

*Historical Designation Report
Kruegel Residence
299 Hilltop Drive
Chula Vista, CA 91910*

Prepared For / Submitted To:
City of Chula Vista
Planning Division
276 Fourth Avenue
Chula Vista, California 91910

Prepared By:
Wendy L. Tinsley Becker, AICP, Principal
Malia Bassett, MCP (c), Junior Planner
Heather Crane, Junior Architect, Architectural Historian
Urbana Preservation & Planning, LLC
3904 Groton Street, #201
San Diego, CA 92110
(619) 543-0693 • wendy@urbanapreservation.com

August 2010

III. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The present-day 299 Hilltop Drive property is located within the City of Chula Vista at the southwest corner of the northwest quarter of Section 111 of Rancho De La Nacion , recorded on May 11, 1869 in San Diego County as Map No. 166. The land tract of Rancho de la Nacion was originally comprised of approximately 26,632 acres; and included the present day communities of National City, Bonita and western Chula Vista. In 1868 developers Frank and George Kimball purchased the land area for \$30,000 and renamed it 'National Ranch.'¹

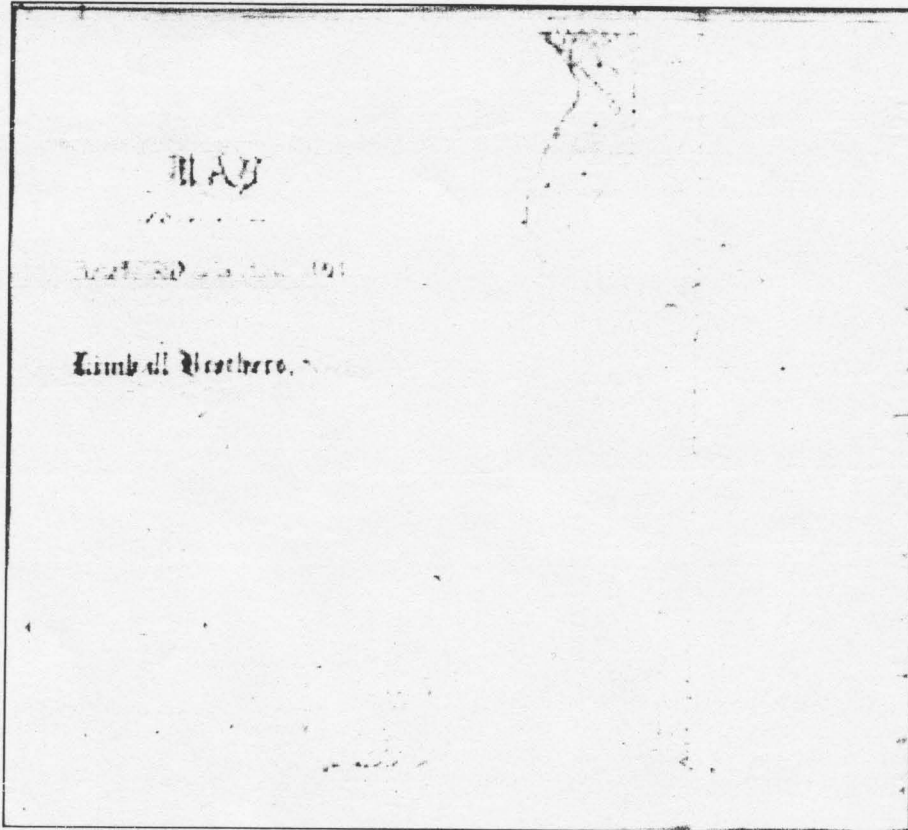


Image 1: Map of Subdivision of Rancho de la Nacion, San Diego County, Cal.
(Map No. 166 Recorded May 11 1869).

