



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 14, 2011 REPORT NO. HRB-11-045

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of July 28, 2011

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – Guilford H. and Grace Whitney House**

APPLICANT: Canedo Family Trust represented by Charles Hughes

LOCATION: 4146 Miller Street, 92103, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Guilford H. and Grace Whitney House located at 4146 Miller Street, as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Guilford H. and Grace Whitney House located at 4146 Miller Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1927-1963 under HRB Criteria B and C. The designation also includes the Norfolk Island Pine Tree (*Araucaria heterophylla*) located at the northeast corner of the property. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

1. The resource is identified with Guilford H. Whitney a historically significant person and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was commissioned by Whitney and his wife and they lived in the house during his productive years as a business and civic leader contributing to the development of San Diego from 1927 to 1963.
2. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Spanish Eclectic style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance of 1927 to



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1963. Specifically, the resource retains its asymmetrical façade, wood divided light casement windows and doors, front courtyard, and stucco exterior.

## 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 located in a single family residential neighborhood of Mission Hills.

The historic name of the resource, the Guilford H. and Grace Whitney House has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of original owner who is a historically significant individual.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Charles Hughes 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 B and C, but not HRB Criterion D. 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.*

Guilford H. Whitney was the son of Guilford Moses and Mary Whitney who founded Whitney & Company in 1905. The original store had a 25' storefront on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue between F and G Streets. It was a limited-price variety store that offered notions costing between 5¢ and 15¢. The company would stay in business for 63 years and become a major department store in the downtown business district in the years before and after World War II.

In 1914 Guilford, Sr. persuaded his son to move to San Diego to take over the family business. By 1918, the store expanded and moved to a new location at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Broadway and E Street. The new location quadrupled the store frontage and provided an extension to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Over the years, the store was expanded to add a Broadway entrance, three stories and a basement.

As the business continued to prosper, Guilford H. and Grace Whitney purchased several lots in the Inspiration Heights subdivision to construct a new home in 1926. The Whitneys contracted with Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles S. Tifal to design and construct the house at 4146 Miller Street. The house was designed as a two-story Spanish Eclectic style house with 5,300 square feet of living space.

In the mid-1920s, Whitney diversified his business interests. Along with several business associates, Whitney founded La Jolla Properties, Inc. to develop residential properties in San Diego. One of their more successful ventures was the La Jolla Hermosa residential district which offered lots starting at \$2,500. Whitney also invested in the construction of the Park Manor Apartment Hotel at 6<sup>th</sup> and Spruce. In 1927, he purchased the Colonial Theater between B

and C Streets to expand his business, but opted to construct a two story building with a basement instead. In 1935, he also added the 6-story Bridges Building at 6<sup>th</sup> and C Street to his portfolio, which was subsequently leased to Sears, Roebuck & Co.

In addition to expanding his business interests during this time, Whitney pursued a busy schedule of civic and philanthropic activities. By the end of the 1920s Whitney was on the board of directors for the First National Trust and Savings Bank of San Diego, which he maintained for 30 years. He was also on the board of directors for the Chamber of Commerce and served as the chairman for the Chamber's Business Development Committee. Whitney was also on the board for the Young Men's Christians Association (YMCA). In 1935-36 Whitney provided financial support to San Diego's second exposition held in Balboa Park, the California Pacific International Exposition and served as one of its vice-presidents on the board of directors. In 1936, Whitney was elected president of San Diego's chapter of Rotary International.

Also in 1936, a 5-alarm fire ripped through the Whitney & Co. store causing over \$2 million worth of damage. With extensive work the store was able to reopen in time of the Christmas season. This was the last major expansion of the Whitney & Co. store.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Whitney was asked to chair the county's war bonds committee. He was already a member of the community's Civilian Defense Committee. He served on the committee for 2 years until health problems forced him to resign. During his tenure, the committee was successful in raising four million dollars towards building a squadron of Liberator Bombers.

