village of Summerfield in southwestern Illinois. His ancestors came from the vicinity of Bern, Switzerland, and left for America to escape religious persecution for their Mennonite beliefs. Paul's father, Grover T. Soldner, had graduated from the Mennonite seminary at Bluffton College in Ohio and in 1919 married Beulah Geiger. Grover served as the pastor of a series of churches in Pennsylvania, Indiana and Ohio. By 1940, the family had settled in Bluffton, Ohio where Grover

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spent the rest of his life as a prominent minister and public speaker. This was an ideal location for the Soldners as much of the population there consisted of Mennonites with ancestral roots in Switzerland.¹²

In February 1942, Paul registered for the draft at the age of twenty, reporting to the registrar that he was a student at Bluffton College. He attended the college as a pre-med student and was also an amateur photographer. Several months later, on 29 October 1942, he reported for duty in Toledo, Ohio. Claiming conscientious objector status stemming from his Mennonite upbringing, Soldner was assigned to serve as a medic with the Third Army commanded by General George S. Patton. After surviving the brutal fighting in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium, he participated in the invasion of Germany and Austria.¹³

In early May 1945, Soldner was among the American troops who liberated the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. Over the following days he cared for the freed inmates and used his camera to document the nightmarish conditions found there (the photos have been donated to the Mauthausen Memorial Museum). Amidst the horrors, he came across charcoal drawings created by a prisoner on the interior walls of one of the barracks. Moved by the presence of art in the midst of a death camp, Soldner later wrote that “despite unbearable conditions and suffering, humans had an inextinguishable drive to express themselves; to create art or music, as best they could.” This experience would shape the trajectory of the rest of his life.¹⁴

Returning home from the war, Soldner took advantage of the GI Bill and completed his BA at Bluffton College in 1946, deciding that he wanted to dedicate his life to art rather than medicine. After graduating, he secured a job teaching in the Medina County, Ohio public schools south of Cleveland and became the supervisor of art in Wayne County. On 15 June 1947, he married Irene Virginia “Ginny” Geiger on the campus of Bluffton College, in a ceremony officiated by his father. Born in 1924 in Bluffton to Mennonite farmers Albert and Elva Geiger, Ginny also graduated from Bluffton College. In May 1950, the young couple boarded the SS Volendam in New York City for a trip to Europe. The ship’s register showed that at the time they were living in a trailer park in Wooster, Ohio, where both were teaching school. The purpose of the trip was to visit Austria and Switzerland, traveling by bicycle from one location to another. In December 1951, Paul and Ginny welcomed the birth of their first and only child, a girl they named Stephanie.¹⁵

Between 1952 and 1954, the Soldners lived in Boulder, Colorado each summer, where Paul used the GI Bill to pursue a Master of Art Education degree at the University of Colorado. During their time off they traveled around the state. On one of their road trips, they stumbled across Aspen and its nascent

¹² “Marriage Licenses,” *Lima Gazette*, 27 August 1919, p. 5; United States Federal Census Records, Soldner Family, 1930 (Souderton, Franconia Township, PA) and 1940 (Bluffton, OH); Draft Registration Record, Paul Edmund Soldner, Bluffton, OH, 16 February 1942.

¹³ Draft Registration Record, Paul Edmund Soldner, Bluffton, OH, 16 February 1942; United States Army Enlistment Record, Paul E. Soldner, Toledo, OH, 29 October 1942.

¹⁴ Paul Soldner, *Nothing to Hide: Exposures, Disclosures, and Reflections*, p. 35-36; “Holocaust Changed Path of Ceramic Artist’s Career,” *Denver Post*, 12 January 2011; E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 22 December 2020.

¹⁵ “Miss Virginia Geiger Weds Paul Soldner,” *Lima News*, 20 June 1947, p. 15; United States Federal Census Records, Geiger Family, 1930 & 1940 (Bluffton, OH); List of Outward-Bound Passengers, Paul and Virginia Soldner, Wooster, OH, Departing New York, Bound for Rotterdam, 29 May 1950; “Ginny Soldner,” *Aspen Times*, 2-3 December 1995, p. 12B; E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 22 December 2020; (Note: The Soldners and Geigers hailed from the area of Bern, Switzerland, and Ginny Geiger and Paul’s mother Beulah Geiger were distantly related.)

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art scene. Their daughter Stephanie later speculated that the drive over Independence Pass likely reminded them of their recent trip to Austria and Switzerland. In Aspen they met Ray and Ruth Maxwell, local potters who encouraged them to consider making the emerging center of postwar art and culture their home. However, the time was not yet ripe for the Soldners to settle there. Back in Boulder, Paul had an inspirational introduction to ceramics when he took an elective class with visiting Scottish artist Katie Horsman, who became head of the ceramics department at the Edinburgh College of Art. This encouraged him to pursue a Master of Fine Arts degree with a specialty in ceramics.¹⁶

Graduate School in Los Angeles (1954-1956): The Soldners moved to Los Angeles in 1954 so Paul could enroll in the Los Angeles County Art Institute (LACAI), previously known as the Otis Art Institute (it is now the Otis College of Art and Design). There he studied under Peter Voulkos, a World War II veteran and highly regarded ceramicist that LACAI had just installed as chair of its new ceramics department. Three years younger than Soldner, Voulkos called his student “old man” and the two developed a close friendship that lasted the rest of their lives. In 1953, Voulkos traveled to New York and met abstract expressionist painters Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline and Jackson Pollock. He also taught a summer course in ceramics that year at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he met prominent abstract expressionist painters Josef Albers and Robert Rauschenberg, along with avant-garde composer John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham. Inspired by these artists, Voulkos returned to Los Angeles eager to expand the boundaries of his work and encourage his students to transform the world of American ceramics.¹⁷

Soldner was Voulkos’ first and only graduate student when he entered LACAI. Because the facility was new and lacking equipment, the two visited area colleges, art schools and ceramic supply companies to determine what the program would require. Looking at the potter’s wheels that were in use, Soldner decided that he would design and fabricate equipment for the department. This was the genesis of Soldner Pottery Equipment, a business that would later become an important part of the family’s work and legacy. Other graduate students soon joined the program, including John Mason, Joel Edwards, Michael Frimkess, Ken Price, Jerry Rothman and Henry Takemoto. Voulkos provided them with no assignments and no exams, and he worked by their side in the school’s basement studio. The instructor encouraged his students to explore new techniques and learn from both him and one another. Some who flocked to LACAI to learn from Voulkos went on to develop notable careers in the field. For decades their work has made its way into private collections and museums around the world. Paul Soldner would soon become prominent among them.¹⁸

During his time at LACAI, followed by a professorship of design and sculpture at the University of California at Berkeley starting in 1959, Voulkos encouraged his students to experiment with new approaches to ceramic art that went beyond the production of traditional pottery and other functional items. This decoupling of function from ceramic arts resulted in the 1950s and 1960s explosion of what came to be known as “West Coast Ceramics,” or the “California Clay Revolution”, a distinct break with

¹⁶ E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 22 December 2020.

¹⁷ “Paul Soldner – Raku,” *Ceramic Review*, July-August 1990; E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 22 December 2020; Tom Zwielerlein, “Paul Soldner: American Master,” *Clay Times*, March-April 1997; “Peter Voulkos,” Artist’s Biography, Smithsonian American Art Museum; “Peter Voulkos, 78: Reinvented Ceramics,” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 February 2002, p. B14; Martha Drexler Lynn, *American Studio Ceramics: Innovation and Identity, 1940 to 1979*, p. 229-231.

¹⁸ E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 22 December 2020; Zwielerlein, “Paul Soldner: American Master,” *Clay Times*, March-April 1997; “Breaking the Clay Mold,” *Aspen Times*, 17 August 2006.

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strictly commercial ceramics in favor of personal expression by artists working to produce pieces that reflected their individual creativity and innovation. Interviewed about his career years later, Soldner stated that he was not only influenced by Voulkos but perhaps even more so by Zen Buddhism and a Japanese aesthetic.¹⁹

When Soldner began his studies with Voulkos, he initially focused upon producing vessels such as pots, plates and teapots. These featured his own approach to multiple glazes and textured surfaces, and they were clearly artistic works rather than functional pieces. His first one-man show occurred in the fall of 1954 in the Ivory Tower Gallery, established for just one month by the graduate students at LACAI in a vacant store on Los Angeles' Sunset Boulevard. In addition, Soldner started submitting examples of his work to art shows and was soon winning awards.²⁰

In this early period, the rise of Soldner's career was followed closely through numerous newspaper articles. In August 1955, the *Long Beach Independent* reported on a ceramic show occurring at the municipal auditorium, noting that art student Paul Soldner demonstrated the use of a pottery wheel as he worked clay into vases. An accompanying photograph showed him with his forearm buried almost to the elbow in a tall vessel as he gave it shape. This would be among the first of hundreds of articles about him to appear across the country over the following decades. In January 1956, the *Lima News* in Ohio announced that Soldner had won a \$100 award for a ceramic piece submitted to the Eighth Annual Ohio Ceramic and Sculpture Show at the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown.²¹

Soldner's graduation from LACAI on 10 June 1956 couldn't have been timed better for the organization and his career. On that date, the Institute dedicated its new ceramics building and staged an end-of-the-year student art exhibit, drawing reporters and numerous attendees to the event. Soldner was the first graduate student to receive an MFA from LACAI, presented as part of the building dedication, and the exhibit of his artwork drew praise. An article published in the *Los Angeles Times* reported that he "distinguished himself with unique and colorful pottery, often of massive design and shape. One of his urns stands 7 feet high." The accompanying photograph of Soldner showed him standing confidently amidst a collection of twelve or so of his monumental pieces. At the age of thirty-five, he pioneered a ceramics technique that allowed for the creation of what were termed "floor pots." Continuously throwing the clay rather than stacking pieces atop one another, he was able to reach remarkable heights and developed a distinctive style for which he would quickly become known. Early and frequent publicity launched Soldner's career, one that would last for decades and propel him to renown as one of the nation's most notable ceramic artists.²²

Becoming a Professional Artist (1950s-1960s): During their early years in California, the Soldners lived in two locations, both of them rented. Their first home while he attended graduate school at LACAI was at 236 Crandall St. northwest of downtown Los Angeles. In March 1957, Soldner received an offer to teach as a visiting lecturer in ceramics at Scripps College in Claremont while the

¹⁹ "Peter Voulkos," Artist's Biography, Smithsonian American Art Museum; "Peter Voulkos, 78: Reinvented Ceramics," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 February 2002, p. B14; Martha Drexler Lynn, *American Studio Ceramics: Innovation and Identity, 1940 to 1979*, p. 229-231; Zwierlein, "Paul Soldner: American Master," *Clay Times*, March-April 1997.

²⁰ Paul Soldner, *Nothing to Hide: Exposures, Disclosures, and Reflections*, p. 4-6.

²¹ "Artists in Ceramics Demonstrate Daily," *Long Beach Independent*, 4 August 1955, p. 10; "Paul Soldner Honored," *Lima News*, 18 January 1956, p. 22.

²² "Art Institute Opening New Ceramics Building," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 1956, part 2, p. 1.

