



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 9, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-049

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of July 23, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM #12 – Laurence Klauber House**

APPLICANT: Downes Graham Trouncer Living Trust, owner; represented by Johnson and Johnson Architecture

LOCATION: 233 West Juniper Street, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Laurence Klauber House located at 233 West Juniper Street as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Laurence Klauber House located at 233 West Juniper Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1927-1968 under HRB Criterion B. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is associated with Laurence Klauber, a historically significant person who made significant and lasting contributions to the field of herpetology, and retains integrity for that association.



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## 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 house is a two story-over-basement Prairie style structure located in the residential subdivision of Horton's Addition.

The historic name of the resource, the Laurence Klauber House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and includes the name of Laurence Klauber, who is a historically significant individual.

## 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 concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion B, but not HRB Criteria A, C, or D, 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 applicant's report states that the subject property is significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of San Diego's historical, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping and architectural development. The report sites four particular associations in this regard: first, the home was constructed during the building boom prior to the first Exposition; second, the home features landscape plantings advocated by Kate Sessions; third, the home is located in Horton's Addition, which attracted prominent citizens; and fourth, the home is located within Uptown/Banker's Hill, one of San Diego's first streetcar suburbs. While all of the above are true, the home does not appear to have a special or unique association with any of these events, people, or locations. 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.*

The applicant's report states that the subject property is significant under HRB Criterion B for its association with Frederick Jackson, Henry Jones and Laurence and Grace Gould Klauber. Staff does not find sufficient evidence to support Jackson (then Vice-President of First National Bank in San Diego and Treasurer for the 1915 Exposition), Jones (President and General Manager of San Diego Gas and Electric and 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-President for the 1915 Exposition) or Grace Gould Klauber (wife of Laurence Klauber and member of the prominent Gould family) as historically significant individuals. However, staff does find that Laurence Klauber is a historically significant individual who made significant and lasting contributions to the field of herpetology.

Laurence Klauber was born in San Diego in 1883 and went to Stanford University to study electrical engineering. In 1908 he graduated and eventually returned to San Diego in 1911 and became employed with the San Diego Consolidated Gas and Electric Company as an engineer. He purchased the subject house in 1927 and would live here until his death in 1968. Klauber rose through the ranks to become president of the company from 1946-49 and chairman of the board from 1949-1954 before retiring. He served on numerous commissions and committees and was honored with a number of awards and commendations. However, Klauber is best known for his work in herpetology.

In 1923, Mr. Klauber was asked by the San Diego Zoo to identify some snakes. He began studying books and actively corresponding with herpetologists, who encouraged him to conduct research and publish his findings. He wrote 100 scientific papers on the systematics of Southwest snakes and lizards and described 53 new species and subspecies of reptiles and amphibians. He was honored by other scientists with 14 new genera, species and subspecies named for him, including the *Crotalus lepidus klauberi*, also known as the banded rock rattlesnake. He worked with the San Diego Zoological Society and was the consulting curator of reptiles at the zoo for 47 years. In 1941 he received an honorary degree from the University of California Los Angeles for his advanced study and work in science, and served as president of the San Diego Zoological Society from 1949-1950.

He was a pioneer in the use of statistical analysis in science as he would count scales for identification, compare data of the different species' populations and samples, and study correlations per geographic locations. He pickled many specimens in his basement and hired assistants to help catalogue, milk, and maintain the collection. His work naturally led to wildlife management in the Anza and Torrey Pines State Parks where he collected and cataloged his findings on a regular basis. The National Parks Service, International Herpetological Symposium, and the Smithsonian Institute still refer to Klaubers' work as an authority on herpetology. His research, which brought him face to face with more than 12,000 rattlesnakes in his lifetime, culminated in his monumental 1533-page definitive study *Rattlesnakes: Their Habits, Life Histories, and Influence on Mankind*, published in 1956.

In 1968 he donated 36,000 reptile and amphibian specimens to the San Diego Natural History Museum, including the most comprehensive collection of rattlesnakes in the world. He amassed an extraordinary herpetological library: 1,462 books, 19,000 pamphlets, 20 drawers of hand-written catalog cards, and 198 looseleaf binders of scientific notes, all of which were donated to the museum. He was a frequent speaker at Science Fairs and encouraged amateurs to explore and engage in scientific work. Time Magazine featured Mr. Klauber in the November 5, 1956 issue for his work on rattlesnakes. The University of San Diego has the Laurence M Klauber Award for Excellence in the Advancement and Understanding of Science. Klauber achieved worldwide recognition for his scientific work and was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Laurence Klauber made significant contributions to the field of herpetology while in residence at the subject property, and in fact conducted a significant amount of work in the home itself. Although the house has experienced some alterations, it retains sufficient integrity of association.

In addition, a review by the Quieter Home Program's historic consultant found the property eligible for listing on the National Register (for the purposes of their program) under National Register Criterion B for its association with Klauber. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the property at 233 West Juniper Street under HRB Criterion B for its association with Laurence Klauber from 1927-1968.

