



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 10, 2014 REPORT NO. HRB-14-066

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of October 23, 2014

SUBJECT: **ITEM #11 – Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn House**

APPLICANT: Peter Dixon Living Trust and Gary Dick Living Trust

LOCATION: 2412 Pine Street, Uptown Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn House located at 2412 Pine Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn House located at 2412 Pine Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1964 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 Custom Ranch style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1964 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features strong horizontal massing in a broad, one-story plan set wide to the street; prominent, low-pitched hipped roof with deep, boxed eave overhang; stucco, vertical wood siding and stone veneer exterior; decorative stone grilles; attached two-car garage with breezeway; original entry door with reeded glass sidelights; massive interior stone chimney; and fenestration consisting primarily of single-light aluminum casement windows.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank and Master Builder William B. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is among both Masters' last known works. The house is notable among their bodies of work as a high-end Custom Ranch style home that is well designed and expertly constructed.

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 one-story single family residence built in 1964 at the north corner of Pine Street and Arista Drive in the Presidio Ridge, Keller Subdivision in the Uptown Community.

The building is located on APN 443-051-02-00. The property was identified in the 2007 Draft Uptown Survey revised by staff in 2012 and given a Status Code of 7R, "Identified in Reconnaissance Level Survey: Not evaluated."

The historic name of the resource, the Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Alfred and Helen Cantoni, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the names of Ralph L. Frank, a Master Architect and William B. Melhorn, a Master Builder.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Peter Dixon, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D, and staff concurs. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, 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 subject resource is a one-story single family residence built in 1964 in the Custom Ranch style. The building is sited on a corner lot and features an irregular plan form. The building's patent horizontal emphasis is conveyed through a prominent low-pitched hipped roof with deep, boxed eave overhangs. A set of unique concrete steps are believed to be original – these lead to the recessed entry porch and compliment the horizontal, rectilinear pattern set by the building. Exterior cladding is predominantly stucco. The primary elevation, however, is characterized by a distinctive stone veneer that fosters the building's horizontality, while vertical redwood siding provides a touch of contrast. Where foundation vents occur along the primary and secondary elevations, the stone veneer has been fashioned into attractive, decorative grilles. The stone veneer is repeated on the interior living room chimney and fireplace. Fenestration consists generally of single-light aluminum casement windows. The original single entry door faces west and features full-length reeded glass sidelights. The original two-car garage shares the main roof structure of the house, forming a breezeway leading to the rear yard. The garage door does not match that seen in original elevation drawings, however, it is faced with vertical wood siding that matches the rest of the house and is believed to be original.

The building has been subject to minimal alteration, and retains very good integrity. In 2014, a reroof project approved by City staff intended to simulate the original wood shake roof and be sympathetic to the building's character.

The Custom Ranch style of architecture was popular between 1950 and 1975 and is differentiated from Tract Ranch homes because they were typically custom-designed with a specific client in mind. The Ranch style became the era's most prevalent type of residential construction in San Diego. Custom Ranch Homes are generally more lavish than their tract counterparts, but like Tract Ranch housing, materials and detailing are generally traditional. Primary character defining features include horizontal massing, wide to the street; usually single-story; custom details such as wood shutters, large wood windows, or large prominent brick or stone chimneys; and prominent low-sloped gabled or hipped roofs with deep overhangs. Secondary character defining features include a sprawling floor plan frequently "L" or "U" shaped around a central courtyard; large attached carports or garages; and expensive building materials such as wood shingle roofing, wood siding, brick, stone, and adobe which are usually much more generous in materials and craftsmanship than tract homes.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Custom Ranch style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including strong horizontal massing in a broad, one-story plan set wide to the street; prominent, low-pitched hipped roof with deep, boxed eave overhang; stucco, vertical wood siding and stone veneer exterior; decorative stone grilles; attached two-car garage with breezeway; original entry door with reeded glass sidelights; massive interior stone chimney; and fenestration consisting primarily of single-light aluminum casement windows. 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.*

