



27 March 1998

Ms. Carol Shull  
Keeper, National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service, Suite NC 400  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE  
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN  
1517 PERLOFF HALL  
BOX 951467  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1467  
(310) 686-7837  
FAX (310) 686-6939

Dear Ms. Shull:

I am writing to endorse with enthusiasm the eligibility of Richard Neutra's Gettysburg Visitors Center for the National Register of Historic Places. I teach cultural, urban, and architectural history in the departments of history and architecture at UCLA. In 1982, I was co-curator of an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York: "The Architecture of Richard Neutra: From International Style to California Modern," and the author, the same year, of Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture: A Biography and History (Oxford University Press).

The Gettysburg building is an important work of Neutra's late career, which many historians, including me, tended to view for many years as being less interesting and perhaps less significant than his seminal work of the thirties and forties. I researched and conceptualized my book more than twenty years ago in the late 1970s, and while, on the whole, I still agree with most of what I wrote, my opinion has changed on Neutra's late public work, which I, and others, now see as much more valuable and important than we did then. Were I writing the book now, I would give very high marks to the Gettysburg building. Its bold, but uninsistent, abstractness, seems just the right approach for a structure on the edge of the sacred ground of the famous battlefield. I must have been, more than I realized, under the sway of "post-modernist" critical theory to suggest, as I did, that the building could have used more "historic allusions." On the contrary, I now see its modernist neutrality as an asset. I shudder to think of the potential for kitschy "neo-bellum" historicism to which it might have descended in the hands of certain "post modernist" architects.

I understand that Neutra's fine structure has been badly maintained and is need of repair. I urge you to list it, restore it, and use it proudly as an important example of mid-twentieth century American modernism that ably and unobtrusively offers an appropriate setting for introducing and interpreting Gettysburg.

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Hines, Professor of History and Architecture