

# Hunt-Wesson, Inc. Headquarters Building

**1645 W. Valencia Drive**

**1962**

**International Style**

**Status: Unrecognized  
Significant Property;  
Listed on the National Register**



Constructed in 1962, the Hunt-Wesson, Inc. Headquarters Building is an exemplary example of corporate International Style architecture, a modern style popular the two decades following World War II. The 60,000-sq.-ft., four-story office building with basement exhibits all the striking elements of the International Style – a simple, rectilinear form, glass panels, a structural steel frame, a repeated module pattern – and its parklike setting provides a dramatic counterpart for this type of architecture. It is one of the few International Style buildings in Fullerton, and one of the outstanding examples of this type in Orange County.

This building was designed by master architect William L. Pereira, considered one of the great architects of the 20th century. In the decades of the mid-1900s Pereira helped to redefine modern architecture, industrial architecture and site planning. Here, Pereira established a campus that included walkways between building sites as well as functional landscaped areas, and he designed the building on an elevated pad or platform for its entry – all to provide a refined, elegant appearance to the premises.

Pereira designed the Hunt-Wesson, Inc. Headquarters Building for its president, industrialist/art collector Norton Simon. Norton Simon created the conglomerate Hunt-Wesson Inc., Company by acquiring and consolidating numerous food processing companies in the 1940s and 50s. By 1959, the company had out-grown its substantial holdings in southwest Fullerton covering over 100 acres, and Simon wanted to separate the manufacturing and processing facilities from its executive and office functions. Simon hired Pereira to create a master plan that would showcase his personal and corporate art collections as well as the corporate face of the rapidly-expanding Hunt-Wesson conglomerate. The master plan included the four-story headquarters building, a remodeling of a 1952-constructed office building (later razed), and a new city branch library – a gift to the city of Fullerton – within a 25.8-acre landscaped campus. Pereira,

who appreciated the importance of a dramatic statement, provided Simon with the striking and impressive complex that he wanted.

The Hunt-Wesson, Inc. Company was acquired by ConAgra Grocery Products Company in the 1980s; ConAgra vacated the property in 2000, moving its workforce to Irvine. After Grace Ministries Church purchased the property in 2000, it was allowed to build a new 180,000-sq.-ft. facility at the western portion of the property that includes a large sanctuary, gymnasium, and private school. The church's new construction did not alter the 4-story former administration building nor its parklike setting. Presently, the church uses this building for offices and support facilities; it is slowly making substantial upgrades to the building to continue that use.

The Hunt-Wesson, Inc. Headquarters Building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2019, as part of a district application called Hunt Center and Library. The district encompasses a 10.1-acre site that includes the four-story headquarters building, the Hunt Library, and the extensive landscaped grounds between the two buildings.



**Headquarters building within landscaped setting  
1962 photo by Jules Shulman**