



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: March 11, 2021 REPORT NO. HRB-21-021

HEARING DATE: March 25, 2021

SUBJECT: **ITEM #5 – Harry and Bess Snyder/Chris Cosgrove House**

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

APPLICANT: Charles and Mary Fite; represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 5285 Marlborough Drive, 92116, Kensington-Talmadge Community, Council District 9, APN 440-043-01-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Harry and Bess Snyder/Chris Cosgrove House at 5285 Marlborough Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Harry and Bess Snyder/Chris Cosgrove House located at 5285 Marlborough Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1948 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the 2017 58-square-foot rear addition. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival elements and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource features the Custom Ranch elements of a wide, low, one-story form with asymmetrical massing; low-pitched hipped roof with boxed eaves; wood shingle siding; and attached garage. The Colonial Revival elements include prominent bay and bow windows supported by Arizona flagstone; windows with double-hung, multi-pane glazing and wood shutters; and an accentuated, recessed front door.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Chris Cosgrove and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Cosgrove's work in the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival elements. The primary façade also exhibits prominently features Arizona flagstone detailing, one of Cosgrove's signature building materials.

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. Located on a corner lot in the Kensington neighborhood,

the subject resource is a one-story single-family residence with an attached two-car garage. The asymmetrical residence faces northwest toward the intersection of Marlborough Drive and Ridgeway Drive.

The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been recently surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the Harry and Bess Snyder/Chris Cosgrove House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the names of Harry and Bess Snyder, who constructed the house as their personal residence, and Chris Cosgrove, a Master Builder.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc., 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 is a one-story, single-family residence built in the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival elements which features an asymmetrical façade covered by a low-pitched hipped roof and clad in horizontal wood shingle siding. Fenestration consists of multi-lite wood windows, horizontal sliding glass windows, plate glass windows, double-hung sash windows, and casement windows.

The primary façade faces northwest and consists of three volumes. On the west end, a projection features a four-over-four double-hung window with wooden shutters. Moving east, the main house volume is accessed by a wooden front door flanked on the right by a five-pane bow window. This wall is covered with Arizona flagstone veneer, which is a signature material of Master Builder Chris Cosgrove. The horizontal wood shingle siding continues to the left of the front door, where a bay-style window consisting of two multi-lite panes in a V-shaped projection sits on a base of flagstone. The attached double garage faces slightly more to the north and features double-hung wood windows on either side.

The northeast elevation is also clad in horizontal wood shingle siding. The left wall of the garage is pierced by a wooden door and a double-hung window. As the elevation continues, the cladding changes to stucco, which differentiates an addition approved by Historical Resources staff in 2016.

The rear elevation faces southeast and is not visible from the public right of way. The rear of the house is accessed by two in-set doors, one wood and one glass. Fenestration consists of two wooden casement windows and several large plate glass windows set on English brick veneer. The staff-approved addition is visible on the right side of the rear elevation and is differentiated by the use of smaller panes of plate glass.

The southwest elevation is visible from Marlborough Drive. The continuous horizontal wood shingle siding is interrupted by fenestration at the approximate center of the elevation. Moving from south to north, the elevation has two fixed pane windows, one horizontal sliding glass window, and a pair of four-pane casement windows.

Modifications to the property are minimal and include a permitted remodel on the east and rear façades, reviewed and approved as being consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards by Historical

Resources staff in 2016. The remodel was minor in scope and included a 58- square-foot laundry room addition and an interior kitchen and bathroom remodel. The impacts of this remodel are limited as the addition is out of the public view and the new construction is visually differentiated. Other alterations include the removal of window shutters from "V"-shaped bay window on the primary façade between 2015 and 2017. Overall, the modifications noted do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship, or feeling and do not result in a loss of integrity.

The Custom Ranch style of architecture was popular between 1950 and 1975. Unlike Tract Ranches of the era, Custom Ranch homes were typically custom-designed with a specific client in mind. The Ranch style became the era's most prevalent type of residential construction in San Diego. Custom Ranch Homes are generally more lavish than their tract counterparts, but like Tract Ranch housing, materials and detailing are generally traditional. Primary character defining features include horizontal massing, wide to the street; usually single-story; custom details such as wood shutters, large wood windows, or large prominent brick or stone chimneys; and prominent low-sloped gabled or hipped roofs with deep overhangs. Secondary character defining features include a sprawling floor plan frequently "L" or "U" shaped around a central courtyard; large attached carports or garages; and expensive building materials such as wood shingle roofing, wood siding, brick, stone, and adobe which are usually much more generous in materials and craftsmanship than tract homes.

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 Adam 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. 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. As noted by McAlester in "A Field Guide to American Houses," "the economic depression of the 1930's, World War II, and changing postwar fashions led to a simplification of the Colonial Revival style in the 1940s and 1950s. These later examples are more often of the side-gabled type, with stylized door surrounds or other details that suggest their colonial precedents rather than closely mirroring them."

The subject resource possesses many characteristics associated with the Custom Ranch style; however, the bay and bow windows and recessed front entrance illustrate the property's Colonial Revival influence.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival elements by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style. Custom Ranch elements include a wide, low, one-story form with asymmetrical massing; low-pitched hipped roof with boxed eaves; wood shingle siding; attached garage; the Colonial Revival influence is exhibited by the resource's prominent bay and bow windows supported by Arizona flagstone and the accentuated recessed front door. 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.

The subject resource was constructed by Master Builder Chris Cosgrove in 1948 in the Custom Ranch Style with Colonial Revival elements and features his signature use of flagstone detailing on the primary elevation and on the built-in backyard barbeque.