Whitney recognized the changing retail landscape and sold the business (not the building) in 1945, which did not last long and the business was back under his control by 1948. Also in 1948, Whitney constructed the store's first branch store at University and Illinois to respond to the community's diversified shopping base. Branch stores in Clairemont, El Cajon, and Escondido soon followed.

Through 1958, the Whitney & Co. stores struggled to maintain profits and were seriously hindered when city officials gave approval for a new shopping mall in Mission Valley. At the same time, downtown property owners formed a task force named San Diegans, Inc.(SDI), with Whitney as the group's president, to focus on long range planning and revitalization of the downtown core. The key to the development was a civic center concourse that would include a convention hall, municipal offices, and performing arts center. When the city's bond efforts fell short by \$1.6 million, SDI stepped forward to cover the gap through private donations within a 90 day period. The money was raised primarily through Whitney's contacts. Subsequently, Whitney was appointed chairman of the Community Concourse Advisory Board to oversee the construction and chairman of the non-profit San Diego Civic Facilities Corporation which would manage the concourse once it was occupied.

During the development of the civic center concourse, Whitney's stores suffered. By 1963, the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue store closed and two years later the building was demolished for a parking lot. The other branch stores soon followed suit. In 1963, Guilford suffered a major stroke and passed away.

Given the contributions that Whitney provided in the development of San Diego, staff recommends designation of the house under HRB Criterion B with a period of significance of 1927-1963 for its association with Guilford H. Whitney. While there were a number of buildings associated with Guilford H. Whitney, many of them are no longer extant. The house on Miller Street was his residence for 36 years, retaining its longest association with him and all of his work in San Diego.

*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.*

Constructed in 1927, in the Spanish Eclectic architectural style, the hollow reinforced concrete house features two-stories with a stucco façade, barrel clay tile roof and wood windows. The house is sited on a corner lot at Miller and Orizaba Streets with the front of the house at Miller.

The front façade features a centrally located entrance surrounded by decorative wood elements and recessed slightly in the wall plane. Square wood pillars on either side of the entrance provide support for a small balcony with a wrought iron railing above the entrance. Access to the balcony is provided via a pair of wood 5-light French doors flanked by wood shutters. To the right of the front entrance is a rounded tower with a low-pitched conical roof topped with round cupola with a weather vane. The first floor of the tower features a pair of wood 4-light French doors with a pair of casements with decorative wrought iron centered above the door. A set of steps leads to the second floor of the tower. To the right of the tower is a one and two story wing that makes up a portion of the front courtyard. This wing features a centrally located window on each level of the front façade and several sporadically placed windows on the second floor of the north side. The north façade also features a three car garage. The garage has three separate bays with arched openings and simple wood sectional garage doors.

To the left of the front entrance is a two story protrusion that steps down to a one story wing. The two story protrusion features stucco grilles over windows on each façade. The one story wing features a shed roof porch that fronts the courtyard. The east façade of this wing has a centrally located tapered chimney flanked by small round windows.

The south façade has windows placed evenly on each plane. All the windows on this façade are fixed single light. A covered porch is also on this façade and features a shed roof with clay tile and stuccoed columns.

The west façade features a cantilevered balcony with decorative wood corbels, balustrade and posts at the second floor. Three and four light wood casement windows are evenly spaced on the rear façade.

There have been several modifications to the house that impact the overall integrity of the property; however a number of the modifications were completed while the Whitneys owned the property. In 1952, the front entrance was modified from a rounded, recessed entrance to a squared portico entrance with wood accents and paneling. The pair of French doors located to the left of the front entrance was removed and the opening was enclosed. The original courtyard fence with solid stucco walls and open wrought iron fencing has been changed to a taller solid