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department head, Richard Petterson, went on sabbatical. The temporary position lasted for eight years. While he was busy at Scripps, Ginny taught in a local elementary school. Because of his work at the college and the need to shorten his commute, in 1957 the family moved into a rental home at 225 E. 11th St. in Claremont. Although they soon established a primary home in Aspen, Colorado, the Soldners continued to use the Claremont house through 1965 while he was teaching.²³

During the second half of the 1950s, Soldner continued to enter his ceramic work in art shows, drawing the attention of reporters who began to refer to the unusually tall slender pieces as Abstract Expressionist “floor pots” or “tree pots.” In 1957 and 1958, he won the Beaux Arts Award at the annual Miami National Ceramic Exhibition held at the University of Miami, Florida. Then in the early spring of 1958 Soldner was notified that two of his pieces had been accepted for display in the American Pavilion at Expo 58, the World’s Fair scheduled to be held from April to October in Brussels, Belgium. Soldner’s works were also exhibited in art shows and galleries in Ohio, where his father was still an active and well-known minister. In the spring of 1959, his work was featured in an art show at his alma mater, Bluffton College. By that time, the local newspaper reported, he had participated in numerous invitational exhibits and won eleven awards. As a visionary ceramic artist and instructor, Soldner was gaining increasing acclaim from the public and art critics. In addition, his work was closely watched by other ceramic artists who found his non-traditional work inspiring.²⁴

In the spring of 1962, the Smithsonian Institution coordinated with the US Department of State to have four of Soldner’s ceramic pieces shown first in Washington, DC, and then shipped across the Atlantic to participate in an international exhibition being held in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Soldner also began periodic travels across the country, giving lectures and teaching pottery workshops in various locations. With his reputation growing in the art world, he found himself in demand as a charismatic public speaker and teacher of workshops attended by students, dabblers in ceramic arts, and fellow professional ceramic artists. His work created a stir, and in a July 1962 article the *Lima Citizen* commented that “his pottery has been given considerable attention after causing much controversy because of its tall joined construction.” Soldner’s work was unlike what most had seen before, and as the 1960s began he was about to make it even more interesting. He was also deep into developing his home and studio in Aspen, a remarkable and even artistic achievement in construction.²⁵

Development of the Soldner Home and Studio in Aspen (1957-1995): Soldner’s teaching position at Scripps College provided the family with income during the school years followed by free time in the summers. This allowed Paul and Ginny to return to the idea of establishing a primary home and studio for themselves in Aspen. In addition to the mountain town’s growing reputation as a

²³ California Voter Registrations, Paul E. Soldner, 236 Crandall St., Los Angeles, 1956 and 225 E. 11th St., Pomona, 1958; E-Mail Exchanges with Stephanie Soldner, 22 and 26 December 2020; “Paul Soldner is Appointed to Faculty,” *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 27 March 1957, p. 22; “Bonsai,” *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 22 May 1964, sec. 4, p. 8.

²⁴ “Paul Soldner,” Artist’s Biography, Smithsonian American Art Museum; “Bluffton – Paul Soldner...,” *Lima News*, 6 February 1957, p. 2; “A New Generation at Pomona,” *Los Angeles Times*, Home Magazine, 9 September 1956, p. 20; “Expressionism Seen in Ceramic Display,” *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 26 March 1957, p. 18; “Pottery Accepted for World’s Fair,” *San Bernardino County Sun*, 8 March 1958, p. 15; “Former Bluffton Man to Exhibit at Brussels Fair,” *Lima Citizen*, 4 April 1958, p. 7; “Soldner Wins Art Awards,” *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 8 April 1958, p. 18 “Bluffton Native’s Pottery Scheduled for World Fair,” *Lima News*, 13 April 1958, p. 5; “Bluffton Artist Displays Works in College Exhibit,” *Lima News*, 31 May 1959, p. 5.

²⁵ “Bluffton Graduate to Exhibit Pottery,” *Lima Citizen*, 29 March 1962, p. 4; “Bluffton College Adds to Art Collection,” *Lima Citizen*, 10 July 1962, p. 5

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cultural mecca, the presence of an airport there was a major draw, allowing for convenient travel between California and Colorado.

In the spring of 1957, the Soldners arranged to purchase three acres of land northwest of town near the Aspen-Pitkin County Airport from ranch owner and physician Dr. Robert M. Burlingame. At the time, the parcel was vacant and covered with sagebrush. When the transfer occurred in May, Dr. Burlingame threw in an additional two acres to the north and the Soldners ended up with five acres for the original price of \$5,000. The northern acreage would remain vacant and is still so today (it is not included in this nomination). The southern three acres would be developed over the following years into the Soldners' home and studio complex, a project they would undertake together.²⁶

That summer, Paul began to erect the first two buildings on the site, the Orange Door Building and A-Frame Building. He threw himself into the work, drawing on experience gained from residential construction jobs during his early years, skills from fabricating potter's kickwheels, and a natural talent for problem solving. The idea for using slip-form concrete embedded with native fieldstones clearly originated in Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West. Although he claimed it to be unintentional, as at Taliesin West the roofs on Soldner's Aspen buildings referenced the surrounding sloped, pyramidal and inverted cone-shaped hills.²⁷

Soldner was also likely aware of the work of Claremont architect Foster Rhodes Jackson. After graduating from MIT, Jackson worked in Boston and then served as a submarine lieutenant commander during World War II. Following his discharge, he became a fellow at Taliesin West and studied under Wright. There he learned the vocabulary of desert Modern architecture, a style he continued to employ and refine over the following decades. Jackson opened his architectural practice in Claremont in 1946 and worked until his death in 1988. Development of his own house in the dry chaparral hills above the city began in 1955 and featured battered concrete walls embedded with exposed native stone. Similar to Wright, Jackson used the building as a laboratory for his own design and construction. He also maintained a shop there and completed much work himself. In Claremont, Jackson was involved with the arts community and may have known Paul Soldner. He lectured on the topic of relating buildings to the earth and designed numerous houses for clients, many of them professors. Wright and Jackson both seem to have inspired Soldner to design and build his own home and studio in Aspen starting in 1957 using similar approaches and techniques.²⁸

In September 1959, the *Aspen Times* took note of the Orange Door Building rising on the site, commenting that "what appears to be the beginnings of a bridge, is in memory of just that." Quoting Paul Soldner, "I remember the solidness of the small bridges in the East, I used to walk as a child." The newspaper went on to inform its readers that "Paul Soldner, who is the owner and designer, will complete this building, which will contain the makings of pottery."²⁹

To construct the buildings, Soldner used the same approach as with his ceramic art, solving construction challenges as the work progressed and finding solutions one at a time. In addition to the

²⁶ Warranty Deed, Robert M. Burlingame to Paul Soldner, Pitkin County Clerk & Recorder, 9 May 1957; E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 22 December 2020; Note: The undeveloped northern two acres have been carved off into a separate parcel and are not part of the nominated property.

²⁷ E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 11 November 2020.

²⁸ Alan Hess and Alan Weintraub, *Forgotten Modern: California Houses, 1940-1970*, p. 202.

²⁹ "Around Aspen, *Aspen Times*, 10 September 1959, p. 4.

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fieldstones, other scavenged materials used on the site included heavy timbers and metal objects that appear to have come from the area's abandoned 19th-century mining and milling sites. Reinforced board-formed concrete and massive fir timbers were employed as roof beams and all of the floors were formed of poured concrete. For the roof of the A-Frame Building, Soldner acquired hundreds of discarded warped and weathered 2" x 4" boards from a local lumberyard and then nailed them into place every 12". The nailing was done by hand, and according to Stephanie Soldner his arms became numb that summer from all of the hammering. The boards used on the Orange Door Building's roof were purchased from the Lenado Mill along Woody Creek north of Aspen.³⁰

While the doors on these first two buildings were made from scrap wood and some scavenged metal parts, much of the hardware was fabricated by Soldner, who acquired tools and equipment and learned to shape and weld metal. Another distinctive feature that appeared on the site is fire-treated wood. Originating centuries ago in Japan and known there as "Shou Sugi Ban," the technique involves briefly charring the surface of the lumber with fire and then cooling it and cleaning it before it is finished with natural oil and installed. This method, often used for exterior siding, seals the wood in a layer of carbon, makes it fire, rot and insect resistant, and brings out a silvery finish. Although it is unclear where Soldner came across this method, he employed it in a number of locations in the Aspen buildings. Charred wood is seen on a number of the interior doors and among the plinths that were fabricated to display his ceramic sculptures.³¹

Work on the Orange Door Building continued through 1965, and although it was originally intended to serve as a ceramic studio, it also became the family's first residence on the site. While the first two buildings were under construction, the Soldners lived in a tent in the mild summer weather. They eventually moved into the Orange Door Building when it was complete enough to be occupied. Paul installed a ceramic studio in one corner, and Stephanie's small bedroom was in the concrete structure within the building. The Orange Door Building became more of a dedicated residence in 1965 when the family decided to make Aspen their primary home and Claremont became a secondary one. Within a few years, Stephanie moved into the upstairs bedroom in the A-Frame Building, and from that time on the Orange Door Building was Paul and Ginny's private living quarters.³²

The A-Frame Building, also started in 1957, was sited to the north of the Orange Door Building and took until 1968 to complete. Construction evidently began without a permit, and in August 1962 Soldner submitted an application to Pitkin County and had it approved the same day. On the application he stated that he was the architect and builder. The only exception was to have Holly's Electric install all of the electrical wiring. From the beginning, Soldner's plans were for the building to include a solar in-floor radiant heating system at a time when anyone wanting such a feature had to design and construct it themselves. This involved building the entire south-facing, slightly concave roof slope as a large solar collector that was carefully aligned to capture winter sunlight. Heated water from the roof was transferred by gravity into the in-floor radiant heating system that he installed within the building.³³

The building's east half was to serve as guest quarters but became the Soldner family's kitchen and dining room, with a restroom, laundry room and dark room downstairs. Stephanie occupied the upstairs

³⁰ Telephone Conversation with Stephanie Soldner, 22 January 2021.

³¹ "Shou Sugi Ban: The Traditional Japanese Art of Charred Cedar," <https://shousugiban.com/overview>.

³² E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 11 November 2020

³³ Building Permit #131 for an A-Frame Residence and Pottery Studio, Pitkin County, CO, 14 August 1962

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bedroom during her teen years and after she later moved away it became a guest room (today it serves as her bedroom again). The west half of the building, now occupied by the living room and gallery, was intended to be a kiln room. This was to hold three large kilns with smokestacks rising through the spaces that are now skylights. Instead, it became an assembly space for Soldner Electric Wheels, potter's wheels that were patented and marketed by the family. With the business expanding, it eventually moved into a commercial space in Carbondale and in 1983 this became the family's living room. Today the room holds a number of Paul Soldner's ceramic pieces.