While much of the original Rancho De La Nacion region remained open land during the early development of Chula Vista, re-subdivisions occurred as early as 1888 when the San Diego Land & Town Company's (SDLTC) *Map of Chula Vista, San Diego County, Cal* was recorded on March 13, 1888 and filed as San Diego County subdivision map number 505. The SDLTC's *Map of Chula Vista* predates the first form of the State Subdivision Map Act passed in 1893 that mandated filing of subdivision or land plat maps prior to physical subdivision or sale of land lots illustrated within. According to the publication *Chula Vista Heritage, 1911-1986* the SDLTC

Approached the development of Chula Vista with a totally different attitude. The company wanted to induce permanent settlement an improvement of the tract, not just sell the land. To this end, the 5,000-acre tract was cleared of brush, graded and subdivided into a gridiron pattern. The 40-acre blocks of 10-acre parcels were laid out to the east of what would eventually be called National Avenue, with 60-acre blocks of 10-acre parcels to the west. Streets 80 feet wide were graded and sidewalks leveled. Hundreds of trees, including evergreen, pepper, olive, cypress, eucalyptus and palm,

planted by the Land and Town Company, enhanced the appearance of the property. The company spent over \$50,000 on improvements.²

At the turn of the century, as new lots were purchased and developed, changes to street patterns and street names occurred throughout Chula Vista's downtown core. By the 1910s further subdivision of large parcels and installation of new streets occurred throughout the original Chula Vista town site centered at the intersection of 3rd Avenue and F Street. The installment of the National City and Otay Railroad connecting San Diego, National City, Chula Vista and Otay allowed for accessibility around the county and ultimately aided in Chula Vista's growth as a city.

On October 17, 1911, Chula Vista was incorporated as a city with a population of 550.³ Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Chula Vista continued to develop as an agricultural community with lemon and celery as the main revenue producing crops.

By the onset of WWII, Chula Vista quickly became a growing metropolis of San Diego. The expansion of Rohr Aircraft Industries to Chula Vista in 1941 attracted many defense workers and their families to the area. The rapid population influx required development of wartime housing in Chula Vista. Much of the housing developments were constructed in place of the orchard groves that defined the city's early economic subsistence.⁴ In the decade following the beginning of WWII, the population of Chula Vista grew from approximately 5,000 in 1940 to 44,000 in 1950; while Rohr Aircraft Industries employed approximately 9,000 individuals in Chula Vista at the height of WWII.⁵

The combination of defense workers that came to Chula Vista during WWII and the local migration of defense workers and servicemen from San Diego resulted in a consistent population increase in Chula Vista at the conclusion of WWII. Much of the military housing developments became the foundation for future housing campaigns. To accommodate the new permanent residents schools, shopping centers, gas stations, and restaurants were built.

At present, Chula Vista maintains growth as one of the largest metropolitan communities of San Diego with approximately 235,000 citizens.

299 Hilltop Drive (1928-1955)

William C. Stephens and wife Charlotte A. Stephens initiated construction of the 299 Hilltop Drive property in approximately 1927-1928. Architect Robert P. Snyder originally designed the property for the Stephens' in a Spanish Revival style of architecture, and in partnership with master architect William Templeton Johnson, Snyder contributed designs for a number of notable buildings in San Diego including the Fine Arts Building and fire alarm station in Balboa Park, the Community Welfare Building, and the Ocean Beach and Logan Heights branches of the San Diego Public Library. Snyder himself continued to design private residences throughout the San Diego County including Bonita, San Diego and Chula Vista.⁶ In 1930, the 299 Hilltop Drive property was valued at \$33,000.⁷ The Stephens family occupied the dwelling through 1955.

(1955-1991)

Lois In 1955 Burt Raynes, the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer at Rohr Aircraft Industries, and wife Lois purchased and moved into the 299 Hilltop Drive residence. Soon thereafter he initiated a comprehensive remodel of the property including subterranean excavations, architectural redesign and the construction of disaster shelters. It is believed that Raynes and many of his Rohr employees assisted in engineering specification and construction of the dwelling and fallout shelters. A native of Clinton, Indiana, Raynes attended university at Rose Polytechnic College in Indiana, having received a degree in mechanical engineering in 1937. He was employed at Rohr Aircraft Industries since its establishment in 1940. His original position at Rohr Aircraft Industries was Chief Inspector.⁸ In 1955, Raynes was promoted to the position of Chief Executive Officer of Rohr Aircraft Industries.

(1991-Present)

In 1991 Jerry and Joyce Leaf purchased the Hilltop Drive property. In 1994 the Leafs intended to complete basement construction and alteration work that former owner Raynes began. However, the Leafs never commenced construction at the property. In 1998, long time Chula Vista residents, Howard and Ophelia Kruegel purchased the property from the Leafs in 1998. Ownership of the property was transferred to Howard J. Kruegel upon Ophelia's passing in 2004. Howard and wife Barbara currently reside at the property and are seeking designation. *2001 1995*

Burt F. Raynes, Chief Executive Officer, Rohr Aircraft Industries, Chula Vista

On August 6, 1940, Rohr Aircraft Industries (Rohr) commenced as an aircraft manufacturing company in a small warehouse at Lindbergh Field in downtown San Diego. Under founder Fred Rohr and principal co-founders Burt F. Raynes and F. E. McCreery, Rohr began manufacturing aircraft engine parts for WWII defense purposes. Rohr's initial projects included a subcontract with the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation to manufacture engine parts for the B-24. This project was unique in that subcontracting major work to another company was unusual for the aircraft manufacturing business at the time. Under the management of Chief Inspector, Burt F. Raynes, Rohr provided labor and approximately 3,500 engine parts for the B-24.



Image 2: Rohr Aircraft Industries c.1941 extending from G Street to J Street. Source: Chula Vista, the Early Years.

With the demands of WWII, defense projects began to accumulate at Rohr. Other significant acquired contracts included constructing packages for Lockheed's Hudson bomber, and the manufacturing of Consolidated Aircraft's PB2Y3 engine compartment. Rohr attracted a large number of defense workers to the San Diego area, and subsequently experienced sizeable growth in both profit and number of employees. In response, Rohr purchased 10 acres of Santa Fe Railroad Company land within the City of Chula Vista. The new 37,500 square foot building was further expanded in January of 1941 with construction of a 250 by 500 foot factory building and a two-story office building as a part of government sponsored defense-building measures. Rohr's first fiscal year ended July 31, 1941 with yearly sales of \$1,493,488 and an expected increase in business. Employment numbers were also significant from 865 employees in December 1941 to nearly 10,000 at its Chula Vista plant by the conclusion of WWII.⁹ Rohr employed a considerable number of Chula Vista's population, including some women, when men were drafted for WWII.



Image 3: The Rohr H Street clock house where employees clocked in and out each day for work. Source: Images of America, Chula Vista.

At the conclusion of WWII, Rohr experienced a loss of project contracts. The decline in defense industry demands caused the company to expand their manufacturing protocol from strictly defense manufacturing to domestic and commercial appliance manufacturing. Rohr began manufacturing radios, refrigerators and

washing machines to maintain business. The manufacturing of domestic appliances was short-lived as Rohr soon accumulated defense industry contracts in light of the defense build up for the threat of communism. By 1949, Rohr had received contracts from another major aircraft producer, Boeing, to perform engineering tasks and manufacture power packages for Boeing's Stratocruiser.

Rohr rapidly became one of the leading manufacturing concerns and employment source within Chula Vista, contributing a notable amount to the city's economic and urban development. Chula Vista grew rapidly, from a population of about 4,000 in 1940 to 30,000 by 1955, much of which was attributable to the attraction of defense workers by Rohr in Chula Vista. Of the municipality's tax revenues, Rohr contributed to approximately 27 percent of the total tax base.¹⁰

As a major part of military defense programs, the paranoia over threats of communism and nuclear attacks was especially felt in the Chula Vista region. Underground protection in the form of fallout shelters stocked with emergency rations was considered the most effective protection against an attack. The basements of the San Diego Public Library and several other municipal buildings were designated as shelters and stocked with emergency goods. By 1961, San Diego authorized more than 200 building permits for home shelters from midsummer to late fall.¹¹

Image 4: Burt F. Raynes, Chief Executive Officer, Rohr Aircraft Industries Chief Executive Officer in 1955. Source: Rohr Magazine - 25th Anniversary 1940-1965 Issue.



Into the mid to late 1950s, in contrast to other San Diego aircraft plants that were experiencing a decline in manufacturing employment, Rohr experienced a surge of in employees in 1957.¹² Beginning in 1955, under the policies established by newly promoted Chief Executive Officer, Burt F. Raynes, Rohr shifted its technological focus and production methods from WWII defense needs of the Cold War era, including missiles. Raynes initiated a

diversification program to extend production and planning to focus on Cold War production of rocket engine fuel cases and nozzles, heat shields and other missile and rocket components as well as large tracking and communications antennas.¹³ In 1955, the company began to produce guided missiles for classified military activity.¹⁴ By 1956 Rohr had expanded to include four facilities within the United States, including new plants at Riverside (California), Winder (Georgia) and Auburn (Washington) with the company headquarters remaining in Chula Vista.

