



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 21, 2016 REPORT NO. HRB-16-023

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of April 28, 2016

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – Edith Olds Gray/Wurster Construction Company House**

APPLICANT: Carin and Hillary Theakston represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 2324 Pine Street, Uptown Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Edith Olds Gray/Wurster Construction Company House located at 2324 Pine Street as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Edith Olds Gray/Wurster Construction Company House located at 2324 Pine Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1931 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the detached structures at the rear of the lot. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Spanish Eclectic architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a side gable roof with red single barrel clay tile, slightly overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails; stucco over wood frame construction; a main entry recessed slightly under a low-point arch; projecting bays; decorative stucco grilles; a wood spindle balcony and fenestration consisting of 1:1 double hung and single pane fixed wood frame and sash windows, with focal windows that include a raised decorative stucco surround.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of proposed Master Builder Wurster Construction Company and retains integrity as it relates to the original construction. Specifically, the Wurster Construction Company had an extraordinary career building some of the most significant buildings in San Diego. The builders constructed two of San Diego's most recognizable civic buildings, the Spreckels Organ Pavilion and the California Tower and California Building in Balboa Park for the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition. The widely accomplished builders focused mainly on civic and commercial buildings along with building a few large high styled residential homes; and the breadth of their work spans some of the most important and influential designs of the periods. The subject property reflects their quality construction expressed in a large two-story Spanish Eclectic style home.

## 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 building is located in a residential setting on APN 443-051-18-00 in the original Plat of Old San Diego. The property was identified in the Draft 2015 Uptown Historical Resources Reconnaissance Survey and given a Status Code of 5D3, "Contributing resource to a district that appears eligible for local listing."

The historic name of the resource, the Edith Olds Gray/Wurster Construction Company House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Edith Olds Gray, who constructed the house as her personal residence along with her husband Captain Lloyd Gray and the name of the Wurster Construction Company, proposed as 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. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D, but is not recommending Criterion D for an association with Lilian J. Rice, as detailed below. 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.*

Research into the history of the property at 2324 Pine Street did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Mission Hills' historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

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

Research into the owners and tenants of the property at 2324 Pine Street did not reveal any individuals who could be considered historically significant in local, state or national history. Furthermore, no events of local, state or national significance are known to have occurred at the subject property. Therefore, the property is not eligible for 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 property located at 2324 Pine Street is a two story Spanish Eclectic style single family home constructed in 1931, and features a side gable roof with red single barrel clay tile, slightly overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails; stucco over wood frame construction; and a raised concrete foundation with sub-floor. The entry is set just right of center, recessed slightly under a low-point arch and accessed via four concrete steps with a small landing. The entry is flanked on either side by a small window and a large picture window with a raised decorative stucco surround. Above the entry, a projecting bay features three narrow 1:1 double hung wood frame and sash

windows over three recessed stucco squares. A stucco grille and 1:1 double hung wood frame and sash window with wood shutters sits to the left of the projecting bay. The main central mass of the building is flanked by narrow, recessed massings. The massing to the left includes a wood spindle balcony at the second level. Remaining fenestration throughout the house consists primarily of 1:1 double hung wood frame and sash windows.

Modifications include construction of a back yard swimming pool and a carport, patio cover and barbeque designed by Ralph L. Frank in 1958 (which appears to have replaced an original accessory structure and covered walkway at the rear of the lot based upon the Sanborn Map documentation); roof repair in 1978; minor window modification in 2004/2004; an interior remodel in 2007/2008; an interior remodel and replacement of the rear pool and spa in 2015; and installation of a solar energy system, also added in 2015. The changes have not impacted any significant character defining features, are at the rear of the building, and are well outside of the public view.

Following the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition, the romantic ideal of Spanish and Latin American architecture was revived. What resulted was the Spanish Eclectic style, which was the predominant style in Southern California between 1915 and 1940, significantly altering the architectural landscape until the Modernist movement took hold during and after WWII. The style uses decorative details borrowed from the entire history of Spanish architecture. These may be of Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic, or Renaissance inspirations, an unusually rich and varied series of decorative precedents. The style employed a variety of floor plans, as well as gabled, cross-gabled, gabled and hipped, hipped and flat roof forms with parapets. Other character defining features include Mission and Spanish clay tile; focal windows; arched windows and other openings; and accented entries.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Spanish Eclectic style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a side gable roof with red single barrel clay tile, slightly overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails; stucco over wood frame construction; a main entry recessed slightly under a low-point arch; projecting bays; decorative stucco grilles; a wood spindle balcony and fenestration consisting of 1:1 double hung and single pane fixed wood frame and sash windows, with focal windows that include a raised decorative stucco surround. 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.*