In July 1965, Paul Soldner took a year's leave of absence from Scripps College, giving him time to focus on development work at the property in Aspen. That same month, he secured a permit from Pitkin County for the construction of a third building on the site, this one to be located just west of the A-Frame. Work on the Round Building likely started that summer and continued until 1970. According to the permit, this was to be a beehive-shaped detached two-car masonry garage. Its shape may also be described as reminiscent of a barrel cactus. As Soldner erected the building, he became enamored with it and decided that it would not be used as a garage. Instead, it became an art studio along with space for winemaking. Storage and workshop spaces were hidden behind pairs of diagonal walls. The open loft served as sleeping quarters for students and friends. However, with no heat it could only be used as such during the warmer months. When Ginny died in 1995, the main floor was turned into exhibit space for her paintings, which are still hung on the diagonal walls. A number of Paul Soldner's ceramic works have been added to the space, some displayed on the floor and others on plinths.³⁴

The Round Building's corbeled roof with a hexagonal skylight at its peak is shaped like an inverted, flared cone. A similar technique was used on the Navajo Hogan, a renowned historic bar and restaurant built in 1935 on Nevada Avenue on the north edge of Colorado Springs (5EP.1179; NRHP listed 1990; NRIS 90001420). There the roof was assembled with large hand-hewn logs arranged in the same pattern, although covered with sheathing and composition shingles on the exterior. On the Round Building in Aspen, the tiered roof planks remain exposed to view on the interior, but due to leakage they have been clad on the exterior with a complex array of metal flashing. In both cases, the roof styles have a historic precedent in the Navajo hogans found throughout the southwest. However, it is unclear whether Paul Soldner was familiar with Navajo hogans and how he came to adopt this style for this particular building. Asked about this, Stephanie Soldner stated that her father worked with three-dimensional art and had a fascination with geometry, suggesting that he would have certainly been drawn to the intricate aesthetic of the corbeled roof.³⁵

In the 1960s, the Soldners decided to ornament the Round Building with a series of "gargoyles" formed by assembling cow bones collected from a gully on a neighbor's property. The Soldners invited friends over and the bones were spread out on newspapers along with wire, cutters and pliers. Everyone was asked to assemble a fantastical creature's skull using the bones in whatever combination they chose. When completed, these were mounted on the Round Building and one was placed at the peak of the A-Frame roof. As time passed, they deteriorated and fell to the ground. One of the gargoyles survived and is mounted to the north wall of the Studio Building.³⁶

³⁴ "Visiting Artists to Join Scripps College Faculty," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 July 1965, p. 11; Building Permit #488C for a Double Detached Garage, Pitkin County, CO, 13 July 1965; E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 11 November 2020.

³⁵ National Register Nomination, Navajo Hogan, Colorado Springs, CO, Added to the National Register 13 September 1990; Telephone Conversation with Stephanie Soldner, 22 January 2021.

³⁶ E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 18 December 2020.

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The next project involved construction of the Studio Building and Kiln Yard, started in 1974 and completed in 1978. This is located in the southwest area of the complex, just west of the Orange Door Building and south of the Round Building. Constructed of concrete, brick and wood, it was known by the family as the Long Building and was originally used for packing, shipping and photography before it became Paul Soldner's last studio. The Kiln Yard on the east side of the building holds a Soldner Clay Mixer and two kilns that were designed and built by Soldner for his own use and that of his students. Within the building are numerous art supplies along with a collection of Soldner's patented potter's wheels, and it has the appearance of a space that the artist could return to at any moment to resume his work. With the four buildings largely completed, the property was featured in a photo essay in a 1977 book by Art Boericke and Barry Shapiro titled *The Craftsman Builder*. It was included as an example of a unique handcrafted home and studio built by noted ceramic artist Paul Soldner rather than by a contractor with the aid of architectural plans.³⁷

Between the A-Frame Building and Round Building is a space that was landscaped by the Soldners, complete with grass, Aspen and bonsai trees, a stone walkway, and a collection of boulders of various hues. These surround a hand-formed hot tub that was installed by Soldner in 1975. The hot tub was used by the family along with guests. To the north is an open wood deck that was used for entertaining. Just north of the deck is the Wine Cellar, the last building to be constructed on the site. Started around 1980, it was finished in 1995.

While much of the land was left in its natural state, the Soldners shaped the areas immediately surrounding the buildings. To reach the complex from Stage Road, they installed a graveled entry drive that was later curved to address flooding issues caused by adjacent development. Landscape features surrounding the buildings included grass, boulders, a massive slab of scrap marble, Aspen and evergreen trees, carefully cultivated bonsai trees, concrete paving slabs, and a number of Paul's bronze pieces mounted on concrete plinths of various sizes and shapes. As the years passed, the buildings were completed, the landscaping matured, and the site evolved into a residential and studio complex that became a haven for living, socializing, teaching and creating art.

American Raku (1960s): As the 1950s drew to a close and the next decade began, Soldner was well on his way to becoming a recognized star in the art world. His career reached its full stride at Scripps College, where he taught through 1966, followed by short-term positions at the University of Colorado in the spring of 1968 and the University of Iowa in 1968-1969. Throughout the 1960s, his work appeared in galleries and art shows across the United States and he participated in exhibits overseas. Although the Soldners maintained a residence in Claremont during the first half of the decade, their primary home and studio shifted to Aspen in 1965, when the initial buildings there were finished enough for year-round occupancy.³⁸

Paul Soldner developed an early interest in Japanese raku pottery, which he had read about in Bernard Leach's 1940 treatise, *A Potter's Book*. In Japan, the carefully refined technique dating from the 16th century involved hand molding, quick firing of the piece in a charcoal fired kiln, and then rapid cooling in the outside air. The resulting cups and bowls had mottled and crackled surfaces and no two were alike. For centuries they have been prized for use in Japan's highly ritualized tea ceremonies. In 1960, Soldner curated the Sixteenth Annual Invitational Ceramic Exhibit at Scripps College. The event

³⁷ Art Boericke and Barry Shapiro, *The Craftsman Builder*, 1977.

³⁸ E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 26 December 2020.

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included twelve examples of postwar avant-garde work produced by Japanese Shodeisha artists along with additional pieces by Californians. This was the first international exhibit of work by the postwar generation of Japanese ceramic artists, and Voukos, Soldner and others at Scripps were influenced by what the Japanese were doing.³⁹

That same year, Soldner decided to bring Japanese raku techniques to his own work, not by trying to replicate what was being done in Japan but by creating something uniquely his own and distinctively American. Through trial and error, he developed revolutionary and far-reaching kiln firing techniques, essentially shaping a new field of ceramics that came to be known as American Raku. Soldner's version of raku involved pulling the shaped clay piece from a red-hot kiln with tongs and plunging it into various combustible items, often organic materials such as sawdust, paper and leaves, which was then smothered, to create unique colors, patterns and textures.⁴⁰

During his first experimental experience with this technique at Scripps in 1960, Soldner pulled a pot from the kiln and dropped it into the fallen leaves of a pepper tree. This started the leaves on fire and when it was quenched, the surface of the pot was found to have taken on a smoky iridescence along with an imprint of the leaves. Recognizing the serendipity and utility of what had occurred, the technique would be refined and perfected over the following years. Describing his unorthodox approach, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that "this rapid way of producing ceramics results in smoky effects and textures not possible with any other."⁴¹

Almost immediately, Soldner's raku pieces began to win awards at exhibits all over the United States and through workshops he became the primary promoter of raku in the country. As Soldner stated in a newspaper interview, creating raku works was a lifelong struggle, one in which he strived to "become one with the material, thus transcending technical inhibition. It is literally an elemental struggle of earth, fire and water." In March 1967, the *Los Angeles Times* published a photo of one of his American Raku pieces, the caption conveying the unusual methods he used: "the surface combines glazed and unglazed areas and is made of porous clay, hot-fired and frozen." The fractured plate shown was not intended to be used, but instead was created as a work of art.⁴²

Soldner in Colorado and the Anderson Ranch Arts Center (1960s-1970s): During the summer of 1957, when Paul Soldner began constructing the first two buildings on the property in Aspen, he also started to show and sell his ceramic pieces at a small store known as the Tom Thumb Gallery. Located downtown across the street from the famed Wheeler Opera House, he would continue to be a featured artist there for at least a decade. As time passed, the Soldners became well known in the community and respected for their central role in the Aspen arts scene.⁴³

³⁹ Lynn, *American Studio Ceramics: Innovation and Identity, 1940 to 1979*, p. 229; Louise Allison Cort, "Crawling Through the Mud: Avant-Garde Ceramics in Postwar Japan." *Studio Potter*, December 2004.

⁴⁰ Lynn, *American Studio Ceramics: Innovation and Identity, 1940 to 1979*, p. 230-233.

⁴¹ "Paul Soldner," *Los Angeles Times*, Home Magazine, 18 July 1971, p. 33; "Ceramicist Known for American Raku," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 January 2011, p. AA6

⁴² "Guess What's in the Oven," *San Francisco Examiner*, California Living Magazine, 9 November 1980, p. 39-42; "Life of Claremont Professor Paul Soldner is Reflected in Clay," *Los Angeles Times*, San Gabriel Story, 28 October 1982, p. 1; "Paul Soldner calls this arresting piece of ceramic..." *Los Angeles Times*, Home Magazine, 26 March 1967, p. 17.

⁴³ "The Tom Thumb," *Aspen Times*, 29 August 1957, p. 12 and 23 July 1959, p. 12 and 22 June 1962, p. 20; "Local Products Abound in Aspen," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 10 December 1967, p. 21.

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By the mid-1960s, Soldner had shown his artwork in international exhibitions at venues that included the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the International Exhibit of Contemporary Ceramics in Tokyo. He also completed murals and terra cotta planters for the Home Savings and Loan in Los Angeles and at Scripps College. An expert in pottery kilns and their design and operation, in 1965 he authored *Kiln Construction*, published by the American Craftsman Council in New York. This was reportedly the first book ever published on the topic. Soldner participated in an invitational exhibit in 1966-1967 that was organized by the Smithsonian Institution's Division of Ceramics and Glass. Known as Ceramic Art, U.S.A., 1966, the exhibit traveled to cities throughout the United States and Canada, including a stop at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. In 1967 and 1968, Soldner exhibited his work again at CSU and acted as a juror for a show at Southern Colorado State College, now CSU Pueblo.⁴⁴

Aspen was emerging as an internationally known ski resort and cultural center, with development proceeding at an explosive rate. Paul Soldner was instrumental in founding what would become one of the country's most prominent visual arts programs. In 1966, he was teaching a group of locals the art of pottery when they lost their lease in a downtown building. Searching for a new location, Soldner selected a historic sheep and cattle ranch in the upper Brush Creek Valley near Snowmass. Known as the Anderson Ranch, the property held a collection of weathered pioneer log buildings that had been acquired by the Janss Corporation of Los Angeles, developers of the Snowmass Resort. With the Snowmass project in its planning stage and Janss eager to include a cultural component, the company gave him the freedom to establish an arts center at the ranch.⁴⁵

In November 1966, the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel* published an article about the Snowmass development, mentioning that "the Aspen pottery group has been given space there, and is now building a kiln. It is expected that eventually artists will be able to teach and work there." Two months later, the newspaper reported that "a group of local potters, who study under the direction of Paul Soldner, have begun working in a converted stable at the Anderson ranch. The center will be a school, not open to passing tourists, and a non-profit affair. Glass blowing, painting, sculpture, weaving and photography are among the subjects which will be available. Soldner will be in charge of the center."⁴⁶

During the project's early years, Soldner recruited the help of fellow artists, among them his former teacher Peter Voukos along with photographer Cherie Hiser and woodworker Sam Maloof. They developed a set of core principles for what was originally named the Center for the Hand, including small class sizes, open hours for studio work, development of the artist as a professional, and "the value of giving more than you take – and making for others to enjoy." To Soldner, this was an opportunity to create a non-profit program that would be distinctly different from the art schools operated by universities. There were to be no charges for tuition or room and board, and no credits or degrees were conferred. Students and faculty were expected to live on the ranch, work together, and learn from one another. In addition to developing the program, the Center launched improvements to the historic

⁴⁴ "A First for Art Buffs," *Lima News*, 2 April 1967, p. 39; "Ceramics Exhibited at CSU," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 19 February 1967, p. 4; "CSU Student Center Has Art Exhibit," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 27 October 1967, p. 5; "8th 'Own Your Own' Show Opens Today at SCSC," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 9 November 1968, p. 63.

