



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 3, 2023 REPORT NO. HRB-23-037

HEARING DATE: November 16, 2023

SUBJECT: **ITEM #1 – RICHARD AND MAURINE HAAS/ RALPH L. FRANK HOUSE**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Rob and Christine Landis Trust 08-08-18; represented by Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 555 San Geronio Street, 92106, Peninsula Community, Council District 2 APN: 532-273-0300

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Richard and Maurine Haas/ Ralph L. Frank House located at 555 San Geronio Street as a historical resource. The designation excludes the second story rear addition constructed outside of the period of significance.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Richard and Maurine Haas/ Ralph L. Frank House located at 555 San Geronio Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1949 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the second story rear addition constructed outside of the period of significance. 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 with Colonial Revival influences and retains architectural integrity from its 1949 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a moderately-pitched side gable roof, L-shaped form, entry porch with slender square columns, shiplap and board and batten cladding with stone veneer accent, multi-lite wood frame double hung windows, diamond pane leaded glass windows, wall dormers, and decorative shutters.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is significant as an example of Frank's work in the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival influences and is a one of several homes in the La Playa neighborhood of Point Loma constructed in the 1930s and 1940s by Frank.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The property is a two-story, single-family residence with an attached garage located in the La Playa neighborhood in Peninsula.

The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been previously surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the Richard and Maurine Haas/ Ralph L. Frank House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Richard and Maurine Haas, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Ralph L. Frank, a Master Architect.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Scott Moomjian, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees and concludes that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D. This determination is consistent with the [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#), 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.

Research into the history of the property at 555 San Gorgonio Street did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Peninsula's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. 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 subject resource was owned by Douglas Blair and Eiko Peterson from 1976 to 1984, Douglas Peterson acquired the property when the couple divorced and continued to live there till his death in 2017. Peterson was an award-winning yacht designer who was active in his field from 1973 to 2008. He was inducted into the Sailing World Hall of Fame (1982); the America's Cup Hall of Fame (2017), and the National Sailing Hall of Fame (2019). Although he resided at 555 San Gorgonio Street from 1976 to 2017, there is no evidence that Peterson conducted his most significant work at the property. There is insufficient information to designate the subject resource under Criterion B for Douglas Peterson at this time. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion B.

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 two-story, single-family residence with an attached garage constructed in 1949 in the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival influences. The house features a moderately-pitched gable roof with wood shake shingles. It is set back from the street and sited onto a sloping hillside lot which provides bay views. The resource has an L shaped form created by a one-story breezeway which connects the garage and the house at the northwest corner. The primary elevation features a full width porch with slender square columns, centered front entry door flanked by a pair of leaded diamond pane windows and

three gabled dormers. The house is clad with a combination of shiplap, board and batten siding with a stone veneer accent. Other features of the house include wood shutters, four large shed dormers on the rear, and three internal chimneys, two stucco and one brick. Fenestration consists of multi-lite, fixed, and casement wood windows.

Modifications to the property since its 1949 date of construction include an addition to the second story on the rear, northeast corner in 1955 and the addition of a pool in 1954, which was subsequently removed in 2018. A sliding door was added to the rear patio at an unknown date. These modifications do not impair the integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to Criterion C.

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.

Following the Centennial Exposition of 1876 America experienced a rebirth of interest in its colonial past. Primarily popular from 1880 to 1955, Colonial Revival buildings reference the early English and Dutch homes of the Atlantic seaboard, particularly the Georgian and Adam styles. As with their prototypes, Colonial Revival structures generally have a symmetrical front façade with the principal areas of elaboration being entrances, windows, and cornices. About ten percent of Colonial Revival houses have asymmetrical facades, a feature rarely seen on their colonial prototypes. Roofs can be hipped, gable or gambrel and some variations feature a center gable projecting slightly from the primary façade. Windows are typically double-hung sash with multi-pane glazing in one or both sashes and are commonly found in pairs, triples, or bay windows.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival influences by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; moderately-pitched side gable roof, L-shaped form, entry porch with slender square columns, shiplap and board and batten cladding with stone veneer accent, multi-lite wood frame double hung windows, leaded glass diamond pane windows, wall dormers, and decorative shutters. 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 Loren Frank was born in Kansas in 1898. He moved to San Diego in 1920 and began working as a salesman for the Grable-Francisco-Bleifuss Company, a real estate company. By 1926, he was working as a drafter for Ralph E. Hurlburt, while also designing houses on his own. By the mid-1930s, he was a partner with the firm Hurlburt, Frank & Slaughter. Frank was the firm's primary architectural designer, while Slaughter built the houses and Hurlburt sold them.

The firm designed and built several houses throughout San Diego for high-end clients including Rueben H. Fleet, Percy J. Benbough (mayor of San Diego from 1935 to 1942), and C. Arnholt Smith. While with Hurlburt,

Frank & Slaughter, Frank was responsible for the design of the five houses in the small subdivision of Brookes Terrace in Marston Hills. He was equally as creative with interior design, planning the interiors for several houses by Hurlburt, Frank & Slaughter. He also designed 20 Southern California branches of the U.S. National Bank in partnership with Grant King.

