



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: May 10, 2018 REPORT NO. HRB-18-025

HEARING DATE: May 24, 2018

SUBJECT: **ITEM #7 – Ralph Ward House**

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

APPLICANT: CMLF Family Trust; represented by Johnson and Johnson

LOCATION: 4239 Palmetto Way, Uptown Community, Council District 3  
APN 443-300-13-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Ralph Ward House located at 4239 Palmetto Way as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Ralph Ward House located at 4239 Palmetto Way as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1914 under HRB Criterion C. The designation excludes the garage and the rear second floor addition constructed in 1929. The designation includes the living room fireplace with flanking bookshelves, study fireplace, dining room buffet and living room window seat. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Prairie style with Spanish Colonial Revival influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a low pitched hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves, two-story form, horizontal emphasis, wood casement windows, recessed arched entry way, and balcony with wooden brackets.

### 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 sits on a corner lot in a residential neighborhood and contains a two-story, Prairie style single family house and garage.

The property was identified in 2016 Uptown Community Plan Update and given a Status Code of 5D3, "appears to be a contributor to a district that appears eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation." The resource was identified as Spanish Colonial Revival.

The historic name of the resource, the Ralph Ward House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Ralph Ward, who constructed the house as their personal residence.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Johnson and Johnson Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, B, C, and D. Staff disagrees and finds that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C but not HRB Criterion A, B and D. This determination is consistent with the [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#), as follows.

*CRITERION A - Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.*

Prior to Ralph Ward, who constructed the subject resource, the property was owned by noted San Diego horticulturalist Kate Sessions. Sessions owned many properties in Mission Hills as real estate investments, growing grounds and for use as a nursery site. When she sold the parcels for development, Sessions stipulated the cost of the structures that were to be built, timeframe for development and required that she approve building plans before work began. It is unknown what plants and trees were present at the time Ward purchased the property. Canyon fires ripped through the property in 1918 and 1920. According to a San Diego Union article from January 10, 1918, the gardens at 4239 Palmetto were "charred remains" after the canyon fire of that year. Margaret Durr and her husband Samuel purchased the property in 1928. Margaret Durr was an avid gardener and won an award from the San Diego Floral Association in 1935; however, the design of her garden is unknown.

To be considered significant under Criterion A, the property must exemplify or reflect a special element of the landscape development of the City, Uptown or Mission Hills. During this period, it was common in San Diego for landowners to add stipulations to contracts when selling off parcels to be developed. Therefore, it is not significant that Sessions added conditions involving the development of this parcel because it was an ordinary practice.

There is no evidence that Kate Sessions designed the gardens located at the subject property. Additionally, there is also no evidence that the plants currently growing on the property are associated with Sessions. It is likely that any plants that were original to the property in 1914 were destroyed in the canyon fires of 1918 and 1920. It is also unknown what the design of Margaret Durr's garden was and how much of that currently remains. Therefore, since there is no evidence that the current landscape reflects an association with Kate Sessions or Margaret Durr, staff is not recommending designation under Criterion A. Staff suggests that the property be more intensely evaluated by a landscape historian for quality of design and integrity in relation to Sessions or Durr.

At this time, staff is not suggesting that any plants or trees be included in the designation because it is unclear which plants date to the 1914 period of significance. Although very tall, the podocarpus on the Plumosa Way side of the property is not present in the 1934 historic photo of the house. The queen palms are likely original to the home; however, they are located in the public right of way and cannot be included in this designation.

*CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.*

Ralph M. Ward constructed the subject resource in 1914 and lived there with his family until 1928. Ward was the auditor for the Marston Company from approximately 1896 to 1930 and was also involved with the First Congregational Church as its Sunday School superintendent. Additionally, Ward was active in a number of civic and philanthropic organizations including the Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Associated Charities and the Community Chest.

S. Robert and Jean Frazee lived in the subject resource from 1945 to 1957. Robert Frazee became president of S.R. Frazee Company, the largest U.S. distributor for Sherwin-Williams products, in 1951. The company was started by his father and Robert Frazee expanded the franchise in the San Diego area. Frazee was also an administrator for the War Food Administration, director of the nonprofit Home Planners Institute of San Diego County, a director of the San Diego Trust and Savings Bank and a member of the Balboa Park Study Committee. Jean Frazee was active in the San Diego social scene and was a member of the ZLAC rowing club, served on the board of the Children's Convalescent Home and as president of the San Diego chapter of the Junior League among other accomplishments.

Philip Monroe Klauber resided in the subject resource from 1958 until his death in 2014. Klauber worked for Solar Aircraft from 1946 to 1963 and then San Diego Gas and Electric from 1963 until his retirement in 1980. Klauber was also a very active philanthropist and member of many service organizations including the United Way of San Diego County. Philip was the son of Laurence Klauber, the San Diego Zoological Society's first curator of reptiles and authority on rattlesnakes.