Chris A. Cosgrove (b. 1888) was born in Rhode Island and moved to San Diego in 1915 at the age of 16. He enlisted in the Navy soon thereafter. In 1928 he is listed in the San Diego City Directory as an architect, and would continue to be identified in the City Directory off and on as an architect as well as a builder/contractor through 1937. Little is known about Cosgrove's early work. However, Cosgrove built the subject house on 3202 Curtis Street for his parents in 1928. The property at 3111 Curtis Street was also built by Cosgrove, but the majority of the homes constructed during his early years were in Coronado. In 1941, Cosgrove reached a career turning point when he collaborated with five other leaders in the building industry to create a new "Masterpiece Home" in Talmadge. The project received newspaper coverage and appears to be Cosgrove's first notable project.

During World War II Cosgrove met his third wife, Celia Barbachano. Celia came from a distinguished Mexican family, the Barbachano family, responsible for many accomplishments including building the Hotel Rosarito. Cosgrove's connections to high society through Celia's family opened new opportunities for Cosgrove in land development and custom home construction. Cosgrove formed his own company and began his career in real estate development and custom home construction in 1945.

In 1946, Cosgrove built the Ken Cinema in Kensington, utilizing flagstone on the facades, an element which would become a trademark of his in years to come. Cosgrove would also take advantage of a regulatory lapse in areas such as Kensington, which allowed him to introduce Modern Ranch style architecture into a neighborhood dominated by Spanish Eclectic styles. Between 1945 and 1949 he built eight homes in Kensington, all on Canterbury Drive and all in the Colonial Revival and Modern Ranch styles. Two of these were Cosgrove's own residences: 4290 Canterbury, completed in 1946/47 which he resided in from 1946/47-1948, as well as 4310 Canterbury (the site being considered for designation), completed in 1949 and his residence from 1949-1951.

Following World War II, Cosgrove became significantly involved in Federal Housing Administration (FHA) housing. He built FHA funded low-cost housing throughout San Diego City and County, including Point Loma, Rancho Santa Fe, Escondido, Borrego Springs, Alpine, and Mount Helix, as well as Los Angeles and Palm Springs. Cosgrove promoted the construction of "El Rancho" Model 833 and economy Model 810, which were modest ranch style homes found in the FHA guide books that he "customized" through the use of wide overhanging eaves, flagstone veneers and large pane glazing. Three of Cosgrove's largest FHA projects in Escondido (49 units), Lomita Village (585 units) and a 116 unit rental property at 43rd Street and Ocean View Boulevard were in development in 1952.

Beginning in 1950, Cosgrove was directly affected by a massive nationwide Congressional FHA investigation of the building industry and its association with housing being sold to veterans through the G.I. Bill. Accusations of overcharging, faulty construction and unlawful arrangements with savings and loans were driving the larger investigation, which forced Cosgrove to sell his home at 5310 Canterbury Drive (the property being considered for designation) in 1951 and liquidate his company. Although he was not responsible for any faulty construction, Cosgrove was tried and convicted in 1953 for "having a Veterans Affairs Administration officer as part of his company, apparently in an effort to expedite the G.I. loans on Cosgrove Homes." He was fined \$10,000 and served one year at Mount Lemmon federal prison camp. Upon his return in 1954, Cosgrove took up residence in the La Mesan Mobile Lodge where he would live until his death in 1985. He continued to develop properties after his relocation to the La Mesan Mobile Lodge, including subdivisions in Alpine.

The breadth of Cosgrove's career as a builder spanned from the 1920s with the construction of Spanish Eclectic style homes to the 1950s with the construction of Mid Century Modern and Contemporary style homes and multi-unit buildings. Cosgrove was established as a Master Builder by the Historical Resources Board with the 2017 designation of 3202 Curtis Street, HRB #1272, which was constructed in 1928 in the

Spanish Eclectic style. 5285 Marlborough Drive is a notable example of Cosgrove's work in the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival elements.

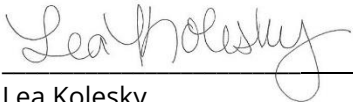
Significance Statement: Chris Cosgrove was an accomplished builder in the post-war era and had many significant developments during this time period. The breadth of Cosgrove's career is evident in his span as a builder from the 1920s with the Spanish Eclectic styles to the 1950s Mid Century Modern buildings. 5285 Marlborough Drive serves as a good example of Cosgrove's work in the Custom Ranch style as made evident by his attention to detail, particularly through his signature use of flagstone as a building material. 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 Harry and Bess Snyder/Chris Cosgrove House located at 5285 Marlborough Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1948 under HRB Criterion C, as the resource specifically embodies the characteristics of the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival elements, and HRB Criterion D, for its association with Master Builder Chris Cosgrove. The designation excludes the 2017 58 -square- foot rear addition.



Lea Kolesky
Junior Planner



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
Development Services Department

LK/ss

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 3/25/2021

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 3/25/2021, to consider the historical designation of the Harry and Bess Snyder/Chris Cosgrove House (owned by Fite Family Trust 10-05-00, 5285 Marlborough Drive, San Diego, CA 92116) located at **5285 Marlborough Drive, San Diego, CA 92116**, APN: **440-043-01-00**, further described as LOT 317 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.** , 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 Harry W. and Bess Snyder/Chris Cosgrove 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 Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival elements and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a wide, low, one-story form with asymmetrical massing; low-pitched hipped roof with boxed eaves; wood shingle siding; attached garage; prominent bay and bow windows; and an accentuated, recessed front door. 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 Builder Chris Cosgrove and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Cosgrove's work in the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival elements and reflects his signature use of flagstone. 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.**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the 2017 58-square-foot rear addition.

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: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney