



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 12, 2025 REPORT NO. HRB-25-026

HEARING DATE: June 25, 2025

SUBJECT: **ITEM #3 – Dr. Alton and Margaret Harpst/Ralph L. Frank House**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Tyler and Brette Humphrey; represented by Urbana Preservation & Planning, LLC

LOCATION: 3210 Xenophon Street, 92106, Peninsula Community, Council District 2  
APN 450-044-03-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Dr. Alton and Margaret Harpst/Ralph L. Frank House located at 3210 Xenophon Street as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Dr. Alton and Margaret Harpst/Ralph L. Frank House located at 3210 Xenophon Street as a historical Resource with a period of significance of 1939 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 the Colonial Revival style with Neoclassical influences and retains integrity from its 1939 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a symmetrical primary front façade with a low-pitched side gabled roof with slight eave overhang and two interior gable-end chimneys, multi-lite double-hung and fixed wood windows, horizontal channel wood siding, a full-length/height front porch supported by six slender and squared columns, a wood panel front entry door accented by a triangular broken pediment with a decorative entablature, and a recessed side wing.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is an example of Frank's work in designing cost-effective residences in the Colonial Revival style after the Great Depression and is a rare example of his work in combining the Colonial Revival and Neoclassical architectural styles. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D.

## 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 property was previously surveyed by the Quieter Homes Program in 2013 and was determined to be a contributor to the National Register eligible Loma Portal Historic District.

The historic name of the resource, the Dr. Alton and Margaret Harpst/Ralph L. Frank House has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Dr. Alton and Margaret Harpst who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Ralph L. Frank, a Master Architect.

In order to be eligible for designation and listing on the City's Register, a resource must meet one or more of the City's designation criteria as specified in the Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Manual and retain integrity as it relates to the significance of the resource. Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance, which requires an understanding of the physical features and characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance. The National, California, and City of San Diego Registers recognize location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as the seven aspects of historical integrity.

Although not all seven aspects of integrity need to be present for a property to be eligible for designation, the record must demonstrate that the property retains enough physical and design characteristics to reflect and convey the significance of the property. Each resource depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects are most important to a particular property requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#) provide information regarding the City's designation criteria, as well as guidance on their application and how to evaluate the integrity of a resource.

## ANALYSIS

The property located at 3210 Xenophon St is a two-story single-family home constructed in 1939 in the Colonial Revival style with Neoclassical influences. It is located on a corner lot in the Peninsula Community Planning Area near other single-family residences of different architectural styles. The property is in its original location.

Since its construction in 1939, the property has been modified as follows: In 1966, a concrete block retaining wall was added to the property's east elevation. In 2013, the property was surveyed as part of the Quieter Homes Program, but no exterior or interior modifications were completed to the resource as a result of the survey. In 2023, solar panels were installed on the rear of the roof, the original wood roof shingles were replaced with composition shingles, and protective glass panels were added behind the original railing on the southeast elevation deck. The replacement of the roof shingles and the addition of glass panels to the deck were reviewed and deemed consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards by Heritage Preservation staff.

A Historical Resource Research was prepared by Urbana Preservation & Planning, LLC, 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 resource is a two-story, single-family residence constructed in 1939 in the Colonial Revival style with Neoclassical influences. It features a symmetrical primary front façade with a low-pitched side gabled roof with slight eave overhang, two interior gable-end chimneys, and is clad in horizontal channel wood siding. Fenestration consists primarily of multi-lite double-hung and fixed wood windows in singles and different groupings.

The resource faces southwest on Xenophon Street and includes a full-length/height front porch that extends the existing roof eave toward Xenophon and is supported by six slender and squared columns. The centered front entry is accessed via a brick walkway and features a wood panel front-entry door with a multi-lite transom window above. A triangular broken pediment sits above the door with a decorative entablature with a dentil cornice, frieze, and architrave supported by fluted pilasters that frame the door. The entryway is flanked by two pairs of six-over-nine double-hung wood windows with exterior wood shutters and cornices. A bay window with a copper roof is located on the northwest elevation.

A recessed wing is located on the northwest side of the resource and is slightly shorter than the main portion and features a low-pitched side gabled roof with a wall gabled dormer and six-over-six double-hung wood windows. It is attached to the garage, which also features a side-gabled roof with copper topped cupola, and a paneled garage door with a wood trellis supported by triangular brackets.