BART, modular hangers etc. interesting in the state of California

In 1961 Rohr Aircraft Industries was renamed as Rohr Corporation in order to reflect the type of manufacturing projects that had become to define Rohr in the post-war era. During his tenure as CEO of Rohr, Burt F. Raynes invented filed patents with the U.S. Patent Office between 1951 and 1956 for engineering equipment including a 'Pivoted Stretch Bending Machine, a 'Corrugated Expandible Clamp' and a 'Machine for Forming Sheet Metal'.

Cold War Era American Domestic Architecture and Lifestyles

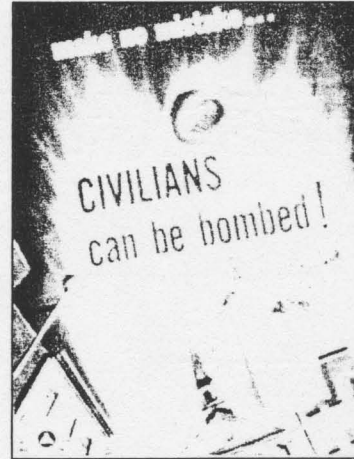
The creation of the atomic bomb marked the beginning of the Cold War era as tensions that began during WWII between the Soviet Union and the U.S. - Great Britain alliance surfaced. The Manhattan Project, a joint effort by the U.S. and Britain, to create an atomic bomb was not disclosed to the Soviet Union and ultimately caused a rift that would define international relations for the next 20 years. Shortly after learning of the U.S.-Great Britain partnership in the development of the atomic bomb, the Soviet Union began to manufacture its own atomic bomb and stock its nuclear arsenal.

A clash of communist and democratic doctrines soon followed as the Soviet Union and the U.S. began to carry out conflicting foreign policies. While the Soviet Union began to impose antagonism on other parts of the world, such as Turkey, the U.S. felt democracy was threatened and adopted the Truman Doctrine.

Through the Truman Doctrine, the Truman administration called for assisting nations that were economically devastated and debilitated by WWII and ultimately vulnerable to subjugation by the Soviet Union. The United States maintained that democratic nations are only as strong as their alliances and sought to maintain them as a strategy to contain Soviet Union expansion.

While much of the Cold War conflicts were ideologically based, a build up of arms by both the U.S. and Soviet Union also occurred in preparation of a possible attack. To prepare, the U.S. strategized that "by means of a rapid and sustained build-up of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world" the U.S. would be equipped to strike on the Soviet Union if necessary.¹⁵ In reaction, the Soviet Union also sought a build up of weaponry. The same pattern of alternating antagonism between the U.S. and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies combined with the looming threat of attack continued to define the Cold War era.¹⁶

Image 5: Federal Civil Defense Administration poster.
Source: *One Nation Underground*, 35.



By 1948 the possibility the ideology of communist infiltrating American society concurrently with the threat of a nuclear attack caused a nationwide fear. The U.S. adopted simultaneous defense strategies: a moral campaign against communism and a physical defense against a nuclear attack, of which each was centered on family life at the home.

The moral campaign focused on American superiority through a happy and safe life by strengthening traditional family values so that the home appeared as a refuge from external insecurities. The expectation was that if American's showed success at home, the focus of the war would be shifted away from weaponry and the likelihood of a nuclear attack would be less. The government attempted to paint the picture that Americans had a superior advantage over the Soviets because of our ideal suburban life; a domestic life that was, "complete with modern appliances and distinct gender roles for family members."¹⁷ This mentality soon became evident in that individuals in the Cold War era began to marry at a younger age than previous decades, seeking a peaceful domestic life. Pride in household roles was proficient as men assumed the role of the wage earner and females as the housekeeper. Further, the accumulation of consumer goods represented a pleasurable and successful life. The serene, affluent domestic life stood as an example of tangible security in a world that was insecure.



Image 6: Showing Cold War newlyweds surrounded by consumer goods for two week honeymoon in fallout shelter (entrance at right rear of photo). Source: *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, 4.

Domestic architecture in the post-WWII era also reflected the desire to make the home a secure place. The Ranch-style suburban home became a popular architectural design in the 1950s. It reflected a secluded and safe look and was often surrounded by a controlled landscape. The Ranch-style suburban home was “seen as creating a unity with nature, but it was a unity that pictured nature as a tamed and open environment...the 1950s design standards conceived of the natural world in a simplified and controlled way that eliminated anything that was wild or irregular.”¹⁸ The Ranch-style home offered stability in the surrounding landscape while the home itself seemed secure and unbreachable; helping to further ease the threat of communist infiltration and curb a attack.

