



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 19, 2008 REPORT NO. HRB-08-060

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of September 25, 2008

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – Elizabeth Lee Stickney/Ralph L. Frank House**

APPLICANT: Scott Moomjian on behalf of Gerald Heidt, owner

LOCATION: 610 Rosecrans Street, Peninsula Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Elizabeth Lee Stickney/Ralph L. Frank House located at 610 Rosecrans Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Elizabeth Lee Stickney/Ralph L. Frank House as a historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies distinctive characteristics through retention of character defining features of the Custom Ranch architectural style and retains an excellent level of architectural integrity from its period of significance, the construction date of 1952.
2. The residence is identified as a notable work of Ralph L. Frank, an established Master Architect, and retains an excellent level of integrity for the purposes of this association.



BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego Municipal Code Section 143.0212.

The resource is located on the west side of Rosecrans Street on a hillside lot overlooking the San Diego Bay. A steep driveway leads from Rosecrans Street to the front side of the house, which faces west. The rear elevation overlooks Rosecrans Street and the San Diego Bay.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by the Office of Marie Burke Lia, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees and finds that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D 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.

Built in 1952, the Elizabeth Lee Stickney/Ralph L. Frank House exhibits character defining features of the Custom Ranch style including: one-story, asymmetrical massing, emphasis on horizontality, indoor-outdoor spaces/patios, a site-specific design, a private backyard with a highly glazed façade, low-pitched hipped roof, mixed material exterior finish, large attached garage and custom details. Character defining features of the Custom Ranch style are further discussed in the San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement and in the HRB adopted Staff Procedures on Evaluating the Historical Significance of Post-War Ranch Houses.

Located on a hillside lot, the house is elevated from the street. The site specific design of the house includes orientation of the entry on the west side facing toward the hillside allowing an expansive view of the San Diego Bay from the private backyard. The long narrow footprint of the house runs north-south, fitting it to the narrow site. The single story house has a low, horizontal profile; an asymmetrical plan; rests on a concrete foundation; and is topped with a hipped roof. This roof, originally shake, was re-roofed in 1999 with composition shingles. The broad eaves are boxed in, finished in wood and painted white. Exterior finish materials are mixed, incorporating stucco as the primary material with stone and board and batten detailing at the entrances and in several locations on the east façade. The original windows are present throughout the house. These are primarily multi-pane steel casement windows, with some sliders, large single pane fixed windows on the east elevation, and a diamond pane casement window near the entry on the west elevation. Throughout the house, the architect incorporated details which evoke the historic imagery of traditional western ranch houses. These include the use of board and batten siding, covered outdoor patios providing shade and an opportunity for indoor/outdoor living, and a cupola and weathervane at the roof ridgeline near the south end house.

Access to the property is provided by a steep driveway which leads uphill from the street, curving around the south elevation of the attached two-car garage to the front of the house. A

pair of steel casement windows with wood shutters is present on the south elevation of the garage adjacent to the driveway.

The west, or entry, elevation is a long horizontal plane with an attached two car garage at the south end and porte cochere closer to the north end of the elevation. The main front entrance is present beneath the porte cochere. This entrance features a pair of large wood entry doors with glass upper panels, and stone exterior finish detailing on the adjacent walls. The porte cochere is supported by wood posts, has a vaulted ceiling, and two open skylights. A secondary entrance also exists beneath the porte cochere, north of the main entrance beyond a wood half-wall. The portion of the front elevation between the porte cochere and garage is defined by various types of windows and an inset entrance adjacent to the garage. The windows in this area are steel casement, and include a diamond pane casement window, a popout supported by wood brackets with casement windows on the sides and a fixed window flanked by casements in the center, and another fixed flanked by two casements just south of the popout. The entrance adjacent to the garage features wood doors with multi-light upper panels, casement windows, and board and batten siding.

The private backyard of the residence captures a spectacular view of the San Diego Bay, and this east facing elevation incorporates several architectural details typical of the Custom Ranch style that take advantage of this view. Large fixed windows look out from this living room and bedrooms on this elevation, some of these windows are flanked by casements. Additionally, a large covered patio accessed from the interior at three locations provides indoor/outdoor living space. Like the other entrances of the residence, this patio is finished with stone and board and batten. Stone exterior finish is also present on the east elevation outside of the patio area adjacent to the rear garage wall, below the windows at the north end of this elevation, and as the finish material for the chimney.

