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Re: 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach, CA

BACKGROUND

The subject property located at 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach, CA was first evaluated in 2010, and peer reviewed by Circa: Historic Property Development (Circa) in 2011. This first peer review included details of the existing condition, alterations to character defining features and a discussion of integrity. The 2011 peer review stated that,

The residence has been included in several publications as part of Neutra's breadth of work, however, it is not identified as one of Neutra's exemplary or particularly distinctive residential designs. Indeed, the residence is noted more for its incompatibility with the environment (water leaks, wind gusts throughout, heating problems, etc.) as evidenced by the rusted and water damaged features and materials, than its architectural design. With regard to compromised integrity the Description section of the DPR form rightfully identifies documented and undocumented changes and alterations to the original design including replacement of Neutra's signature ribbon windows and a small addition. These factors combine to reduce significance accorded this residence. While technically of some significance for its association to Neutra, the building is only marginally so.

During the time since the property was peer reviewed in 2011 the residence has suffered further damage, making it uninhabitable.¹ This report is to document the current conditions of the subject residence. For consistency with the previous peer review and ease of comparison, the Monterey County Criteria is used.

THE MONTEREY COUNTY CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION FOR 1170 SIGNAL HILL ROAD, PEBBLE BEACH, CA - PYSICAL INTEGRITY UPDATE

A. Historical and Cultural Significance.

The resource or district proposed for designation is particularly representative of a distinct historical period, type, style, region, or way of life.

2011 Documentation:

The residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road is one of hundreds constructed in the area between 1959 and 1963 (i.e. on the cusp of 50 years old)². An initial search of data shows that over 760 residences of similar age, and presumably also of the Contemporary Style so prolific at the time, exist in the immediate area. No evidence indicates that the property is *particularly* representative of a distinct historical period, type, style, region, or way of life.

¹ Water infiltration around the remaining original windows has caused mold to develop making the atmosphere unsafe for extended periods. Personally my asthma was triggered from just an hour-long visit.

² Research utilized the Monterey County's Assessors Books 007 and 008 (Del Monte Forest) 009 (Carmel Unincorporated) and 241 and 243 (Carmel Highlands – HWY 1 to Palo Colorado Road).

The historic resource evaluation³ (DPR set October 2010) states that Pebble Beach is far behind the design and construction of modern residences in Carmel and Monterey; that "... modernism seems not to have made an appearance in Pebble Beach until some years after the war [1945]..." Continuing the discussion of modernism at the local level, the report alludes to the fact that there may be even more examples of modern architecture in Pebble Beach but "... the lack of a comprehensive local architectural history, together with the difficulty of viewing many residences from public thoroughfares, makes a definitive assertion on this point impossible."

1. The resource or district proposed for designation is, or contains, a type of building or buildings which was once common but is now rare.

Based on the facts stated in response #1 the residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road was/is commonplace and not rare.

2. The resource or district proposed for designation was connected with someone renowned.

The residence was the summer/weekend residence of Arthur L. Connell of Los Angeles. Mr. Connell had no particular historic association to Pebble Beach or Monterey County.

3. The resource or district proposed for designation is connected with a business or use which was once common but is now rare.

The building was designed and used as a residence and is not considered rare.

4. The resource or district proposed for designation represents the work of a master builder, engineer, designer, artist, or architect whose talent influenced a particular architectural style or way of life.

The residence was designed by the prominent southern California architectural firm of Richard Neutra, however, there is no evidence that Neutra himself designed the residence or even approved the set. What appears to be the original project plans (on file) are not signed by Neutra, or anyone from the firm, therefore the plans cannot be presumed to be approved (or not approved) by Neutra. The residence is not identified as one of the firm's exemplary or even particularly distinctive residential designs. Indeed, the residence is noted for its incompatibility with the environment (water leaks, wind gusts throughout, heating problems, etc.) and has suffered from undocumented changes and alterations to the original design including replacement of Neutra's signature ribbon windows.

5. The resource or district proposed for designation is the site of an important historic event or is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community.

The residence is not the site of an important historic event that made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community.

6. The resource or district proposed for designation has a high potential of yielding information of archaeological interest.

The residence does not have a high potential of yielding information of archaeological interest.

³ Kirk evaluation/DPR set October 2010.