Ralph L. Frank, Master Architect

The house was designed by Master Architect Ralph L. Frank for original owners Alfred and Helen Cantoni. Frank was established as a Master Architect by the HRB in 2002, and to date there are eight properties listed on the local register that have been attributed to him – six of which have been designated under Criterion D as the work of this Master Architect. Through the 1920s and 1930s, Frank designed high-end homes independently as well as through his associations with the firms Hurlburt and Tifal, and Hurlburt Frank and Slaughter. He is known to have worked in a variety of architectural styles, and in many neighborhoods including Uptown, Mission Hills, Point Loma, La Playa and La Jolla. During the Depression, Frank transitioned from the more Spanish styles of architecture to the simpler, more cost effective Colonial Revival design. Most of his locally listed works are in the Colonial and Monterey Revival styles.

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains excellent integrity and continues to reflect Frank's original design, intent and aesthetic. The house is notable as a well-executed high end custom home built to the owner's needs, and is among the last of Frank's known works, completed just after his passing. Furthermore, among locally listed resources, the property is the best preserved Modernist example of his work. Therefore, staff recommends designation under Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank.

William B. Melhorn, Master Builder

The subject house was built by Master Builder William B. Melhorn in 1964. William's father, Martin V. Melhorn, was a well known builder in San Diego and owned several construction companies including Bay City Construction, Alberta Security Company, and Martin V. Melhorn Investments. In 1922 Martin and William partnered together and founded M.V. Melhorn & Son. This partnership lasted until Martin Melhorn's unexpected death in 1926. William Melhorn continued to operate the company after his father's death. After World War II, William combined the Alberta Security Company with Bay City Construction to form the Melhorn Construction Company.

Both Martin V. Melhorn and his son, William B. Melhorn have been established by the HRB as Master Builders. The Melhorns were responsible for the construction of Shirley Ann Place (HRB Site #424), a street in University Heights with small, one-story Spanish Eclectic style homes. In addition, William B. Melhorn constructed a series of stucco bungalows on Alberta Place in Mission Hills. Along with residential projects, William constructed several commercial buildings throughout San Diego including the Gustafson Furniture Building (HRB Site #517). Other buildings he constructed include Mission Hills Plumbing, Standard Furniture Company, San Diego Burglar Alarm Company, San Diego Electric Company Showroom, and Christian Science Church of San Diego. Presently, there is only one locally listed resource designated under Criterion D and solely attributed to William B. Melhorn: the Albert D. and Allie M. Hagaman/William B. Melhorn House (HRB Site #870).

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains excellent integrity and continues to reflect the quality of construction and craftsmanship that is characteristic of William B. Melhorn's work. Among locally listed resources, the house is the only known work of his in the Custom Ranch style. Therefore, staff recommends designation under Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank.

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.

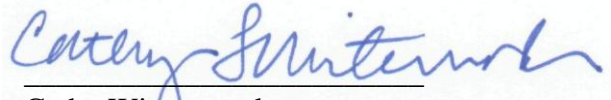
CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn House located at 2412 Pine Street be designated with a period of significance of 1964 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the Custom Ranch style; and HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank and Master Builder William B. Melhorn. 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.



Camille Pekarek
Junior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Deputy Director

CP/cw

Attachments:

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 10/23/2014

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 10/23/2014, to consider the historical designation of the **Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn House** (owned by Peter C Dixon Living Trust 10-16-98 and Gary F Dick Living Trust 10-16-98, 2412 Pine Street, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **2412 Pine Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-054-02-00**, further described as LOT 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 Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn 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 Custom Ranch style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1964 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features strong horizontal massing in a broad, one-story plan set wide to the street; prominent, low-pitched hipped roof with deep, boxed eave overhang; stucco, vertical wood siding and stone veneer exterior; decorative stone grilles; attached two-car garage with breezeway; original entry door with reeded glass sidelights; massive interior stone chimney; and fenestration consisting primarily of single-light aluminum casement windows. 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 Ralph L. Frank and Master Builder William B. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is among both Masters' last known works. The house is notable among their bodies of work as a high-end Custom Ranch style home that is well designed and expertly constructed. 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: _____
CORRINE NEUFFER,
Deputy City Attorney