Ralph Frank worked in many neighborhoods including Uptown, Mission Hills, Point Loma, La Playa and La Jolla, and in various architectural styles. Towards the beginning of his career Frank was known for his high-end Spanish style homes but he turned his focus to more cost-effective Colonial Revival and Monterey designs during the Great Depression. At the height of his career in the late 1930s thru the 1940s, Frank had developed a distinctive Colonial Revival style incorporating elements of the Monterey and Ranch styles. He worked as an architect into his later years, shifting to styles more common during the midcentury. A partial list of Frank's notable works is below.

- HRB #718- Strawn House (3120 Owen Street), 1933
- HRB #722- Philip and Helen Gildred/Ralph Frank House (1025 Cypress Avenue), 1935
- HRB #869- T. Claude Ryan House (548 San Fernando Street), 1962
- HRB #881- Ralph Loren and Alice Mae Frank House (6003 Waverly Avenue), 1928
- HRB #896- C. Arnholt Smith/Ralph L. Frank House (2293 San Juan Road), 1936
- HRB #955- Willis and Jane Fletcher/Ralph L. Frank and Milton Sessions House (575 San Geronio Street), 1941
- HRB #987- Walter J. and Grace Ogden/Ralph L. Frank House (1007 Cypress Avenue), 1931
- HRB #1011- Guilford H. and Grace Whitney House (4146 Miller Street), 1927 (with Hurlburt, Tifal and Milton P. Sessions)
- HRB #1059- Dr. Franklin and Leone Lindemulder/Ralph Frank House (2251 San Juan Road), 1935
- HRB #1160- Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn House (2412 Pine Street), 1964
- HRB #1206- Justin and Anastasia Evenson/Ralph L. Frank House (1041 Cypress Avenue), 1934
- HRB #1288- Howard and Helen Taylor House (605 San Fernando Street), 1956
- HRB #1457- Timothy and Thelma Perkins/ Ralph L. Frank House (4165 Miller Street). 1946
- HRB #1492 - Fred Rohr/ Ralph L. Frank House (555 San Fernando Street), 1940
- Frank Residence (2288 San Juan Road)

At least 14 of Frank's works have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include the Philip and Helen Gildred/Ralph Frank House (HRB #722), which established him as a Master Architect by the HRB in 2005, the Ralph Loren and Alice Mae Frank House (HRB #881), and the C. Arnholt Smith/Ralph L. Frank House (HRB #896).

Ralph Frank designed the 555 San Geronio Street property for Richard and Maurine Haas in 1949. During the 1930s and 1940s Frank designed multiple custom homes in Peninsula. The rear façade demonstrates his ability to adapt the sloping lots of the La Playa neighborhood to maximize views. The 555 San Geronio residence is a rare example of Frank's work in the Custom Ranch style and is notable for incorporating his signature Colonial Revival style through materials and detailing with the Custom Ranch form.

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains integrity and continues to reflect Master Architect Ralph L. Frank's original design and aesthetic. The house is significant as an example of Frank's work in the Custom Ranch style utilizing materials and detailing of his signature style, Colonial Revival, and is a part of a collection of Frank-designed homes in the La Playa neighborhood of Point Loma constructed in the 1930s and 1940s. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

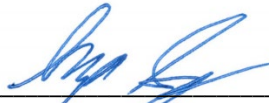
Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility 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. 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 the Richard and Maurine Haas/ Ralph L. Frank House located at 555 San Geronio Street be designated with a period of significance of 1949 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of Custom Ranch style architecture with Colonial Revival influences and HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Ralph L. Frank. The designation excludes the second story rear addition constructed outside of the period of significance.



Megan Walker
Associate Planner
City Planning Department



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
City Planning Department

MW/sa/ss

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 11/16/2023

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 11/16/2023, to consider the historical designation of the **Richard and Maurine Haas/ Ralph L. Frank House** (owned by Rob & Christine Landis Trust 08-08-18, 555 San Gorgonio Street, San Diego, CA 92106) located at **555 San Gorgonio Street, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **532-273-03-00**, further described as BLK 159 LOT 1 N 60 FT 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 Richard and Maurine Haas/ Ralph L. Frank House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics retention of character defining features of the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival influences and retains architectural integrity from its 1949 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a moderately-pitched side gable roof, L-shaped form, entry porch with slender square columns, shiplap and board and batten cladding with stone veneer accent, multi-lite wood frame double hung windows, diamond pane leaded glass windows, wall dormers, and decorative shutters. 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 retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is significant as an example of Frank's work in the Custom Ranch style with Colonial Revival influences and is a one of several homes in the La Playa neighborhood of Point Loma constructed in the 1930s and 1940s by Frank. 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 designation shall exclude the second story rear addition constructed outside of the period of significance.

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:

BY: _____
TIM HUTTER, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney

DRAFT

RECORDING REQUESTED BY
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD
ATTN: HRB SECRETARY
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 501
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

SPACE ABOVE THIS LINE FOR RECORDER'S USE

RESOLUTION NUMBER **N/A**

HISTORICAL DESIGNATION OF PROPERTY ON

555 San Geronio Street, San Diego, CA 92103

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER **532-273-03-00**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD NUMBER **0**