



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**Historical Resources Board**

DATE ISSUED: June 12, 2014 REPORT NO. HRB-14-034

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of June 26, 2014

SUBJECT: **ITEM #7 – Martin and Enid Gleich/Henry Hester House**

APPLICANT: Julie Dunne represented by Allen Hazard & Janet O'Dea

LOCATION: 5120 Norris Road, College Area Community, Council District 9

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Martin and Enid Gleich/Henry Hester House located at 5120 Norris Road as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Martin and Enid Gleich/Henry Hester House located at 5120 Norris Road as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1957-1962 under HRB Criteria C and D. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Modern Post-and-Beam/Organic Geometric style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1957-1962 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a direct expression of the wood frame structural system; strong horizontal massing; flat roofs with deep overhangs; floor-to-ceiling glass; natural materials of redwood and stone; asymmetrical facades; and site-specific design encouraging indoor/outdoor living.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Henry Hester and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource demonstrates excellence in bespoke Modernist design in a work that was widely recognized at the time of construction, and is highly representative of Hester's early residential works.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The resource is a one story single family residence built in 1957-1962 in the Modern Post-and-Beam/Organic Geometric style, and

located on the west side of Norris Road in the Alvarado Terrace Subdivision of the College Area Community.

The building is located on APN 461-600-04-00. The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been previously surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the Martin and Enid Gleich/Henry Hester House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Martin and Enid Gleich, who constructed the house their personal residence and the name of Henry Hester, a Master Architect.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Allen Hazard & Janet O'Dea, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D and staff concurs. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

*CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.*

The subject property was constructed in 1957 of above-standard wood frame and stone construction on a concrete foundation as a one story single family residence tailored for private modern living. The building's overall plan form is irregular and generally positioned around a central courtyard with original swimming pool. The rearward slope of the lot coupled with the building's orientation, low-slung profile and tremendous front yard setback dissociates the home from the street – the only indication of its presence being the roofline of a large carport reaching forward over a circular driveway. Vertical redwood siding and natural stone make up most of the exterior materials seen from the outside perimeter, while floor-to-ceiling glass dominates the interior portions of the structure that face private courtyards and patios. More redwood material is seen in the copious fencing about the property. Original brickwork is present in the steps leading to the primary metal entry door, and in the patios and courtyards. A notable feature to the right of the main entry is the massive curved stone wall of the living room. This stone wall rounds the northeast corner of the house and extends rearward into the brick patio leading to the pool deck beyond. The roof form of the house is consistently flat, marked by wide overhangs and horizontal wood fascia carried throughout the property. Fenestration consists generally of floor-to-ceiling metal sash windows and sliding glass doors. Overall, the building is characterized by rectilinear geometry, asymmetrical facades, angular shapes, strong horizontal massing, natural materials, and a private yet open design encouraging indoor/outdoor living.

Beyond the informal entry accessed from the carport is a secondary courtyard resulting from the construction of a 1962 addition along the south (side) elevation designed by the building's original architect, Henry Hester. This 1962 addition was fully integrated into the original structure, incorporating the same materials and design elements seen throughout. Having been designed by the original architect and not long after the initial construction, the 1962 addition is

determined to have gained historical significance in its own right. The resource's period of significance (1957-1962) has therefore been extended to include this 1962 addition.

The resource retains excellent integrity, with modifications limited only to the in-kind replacement of windows on south side of the interior courtyard and the removal of some elements of the original landscaping.

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Modernism had a tremendous effect on San Diego's built environment, most notably during the construction boom following World War II – and resulted in the development of a variety of architectural sub-styles that reflected the progressive attitudes of the Modernist movement. While some shared common elements, these sub-styles were characteristically distinct and would occasionally overlap within a single building. Stylistically, the subject property has been identified as one such “hybrid” – exhibiting a blend of Modern sub-styles, namely Post-and-Beam and Organic Geometric. This unique blending of architectural sub-styles seen in the present structure demonstrates a fluidity of Modernism in an architectural context.

The *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement* determines a period of ca. 1950-1970 during which Modern Post-and-Beam was most popular as a design style. The Post-and-Beam style is characterized by rectilinear forms and open floor plans that are grid-like and often constructed with modular components. The subject property exhibits all the primary character-defining features of the style in the direct expression of the wood frame structural system; strong horizontal massing; flat roofs with deep overhangs; and floor-to-ceiling glass. Secondary character-defining features of the style are seen in the minimal use of solid load-bearing walls, particularly around the interior courtyards; strong interior and exterior connections; and open interior floor plan. The Context Statement notes the relative rarity of this style, and identifies the expression of the structural system through expansive floor-to-ceiling glass and wood or steel framing as critical elements to its conveyance.