2013 Documentation:

Current conditions remain generally the same except that:

- Robert Chattel AIA agreed with the 2011 Circa finding and stated that "The Connell house does not exhibit the woodsy, informal, and anti-urbanism associated with the Second Bay Tradition...and the consultant has not placed the Connell house within its proper context"⁴
- Barbara Lambrect⁵ stated before being contacted by Anthony Kirk she had only a "...superficial knowledge" of the property. This statement is supported by the fact that the subject property wasn't even included in Lambrect's most recent book on Neutra.⁶
- Thomas Hines wrote that he visited the house [once] in the 1970s, prior to any additions, alterations, substitutions, and/or effects of weather - for which Hines himself documented the original owner's complaint of the house's incompatibility with the environment (i.e. water and wind leaks, heating, etc)

B. Historic, Architectural, and Engineering Significance.

2011 Documentation:

1. The resource or district proposed for designation exemplifies a particular architectural style or way of life important to the county.

As stated in criterion A1 above, the residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road is one of hundreds (over 760) constructed in the area between 1959 and 1963. No evidence indicates that the property is of *particular* style or way of life important to the county.

The historic resource evaluation⁷ (DPR set October 2010) states that Pebble Beach is far behind the design and construction of modern residences in Carmel and Monterey; that "... modernism seems not to have made an appearance in Pebble Beach until some years after the war [1945]..." Continuing the discussion of modernism at the local level, the report alludes to the fact that there may be even more examples of modern architecture in Pebble Beach but "... the lack of a comprehensive local architectural history, together with the difficulty of viewing many residences from public thoroughfares, makes a definitive assertion on this point impossible."

2. The resource or district proposed for designation exemplifies the best remaining architectural type of a community.

The evaluation does not substantiate, explain or defend how the subject property meets the CR Criterion 3. Indeed, the Significance discussion elaborates on the subject of local modernism but does not mention the contribution of 1170 Signal Hill Road in this movement.

"In contrast to Carmel and Monterey, modernism seems not to have made an appearance in Pebble Beach until some years after the war, although the lack of a comprehensive local architectural history, together with the difficulty of viewing many residences from public thoroughfares, makes a definitive assertion on this point impossible. In 1940 Frank Lloyd Wright designed a spacious house for John Nesbitt on 17 Mile Drive, but it was never constructed.

⁴ Robert Chattel, AIA, Chattel Architecture, Planning & Preservation, letter dated April 19, 2012.

⁵ Barbara Lambrect, architectural historian, letter dated February 1, 2012.

⁶ Lambrect, Barbara, *Neutra-Complete Works*, 2010.

⁷ Kirk evaluation/DPR set October 2010.

Near the end of the decade Jon Konigsberger created a handsome residence for the Robert Buckner family in Pebble Beach that was one of fifty-three houses featured in the exhibition 'Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region', which opened in October 1949 at the San Francisco Museum of Art. Several years later Konigsberger built a house for Macdonald and Margaret Booze on Signal Hill Road, and throughout the mid-century other architects associated with modernism, such as Gardiner Dailey, Walter Burde, Will Shaw, Henry Hill, and Charles Moore, also designed houses in Pebble Beach."

The evaluation eludes to the fact that as an example of modernism at the local level 1170 Signal Hill Road is far behind the design and construction of modern residences in Carmel and Monterey; that "... modernism seems not to have made an appearance in Pebble Beach until some years after the war [1945]..." The evaluation continues the discussion by saying that there may be even more examples of modern architecture in Pebble Beach but "... the lack of a comprehensive local architectural history, together with the difficulty of viewing many residences from public thoroughfares, makes a definitive assertion on this point impossible."

The 2010 evaluation cites several Pebble Beach properties including one by "... Konigsberger...for the Robert Buckner family in Pebble Beach..." another Konigsberger house built "...for Macdonald and Margaret Booze on Signal Hill Road [emphasis added], and throughout the mid-century other architects associated with modernism, such as Gardiner Dailey, Walter Burde, Will Shaw, Henry Hill, and Charles Moore, also designed houses in Pebble Beach."

From these statements, and others elaborated upon in the evaluation, it is clear that 1170 Signal Hill Road is not "the best remaining" architectural type of a community.

3. The construction material or engineering methods used in the resource or district proposed for designation embody elements of outstanding attention to architectural or engineering design, detail, material or craftsmanship.

Nothing in the evaluation of 1170 Signal Hill Road recognizes outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, material or craftsmanship.