A brick patio extends from the south side of the front façade to the southeast elevation of the property. The southeast façade is visible along Evergreen Street and features a balcony with a decorative wood balustrade, modern protective glass panels, French doors, and multi-lite fixed wood windows.

Following the Centennial Exposition of 1876 America experienced a rebirth of interest in its colonial past. Primarily popular from 1880 to 1955, Colonial Revival buildings reference the early English and Dutch homes of the Atlantic seaboard, particularly the Georgian and Federal styles. As with their prototypes, Colonial Revival structures generally have a symmetrical front façade with the principal areas of elaboration being entrances, windows and cornices. Roofs can be hipped, gable or gambrel and some variations feature a center gable projecting slightly from the primary façade. One-story side wings with flat roofs are common. Windows are typically double-hung sash with multi-pane glazing in one or both sashes and are commonly found in pairs, triples, or bay windows. Front-facing gambrel roofs were most common in earlier revival houses while side gambrels became popular in the 1920s and '30s.

The Neoclassical style was an architectural trend from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. It incorporated previously established elements of the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Classical Revival and Adam (Federal) styles as well as the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Greek Revival style, sometimes combining them in the same building. The style had two primary phases of design. The first period, from 1900 to 1920,

emphasized hipped roofs and elaborate columns. The later period, from roughly 1925 through the 1950s, emphasized side-gabled roofs and simple, slender columns. In general, both phases of the Neoclassical style are best identified by symmetrical façades, typically dominated by a full-height porch with the roof supported by classical columns. Neoclassical houses usually have a boxed eave with a moderate overhang, frequently with dentils or modillions beneath; a wide frieze band is occasionally found beneath the cornice. Doorways commonly have elaborated, decorative surrounds with based on Greek Revival, Federal, or even Georgian precedents. Windows are rectangular with double-hung multi-pane sashes.

Of the seven aspects of integrity, design, materials, and workmanship are the most critical to the property's ability to convey significance under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Colonial Revival style with Neoclassical influences. The modifications, which include the additions of a concrete block retaining wall on the south façade and solar panels on the rear façade do not impact significant character defining features, the property's integrity of design, materials and workmanship, or its ability to convey significance under Criterion C. The reroofing of the property with composition shingles and the addition of protective glass panels to the southeast elevation deck were deemed consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards by Heritage Preservation staff. Therefore, the property retains integrity to its 1939 period of significance under HRB Criterion C.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Colonial Revival style with Neoclassical influences by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style, including a symmetrical primary front façade with a low-pitched side gabled roof with slight eave overhang and two interior gable-end chimneys, multi-lite double-hung and fixed wood windows, horizontal channel wood siding, a full-length/height front porch supported by six slender and squared columns, a wood panel front entry door accented by a triangular broken pediment with a decorative entablature, and a recessed side wing. 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.*

Ralph Loren Frank was born in Kansas in 1898. He moved to San Diego in 1920 and began working as a salesman for the Grable-Francisco-Bleifuss Company, a real estate company. By 1926, he was working as a drafter for Ralph E. Hurlburt, while also designing houses on his own. By the mid-1930s, he was a partner with the firm Hurlburt, Frank & Slaughter. Frank was the firm's primary architectural designer, while Slaughter built the houses and Hurlburt sold them.

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 to 1942), and C. Arnholt Smith. While with Hurlburt, Frank & 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 for several houses by Hurlburt, Frank & Slaughter. He also designed 20 Southern California branches of the U.S. National Bank in partnership with Grant King.

In order to cope with the economic hit of the Depression, Frank and Hurlburt transitioned from Spanish Eclectic styles to the simpler, more cost-effective "American" styles promoted by the FHA to meet demands for affordable housing, such as Colonial Revival and Cape Cod.

Ralph Frank worked in many neighborhoods including Uptown, Mission Hills, Point Loma, La Playa and La Jolla, and in various architectural styles. He worked as an architect into his later years, shifting to styles more common during the midcentury. A partial list of Frank's notable works is below.

