



The City of San Diego

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 11, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-025

HEARING DATE: June 25, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #14 – Donald and Joyce Schmock/Sim Bruce Richards House**

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

APPLICANT: Jonathan C Schmock Living Trust represented by Urbana Preservation & Planning, LLC

LOCATION: 7345 Remley Place, La Jolla Community, Council District 1  
APN 352-212-03-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Donald and Joyce Schmock/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 7345 Remley Place as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Donald and Joyce Schmock/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 7345 Remley Place as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1952-1963 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 Organic Geometric style and retains integrity to its 1952-1963 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features exposed rafters, polygon design motifs, natural materials, angular massing, an asymmetrical facade, complex roof form, and site-specific design.
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 a notable example of Richards' use of natural materials, angular massing, complex roof forms and site-specific design.

### 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 subject resource is a single-family residence located in the La Jolla Country Club Heights Subdivision, on a lot that slopes downward to

the north into the La Jolla Nature Park canyon, providing the rear of the property with views of the ocean.

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

The historic name of the resource, the Donald and Joyce Schmock/Sim Bruce Richards House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Donald and Joyce Schmock, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Sim Bruce Richards, a Master Architect.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Urbana Preservation & Planning LLC, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria B, C, and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D, but not HRB Criterion B. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

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

The Historical Resource Research Report argues that the home is significant under HRB Criterion B for its association with Joyce Cunningham Schmock. In 1942, Schmock enlisted in the army, becoming part of the first group of Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC, later WAC) trainees. In 1952, when the house at 7345 Remley Place was built, she had become an army major, and was helping to organize the Army's Organized Reserve Corps School at Fort Rosencrans in San Diego. She continued to live at the house until she passed away in 2008.

Although Schmock was part of a pioneering group who became the first class of WAAC trainees, this experience did not take place while she lived at the subject resource, nor does it indicate that she was more or less significant in local, state or national history than other early WAAC enlistees associated with San Diego. Her work as an army major in organizing the Army's Organized Reserve Corps School at Fort Rosencrans did overlap with her residence in the subject resource. However, information about this role does not indicate that she made major achievements contributing to the history of San Diego, the state or the nation. 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 was originally constructed in 1952 as a split-level single-family residence in the Organic Geometric style. The resource is clad in vertical redwood, "inverse" board-and-batten siding with bricks along the foundation. It has a five-sided footprint and includes a second floor, ground floor, and split-level lower floor. The asymmetrical plan features large expanses of windows on the northeast and northwest elevations, facing the canyon. The low-sloped gable roof has an irregular shape, deep eaves, exposed rafter tails, and a wide clerestory dormer. The main entrance is on the south end of the southeast elevation, accessed by a gate opening onto Remley Place.

Around 1960, the Schmocks hired Richards to design an addition off the northwest elevation and a vestibule around the main entrance. The addition is an irregular polygon shape with the widest portion containing a new carport facing the street. The addition is clad in the same redwood siding as the original building. Above the carport, a large deck was constructed, with angled wood guardrails that also serve as narrow benches. There are five aluminum slider windows on the house, which, according to the original owner, were installed during this remodeling. The work was completed in 1963.

The building has undergone few alterations since Sim Bruce Richards' addition was built in 1963. A wood garage door was replaced with the current metal garage door circa 2014. Around that time, two redwood box surrounds were added to the lights flanking the garage door. These box surrounds match those found elsewhere on the building in photographs from the 1950s, and those currently flanking the main entrance. Finally, in 2018, the deck was reconstructed, and some structural elements were replaced in the garage. This work was reviewed by Historical Resources staff and was found to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Additionally, there are some discrepancies between door and window openings shown on Richards' 1960 plans and those on the existing building. However, it is unclear if these are a result of deviations from Richards' drawings during construction, or later modifications. The plans show that the exterior windows and door in the new carport were intended to be open. However, the three window openings do not appear to have been built and the door opening was enclosed with a wood garage door. The Historical Resource Research Report dates the wood garage door to the original construction of the addition. There are also some differences between the openings shown on the north elevation of the addition in the 1960 plans and those on the existing building.

Organic Geometric architecture is a philosophy of design which promotes a harmonious relationship between buildings and nature. Organic Geometric designers used natural building materials such as wood and stone. Like their Post and Beam Modern contemporaries, Organic Geometric architects also used glass to minimize the separation between interior and exterior and encourage indoor/outdoor living. Buildings were carefully sited to take advantage of views and other site features. Designs emphasize rectilinear geometry, asymmetrical facades, unusual rooflines, and angular shapes. Primary character-defining features of an Organic Geometric style house are: exposed structure and materials; square, diamond and polygon design motifs; and natural materials. Secondary features are: sharp angular massing; asymmetrical facades; complex roof forms; and site-specific design.

The subject property is representative of the Organic Geometric style and features all the primary and secondary character-defining features.

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 rectilinear features, unpainted redwood siding, exposed rafter tails, angular massing, irregular roof form, asymmetrical facade, and a site-specific design that promotes indoor-outdoor living. 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 a notable work of Master Architect, Sim Bruce Richards, in the Organic Geometric style, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design.

Six of Sim Bruce Richards' works are currently designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board.

Sim Bruce Richard was born in Oklahoma in 1908. In 1930, he began studying architecture at UC Berkeley but soon switched to art. He excelled in the craft of weaving abstract designs in fabrics and rugs. The exceptional quality of his weaving caught the attention of Frank Lloyd Wright, who personally invited Richards to study architecture at his Taliesin estate in Wisconsin. Richards left Berkeley and studied at Taliesin from 1934 to 1936.

Richards moved to San Diego around 1938 and initially worked as a civilian architect for the US Navy. He also worked in the architectural offices of William Templeton Johnson and Harold Abrams before opening his own practice around 1949. He focused on residential design, although he also designed several public and commercial structures. There are currently hundreds of structures attributable to Richards throughout the San Diego area.

Reflective of his training in organic design at Taliesin, Richards' body of work is characterized by unpainted wood and often rough or unfinished appearances, as well as complex roof forms, angular massing, and site-specific design. Richards often collaborated with friends who were artists and craftsmen, incorporating their crafts such as metalworking, tilework, and masonry in his home designs.

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' use of natural materials, angular massing, complex roof forms and site-specific design. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property 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 Donald and Joyce Schmock/Sim Bruce Richards House located at 7345 Remley Place be designated with a period of significance of 1952-1963 under HRB Criteria C and D.



Gemma Tierney  
Associate Planner

GT/ss



Suzanne Segur  
Senior Planner  
Development Services Department

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 6/25/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/25/2020, to consider the historical designation of the (owned by Jonathan C Schmock Living Trust 07-07-98, 11812 San Vicente Boulevard, 4th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90049) located at **7345 Remley Place, La Jolla, CA 92037**, APN: **352-212-03-00**, further described as BLK LOT 4 ALL LYING NELY OF REMLEY PL 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 Donald and Joyce Schmock/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 integrity to its 1952-1963 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features exposed rafters, polygon design motifs, natural materials, angular massing, an asymmetrical facade, complex roof form, and site-specific design. 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 Sim Bruce Richards and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Richards' use of natural materials, angular massing, complex roof forms and site-specific design. 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

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