#### *Master Architect*

The report identifies two primary connections that have been made between the subject property and Master Architect Lilian J. Rice. First, researcher and author Diane Y. Welch included the subject property in her 2010 book *Lilian J. Rice: Architect of Rancho Santa Fe, California*, which includes an index with all of Rice's known designs. One such entry reads: "Beamer Residence, Pine St., San Diego, CA 92103 (date unknown)" Second, prior owners William and Sharon Beamer stated that Samuel Wood Hamill, FAIA (1903-1989), who was an architect that worked very closely with Rice over her most productive years in the 1920's and 1930's, told them directly that the subject property was designed by Rice. However, there is no other documentation in the form of original plans, newspaper articles, notice of completion, permit notices, etc to document that the property is the work of Lilian J. Rice. Absent documentation other than oral histories, staff is unable to recommend

designation under HRB Criterion D as the work of Master Architect Lilian Rice. Should documentation become available in the future, the designation could be amended.

#### *Master Builder*

The Wurster Construction Company skill and impact is still visible in San Diego today. At least ten National register and locally designated San Diego historic resources were built by Wurster along with important surviving examples of the builder seen nearby in Coronado and other Southern California communities. Extensive research into the building career of the Wurster Construction Company reveals they built in a wide range of styles including Neoclassical, Spanish Baroque and other styles. Wurster was capable of designing a wide range of structures. They built high quality, grand custom homes like the subject resource as well as civic buildings, large banks and ecclesiastical churches. However, the builder's grandest designs appear to be in the Spanish Colonial/Eclectic architectural style, of which they built the most impressive designs.

Significance Statement: Proposed Master Builders the Wurster Construction Company had an extraordinary career building some of the most significant buildings in San Diego. The builders constructed two of San Diego's most recognizable civic buildings, the Spreckels Organ Pavilion and the California Tower and California Building in Balboa Park for the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition. The widely accomplished builders focused mainly on civic and commercial buildings along with building a few large high styled residential homes; and the breadth of their work spans some of the most important and influential designs of the periods. The subject property reflects their quality construction expressed in a large two-story Spanish Eclectic style home. Therefore, staff recommends that the Wurster Construction Company be established as Master Builders, and that the subject property be designated under HRB Criterion D as an example of their notable work.

*CRITERION E - Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.*

The property at 2324 Pine Street has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

*CRITERION F - Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.*

The property at 2324 Pine Street is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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 Edith Olds Gray/Wurster Construction Company House located at 2324 Pine Street be designated as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1931 under HRB Criteria C for its Spanish Eclectic design and D as the work of Master Builder Wurster Construction Company. The designation excludes the detached structures at the rear of the lot. 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.



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Kelley Stanco  
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

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Attachments:

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 4/28/2016

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 4/28/2016, to consider the historical designation of the **Edith Olds Gray/Wurster Construction Company House** (owned by Carin and Hillary Theakston, 2324 Pine Street, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **2324 Pine Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-051-18-00**, further described as BLK 526 LOT 4 SE 50 FT LOT 1 & NW 50 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 Edith Olds Gray/Wurster Construction Company House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Spanish Eclectic architecture and retains integrity to its 1931 date of construction and period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a side gable roof with red single barrel clay tile, slightly overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails; stucco over wood frame construction; a main entry recessed slightly under a low-point arch; projecting bays; decorative stucco grilles; a wood spindle balcony and fenestration consisting of 1:1 double hung and single pane fixed wood frame and sash windows, with focal windows that include a raised decorative stucco surround. 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 Wurster Construction Company and retains integrity as it relates to its original 1931 construction. Specifically, the Wurster Construction Company had an extraordinary career building some of the most significant buildings in San Diego. The builders constructed two of San Diego's most recognizable civic buildings, the Spreckels Organ Pavilion and the California Tower and California Building in Balboa Park for the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition. The widely accomplished builders focused mainly on civic and commercial buildings along with building a few large high styled residential homes; and the breadth of their work spans some of the most important and influential designs of the periods. The subject property reflects their quality construction expressed in a large two-story Spanish Eclectic style home. 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 detached structures at the rear of the lot.

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: \_\_\_\_\_  
JOHN LEMMO, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
CORRINE NEUFFER,  
Deputy City Attorney