Although many people lived in the property located at 4239 Palmetto Way, the Historical Resources Research Report has identified the four people above as the most significant persons who have the best association with this property. All four were socially connected and members of the most well-known families in San Diego. In order to be considered under HRB Criterion B, a person cannot be considered historically significant simply by virtue of position/title, association, affiliation, race, gender, ethnicity or religion. While the achievements of Ralph Ward, S. Robert Frazee, Jean Frazee and Philip Klauber are impressive, they are not demonstrably important to the history of San Diego in a way that surpasses their contemporaries of the same socio-economic status. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion B.

*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 resource is a two-story, single family residence constructed in 1914 in the Prairie style with some Spanish Colonial Revival influences. The main entry is accessed from the street by a scored concrete walkway and brick stairs. The stucco house is rectangular in shape and features a low pitched, hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves. In the center of the symmetrically designed

front (west) façade is the main entrance which is recessed within a deep arch. Directly above the entrance is a stucco balcony supported by two large wooden brackets and accessed by a set of multi-lite French doors. On either side of the front door is a large fixed window with multi-lite decorative transom, also known as a “cottage window.” Overall, the large eave overhang, wide windows and balcony combine to give the house a horizontal emphasis which is a defining characteristic of the Prairie style. The arched recessed entrance designed to imitate adobe walls and wooden balcony brackets are more characteristic of the Spanish Colonial Revival.

The sides and rear are relatively plain and feature simple wood casement windows. On the north façade there is a small, one-story projection with a shed tile roof. Another one story projection is present on the rear, however this one has a balcony above. The south façade features a wide stucco chimney and a number of wood casement windows in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Behind the house facing Plumosa Way sits a two car garage. The property's original garage is attached to the rear of this structure. According to historic aerial photography, the garage additions occurred sometime before 1953 although that is not reflected in the Sanborn map from 1956. Because the garage has been significantly modified it is not being included in this designation.

Several alterations have occurred to the property since its construction in 1914. Originally, the rear second story of the house was a porch but in 1929 the whole rear section was enclosed. The resource has been reroofed at least once with there being evidence of a roofing permit in 1933. Upon visiting the site, staff noted evidence of the house being restuccoed at least once but with a similar stucco texture. Additionally, an original window on the south façade was changed to a jalousie and two small windows on the first floor of this façade appear to have been modified but within the original window opening. At some point the built-in planters by the front door were filled in with concrete but have since been restored to their original function. In 2017 the current homeowners applied for a permit to repair the stucco of the balcony on the front façade. This project was approved as consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards by historic resources staff. These modifications do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling and the building retains integrity as it relates to architectural significance.

The American Foursquare is a house shape that was popular between 1890 and 1930. Born out of the Arts and Crafts movement, the simple structure of the Foursquare was a response to the overly ornate and revival styles of the Victorian era. Foursquare houses are characterized by a square floor plan, hipped roof, centered dormer, large porch and two-story design. The interior features four rooms on both the first and second floors without a central hall. This common vernacular form can be found in a variety of styles including Prairie, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical and Mission Revival. Because the term Foursquare refers to the shape of a house not the style, staff is not recommending the subject property as an example of an American Foursquare.

The subject resource features a significant amount of original interior materials including a notable quantity of gum wood woodwork. The Historic Resources Research Report suggests designating all of the entry, study, living room, dining room, conservatory and stairs. While many of the interior features in these rooms are original they do not reach the level of significance to be designated historic. Staff is recommending that the living room fireplace with flanking bookshelves, study fireplace, dining room buffet and living room window seat be included in this designation.

The use of hollow clay tile was widespread in San Diego in the early part of the twentieth century. Hollow clay tiles were popular mainly because they were fire resistant but also because they were easy to install and readily available. As pointed out in the Historic Resources Research Report, the abundant use of these tiles as a veneer on other properties in the subject resource's vicinity is illustrated on the 1921 Sanborn Map. Because the use of hollow clay tile was so widespread in San Diego during the period of the subject resource's construction, staff is not recommending the property as an example of a method of construction.

The Prairie style originated in Chicago and was popular primarily in the Midwest for the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An indigenous American style, the Prairie School shared the ideals of the British Arts and Crafts movement and was popularized by architects including Frank Lloyd Wright, George Maher and others. Character defining features of Prairie style architecture include low-pitched, usually hipped roofs, wide overhanging eaves, cornices and façade detailing emphasizing horizontal lines. Prairie style houses are typically two stories and often feature casement windows, one-story wings, porches, porte cocheres and inconspicuous entries. Pattern books and popular magazines spread vernacular examples widely to suburbs throughout the country, with most being built between 1905 and 1915.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Prairie style with Spanish Colonial Revival influences by embodying the historic characteristics associated with those styles; including a low pitched hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves, two-story form, horizontal emphasis, wood casement windows, recessed arched entry way, and balcony with wooden brackets. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property 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 property at 4239 Palmetto Way was built by Benjamin Hawkins. Benjamin Hawkins has not been established by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Architect, Designer or Builder, and there is insufficient information to designate him as such at this time.