2013 Documentation:

Current conditions remain generally the same except that a "windshield" survey of Pebble Beach properties was conducted in February 2012.⁸ Of the 900 residences constructed between 1944-1962 in Pebble Beach over 525 properties were surveyed within close proximity to the subject property. To compare like-properties the subject property was used as a center point and radiating outward. Over 525 properties were surveyed and photographed, identifying those that had similar setting/views. There are 134 modern residences that share a similar setting immediately neighboring 1170 Signal Hill. They all retain important characteristics identified with modern residences including the absence of ornament and detail, and the use of technologies, materials and construction techniques of the time. They all architecturally embrace the philosophy of indoor/outdoor living and represent a particularly unique and rarified setting.

⁸ Circa, *Survey Summary and Findings*, July 11, 2011.

C. Community and Geographic Setting.

2011 Documentation:

1. The proposed resource materially benefits the historic character of the community.

The residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road neither materially benefits nor detracts from the historic character of the Pebble Beach.

2. The unique location or singular physical characteristic of the resource or district proposed for designation represents an established and familiar visual feature of the community, area, or county.

The residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road does not represent an established or familiar visual feature of the community, area, or county.

3. The district is a geographically definable area, urban or rural possessing a significant concentration or continuity of site, buildings, structures, or object unified by past events, or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

The property at 1170 Signal Hill Road has not been identified as a district. The community of Pebble Beach is a world renown planned development/leisure community (district).

4. The preservation of a resource or resources is essential to the integrity of the district.

The preservation of the residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road is not essential to the integrity of Pebble Beach.

2013 Documentation:

Current conditions remain generally the same except that more recent "modern" houses have been constructed or altered in Pebble Beach since 2011, and therefore have changed the community and geographic setting somewhat.

CURRENT CONDITIONS⁹

For purposes of Historic Resource Assessment the County of Monterey does not include or consider interior conditions except in the case of public access properties. Interior photographs are used in this report to best illustrate the damage to both the interior and exterior. The subject property was visited and initially evaluated in 2010 by Kirk, then in 2011 by Circa. In both reports it was observed that there were documented and *un*-documented changes and alterations to the residence.

It is also well documented in all of the reports, and even Hines own book, that the subject property has never held up physically to the extremes of weather and exposure, and that the house was not designed or constructed with the intense fluctuations of weather at Pebble Beach in mind. With these facts in mind there has been further exposure, damages and repairs/replacements to the residence since 2010. These are:

Front Entry (picture 1)

- Extensive water damage to the front entry area
- Continued salt and water degradation of the entry porch decking
- Corrosion and subsequent failing of the entry porch handrail

⁹ A site visit and thorough examination of exposed existing conditions was conducted on 9/5/13.

Parapet Cap at Front Entry (picture 2)

Water infiltration at wall junctures particularly at the front entry

Replacement Windows Damaged - Living Room (picture 3)

Replacement windows and frames damaged by storm

Replacement Windows Living Room (picture 4)

Replacement windows remaining

Replacement Windows Courtyard - Living Room (picture 5)

Replacement windows damaged

Northwest Corner (picture 6)

Upper/living room windows and frames damaged

Wall juncture water damage

Window and frame damaged by storm

Northwest Deck Rail (picture 7)

Deck rail metal corrosion/wind damage

Northwest Master Bedroom (picture 8)

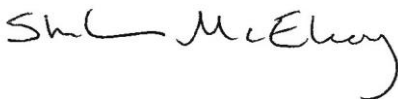
Shattered door (foreground)

Broken window (background)

While the DPR form identifies the subject residence as "...an important and relatively early example of modern architecture in Pebble Beach", this is just not so. In addition to it not being an early or sole reminder of modern architecture, the property had admittedly low physical integrity when evaluated in 2010. There has been no disputing the 2011 peer review finding that the residence has very low integrity, and the recent site visit confirms the continued damage due to failings of the original construction materials and design - that even recent repairs and in-kind replacements could not avoid further damage. The few remaining character defining features that could have been removed in 2010 as a mitigation effort (for archival-sake) are now in ruin.

Considering the current state of the residence there is no physical integrity to justify listing as a historic resource. The survey materials reviewed with the staff in 2012 substantiate the thorough documentation supporting our conclusion that the residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road does not meet the Monterey County Criteria for Evaluation of Historic Resources. There has been no substantiated documentation to refute these findings therefore the property is not a historic resource at the national, state or local level.

Respectfully submitted,



Sheila McElroy
Principal
Circa: Historic Property Development

Picture 1 - Front Entry 9/13



Picture 2 - Parapet Cap/Wall Juncture 9/13



Picture 3 - Replacement Windows Damaged - Living Room 9/13



Picture 4 - Replacement Windows Remaining - Living Room