⁴⁵ Anderson Ranch Arts Center Timeline, Located at <https://www.andersonranch.org/about/history>; Zwielerlein, "Paul Soldner: American Master," *Clay Times*, March-April 1997; Paul Soldner Interview, 28 June 1996.

⁴⁶ "Snowmass Lifts and Village to Open in 1967," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 6 November 1966, p. 68; "Culture and Almighty Dollar Battle for Aspen," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 29 January 1967, p. 85.

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buildings to adapt them for new use. On the weekends, Paul and Ginny hosted faculty and students at free-spirited parties at their home and studio. The clothing-optional hot tub built by Soldner and his varieties of homemade wine were focal points of their socializing.⁴⁷

Soldner left the project after several years while he returned to teaching college and because of a conflict with the board over his insistence that the property needed to be owned by the Center. The land was eventually donated by the developer in 1983. In 1973, the Center for the Hand merged with the Center for the Eye, founded by Cherie Hiser, to form the Anderson Ranch Arts Center. Soldner ended up serving briefly as director of the expanded organization. Additional historic log buildings were moved to the site in the 1970s and 1980s from area ranches and converted to art studios and for related uses. By 1980, the Center had been transformed from a summer program into a year-round visual arts center. Fundraising included the solicitation of local donations combined with a grant from the Boettcher Foundation, and major capital improvements were launched to fully winterize the buildings. As the 1980s came to a close, annual participation in the program involved more than 900 artists attending 70 workshops. Twenty years later, in 2000, the Center broke ground on the Soldner Ceramics Studio. In 2016, the Anderson Ranch Arts Center celebrated its 50th anniversary and it remains in operation today.⁴⁸

Soldner's Career in the 1970s and 1980s: In early 1970, Soldner rejoined the faculty at Scripps as a professor of art and full-time director of the ceramics department. Traveling between Aspen and Claremont, he taught at Scripps each spring semester until retiring in the 1990s. Through an arrangement made with the school, he hired another professor to teach his undergraduate classes in the fall semesters and returned there periodically to meet with graduate students. Soldner was busy staging one-man shows at the University of Oklahoma and Murray State University in Kentucky. During the first half of 1970, he also had artwork on exhibit at Purdue University, Ohio Northern University, and the Fine Art Contemporary Gallery in Dallas. Other pieces were featured in a widely publicized traveling exhibit in 1969 and 1970 called *Objects, U.S.A.* Sponsored by Johnson Wax, the exhibit was staged at the Smithsonian Institution's National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, DC and visited twenty cities in the United States and ten in Europe.⁴⁹

Although their primary home remained in Aspen, from 1970 to 1979 the Soldners rented another house in Claremont, this time at 316 S. Mills St. in a small neighborhood known as the Russian Village (NRHP listed in 1978). The fifteen owner-built houses there dated from the 1930s and were constructed using native fieldstone, poured concrete, and repurposed materials that included discarded lumber, surplus ceramic tiles, and concrete rubble gathered from highway construction projects. Other items such as hardware were purchased from an architectural salvage company in Los Angeles. The neighborhood's non-traditional folk architecture appealed to the Soldners and other residents, among them "writers, potters, painters, sculptors [sic], musicians, glass blowers, and graphic artists." Perhaps not surprisingly, the section of the NRHP nomination describing the house at 316 S. Mills St. was written in 1977 by Stephanie Soldner.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Anderson Ranch Arts Center Timeline; Zwierlein, "Paul Soldner: American Master," *Clay Times*, March-April 1997.

⁴⁸ Anderson Ranch Arts Center Timeline; "Back at the Ranch," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 14 August 1988, p. 39.

⁴⁹ E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 26 December 2020; "One-Man Shows," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 November 1969, sec. P, p. 2; "Fine Arts Foundation Books Paul Soldner," *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 16 March 1970, p. 13.

⁵⁰ National Register Nomination, The Russian Village, Claremont, CA, 1977.

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On 8 May 1970, Soldner was featured in a nationally broadcast ABC television special called "With These Hands": The Rebirth of the American Craftsman." The program focused on the creativity of eight artists dedicated to working with their hands and the raw materials of the earth, including clay, wood and glass. Newspapers across the country encouraged their viewers to watch the segment on Paul Soldner, the ceramicist in Aspen, Colorado "who works with a kind of athletic gesturalism." He was also featured in a film called *Earth and Fire* that aired on television and at colleges and art centers throughout the country. The production followed Soldner working in his Aspen studio. Throughout much of his career, Soldner experimented with ornamenting many of his ceramic pieces with impressions and textures of various sorts. These included plants, animals, female nudes, landscape lines and burlap bags. He also marked some with a horse's tooth, an animal bone, the patterns in the soles of his tennis shoes, and even an impression of his own navel using a plaster of Paris cast.⁵¹

In Aspen, Soldner developed an interest in winemaking, acquiring used containers, jugs and bottles from area merchants and restaurants. He also dabbled in brewing beer, baking bread with beer yeast, and making cheese. Rather than using grapes, his wines were made from a variety of non-traditional ingredients, including serviceberries, rhubarb, elderberries, oranges, clovers, beets, dandelions, chokecherries and prickly pear cactus. Whenever possible, the Soldners and friends went on outings to harvest these items themselves. In the summer of 1971, he taught a class in winemaking at a crafts event in Steamboat Springs. In later years, when Soldner conducted workshops at Anderson Ranch, he would invite the participants to join him in picking dandelion blossoms in the shadow of the famed Maroon Bells. The group would then gather at the Soldner home to sip dandelion wine made from blossoms picked by the previous year's workshop attendees, paying it forward each year.⁵²

Soldner returned to Bluffton in September 1970 to conduct a workshop at the college on the construction of pottery kilns. Over a period of three days, he worked with around seventy students and full-time potters from various states and a number of colleges and universities who registered to learn how to build a kiln featuring a catenary arch, similar to the ones Soldner had developed at his studio in Aspen. The catenary arch was critical to his art because it allowed the kiln to reach higher temperatures than those with traditional square or domed roofs. To those in attendance, Soldner was viewed as a master ceramicist as well as an "innovator and inventor" who had gained renown for his patenting and marketing of equipment used in the field. During the workshop, he also demonstrated his techniques of American Raku and salt fuming. This was just one example of Soldner's numerous workshops on the construction and operation of kilns.⁵³

Soldner conducted an interesting experiment in kiln firing in June 1973 in conjunction with the annual conference of the American Crafts Council. The event took place on the campus of Colorado State University in Fort Collins. Initially, he and several friends built an 8'-diameter parabolic mirror to try and fire a kiln with solar radiation. Quoted in the *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, Soldner stated that "the problem is to find a different, more direct and inexhaustible energy source; to work this out without government grants; to come up with a workable solution as cheaply and economically as possible. The technique is to use energy from the sun to melt glazes on pots and to fire." Although they managed to focus the

⁵¹ "Blufftonite Escape Artist," *Lima News*, 7 May 1970, p. 25; "The Hands That Fashion Their Own Environments," *San Francisco Examiner*, Datebook, 3 May 1970, p. 15; "Paul Soldner Program Scheduled at Scripps," *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 18 March 1973, p. C-6; "Artist Uses Personal Stamp for Identification," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, 2 May 1970, p. 6

⁵² "Cooking," *Banning Record-Gazette*, 11 May 1970, p. 9; "Art Craft-In Draws 200," *Steamboat Pilot*, 29 July 1971, p. 2.

⁵³ "Bluffton Workshop the Arch to Fame," *Lima News*, 13 September 1970, p. 41

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sun's rays on the pot, the mirror proved unable to harness enough heat to melt ceramic glaze. Recruiting the help of around fifty attendees in his workshop, Soldner then provided each with a small one-foot-square mirror and as they stood together reflecting the sunlight onto a cardboard box, it suddenly caught fire. Soldner later wrote that he "learned an important lesson: pay attention to the immutable laws of the universe." As with his solar-heated house in Aspen, he was continuously thinking through problems and working to find practical solutions.⁵⁴

In May 1972, the *San Bernardino County Sun* declared Paul Soldner "the Potter of the United States," informing its readers that the noted artist "has won 30 national and international awards, has participated in 118 invitational exhibits in this country and abroad, [and] has had 48 one-man shows." He also participated in numerous exhibitions as a juror. These numbers only increased over the following years and by the early 1970s Soldner had become widely known as the "Father of American Raku." In 1972, he was awarded his second Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation grant, the first occurring six years earlier. He was also honored by the State of Colorado in the summer of 1975 as a recipient of the Governor's Award in the Arts and Humanities and that same month was a guest artist at the Colorado State Fair in Pueblo. The *Greeley Daily Tribune* called him "probably the most famous artist from Colorado." One year later, Soldner was named a Fellow of the Collegium of Craftsmen by the American Crafts Council and received the arts craftsmen's fellowship grant awarded by the National Endowment of the Arts.⁵⁵

In the fall of 1978, Soldner's work was featured in an exhibit titled "Colorado Crafts: 17 Views" that was staged at the Denver Art Museum. The following year he participated in an exhibit, "Current Concepts in Clay," at the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center in Pueblo. In 1980, thirty of Soldner's pieces were placed on display and for sale at Colorado State University's gallery in Pueblo. An article published in the university newspaper pointed out that many of his works were priced by the inch and not by the piece. At \$20 per inch, the average price was about \$400.⁵⁶

The Soldners purchased their final home in Claremont in 1981 at 743 W. Baseline Rd., and they continued to live both there and in Aspen the rest of their lives. The Claremont house was a mid-20th century ranch that according to Stephanie Soldner "was ideal for having students over for Thursday night seminars and entertaining. Over the years they planted numerous fruit trees...and built a wonderful hot tub surrounded by boxwood bushes pruned to look like the Loch Ness Monster." Among the more than fifty bonsai plants Paul kept in the backyard, thirteen were acquired by the Huntington Museum and Botanical Gardens following his death. These remain on display in one of its most popular attractions, the Japanese and Chinese Gardens.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ "Noted Craftsman Discusses Field," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 8 June 1973, p. 8; Paul Soldner, *Nothing to Hide: Exposures, Disclosures, and Reflections*, p. 74-77.

⁵⁵ "Paul Soldner to Give Talk on Pottery," *San Bernardino County Sun*, 30 March 1972, p. C-7; "Father of American Raku' Appears Friday at SRJC," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, 16 May 1973, p. 43; "Art Awards to Honor Eight," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 10 May 1975, p. 2; "Scripps College Art Professor..." *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 28 September 1975, p. 14; "The Greeley Art Scene," *Greeley Daily Tribune*, 14 October 1975, p. 13; "Ceramist Paul Soldner..." *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 19 September 1976, p. 28.

⁵⁶ "Artistic Freedom and Creativity Represented in Crafts Exhibit," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 3 November 1978, p. 8; "Art Centers and Museums," *Straight Creek Journal*, 16 August 1979, p. 11; "Soldner's Ceramic Collection Displayed Through September," *Arrow*, 11 September 1980, p. 3.