Research into the construction of the subject resource failed to conclusively identify Mead and Requa as the firm which designed this structure. The Historic Resources Research Report discusses the oral history of the firm's association with the property and compares the structure to other works attributed to Frank Mead and Richard Requa; however, there are no primary documents such as a notice of completion, original building plans, building permits, or contemporary newspaper articles to confirm this hypothesis. Mead and Requa cannot be conclusively identified as the designers of this building; therefore, staff cannot recommend designation under HRB Criterion D at this time. The applicant may come forward at a later date for a reevaluation of the property under Criterion D if new information is provided which speaks to its eligibility for designation.


#### 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 Ralph Ward House located at 4239 Palmetto Way be designated with a period of significance of 1914 under HRB Criterion C as an example of the Prairie style with Spanish Colonial Revival influences. The designation excludes the garage and the rear second floor addition constructed in 1929. The designation includes the living room fireplace with flanking bookshelves, study fireplace, dining room buffet and living room window seat.



Suzanne Segur  
Associate Planner



Sonnier Francisco  
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison

SS/sf

Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Interiors proposed for designation
3. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 5/24/2018

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 5/24/2018, to consider the historical designation of the **Ralph Ward House** (owned by CMLF Family Trust 10-15-15, 4239 Palmetto Way, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **4239 Palmetto Way, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-300-13-00**, further described as BLK 1 LOT 12 N 1/2 LOT 11 ALL 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 Ralph Ward 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 the Prairie style with Spanish Colonial Revival influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1914 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a low pitched hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves, two-story form, horizontal emphasis, wood casement windows, recessed arched entry way, and balcony with wooden brackets. 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 designation shall include the living room fireplace with flanking bookshelves, study fireplace, dining room buffet and living room window seat.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the garage and the rear second floor addition constructed in 1929.

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

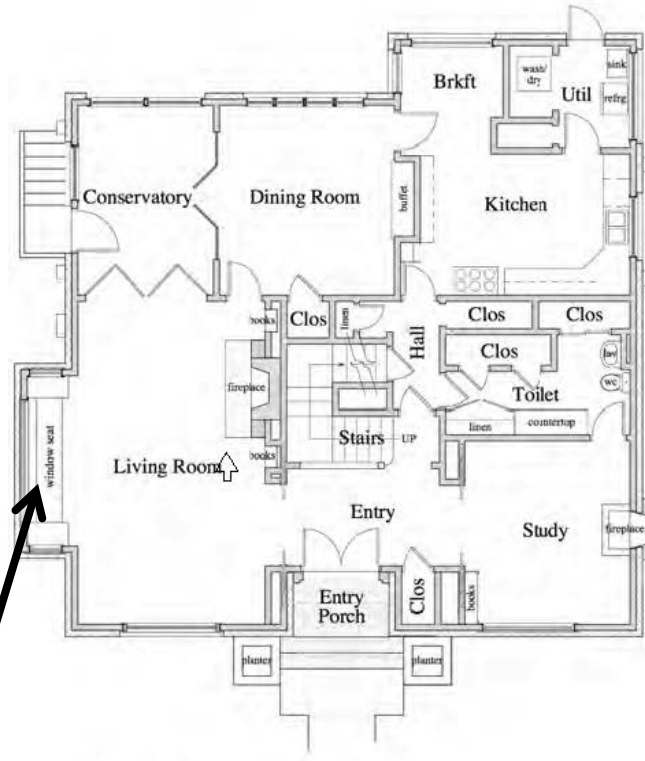
BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
JEREMY JUNG,  
Deputy City Attorney

# Site Plan with Footprint

Interior Features Included In Proposed Designation



Location of living room window seat included in designation

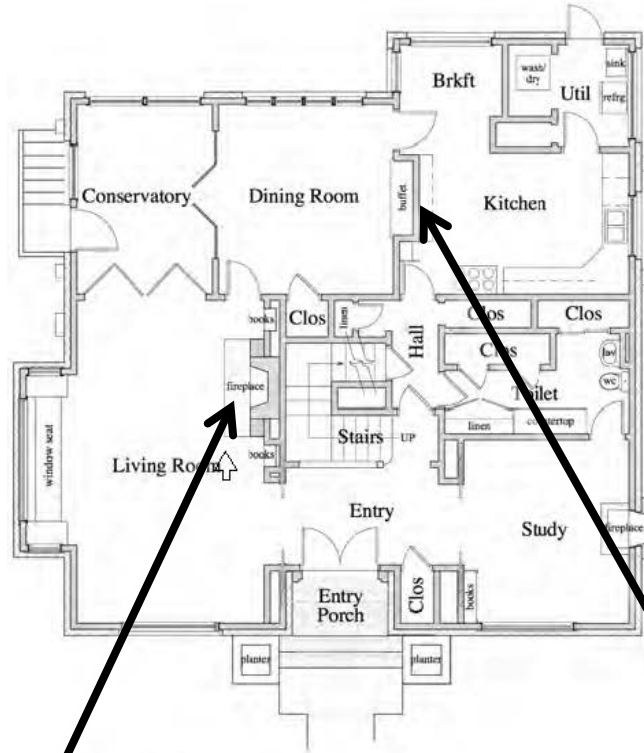
Location of study fireplace included in designation





# Site Plan with Footprint

Interior Features Included In Proposed Designation



Location of living room window fireplace with flanking bookshelves included in designation

Location of dining room buffet included in designation