- HRB #718– Strawn House (3120 Owen Street), 1933
- HRB #722– Philip and Helen Gildred/Ralph Frank House (1025 Cypress Avenue), 1935
- HRB #869– T. Claude Ryan House (548 San Fernando Street), 1962
- HRB #881– Ralph Loren and Alice Mae Frank House (6003 Waverly Avenue), 1928
- HRB #896– C. Arnholt Smith/Ralph L. Frank House (2293 San Juan Road), 1936
- HRB #955– Willis and Jane Fletcher/Ralph L. Frank and Milton Sessions House (575 San Geronimo Street), 1941
- HRB #987– Walter J. and Grace Ogden/Ralph L. Frank House (1007 Cypress Avenue), 1931
- HRB #1011– Guilford H. and Grace Whitney House (4146 Miller Street), 1927 (with Hurlburt, Tifal and Milton P. Sessions)
- HRB #1059– Dr. Franklin and Leone Lindemulder/Ralph Frank House (2251 San Juan Road), 1935
- HRB #1160– Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn House (2412 Pine Street), 1964
- HRB #1206– Justin and Anastasia Evenson/Ralph L. Frank House (1041 Cypress Avenue), 1934
- HRB #1288– Howard and Helen Taylor House (605 San Fernando Street), 1956
- HRB #1457– Timothy and Thelma Perkins/ Ralph L. Frank House (4165 Miller Street). 1946 Frank Residence (2288 San Juan Road)

At least 13 of Frank's works have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include the Philip and Helen Gildred/Ralph Frank House (HRB #722), which established him as a Master Architect by the HRB in 2005, the Ralph Loren and Alice Mae Frank House (HRB #881), and the C. Arnholt Smith/Ralph L. Frank House (HRB #896). The firm Hurlburt, Frank, and Slaughter was contracted to design and construct the subject resource by owners Dr. Alton and Margaret Harpst. In 1939, Master Architect Ralph L. Frank designed the subject resource as the lead architect for the firm. It is an example of Frank's work in adapting the Colonial Revival style to create cost-effective residences to meet the needs of his clients in the wake of the Great Depression and is a rare example of his work in combining the Colonial Revival and Neoclassical architectural styles.

Of the seven aspects of integrity, design, materials, and workmanship are the most critical to the property's ability to convey significance under HRB Criterion D as a resource that represents the notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank. The modifications, which include the addition of a concrete block retaining wall and the addition of solar panels on the rear façade roof, do not impact significant character defining features, the property's integrity of design, materials and workmanship, or its ability to convey significance as a resource that represents the notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank. The reroofing of the property with composition shingles and the addition of protective glass panels to the southeast elevation deck were deemed consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards by Heritage Preservation staff. Therefore, the property retains integrity to its 1939 period of significance under HRB Criterion D.

Significance Statement:

The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank and retains integrity to its original design. Specifically, the resource is an example of Frank's work in designing cost-effective residences in the Colonial Revival style after the Great Depression and is a rare example of his work in combining the Colonial Revival and Neoclassical architectural styles. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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. 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 Dr. Alton and Margaret Harpst/Ralph L. Frank House has located at 3210 Xenophon St be designated with a period of significance of 1939 under HRB Criteria C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Colonial Revival style with Neoclassical Influences and Criteria D as a notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank.



Audrey Rains  
Assistant Planner



Suzanne Segur  
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison  
City Planning Department

AR/SS

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on , to consider the historical designation of the **DR. ALTON AND MARGARET HARPST/RALPH L. FRANK HOUSE** (owned by Tyler and Brette Humphrey, 3210 Xenophon Street, San Diego, CA 92106) located at **3210 Xenophon Street, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **450-044-0300**, further described as BLK 196 LOTS 5 & 6 SWLY 70 FT 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 BLANK 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 the Colonial Revival style with Neoclassical influences and retains integrity from its 1939 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a symmetrical primary front façade with a low-pitched side gabled roof with slight eave overhang and two interior gable-end chimneys, multi-lite double-hung and fixed wood windows, horizontal channel wood siding, a full-length/height front porch supported by six slender and squared columns, a wood panel front entry door accented by a triangular broken pediment with a decorative entablature, and a recessed side wing. 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 Ralph L. Frank and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is an example of Frank's work in designing cost-effective residences in the Colonial Revival style after the Great Depression and is a rare example of his work in combining the Colonial Revival and Neoclassical architectural styles. 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:

BY: \_\_\_\_\_

KRISTI BYERS, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: HEATHER FERBERT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,  
Deputy City Attorney

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