⁵⁷ E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 25 December 2020.

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In 1981, an international poll conducted by *Ceramics Magazine* resulted in Soldner being voted one of the twelve best ceramic artists in the world. By the early 1980s, he had received 39 national and international awards and participated in 245 invitational exhibits. In addition, he had staged 125 one-man shows, provided more than 250 lectures and workshops, and participated in numerous art show juries. His work was appearing in exhibits staged by international museums and galleries, and many of the world's art museums already had examples of his work in their permanent collections.⁵⁸

Ginny began painting in the late 1970s and in 1986 earned an MFA from the Claremont Graduate School. She also enjoyed visiting the region's many art galleries and museums, and was a voracious reader of works on art, philosophy, women's issues and personal growth. During periods when they were in California, she maintained a studio in a former orange packing warehouse in La Verne near Claremont that had been converted for artists to use. The space provided her with the opportunity to pursue her interest in "Color Field Painting" using large canvases, many of them over 6' tall. Her abstract works reflected on themes that had personal and philosophical meaning and she tended to hold onto them. A number are on display in the Round Building at their home in Aspen.⁵⁹

Starting in the 1980s and extending into the 1990s, Soldner developed and refined another technique for which he would become known. This was low temperature salt fuming. The technique involved adding salts and chemical compounds to the heated kiln, which resulted in various textures and splashes of colors on the ceramic pieces with no glazing involved. Sometimes he would wrap the salt and minerals in magazine pages like a burrito and then place the package into the kiln through one of the peep holes used to monitor the progress of firing.

Soldner Pottery Equipment: In addition to studying art in graduate school at LACAI, Soldner began to design, fabricate and sell his own line of potter's kickwheels. After he completed the first one for the ceramics department, Voulkos ordered eight more of them, which were purchased by the college and remained in use there for years. Recognizing the high quality of the equipment, instructors from other schools also started to place orders. Soldner learned to weld and cast concrete in order to make the kickwheels, and over the years he continued to improve them and came out with various patented models. During the 1960s, he assembled them on a limited basis in the garage of the family house in Claremont. After the Soldners moved to Aspen in 1965, Paul started to phase out the kickwheels in favor of electric wheels of his own design. He also began to design and manufacture Soldner Clay Mixers.⁶⁰

In 1965, Paul Soldner developed a business logo formed by a square border surrounding the Japanese symbol for the word Te, meaning "hand," with the name Soldner printed in block letters below. He created the logo to express his handiwork, which included his ceramic art, ceramic supplies, and buildings. In 1985, Soldner submitted an application to the US Patent and Trademark Office to have the logo registered and it was approved in 1988. Over many years, the logo appeared on all of the

⁵⁸ "Life of Claremont Professor Paul Soldner is Reflected in Clay," *Los Angeles Times*, San Gabriel Story, 28 October 1982, p. 1.

⁵⁹ E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 25 December 2020; "Slope Business," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 14 February 1973, p. 33.

⁶⁰ "Ceramic Display," *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 28 November 1957, p. 28; E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 29 January 2021.

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advertising for Soldner Pottery Equipment. It is also found on the overhead beam supporting the entrance to the wine cellar in Aspen.⁶¹

During the early 1970s, Soldner secured six US patents for his Soldner Electric Wheels and Soldner Clay Mixers, along with one Japanese patent for Soldner Kick Wheels. The enterprise was incorporated in Colorado in 1973 under the name Soldner Pottery Equipment Inc. Paul and Ginny were partners in the firm, and while he focused his attention on fabrication and refining the designs, she oversaw the business operation. Stephanie also served as a company director. The products were advertised through humorous, sometimes risqué, posters that were released annually, along with advertisements placed in *Ceramics Monthly* and *Clay Times*. Paul and Ginny came up with the concepts and he handled all of the photography, design and layout.⁶²

In Aspen, fabrication initially took place in the A-Frame Building, in the western space now used as a living room. A darkroom was set up in a downstairs room for developing the photographs Soldner used for marketing and to record each of his ceramic pieces. When the size of the operation outgrew the building, the shop was moved down-valley to Carbondale and a foreman was hired to oversee manufacturing. In 1973, the Soldners purchased a building in the town of Silt west of Glenwood Springs and moved the operation there. The plant was destroyed in 1978 when a fire swept through the building. After rebuilding, it was running again the following year. Sometime in the 1980s, it was moved again, this time to Rulison, Colorado west of Silt. In 1988, the right to manufacture and sell Soldner Electric Wheels was sold to Dave Ball and Bluebird Manufacturing of Fort Collins. Soldner Clay Mixers was sold in 2001 to Conrad Snyder and Muddy Elbow Manufacturing of Newton, Kansas, and subsequently to Mammoth Clay in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Soldner Pottery Equipment products, both used and new, remain on the market today and are still considered among the finest available.⁶³

Soldner's Later Years (1990-2011): After retiring from teaching at Scripps in 1991, Soldner traveled across the United States and even overseas during the 1990s and into the early 2000s, staging his ceramics workshops at a rate of two or three each month. That same year, Scripps staged a retrospective exhibit that included around seventy-five of his works representing the major periods of his career. He also began to produce bronzes made from molds of his ceramic pieces, and a number of them were mounted on plinths scattered around the property in Aspen. Others were shown in gallery exhibits. By that time, Soldner had also installed seventeen custom ferro-cement hot tubs for various friends, similar to the one he built at the Aspen complex.⁶⁴

Ginny died in the Claremont house on 28 November 1995 and her passing left Paul devastated. As Doug Casebeer of the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass Village wrote following her death, "The Soldner name would not have achieved such prominence without Ginny. Paul's vision and ideas

⁶¹ Soldner Logo, Registered Trademark, United States Patent and Trademark Office, Registered 23 August 1988 (Reg. No. 1,500,974).

⁶² "Fine Arts Foundation Books Paul Soldner," *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, 16 March 1970, p. 13; "Objects '75 Features Unique Exhibits," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 10 July 1975, p. 5; Zwierlein, "Paul Soldner: American Master," *Clay Times*, March-April 1997; E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 22 December 2020 and 29 January 2021.

⁶³ Zwierlein, "Paul Soldner: American Master," *Clay Times*, March-April 1997; E-Mail Exchange with Stephanie Soldner, 29 January 2021.

⁶⁴ "Scripps College Legend is Moving On," *Claremont Daily Bulletin*, 8 April 1991, p. B1.

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were made real by Ginny's attention to every detail." Paul stopped construction on their property in Aspen at that time and continued to live in the buildings as they were.⁶⁵

As Soldner reached his eighties, he was showered with accolades and awards. In 2003, Bluffton College conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts upon its distinguished alumnus. Art museums and centers also began to stage retrospectives celebrating his decades-long career and impact upon the field of ceramic arts. The American Museum of Ceramic Art in Pomona, California opened its doors in 2004 with a three-month inaugural exhibit titled "Inferno: The Ceramic Art of Paul Soldner." The museum's webpage for the exhibit noted that its use of the term "Inferno" was meant to reference not only the art of firing ceramics but also Soldner's risk-taking spirit and energetic approach to his craft. Numerous pieces were placed on display, providing visitors with a chronological tour of his career through the evolution of his artwork. That same year, forty-seven years after he started teaching at Scripps College, the institution announced its establishment of the Paul Soldner Endowment. A primary purpose of the fund was to support the Scripps Ceramic Annual, which Soldner curated for thirty-seven years and turned into a renowned international exhibition. The endowment also established a visiting artists program and continues to provide outreach in the arts to primary and secondary schools.⁶⁶

In 2004, Soldner was inducted into the Aspen Hall of Fame and in August 2006 the *Aspen Times* devoted a lengthy article to the life and career of one of the city's most notable, beloved and impactful resident artists. The newspaper described Soldner's artwork as "sculptural, abstract and dynamic, even sensual." He continued to teach until 2007 and work with ceramics until 2010. In 2008, the American Crafts Council conferred its coveted Aileen Osborn Webb Gold Medal for Consummate Craftsmanship upon him.⁶⁷

Paul Soldner died at his home in Claremont on 3 January 2011. Obituaries published over the following days by newspapers across the country, including the *Denver Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times*, provided the public with a summary of his remarkable life, successful art career, and profound influence upon the field of ceramic arts. In a memorial email distributed to the Scripps College community, President Lori Bettison-Varga wrote that Soldner "influenced generations of ceramic art students, who found in [him] an artist who was both internationally acclaimed and personally accessible, a teacher who taught not by rule, but by example." Paul and Ginny's ashes are scattered on their beloved property in Aspen.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ "Ginny Soldner," *Aspen Times*, 2-3 December 1995, p. 12B; Doug, Casebeer, *Ginny Soldner, 1924-1995*, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO, 1995.

⁶⁶ "Inferno: The Ceramic Art of Paul Soldner," Inaugural Exhibition, American Museum of Ceramic Art, September-December 2004; "Ceramic Annual Event Kicks Off," *Los Angeles Times*, Claremont-Upland Voice, 23 January 2004, p. A8; "Paul Soldner Endowment," Located Online at <https://rcwg.scrippscollege.edu/paul-soldner-endowment>.

⁶⁷ "Breaking the Clay Mold," *Aspen Times*, 17 August 2006.

⁶⁸ E-Mail Message from Scripps College President Lori Bettison-Varga to the Scripps College Community on the Death of Paul Soldner, 4 January 2011.

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- "Lustrous New Lamps," 20 January 1957, p. 34.
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- "Paul Soldner calls this arresting piece of ceramic..." Home Magazine, 26 March 1967, p. 17.
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SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

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PITKIN, COLORADO

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Name of Property

PITKIN, COLORADO

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"Paul Soldner is Appointed to Faculty," 27 March 1957, p. 22.
"Ceramic Display," 28 November 1957, p. 28.
"Soldner Wins Art Awards," 8 April 1958, p. 18.
"Ceramist Building Studio in Padua Hills," 8 June 1959, sec. 1, p. 8.
"Bonsai," 22 May 1964, sec. 4, p. 8.
"Fine Arts Foundation Books Paul Soldner," 16 March 1970, p. 13.
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"Potter Stamps Belly Button Into His Work," 27 April 1970, p. 25.
"Paul Soldner to Give Talk on Pottery," 30 March 1972, p. C-7.

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SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

Name of Property

PITKIN, COLORADO

County and State

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"Art Centers and Museums," 16 August 1979, p. 11.

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United States Federal Census Records, Geiger Family, 1930 & 1940 (Bluffton, OH).