Organic Geometric architecture is a philosophy of design which promotes a harmonious relationship between buildings and nature. Organic Geometric designers made use of natural building materials such as wood and stone and designed buildings respectful to the site. Like their Modern Post-and-Beam contemporaries, Organic Geometric architects also used glass to blur the separation between interior and exterior and encourage indoor/outdoor living. Buildings were carefully sited to take advantage of views and other site features, often built on steep slopes and boasting large balconies. In terms of shape, architects designed these buildings with an emphasis on rectilinear geometry, and the designs are characterized by asymmetrical facades, unusual rooflines, and angular shapes. Primary and secondary character-defining features of this style and readily seen in the subject resource are: exposed structure and materials; square, diamond and polygon design motifs; natural materials; sharp angular massing; asymmetrical facades; and site-specific design.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Modern Post-and-Beam and Organic Geometric styles by embodying the historic characteristics associated with them; including a direct expression of the wood frame structural system; strong horizontal massing; flat roofs with deep overhangs; floor-to-ceiling glass; natural materials of

redwood and stone; asymmetrical facades; and site-specific design encouraging indoor/outdoor living. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C.

CRITERION D - *Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.*

Henry Hartwell Hester was born in Vinita, Oklahoma in 1925. After his family moved to San Diego, Henry attended Roosevelt Junior High School and Brown Military Academy before serving in the Coast Guard during World War II. Hester graduated from the University of Southern California in 1947 with a bachelor's degree in architecture and moved to La Jolla. Some of his early mentors were William F. Cody and Lloyd Ruocco. Throughout his career, Hester formed a number of partnerships with other architects, including Cody, Ronald K. Davis, Robert E. Jones and Fred Liebhardt. Hester was widely published in numerous architectural magazines and books and has been recognized as a Master Architect by the HRB. Of his many projects located within the City of San Diego, only one Hester-designed resource has been historically designated by the HRB: the Colonel Irving Salomon/Henry Hester Apartments (HRB Site #801) located at 3200 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and built in 1958.

The subject property was designed by Master Architect Henry Hester in 1957. At the time, Hester was partnered with Ronald Davis, a notable architect listed in the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement* but not yet granted Master status by the HRB. Among Hester's known works, the subject resource was designed fairly early in his career and received national acclaim when its design was documented in *Life Magazine* in 1958. In 1960 the house was locally recognized with an Award of Excellence by AIA San Diego. The resource was truly a confluence of Modernism in San Diego as the property was also photographed by architectural photographer Julius Schulman, and the site design was supplied by noted landscape architects Harriet Wimmer and Joseph Yamada.

Significance Statement: As a demonstration of recognized excellence in custom residential Modernist design, and a property that is representative of Hester's early works, staff recommends designation of the subject resource under HRB Criterion D.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

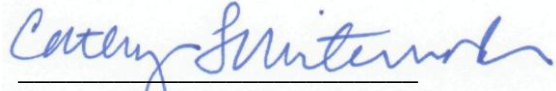
#### CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Martin and Enid Gleich/Henry Hester House located at 5120 Norris Road be designated with a period of significance of 1957-1962 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the Modern Post-and-Beam/Organic Geometric style; and HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Henry Hester. Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The

benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives.



Camille Pekarek  
Junior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd  
Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

CP/cw

Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 6/26/2014

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/26/2014, to consider the historical designation of the **Martin and Enid Gleich/Henry Hester House** (owned by Julie A Dunne, 5120 Norris Road, San Diego, CA 92115) located at **5120 Norris Road, San Diego, CA 92115**, APN: **461-600-04-00**, further described as LOT 4 in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. 0**, and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the Martin and Enid Gleich/Henry Hester House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Modern Post-and-Beam/Organic Geometric style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1957-1962 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a direct expression of the wood frame structural system; strong horizontal massing; flat roofs with deep overhangs; floor-to-ceiling glass; natural materials of redwood and stone; asymmetrical facades; and site-specific design encouraging indoor/outdoor living. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Architect Henry Hester and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource demonstrates excellence in bespoke Modernist design in a work that was widely recognized at the time of construction, and is highly representative of Hester's early residential works. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote: N/A

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
JOHN LEMMO, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND  
LEGALITY: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
CORRINE NEUFFER,  
Deputy City Attorney