



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 11, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-044

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of June 25, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – George and Martha Murrin/Allen Hilton Spec House #1**

APPLICANT: Angus and Sally MacDonald, owners; represented by Legacy 106

LOCATION: 4625 East Talmadge Drive, Kensington-Talmadge Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the George and Martha Murrin/Allen Hilton Spec House #1 located at 4625 East Talmadge Drive as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the George and Martha Murrin/Allen Hilton Spec House #1 located at 4625 East Talmadge Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1930 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 1930 period of significance.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Allen Hilton as a very good example of one of his few known single family residences, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design.



**City Planning & Community Investment**  
202 C Street, MS 5A • San Diego, CA 92101-3865  
Tel (619) 235-5200 Fax (619) 533-5951

## 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 one and two story, Spanish Eclectic style structure located in the residential subdivision of Talmadge Park Unit #1.

The historic name of the resource, the George and Martha Murrin/Allen Hilton Spec House #1, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and includes the name of George and Martha Murrin who constructed the house as a speculation house, and the name of Allen Hilton, a Master Builder.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Legacy 106, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D, but not HRB Criterion A, 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 property is significant under HRB Criterion A for contributing to a better understanding of the development of Talmadge between the Great Depression and World War II; the relationship between investors in Los Angeles and the development of Talmadge Park as a subdivision with a Hollywood connection; and the development of Talmadge Park consistent with the design principles of the Nolen Plan. While the subject property does contribute to a better understanding of all of these aspects of development and history, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the subject property reflects a special element of that history distinct from other properties. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

*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 property at 4625 East Talmadge Drive is a one and two story single family home designed in the Spanish Eclectic style and features a hipped roof with single barrel clay tile; slightly overhanging eaves; exposed rafter tails; generally smooth stucco walls; and a concrete foundation. The house is roughly "U" shaped and asymmetrical, with a two-story center portion and one-story wings consisting of habitable space and a garage that project forward of the main house, forming a courtyard. The courtyard was enhanced with flagstone pavers and a garden wall and gate sometime prior to the early 1950's, as evidenced in historic aerial photograph provided in the report. The entry is located on the center portion of the house and is recessed under the second floor above. The entry door is ornately carved and may not be original to the house. Fenestration consists of multi-lite wood frame and sash casement windows and single-pane wood frame fixed windows. Decorative features include detailed rafter tails; wood lintels; wood shutters (which may or may not be original); and stucco grilles. The two-car garage is attached and set toward the front of the lot along the southeast property line.

Modifications include the possible replacement of the front door, as well as improvements to the rear yard including a pool. The roof appears to have been replaced, given the very clean and intact appearance of the tile and mortar and the use of bird stops. However, if the roof is a replacement, it is stylistically appropriate and does not adversely impact the resource. As noted in the description, the garden wall, gate and flagstone at the entry was installed sometime prior to the early 1950's, based on photographic evidence. Boardmembers may recall that the property to the south at 4617 East Talmadge Drive, which was designated by the Board in February 2008, had a similar garden wall which staff required to be substantially reduced in height prior to recommending designation. The important distinction between the two situations is that the wall at 4617 East Talmadge was constructed in 1996 and was a recent, non-historic element which impacted the historic spatial relationships of the resource. The wall at the subject property was built at least by the early 1950's and may have been constructed not long after the house itself was constructed.

As a good example of Spanish Eclectic architecture retaining a very good level of integrity, staff recommends designation of the house at 4625 East Talmadge Drive 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.*

Allen H. Hilton was born in 1890 in Oregon and arrived in San Diego in 1924. He had limited experience as a contractor from 1904-1908 while working for his father, and put that experience to use when he obtained his architect and contractor licenses in 1926. He appears to have designed buildings primarily in the Spanish Colonial Revival style and focused heavily on apartment building construction, with limited known examples of single family residential work. Known examples of Hilton's work include:

#### Apartment/Multi-Family Buildings

- The Adams Apartments, at 2448 Adams Avenue (HRB Site #713)
- El Tovar, at 1301 28<sup>th</sup> Street (extant)
- El Mirasol, at 303 Olive (extant)
- St. Theresa, at 3835 Third Avenue (extant)
- Loma Alta, at 3515 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue (extant)
- The Adelene, at 3597 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue
- Carmelita Court, at 1826 30<sup>th</sup> Street (extant)
- The Galvez, at 1422 University, identified as 1442 University in the Canada/Montes report (demolished)
- Casa Mia, at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Redwood (demolished)

#### Single Family Residences

- 3767 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue (house with apartments, extant)
- 4625 East Talmadge Drive (subject property)
- 1270 Emerald Street (extant, altered)
- 4335 Hamilton Street (demolished)

Each of these properties has character defining features indicative of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Hilton's articulation of the style is well recognized through his fine detailing throughout the interior and exterior of the buildings. Such features include smooth plaster walls, niches, decorative tiles, plaster grill work, beehive fireplaces, and courtyards with fountains, flowers, and shrubbery. The subject property is one of three known extant single family residences designed by Hilton, only two of which appear to be eligible for designation in their current condition. The subject property is notable as one of his few known single-family residences and exhibits quality design and attention to detail.

In the Board's action to designate The Adams Apartments, the Board established Hilton as a Master Builder. Given that Hilton was a licensed architect, it may have been more appropriate to establish him as a Master Architect, rather than Builder. However, given that the Board has established Hilton as a Master Builder, and given that he was responsible for both the design and construction (along with carpenter Henry Crow) of the subject property, staff recommends that the property be designated under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Builder Allen Hilton. Should the Board wish to establish Hilton as a Master Architect, findings would need to be made to that effect.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

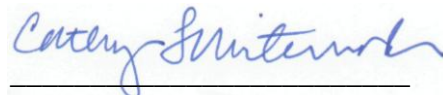
Conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

#### CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the George and Martha Murrin/Allen Hilton Spec House #1 located at 4625 East Talmadge Drive be designated as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1930 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of Spanish Eclectic architecture and Criterion D as a notable work of Master Builder Allen Hilton. 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

Attachments: Draft Resolution  
Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 6/25/2009

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/25/2009, to consider the historical designation of the **George and Martha Murrin/Allen Hilton Spec House #1** (owned by MacDonald-Muir Family Trust, 2013-44 Jackes Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4T1E5 Canada) located at **4625 East Talmadge Drive, San Diego, CA 92116**, APN: **465-402-01-00**, further described as Lot 75 of Map 1869, Talmadge Park Unit 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 George and Martha Murrin/Allen Hilton Spec House #1 on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as it 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 1930 period of significance. Specifically, the house retains a hipped roof with single barrel clay tile; slightly overhanging eaves; exposed rafter tails; generally smooth stucco walls; multi-lite wood frame and sash casement windows and single-pane wood frame fixed windows; detailed rafter tails; wood lintels; wood shutters; and stucco grilles. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing; and

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D a notable work of Master Architect Allen Hilton. Specifically, the house is notable as one of his few known single family residences, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design.

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