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SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

PITKIN, COLORADO

Name of Property

County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University – **Scripps College, Claremont, CA**
- Other
- Name of repository: **Aspen Historical Society, Aspen, CO**
The Soldner Center, Aspen, CO

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

5PT.1392

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.979 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

The UTM reference point was derived from heads up digitization on Digital Raster Graphic (DRG) maps provided to OAHF by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

UTM References (NAD 83)

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A 13 339835 4341674
Zone Easting Northing

C 13 339717 4341589
Zone Easting Northing

E 13 339832 4341546
Zone Easting Northing

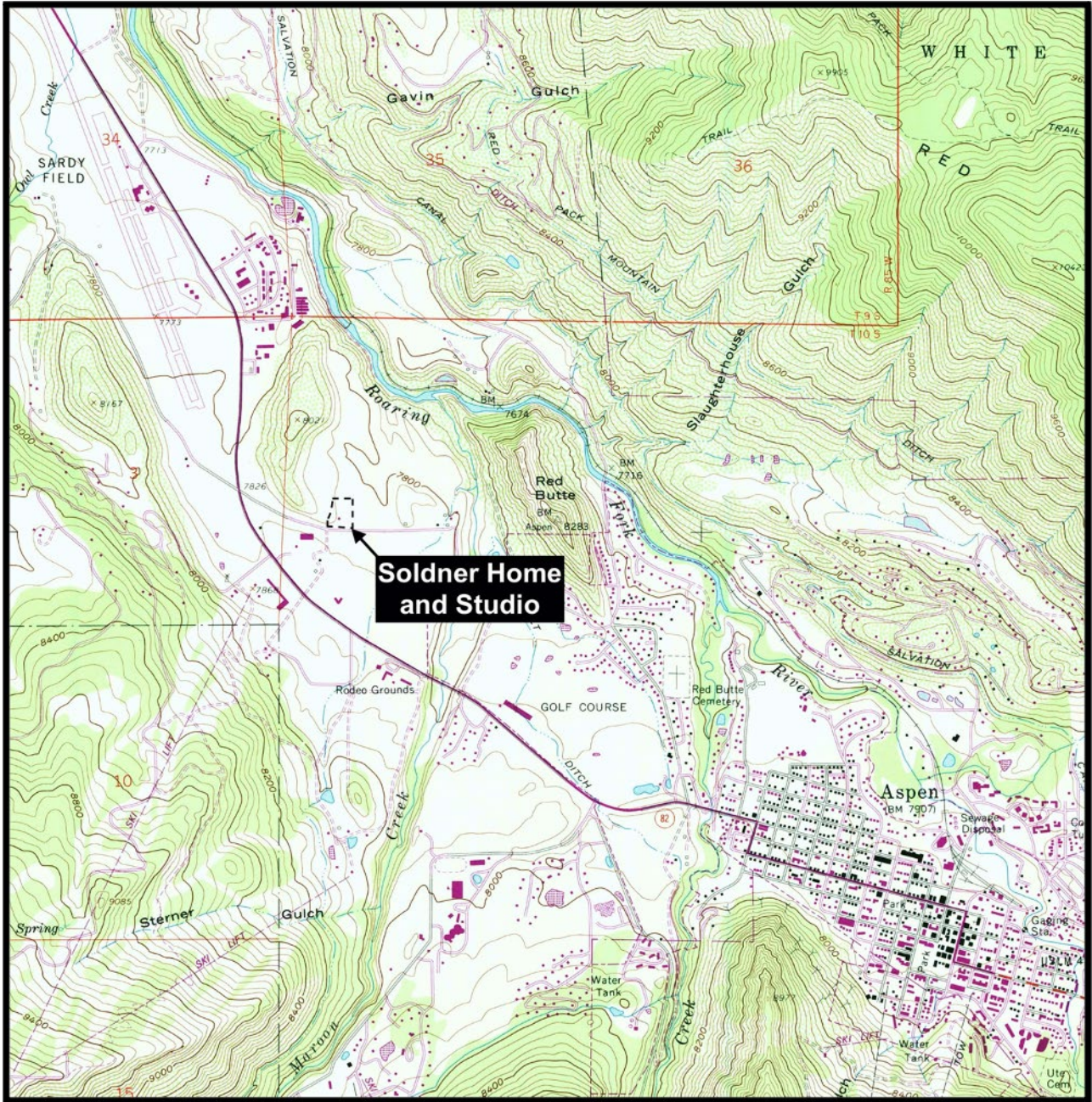
B 13 339755 4341674
Zone Easting Northing

D 13 339716 4341564
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundaries of the nominated property run along established survey lines and consist of Lot 1 of the Soldner Family Partnership LLLP Subdivision.

Boundary Justification: The nominated property is limited to Lot 1, a parcel almost three acres in size with a clear and justifiable legal description. This holds the historic building complex together with its surrounding landscaped and natural grounds. It does not include the additional two acres to the north, known as Lot 2, that were acquired by the Soldners in 1957. This is because the land there was never developed and holds no importance in relation to the site's history and significance.

Site Location Map

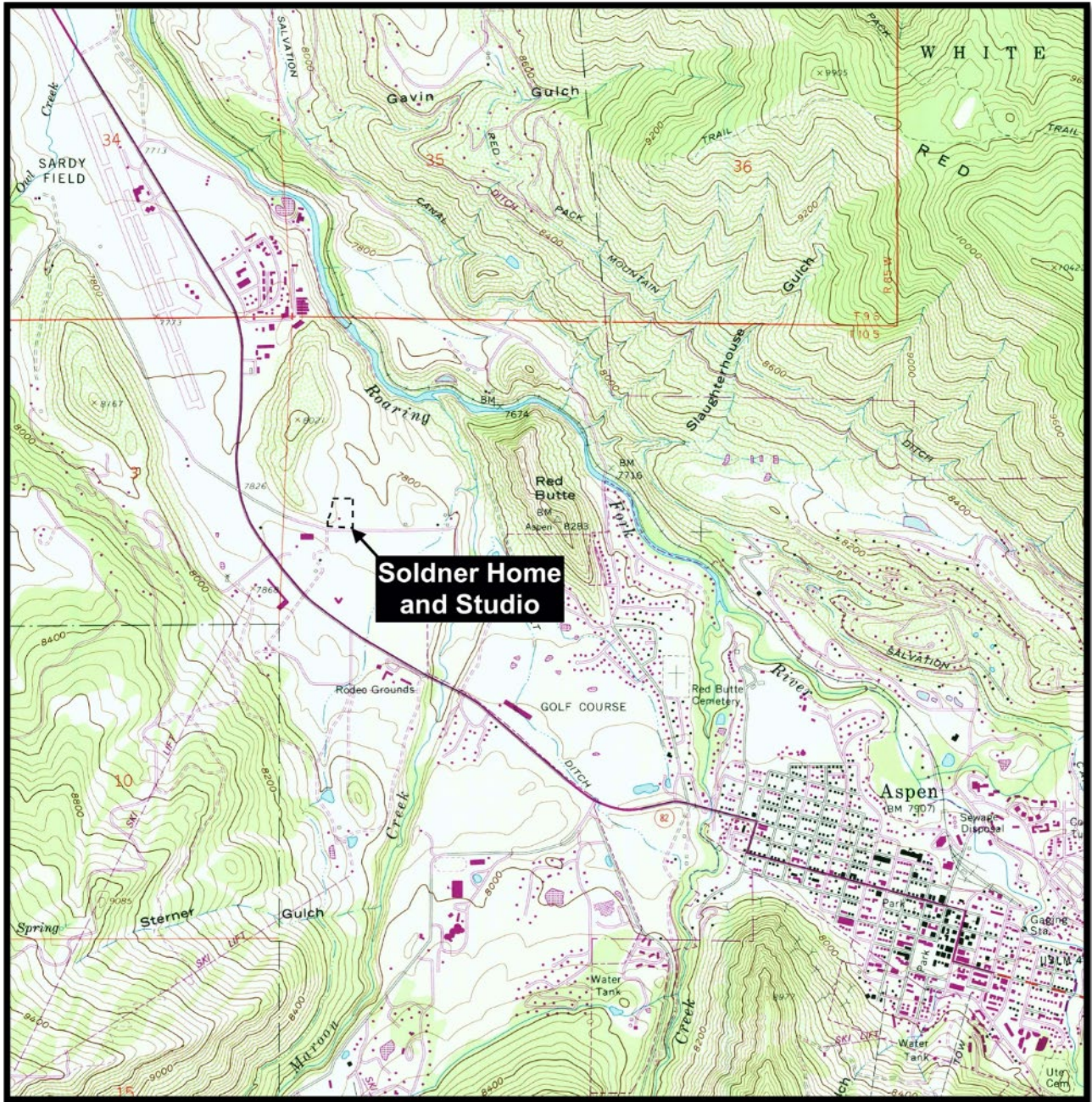


SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

Name of Property

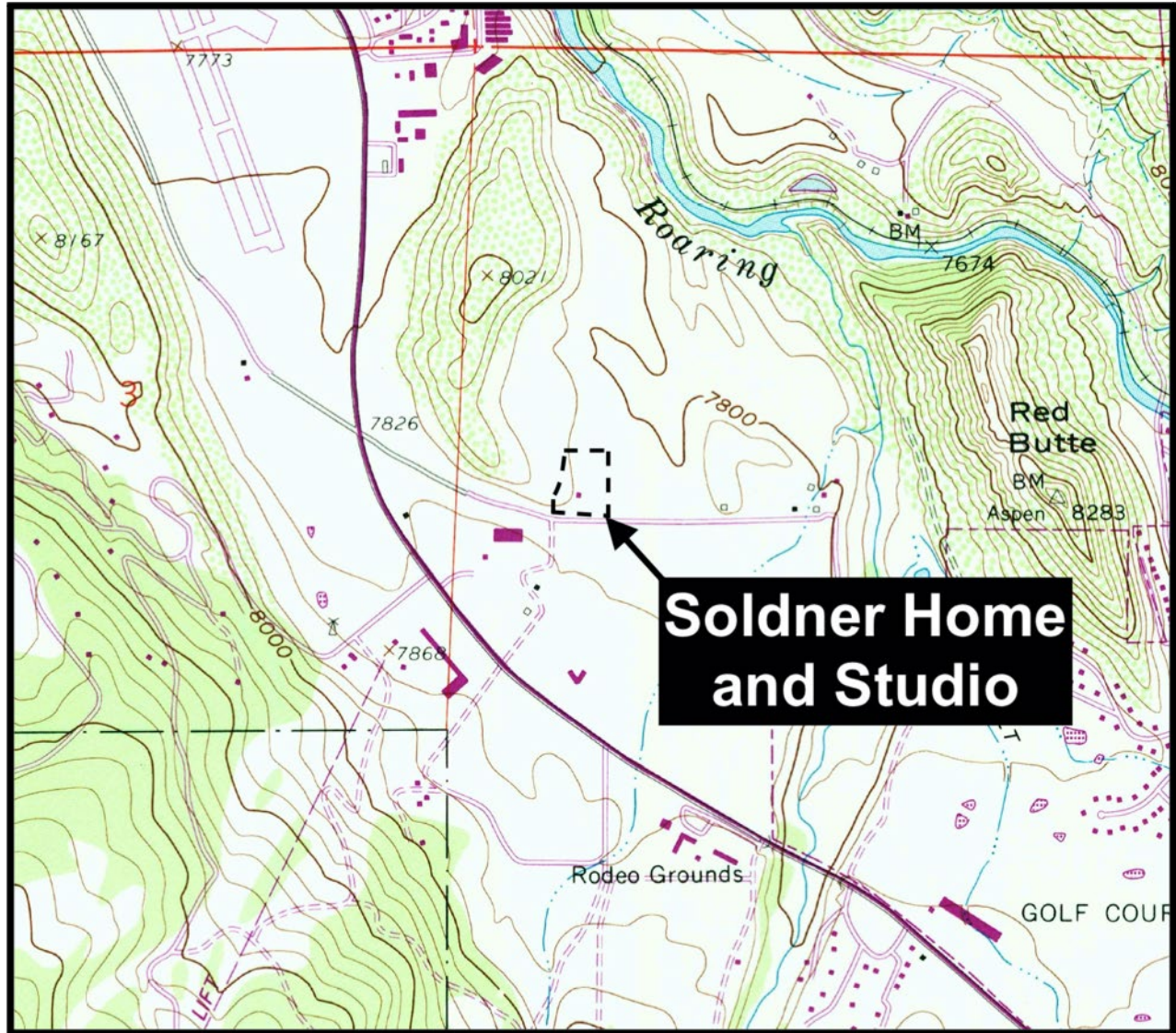
PITKIN, COLORADO

County and State



USGS Aspen 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle (1960, rev. 1987)