The house retains an excellent level of integrity from its 1952 period of significance. While not included as part of the designation, it should be noted that the house appears to be unaltered on the interior at this time, retaining quality interior woodwork in the main living areas. With the exception of the composition roof dating from 1999, the form, plan, materials and details appear to be completely original. The house retains its exterior character defining features of the Custom Ranch style, and staff recommends that the property be designated under HRB Criterion C as an excellent example of Custom Ranch style architecture.

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

A notice of completion dating from September 18 1952 notes that the property at 610 Rosecrans, owned by Elizabeth Lee Stickney, was built by contractor Walter F. Osborn to the plans and specifications prepared by Ralph L. Frank and his son William L. Frank. Ralph L. Frank was established as a Master Architect by the Historical Resources Board in July of 2005.

Ralph Frank was born in Kansas in 1898, and moved to San Diego in 1920 after serving in World War I. As early as 1923 he was working with Ralph E. Hurlburt. In 1925, he was referenced as a designer working for Hurlburt and Tifal, a well-known design-build firm. At the

same time he was also designing buildings independent of Hurlburt and Tifal. By the mid-1930s he was a partner with the firm Hurlburt, Frank and Slaughter. Frank was the firm's primary architectural designer. The firm designed and built several houses throughout San Diego for high-end clients including Rueben H. Fleet, Percy J. Benbough, mayor of San Diego from 1935-1942 and C. Arnholt Smith. They were also responsible for planning of the Wonder House of Stone (HRB #464), though credit was given to Hurlburt. While with Hurlburt, Frank and Slaughter, Frank was responsible for the design of the five houses in the small subdivision of Brookes Terrace in Marston Hills. He was equally as creative with interior design, planning the interiors on a number of Hurlburt, Frank and Slaughter houses. He also designed 20 Southern California branches of the U.S. National Bank in partnership with Grant King.

It is well documented that Ralph Frank worked in many neighborhoods including Uptown, Mission Hills, Point Loma, La Playa and La Jolla, and in various architectural styles during the 1930's. Properties designated by the HRB for their association with Ralph Frank as a Master Architect include HRB # 718 (The Strawn House), HRB #722 (The Philip and Helen Gildred/Ralph Frank House), and HRB #881 (The Ralph Loren and Alice Mae Frank House). Now that homes built during the 1940's, 1950's and even 1960's are gaining historical significance it is being discovered that Ralph Frank worked as an architect into his later years and designed quality homes for his clients in styles more common during the mid-century. Most recently, The T. Claude Ryan House (HRB #869) at 548 San Fernando Street in Point Loma was nominated as a historical resource under HRB Criterion B, for its association with T. Claude Ryan; HRB Criterion C, as an example of Modern/Contemporary architecture; and HRB Criterion D for its association with Master Architect Ralph L. Frank. Because of a loss of architectural integrity, the T. Claude Ryan House was only designated under HRB Criterion B, not C or D. However the house, designed by Frank in 1962, just two years before his death, is just one example of the evolution of Frank's architectural style from traditional styles such as Colonial Revival and Monterey Revival to Custom Ranch and Modern/Contemporary. Another example of Frank's later work in Point Loma is the Custom Ranch home at 385 San Fernando Street, designed by Frank in 1956. This house is not currently designated, but has come to historical resources staff for project review.

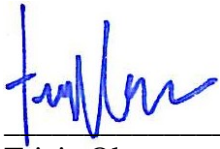
The Elizabeth Lee Stickney/Ralph L. Frank House at 610 Rosecrans Street is a notable example of Ralph's Frank later work in the Custom Ranch style. Designed by Frank in 1952, the property retains an excellent level of integrity for the purposes of association with Ralph L. Frank, including all original character defining features of the Custom Ranch style, with the exception of the shake roof. Staff recommends that the house be designated under HRB Criterion D, as a notable example of the work of Ralph L. Frank.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

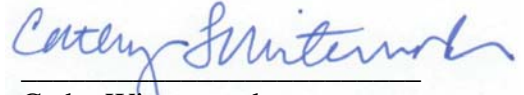
The house retains its original configuration, materials and details at this time and no exclusions have been identified. However any future modifications will be excluded from a Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Elizabeth Lee Stickney/Ralph L. Frank House be designated under HRB Criterion C as an example of Custom Ranch style architecture, and under HRB Criterion D as a notable example of the work of Ralph L. Frank, a Master Architect. 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.



Tricia Olsen
Associate Planner



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Senior Planner/Program Coordinator

TO/cw

- Attachment(s):
1. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover
 2. Applicant's Historical Report Addendum under separate cover