



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: August 9, 2018 REPORT NO. HRB-18-041

HEARING DATE: August 23, 2018

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – Edward and Iris Bascomb/Sim Bruce Richards House**

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

APPLICANT: Timothy and Brenda Fleming represented by Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 887 Golden Park Avenue, Peninsula Community, Council District 2
APN 531-632-01-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Edward and Iris Bascomb/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 887 Golden Park Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Edward and Iris Bascomb/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 887 Golden Park Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1954. The designation excludes two rear additions to the property built in 1996 that measure 18' x 8' and 5' x 4'. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character-defining features of the Organic Geometric style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1954 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains vertical wood siding; large beams with geometric decorative detailing, geometric design motifs in fenestration and screens; angular massing; and site-specific design of the building façades in response to views and vistas.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect, Sim Bruce Richards, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is representative of Richards' notable work as it exemplifies the architect's mastery of the principles of organic design, while also integrating Asian influences with peaked and flared rooflines, an indoor-outdoor relationship with courtyards and terraced gardens, and the use of shoji screens.

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 two-story single-family residence built in 1954 and originally designed by Sim Bruce Richards in the Organic Geometric style. It faces west onto Golden Park Avenue, at the southeast corner of the intersection at Harbor View Drive, in the neighborhood of Point Loma, in the Peninsula community.

The property has not been identified in any previous historic surveys.

The historic name of the resource, the Edward and Iris Bascomb/Sim Bruce Richards House has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy, reflecting the names of Edward and Iris Bascomb, who were the first owners of the house and commissioned it as their residence; and Sim Bruce Richards, the established Master Architect who designed the house.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by the Office of Marie Burke Lia, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D, but not HRB Criterion A. 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.

The Historical Resource Research Report argues that the home is significant under HRB Criterion A, reflecting special elements of architectural and historical development of the neighborhood as a home that exemplifies and reflects the upscale, architect-designed residential development of Point Loma. Upscale and architect-designed residences are not unique to the neighborhood of Point Loma in the context of residential development overall within the City of San Diego, and there is insufficient data and analysis to attribute individual significance of the property on this basis. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

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 resource was built in 1954 as a two-story single-family residence in the Organic Geometric style. The building is asymmetrical in plan and in elevation, and is sited on a sloping lot with easterly views toward San Diego Bay. The primary façade faces west and is centered about a courtyard enclosed by fiberglass shoji screens. The courtyard is entered at the left side by wood gates. At the right side of the primary façade is a two-car garage that repeats the shoji screen detail. The composite roof is front gabled with a shallow pitch, and flared edges. At the north elevation, a large brick chimney with a raised, geometric pattern rises above the roofline.

The residence was designed to capture the dramatic views of San Diego Bay. From west to east, the façades are designed in a progression that transitions from more closed toward the street with privatized outdoor space within the screened courtyard to more open toward the rear with expansive windows to maximize views of the bay.

The property has undergone few alterations since its 1954 construction. In 1996 an 18' x 8' closet and half bath was added to the rear of the garage, and a 5' x 4' closet was added to the lower level of the south façade. Neither addition is visible from the street level public right of way. These noted modifications do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling or association, and the building retains integrity as it relates to architectural significance.

The *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement* describes Organic Geometric architecture as a style that was promulgated by Frank Lloyd Wright, promoting a "harmonious relationship between buildings and nature." The Historic Context Statement notes that architects who designed in this style emphasized the man-made and natural elements of the buildings through the use of organic design within the structure of geometric forms. Organic Geometric style buildings are more prevalently located in the La Jolla and Point Loma areas, but are somewhat rare overall in the San Diego region.

The subject property is representative of the Organic Geometric style and features many of the primary character-defining features such as exposed wood structure and materials, geometric design motifs, and natural materials such as wood and glass. The secondary character-defining features of the Organic geometric style found at the property include angular massing; complex roof forms, and site-specific design of the building elevations.

