



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: February 12, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-013

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of February 26, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM #10 – Frederick and Helen Thompson/Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles H. Tifal House**

APPLICANT: Eric Bianchini, owner; represented by the Office of Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 1232 Myrtle Avenue, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Frederick and Helen Thompson/Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles H. Tifal House, located at 1232 Myrtle Avenue as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Frederick and Helen Thompson/Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles H. Tifal House, located at 1232 Myrtle Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1927 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 Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1927 period of significance.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Ralph E. Hurlburt and Master Builder Charles H. Tifal and retains integrity as it relates to the original design.



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BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board at the owner's request to have the site designated as a historical resource. The house is a five-level Spanish Eclectic style home built on a steeply sloping canyon lot in 1927 by Master Architect Ralph E. Hurlburt and Master Builder Charles H. Tifal for owners Frederick and Helen Thompson. The house is located in the residential subdivision of Marston Hills in the Uptown community.

The historic name of the resource, the Frederick and Helen Thompson/Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles H. Tifal House,, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and includes the name of Frederick and Helen Thompson, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the names of Ralph E. Hurlburt, a Master Architect and Charles H. Tifal, a Master Builder.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report prepared by previous owner Steven Fusco concludes that the house is significant under HRB Criteria A and D, although it appears that the focus of the Criterion A argument was on architecture, which is better reflected under Criterion C. This report was supplemented with an addendum by the Office of Marie Burke Lia commissioned by the current owner 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 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 house at 1232 Myrtle Avenue was built in 1927 in the Spanish Eclectic style. The house is located on a steeply sloping canyon lot and was built in five levels to respond to the natural topography. From Myrtle Avenue the house presents a single story clay tile-covered side-gable with a generous two car garage on the left half of the façade and a pair of 8-lite wood casement windows with wood shutters and a simple decorative wood lintel above on the right half of the facade. A brick garden wall and wrought iron gate along the right side of the house leads to the main entry, which faces to the east, not toward Myrtle Avenue to the south. The site originally included the sloping canyon lot to the east, which was split from the subject property in 1981. This explains the unusual orientation of the house to the east, which would have had open views of the canyon. Behind the side gable section, set a few feet below, is a two story section of the house which features the slightly recessed main entry below a pair of 6-lite wood casement windows at the second story. Stepping down from the entry bay is another two story section with two pairs of multi-lite French doors covered by a large fabric awning which open onto a cement slab patio. Above the doors at the second level are two sets of 8-lite wood casement windows with simple decorative wood lentils above. Wrapping around to the rear of the property, a large 16-lite fixed wood picture window with low-point arch looks out onto the canyon at the main level, with a pair of 8-lite wood casement windows above. The basement level is visible from this rear elevation, and is accessed through wood doors. The western elevation features several 8-lite wood frame and sash casement windows, the stucco chimney, newer 6-lite wood casement

windows at the kitchen, and a small pop-out with 8-lite steel casement windows. This pop-out appears to be an early modification, and does not adversely impact the house.

Modifications include the removal of the original clay tile roof and the original wood garage door. A photograph from the 1996 Mid-City survey (Attachment 1) shows that the original clay tile roof had been removed and replaced with an asphalt shingle roof, likely during the ownership on the Emamis from 1974-1996. The roof has since been replaced with a clay tile roof not entirely in keeping with what was likely there originally, but a significant improvement over the asphalt shingle. The 1996 Mid-City survey photo also shows the original garage door, described as having “broad, rustic planks”. This door has since been removed and replaced with new wood garage doors not in keeping with the style of the original. Neither of these modifications significantly impairs the integrity of the building to such an extent that it is no longer eligible for designation.

Therefore, staff recommends designation of the property at 1232 Myrtle Avenue under HRB Criterion C as a very good example of Spanish Eclectic architecture retaining a good degree of integrity from its 1927 period of significance.

CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.

Ralph E. Hurlburt was born in 1888 in Utica, Nebraska. He was trained by his grandfather George in the construction trade. In 1916, he married Nettie Goodbrod and relocated to San Diego. Originally involved with real estate financing and law, Hurlburt shifted to architectural design. Early in his building career, Hurlburt partnered with builder Charles H. Tifal, a partnership that lasted until shortly before Hurlburt’s death in 1942.