Enlarged Site Location Map

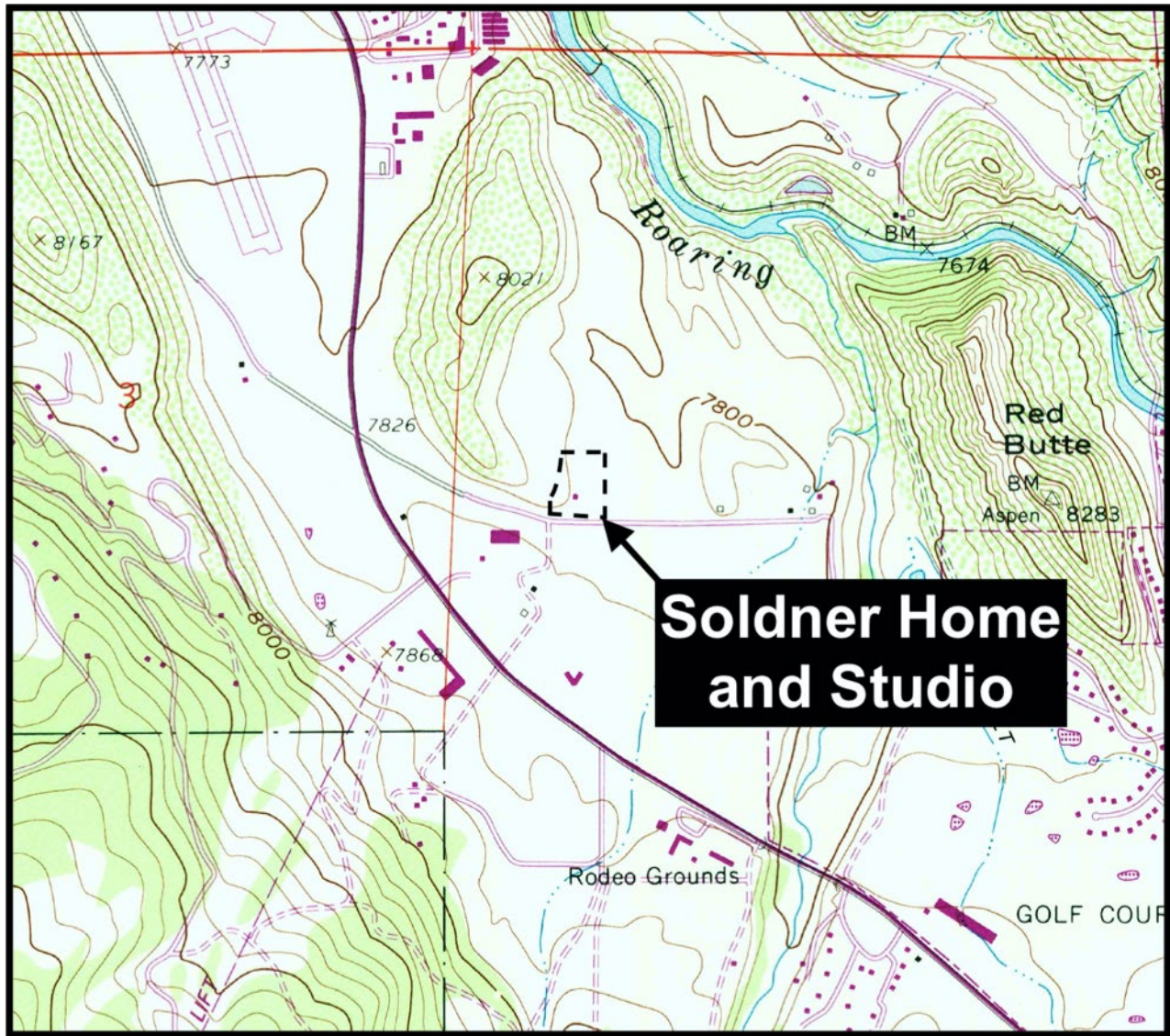


SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

Name of Property

PITKIN, COLORADO

County and State



Aerial Image of the Site

Showing Lot Boundaries and UTM Points



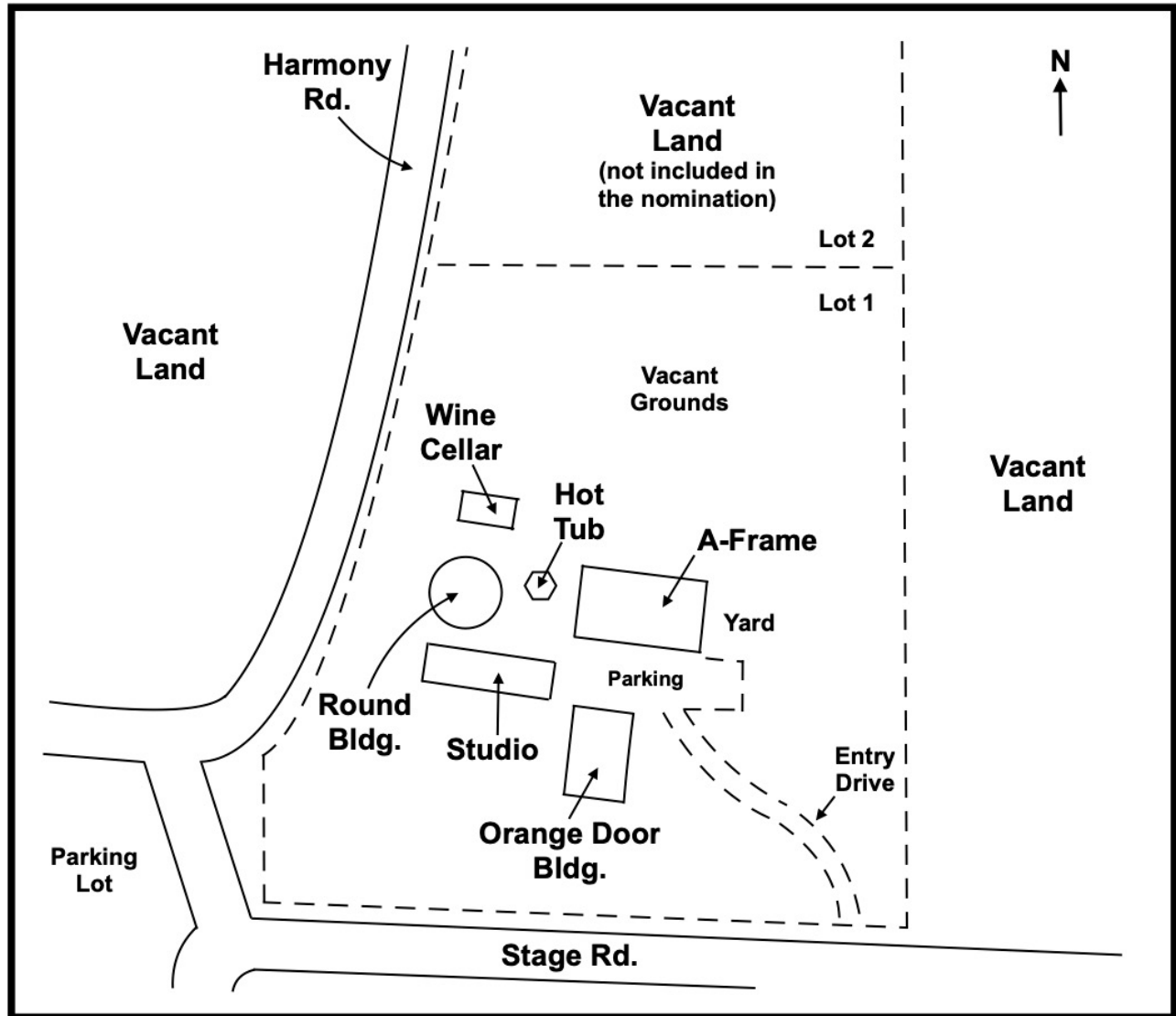
SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO
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PITKIN, COLORADO
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Source: Pitkin County Assessor

Site Diagram

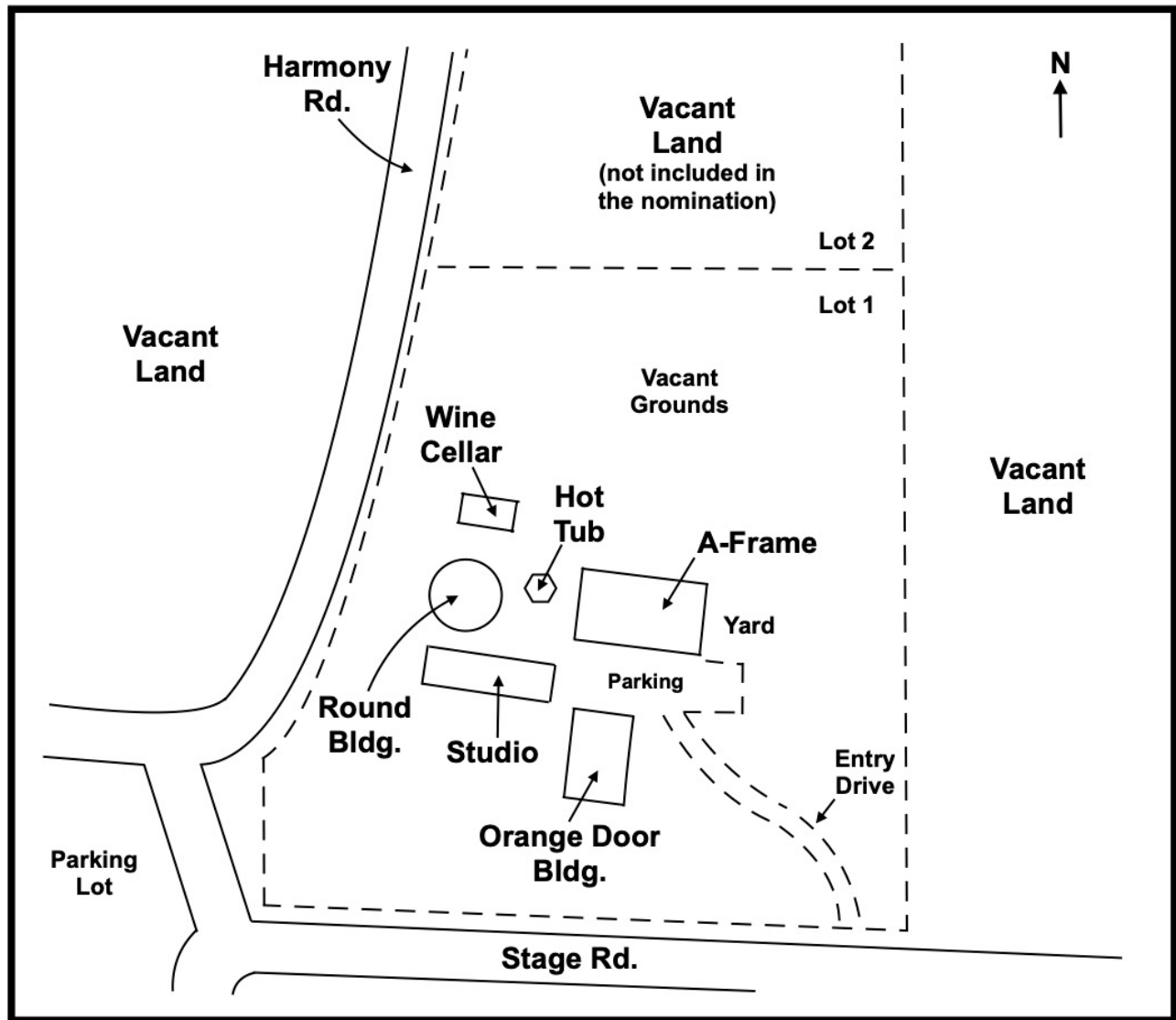


SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

PITKIN, COLORADO

Name of Property

County and State



11. Form Prepared By

name/title RON SLADEK, PRESIDENT (for property owner)

organization TATANKA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATES INC.