*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 233 West Juniper was constructed in 1911 in the Prairie style and features a flat roof with low parapet wall; overhanging boxed eaves; a Greek key pattern at the cornice line under the eave; hollow clay tile walls covered in textured stucco; and a raised wood foundation with concrete footings. The house was constructed in a "U" configuration with two stories over a partial basement. Original fenestration was extensive and, based on historic photographs, consisted of 8-over-1 and 1-over-1 double hung wood frame and sash windows; large single pane fixed wood frame windows with multi-lite (non-operable) transoms above; and what appears to be one or two-lite, possibly casement windows. All window openings are accented by thick stucco surrounds. Across the front façade on Albatross Street, a full-width porch covered by a wood trellis supported on thick columns runs the length of the façade over the basement space. A decorative wrought iron railing originally enclosed the porch. A large retaining wall, now covered in vegetation, spans the perimeter of the sloping property and is original to the house.

Modifications to the house include the addition of windows at the original one-story wing at the northeast corner of the house and a second story addition at the same location sometime prior to 1927; a one story addition to the east of this wing in the late 1950's or early 1960's; the removal of the original decorative wrought iron railing along the front porch sometime between 1990 and 2005; a nearly wholesale replacement of the original windows in 2005 (as shown by a photo from the Draft Uptown Survey which shows the new windows with manufacturer's labels and painting tape) with dual-pane wood frame windows which do not replicate the historic appearance; and the addition of new windows at the basement area on the west façade fronting onto Albatross Street. The applicant's report speculates that the second story portion of the southeast wing may be an addition completed contemporaneously with the second story addition at the northeast wing due to their similar appearance. However, the 1921 Sanborn Map, which shows the northeast wing in its original single-story configuration, clearly shows the southeast wing as a two-story element. Therefore, it is staff's position that the two-story element is original, but may have been modified at some point to incorporate more windows. It should be noted that the additions to the northeast wing are relatively minor, and occurred during Klauber's ownership of the property. Finally, staff noted during the site visit that the stucco coat is very thick and does not appear particularly weathered; however, staff has seen similar stucco textures on historic houses in the past, and does not have sufficient evidence to suggest the current texture is not generally in keeping with what was there historically.

Due to the significant and well documented modifications to the house, staff is unable to recommend designation under Criterion C at this time. If the house were to be properly restored, including installation of historically appropriate windows, reconstruction of the missing balcony

railing, and removal of the added windows at the basement, the property could be reconsidered for designation under Criterion C at some point in the future.

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

The applicant's report states that the property is significant under HRB Criterion D as the work of architects Robert Farquar Tran and Robert Edmund Williams. Train and Williams have not yet been established by the Board as Master Architects, and appear to have done few projects in San Diego. Most of the known examples of their work are located in Los Angeles and include:

<b>Building</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Strand Theatre	c1914	Pasadena	demolished
First Congregational Church	unknown	Los Angeles	
Pasadena Ostrich Farm	1915	Arroyo Seco	
Victor Clothing	1914	Los Angeles	
Hathaway Home for Children	unknown	Los Angeles	Designated
First National Bank	1906	Long Beach	National Register
Holmes-Shannon Residence	1911	Los Angeles	National Register
Judson Studios	c1911	Los Angeles	National Register
Angels Flight	1901	Los Angeles	National Register

While it appears that Train and Williams were responsible for the design of several substantial projects that have achieved historical significance, it does not appear that any of the designations of their buildings have acknowledged Train and Williams as Master Architects. The information in the applicant's report, while promising, does not quite provide the level of information and analysis required to establish Train and Williams as Master Architects. Furthermore, staff's position is that even if there was sufficient information to establish Train and Williams as Masters, the subject property has been too altered to be eligible for designation as a notable example of their work. If additional research and analysis is provided to support the establishment of Train and Williams as Masters, and if the home is properly restored, the property could be reconsidered for designation under HRB Criterion D at some point in the future.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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 Laurence Klauber House be designated with a period of significance of 1927-1968 under HRB Criterion B for its association with Laurence Klauber, a historically significant person who made significant and lasting contributions to the field of herpetology. 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 Saunders  
Senior Planner



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Cathy Winterrowd  
Principal Planner/HRB Liason

KS/cw

Attachment(s): Draft Resolution  
Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 7/23/2009

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 7/23/2009, to consider the historical designation of the **Laurence Klauber House** (owned by Downes Graham Trouncer Living Trust, 1600 National Avenue, San Diego, CA 92113) located at **233 West Juniper Street, San Diego, CA 92101**, APN: **533-154-13-00**, further described as Lots A-C in Block 254 of Horton's Addition 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 Laurence Klauber House on the following finding:

(1) The property is historically significant under **CRITERION B** for its association with Laurence Klauber a historically significant person who made significant and lasting contributions to the field of herpetology, and retains integrity for that association which lasted from 1927 to 1968. 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: N/A

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

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND  
LEGALITY: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
NINA FAIN  
Deputy City Attorney