The other element of the dual campaign was to provide Americans with the reassurance that in the event of a nuclear attack on the U.S. were to occur, they could be safe if proper precautions were taken. As newly elected U.S. president Eisenhower noted in a 1952 speech, “the main training site where civil defense discipline would be cultivated was at home”¹⁹ The U.S. government encouraged citizens to adopt civil defense measures in the form of fitting their home with fallout shelters that could be the key to withstanding an atomic bomb attack. In 1953 the Federal Civil Defense Administration issued the *Home Protection Exercises: A Family Action Program*, which outlined tasks that were necessary for families to take under a nuclear attack. The first task was that the “home must be prepared as a shelter: a bomb or blast shelter if it was located within ten miles of an expected target, such as a military installation, an industrial complex, or the center of a large city.”²⁰ At the encouragement of the government, many construction campaigns to make homes and public buildings safe against a nuclear attack were underway by 1955. A *Better Homes and Gardens* article noted, “never before in America has so much dirt been excavated, by so many, so feverishly. The fear of radioactive fallout from an atomic war has itself settled on our land like a deadly fog.”²¹

Image 7: Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization poster.
Source: One Nation Underground.
35.



IV. ARCHITECTURAL OVERVIEW

The 299 Hilltop Drive property was originally constructed in approximately 1928 and designed by architect Robert W. Snyder in a Spanish Revival style of architecture. In 1955, the dwelling was extensively remodeled by architect John Bender to reveal a Ranch-style layout. While the remodel retained attributes of the original Spanish Revival design, it was a modern upgrade that incorporated progressive design and security measures reflective of the Cold War era for its security evoking design.

The Ranch House Style

The Ranch Style House first emerged in the early 1930's, when in 1932, Architect Cliff May designed the first of its kind in San Diego, California. Initially designed to be low-cost tract housing, the style was not intended to be eye-catching.²² It's low profile appearance and plain use of materials was a precursor architectural style to the post WWII privatization of homes. It was widely used in the post WWII era as a reflection of defense measures by means of sheltered privacy. With deep eaves and long horizontal frames, Ranch Style Homes gave Americans a sense of security from the happenings of the Cold War.

Typically having a deep setback from the street, the horizontality of the house stretched interior spaces in a linear, L-shaped, U-shaped, or H-shaped fashion, and embraced the outdoors through redefining courtyards and patios as out-door "rooms." New meaning was given to the roles and locations of rooms. The kitchen was brought forward to the front of the house and the living room, because of the houses shallow depth, usually opened to both the front and rear of the dwelling. Ranch Style homes typically had open floor plans, combining the kitchen, dining, and living room into one communal family area. Civil Defense propaganda from the 1950's stressed strength of family as being the strength of America. Low-profile Ranch Homes became ideal locations for personal disaster shelters.

Character-defining features of the Ranch Style are large landscaped yards, deep street setbacks, large garages with motor courts, gable or hip style wood shingle roofs, long horizontal windows which "framed" views, and wood, stone, or brick siding. Ranch Style Homes are typically single story and come in several style variations including Colonial, Spanish Hacienda, and can have revival style features as well.²³

299 Hilltop Drive Architectural Overview, 1928 Construction

Originally built in 1928 by Master Architect Robert W. Snyder and planted by Master Landscape Architect Roland Hoyt, the W.C. Stephens Residence located at 299 Hilltop Drive in Chula Vista, California typified a Spanish Revival house with a Spanish Californian influence. Once an archetypical example of a Californian Spanish Revival home featuring an ornate entry with arches on Tuscan columns, the house has since undergone an intensive 1955 remodel, transforming it into a modern Ranch Style home, leaving very few Spanish character defining features, that exhibit the original Spanish Revival aesthetic. The remaining features original to the 1928 design include:

- A U-shaped asymmetrical footprint surrounding a courtyard entry,
- The terraced hillside at the rear of the house,
- Exposed veneered redwood rafters and wall paneling throughout the living and dining room areas, and
- Servants' quarters adjacent to the kitchen.²⁴

299 Hilltop Drive Architectural Overview, 1955 & 1960 Remodel

The second construction campaign, by architect John Bender, occurred in 1955 and resulted in a major change in the physical appearance of the home's exterior. The design and plan for the interior was also modified, the most prominent being the addition of the master bedroom on the northwest corner of the house and the addition of three subterranean disaster shelters, the first being located below the master bedroom, the second being beneath the living room and the third located below the southwest corner of the house. A large area directly below the two westward bedrooms was excavated for use as an indoor swimming pool and water storage area, but was never completed.