date 15 MARCH 2021 (REVISED 8/24/22)

street & number P.O. BOX 1909

telephone 970/689-4855

city or town FORT COLLINS

state CO

zip code 80522

e-mail tatanka@verinet.com

SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

Name of Property

PITKIN, COLORADO

County and State

Current Photographs Log

The following information applies to all of the photographs submitted with this form:

Name of property: Soldner House and Studio
City, county and state: Pitkin County, Colorado
Photographer: Ron D. Sladek
Date photographed: 23 July 2020
Location of originals: Tatanka Historical Associates Inc.
P.O. Box 1909
Fort Collins, CO 80522
TIFF images on file with the National Register, Washington, D.C.

- Photograph 1: General View of the Soldner Home and Studio. View to the Northeast.
- Photograph 2: Entry Drive from the Southeast Corner of the Property. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 3: Entry Drive Approaching the Building Complex. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 4: A-Frame Building, South Wall. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 5: A-Frame Building, West Wall. View to the Northeast.
- Photograph 6: A-Frame Building, East Wall. View to the West.
- Photograph 7: A-Frame Building, North Roof and West Wall. View to the Southeast.
- Photograph 8: A-Frame Building, Living Room with Soldner Ceramic Sculptures on Display. View to the Southwest.
- Photograph 9: A-Frame Building, Dining Room. View to the West.
- Photograph 10: A-Frame Building, Kitchen. View to the West.
- Photograph 11: A-Frame Building, West Addition. View to the North.
- Photograph 12: A-Frame Building, Upstairs Bedroom. View to the West.
- Photograph 13: Orange Door Building, North Wall. View to the Southeast.
- Photograph 14: Orange Door Building, South Wall. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 15: Orange Door Building, Interior Roof Structure. View to the South.

SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

PITKIN, COLORADO

Name of Property

County and State

- Photograph 16: Orange Door Building, South Interior. View to the Southeast.
- Photograph 17: Orange Door Building, East Wall. View to the Northeast.
- Photograph 18: Orange Door Building, West Wall with Fireplace. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 19: Round Building. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 20: Round Building. View to the Southwest.
- Photograph 21: Round Building, Main Floor Interior. View to the West.
- Photograph 22: Round Building, Upper-Level Loft.
- Photograph 23: Round Building, Loft Opening from Above.
- Photograph 24: Round Building, Cantilevered Loft Structure from Below.
- Photograph 25: Round Building, Roof Structure.
- Photograph 26: Round Building, Cribbed Roof Structure and Octagonal Skylight.
- Photograph 27: Studio Building, East Wall. View to the Southwest.
- Photograph 28: Studio Building, North Wall. View to the Southwest.
- Photograph 29: Studio Building, South Wall. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 30: Studio Building, Outdoor Workshop with Kilns. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 31: Studio Building, Outdoor Workshop, Soldner Patented Clay Mixer.
- Photograph 32: Studio Building Interior. View to the Southeast.
- Photograph 33: Studio Building Interior. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 34: Studio Building Interior, Soldner Patented Electric Kickwheels.
- Photograph 35: Wine Cellar, East Entrance. View to the Northwest.
- Photograph 36: Wine Cellar, Upper Room.
- Photograph 37: Wine Cellar, Lower Room (Lime Kiln Drum).
- Photograph 38: Hot Tub, Courtyard Between the A-Frame Building and Round Building. View to the South.

SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

Name of Property

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- Photograph 39: Soldner Property, Open Ground North of the Building Complex. View to the North.
Photograph 40: Paul Soldner Sculpture Near the Entrance to the Property. Composed of Vintage Steam Radiators and Repurposed Timbers. View to the Southeast.
- Photograph 41: Paul Soldner Sculpture Located South of the Hot Tub. Bronze Copy of Original Ceramic. View to the North.
- Photograph 42: Paul Soldner Sculpture Along Entry Drive. Bronze Copy of Original Ceramic. View to the Northeast.
- Photograph 43: Paul Soldner Sculpture East of the House. Bronze Copy of Original Ceramic. View to the East.

Historic Photographs Log

- Photograph 1: Paul Soldner, *Long Beach (CA) Independent*, 4 August 1955, p. 10.
- Photograph 2: Paul Soldner, Master of Fine Arts Show, *Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 1956, part 2, p. 1.
- Photograph 3: Paul Soldner, *Lima (OH) News*, 6 February 1957, p. 2.
- Photograph 4: Paul Soldner, *Lima (OH) News*, 2 April 1967, p. 39.
- Photograph 5: The Soldner Property Outside Aspen, 1957. View to the East.
- Photograph 6: Paul Soldner Mixing Cement on the Site, circa 1958. View to the East.
- Photograph 7: Orange Door Building, Slip-Form Concrete Wall Frame, 1957.
- Photograph 8: Orange Door Building, Roof Truss Form, 1958.
- Photograph 9: Orange Door Building Under Construction, 1958. View to the East.
- Photograph 10: Paul Soldner Guiding Roof Beam into Place, Orange Door Building, 1959.
- Photograph 11: Ginny and Stephanie Soldner, Orange Door Building, 1963.
- Photograph 12: Cast Concrete Beam Frames, A-Frame Building, 1959.
- Photograph 13: Erecting the A-Frame Building, 1960.
- Photograph 14: Erecting the A-Frame Building, 1962.
- Photograph 15: Paul Soldner Laying Concrete Blocks for the Round Building, circa 1966.

SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO

Name of Property

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- Photograph 16: Round Building Under Construction, circa 1969.
- Photograph 17: Paul Soldner in His Studio in the Round Building, 1979.
- Photograph 18: The Studio Building (Long Building) Under Construction, 1974.
- Photograph 19: Paul Soldner Firing Raku in Winter, 1969.
- Photograph 20: Paul Soldner Firing Raku in Summer, 1971.
- Photograph 21: Paul Soldner at Work, 1982.
- Photograph 22: Soldner Registered Trademark.
- Photograph 23: Paul and Ginny Soldner, 1995.

****Note: All photographs provided by the Soldner family and noted in the captions are copyrighted by the Soldner Family Partnership LLLP. These photos are not to be reproduced, published or made available for distribution beyond this National Register nomination.**

SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO
Name of Property

PITKIN, COLORADO
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Photo 6: A-Frame Building, East Wall. View to the West.

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SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO
Name of Property

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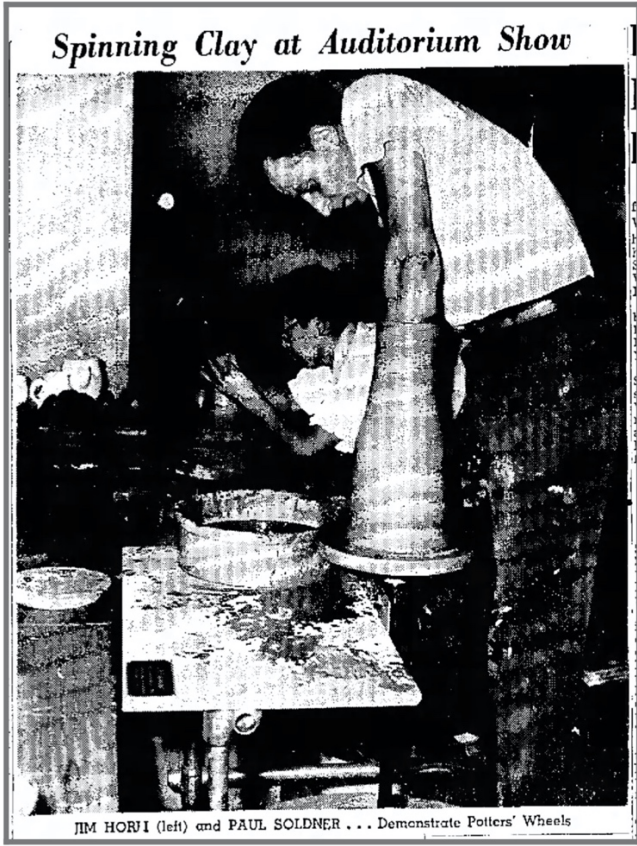


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Paul Soldner
Long Beach (CA) Independent
4 August 1955, p. 10



Photo 2
Paul Soldner
Master of Fine Arts Show
Los Angeles Times
10 June 1956, part 2, p. 1

SOLDNER HOME AND STUDIO
Name of Property

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County and State

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS



BLUFFTON — Paul Soldner, son of Rev. and Mrs. G. T. Soldner of West Elm St., shown here with some of his work, has accepted a two-year appointment as head of the ceramics department at Scripps College, Claremont, Calif. The former Blufftonite will head the department during the absence of his predecessor, who is on leave of absence. Since graduation last spring from the Los Angeles County Art Institute, Soldner has been free lancing in ceramics and recently completed a ceramics mural for a new bank building in San Francisco.

Photo 3
Lima (OH) News
6 February 1957, p. 2



BLUFFTON NATIVE — Paul Soldner, a native of Bluffton, now ceramist at the University of Colorado, will return to his hometown and to Lima Saturday for the all - day art program.

Photo 4
Lima (OH) News
2 April 1967, p. 39

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS



**Photo 5: The Soldner Property Outside Aspen, 1957. View to the East.
From the Collection of the Soldner Family Partnership LLLP.**



**Photo 6: Paul Soldner Mixing Cement on the Site, circa 1958. View to the East.
From the Collection of the Soldner Family Partnership LLLP.**

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS



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Orange Door Building
Slip-Form Concrete Wall Frame
1957



Photo 8
Orange Door Building
Roof Truss Form
1958

From the Collection of the Soldner Family Partnership LLLP.

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS



**Photo 9: Orange Door Building Under Construction, 1958. View to the East.
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Paul Soldner Guiding Roof Beam into Place.
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**Photo 12: Cast Concrete Beam Frames, A-Frame Building, 1959.
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Photo 13: Erecting the A-Frame Building, 1960.
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Photo 14: Erecting the A-Frame Building, 1962.
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**Photo 15: Paul Soldner Laying Concrete Blocks for the Round Building, circa 1966.
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HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS



**Photo 21: Paul Soldner at Work, 1982.
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Photo 22: Soldner Registered Trademark.

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS



**Photo 23: Paul and Ginny Soldner, 1995.
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