HRB Sites designated under Criterion D (Master Architect/Designer) Ralph E. Hurlburt:

- HRB #464 – The Wonder House of Stone (4386 Adams Avenue)
- HRB #523 – James C. & Lillie Byers/Ralph E. Hurlburt House (4230 Arguello Street)
- HRB #613 – Alfred LaMotte/Hurlburt and Tifal House (3557 Third Avenue)
- HRB #697 – Edwin and Rose Emerson/Hurlburt and Tifal House (2645 28th Street)
- HRB #824 - Sam & Mary McPherson/Ralph E. Hurlburt & Charles H. Tifal House, (3133 28th St)

Charles Tifal was born in 1882 in Wisconsin and relocated to San Diego in approximately 1920. Beginning in the early 1920s, Hurlburt and Tifal designed and constructed structures, primarily high-end custom residences, in a myriad of styles including French Eclectic, Spanish Eclectic, Arts and Crafts, Tudor, Italian Renaissance and variants with North African and American Pueblo territorial design elements. In 1942 Tifal was no longer working with Hurlburt but was partnered with Scott King. The firm of Tifal & King installed the Alvarado Road Pump House, cottage and garage. Charles died at age 86 in February of 1968.

HRB Sites designated under Criterion D (Master Builder) Charles H. Tifal:

- HRB #613 – Alfred LaMotte/Hurlburt and Tifal House (3557 Third Avenue)
- HRB #697 – Edwin and Rose Emerson/Hurlburt and Tifal House (2645 28th Street)
- HRB #824 - Sam & Mary McPherson/Ralph E. Hurlburt & Charles H. Tifal House, (3133 28th St)

HRB Sites designated under other Criterion, also built by Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles H. Tifal:

- o HRB #534 – The Frank H. & Margaret Burton/Milton P. Sessions House (1271 Brookes Ter)

The subject property, 1232 Myrtle Avenue, is the work of Master Architect/Designer Ralph E. Hurlburt and Master Builder Charles H. Tifal, and is a notable example of their work and collaboration. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the Frederick and Helen Thompson/Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles H. Tifal House, as a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion D (Master Architect/Designer/Builder).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Any future Mills Act agreement will be conditioned to require replacement of the existing garage door with a new garage door to match the original shown in historic photographs; investigation of the original roofing to determine if the current clay tile roofing is appropriate; and pruning of the vegetation at the front to increase visibility of the front and east sides of the house. Additional 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 Frederick and Helen Thompson/Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles H. Tifal House, located at 1232 Myrtle Avenue be designated under HRB Criteria C as a very good example of Spanish Eclectic architecture; and Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Ralph E. Hurlburt and Master Builder Charles H. Tifal. 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.



Kelley Saunders
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Senior Planner/Program Coordinator

KS/cw

Attachment(s):

1. Photograph and Survey form from the 1996 Mid-City Survey
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover
3. Addendum prepared by the Office of Marie Burke Lia under separate cover



21. UTM: 11/485460/3622670 Parcel #452-450-32
1232 Myrtle Avenue (2103-2-21) Construction Date: ca. 1927
Legal Description: Par. 1, Being a Portion of Lot 27, Map
1790, Marston Hills

Zoning: MR-1000

Present Owner: Emani, Hitta; Emani, Mithra; Emani, Mini
431 Stanford Street
Irvine, CA 92715

This T-shaped, Spanish Colonial Revival style residence was built ca. 1927 by Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles H. Tifal for Frederick Thompson, service manager for the Toledo Scale Company, and his wife Helen. Like the other Hurlburt and Tifal-built residences in Marston Hills, this residence gives the impression of it being a narrow cluster of small rustic Spanish cottages overlooking a deep arroyo in the rear. The main block facing the street is a gable-ended unit with a built-in two car garage (rare for a mid-1920s Spanish house). Other distinctive Spanish details include textured stucco-covered wood-frame built walls, wood framed and shuttered casement windows and broad, rustic planks making up the garage door.



M: 11/485460/3622670

82 Myrtle Avenue (2103-2-21)

Parcel #452-450-

Construction Date: ca.