Asian influences incorporated into the design of the house include the use of shoji screens, terraced gardens, and flared roof edges.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Organic Geometric style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including exposed wood frame structure; large decorative beams that project beneath open eaves; a brick chimney with raised geometric patterns; geometric design motifs in fenestration; angular massing and roof forms; shoji screens at the entry courtyard and garage door; and the site-specific design of the building façades in response to views and vistas. 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 resource is representative of the notable work of Master Architect, Sim Bruce Richards, in the Organic Geometric style, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Examples of Organic Geometric style architecture are rare in San Diego, and the design of the property at 887 Golden Park Avenue is unique in that Richards blended Asian influences with the Organic Geometric style.

Sim Bruce Richards was born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma in 1908, and began studies in architecture at the University of California, Berkeley in 1930. There, Richards later switched his major to art, and

excelled in the craft of weaving abstract designs in fabrics and rugs. Impressed by Richards' rug designs viewed on display for exhibition, Frank Lloyd Wright personally invited Richards to join him in the Taliesin Fellowship in Wisconsin. Richards trained in Wright's experimental academy setting and was among the first class to make the move to Wright's Taliesin West outside of Phoenix, Arizona.

Richards relocated to San Diego, serving as a civilian Naval architect during WWII. In San Diego, he also briefly worked with architects Harold Abrams and William Templeton Johnson.

Richards' body of work which included several residences and a limited number of public and commercial buildings, were all of wood construction. They were usually with rough finishes, natural, and never painted. In addition to Richards, other architects who designed buildings in the Organic Geometric style are Lloyd Ruocco, Richard Lareau, and John August Reed. Richards often collaborated with friends who were artists and craftsmen, utilizing their craft such as metalworking, tilework, and masonry in his home designs. Among them were James Hubbell, Rhoda Lopez, and Bill Davey. Richards was also active in his community as a supporter of the Sierra Club, the Ilan Lael Foundation, and a land use advocacy group called the Citizens Coordinate for Century Three (C3), and as president of the San Diego chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Sim Bruce Richards lived from 1908-1983.

Significance Statement: The resource retains good integrity and continues to reflect Sim Bruce Richards' original design, intent and aesthetic. Specifically, the resource is representative of Richards' notable work as it exemplifies the architect's mastery of the principles of organic design, while also integrating Asian influences with peaked and flared rooflines, an indoor-outdoor relationship with courtyards and terraced gardens, and the use of shoji screens. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards.

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 Edward and Iris Bascomb/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 887 Golden Park Avenue be designated with a period of significance of 1954 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes two rear additions to the property built in 1996 that measure 18' x 8' and 5' x 4'.



Sonnier Francisco
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison

SF/ss

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 8/23/2018

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 8/23/2018, to consider the historical designation of the **Edward and Iris Bascomb/Sim Bruce Richards House** (owned by Timothy and Brenda Fleming, 2961 Ballyntyne Road South, Salem, CA 97302) located at **887 Golden Park Avenue, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **531-632-01-00**, further described as BLK 3 LOTS 15 & 16 N 80 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 Edward and Iris Bascomb/Sim Bruce Richards 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 Organic Geometric style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1973 period of significance. Specifically the resource retains exposed wood frame structure; large decorative beams that project beneath open eaves; a brick chimney with raised geometric patterns; geometric design motifs in fenestration; angular massing and roof forms; shoji screens at the entry courtyard and garage door; and the site-specific design of the building façades in response to views and vistas. 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 established Master Architect Sim Bruce Richards, and retains sufficient integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is representative of Richards' notable work as it exemplifies the architect's mastery of the principles of organic design, while also integrating Asian influences with peaked and flared rooflines, an indoor-outdoor relationship with courtyards and terraced gardens, and the use of shoji screens. 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 exclude the two rear additions to the property built in 1996 that measure 18' x 8' and a 5' x 4'.

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

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

BY: _____
JEREMY JUNG,
Deputy City Attorney

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