fence around the courtyard. The lily pond that was originally located within the courtyard was also removed. The entrance to the courtyard has been relocated to the front rather than the side. Also in 1952, on the south side within the covered patio area, where there were originally two casement windows, the windows were replaced with a single large fixed window flanked with oblong sidelights. The windows on the south façade were also changed from pairs of wood casement windows to fixed single light windows. In 1999, the owners at the time replaced a fabric awning with a covered shed roof porch with clay tile. It is not clear when a free standing pergola on the south façade was removed. The entire roof on the house has also been changed and clay bird blockers were added to the end of each course. While there have been a number of modifications to the property, many of them were made by the Whitney family and do not detract from the overall integrity of the building. Therefore, staff recommends designation under Criterion C as a good example embodying distinctive characteristics of Spanish Eclectic style architecture.

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

The consultant report states that the Whitney contracted with Ralph E. Hurlburt and Charles S. Tifal to design and construct the property. Both Hurlburt and Tifal have been identified by the Historical Resources Board as a Master Designer and a Master Builder, respectively. However, based on a 1931 newsletter, Sessions Garden Pointers, Milton Sessions notes that the house was actually designed by Ralph L. Frank in collaboration with Hurlburt. There is no further information or other indications that Ralph L. Frank was involved in the design of the house.

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.

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. Charles died at age 86 in February of 1968.

In addition to the architectural design of the house, Milton Sessions was hired to landscape the property. Prior to completion of construction and for 20 year following, Sessions worked on the landscaping. Sessions was the son of Frank Sessions and the nephew of Kate Sessions, and grew up working with them in the plant nursery business. Milton Sessions prepared landscaping plans for MCRD, NTC, the Naval Hospital, La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club, Kensington Heights, and the 1935 Exposition area in Balboa Park with Richard Requa, whom he collaborated with in a number of sites countywide. Although he never achieved the renown of his aunt, Milton Sessions was a highly competent nurseryman and landscape designer in his own right, and was established by the Board as a Master Landscape Architect.

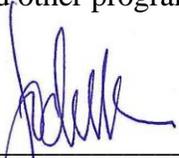
Given the number of alterations to the architectural elements of the house, the original design intent has been modified, as stated previously, and staff does not recommend designation under Criterion D for Ralph E. Hurlburt or Charles H. Tifal. There also appears to have been a number of alterations to the landscape plan and plants surrounding the house that do not reflect the original material, as seen in the historic photos, with the exception of the Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*) at the northeast corner of the property. The report does not provide adequate information to properly analyze the current design with Sessions' original intent, therefore staff does not recommend designation under Criterion D for Milton Sessions.

### 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 Guilford H. and Grace Whitney House located at 4146 Miller Street be designated with a period of significance of 1927-1964 under HRB Criterion B for its association with Guilford H. Whitney and the role that he played in the development of San Diego and Criterion C for its distinctive characteristics of Spanish Eclectic style architecture and retention of a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains its asymmetrical façade, wood divided light casement windows and doors, front courtyard, and stucco exterior. The designation also includes the Norfolk Island Pine Tree (*Araucaria heterophylla*) located at the northeast corner of the property. 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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Jodie Brown, AICP  
Senior Planner



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Cathy Winterrowd  
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

jb/cw

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 7/28/2011

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 7/28/2011, to consider the historical designation of the **Guilford H. and Grace Whitney House** (owned by Canedo Family Trust 11-13-89, 4146 Miller Street, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **4146 Miller Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-562-08-00**, further described as PAR 1 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 Guilford H. and Grace Whitney House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION B for its association with Guilford H. Whitney a historically significant person and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was commissioned by Whitney and his wife and they lived in the house during his productive years as a business and civic leader contributing to the development of San Diego from 1927 to 1963. 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 C for its distinctive characteristics of Spanish Eclectic style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1927-1963 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains its asymmetrical façade, wood divided light casement windows and doors, front courtyard, and stucco exterior. The designation also includes the Norfolk Island Pine Tree (*Araucaria heterophylla*) located at the northeast corner of the property. 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
KEITH BAUERLE  
Deputy City Attorney