As part of the 1955 remodel, changes to the exterior include:

- The removal of the stucco siding and replacing it with vertical wood slat siding,
- Replacing the Tuscan columns and amber cathedral-leaded glass with square posts and double hung or diagonal paned windows,
- Changing the shape of selected windows to suit a more horizontal configuration,

- Extending the living room roofline and lowering the pitch of the north elevation to cover the new screened-in porch and master bedroom,
- Enlarging the chimney and removing the arched top to be flat,
- Adding a corner boxed window to the southwest corner of the northwest bedroom, and
- Adding a large reinforced concrete and rod-iron electrified and barb wired fence approximately 10 feet high to the perimeter of the property.

Noteworthy changes to the interior include:

- The addition of a hallway to the front of the house, which required the removal of a lavatory,
- Increasing the size of the entry by offsetting the shared living room wall 8 feet into the living room as well as removing a coat closet on the east wall of the entry. In lieu of the coat closet, a door was installed between the entry and dining room. The door between the living and dining room was removed and patched,
- The east terrace was enclosed and became a screened-in porch. Sliding door units were installed in the living and dining rooms to open to the screened-in porch area,
- The fireplace in the living room was replaced with a rotational firebox that could be shared with the new master bedroom. A new box picture window also replaced the existing bay window in the living room,
- The wall separating the original pantry and kitchen was removed to make for an eating area within the kitchen. The enunciator located on said removed wall was relocated to an alcove on the north wall of the new eating area. Boxed / bay windows divided by shelving were added to the north and east walls of the eating area, and
- The wall separating the original service room and kitchen was offset making the footprint of the kitchen three feet larger. The service room was also converted into a new pantry.²⁵

Other notable additions to the property in 1955 included an extensive security system throughout the property. The security system included a control panel in the master bedroom located at the head of Raynes' bed. The control panel featured a mock-up of the dwelling envelope with lights at each point of entrance to the property. Lasers hidden in birdhouses throughout the exterior of the property would trigger an unsolicited visitor and cause the control panels to light up with corresponding trespassed entrance point. In addition, there were also a number of panic buttons through the interior and exterior of the property. The rear of the property was equipped with an electrified and barb wired concrete fence.

In the event the property was breached or if a panic button was pressed, the security system would contact the Rohr guard shack and the guards were expected to immediately make their way to the property.

In 1960, property owner Burt F. Raynes constructed a two-car garage and laundry room immediately adjacent to the southeast corner of the house. The addition was built as a separate structure, but is physically connected to the house via a stepped roofline.²⁶

Present Day 299 Hilltop Drive

Today, the home's appearance is consistent with and reflective of the 1955 remodel. Much of the same vegetation still exists, with exception to a fruit and nut tree orchard that was once located on the eastern expanse of the property. In its current appearance, configuration, and form, the house embodies the character-defining features of a 1950's custom Ranch House modeling an architectural emphasis on horizontality, deep roof overhangs which create a low profile feel, a low-slope gabled roof with exposed rafters, a large rectangular brick chimney, a 2-car garage and motor court with connecting breezeway, and beige-colored vertical wood slat siding. Original to the 1928 design, but characteristic to a custom ranch home, the house also features a large landscaped yard, a deep street setback, a U-shaped design around a central courtyard, and a low-pitched stepped roof. The exterior walkways and porches are paved with concrete or red brick on a concrete base. Red brick planters also surround the residence. The interior offers generous living spaces with large bedrooms that are secluded from the main living space and a generous-sized living room that runs the depth of the house. The home includes servant quarters, which is typical to both Spanish Revival and custom Ranch Style homes. The majority of interior finishes are redwood veneer, including the vertical wall paneling in the living room and dining room, both from the 1928 design, and master bedroom from the 1955 campaign. Exposed ceiling rafters in the previously stated rooms are

Addendum to Historic/Landmark Organization, Part 1:

Under section 5024.1. of the California Public Resources Code, a site may be identified as historic if it meets any one of the following criteria:

- (1) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's (or in this case, Chula Vista's) history and cultural heritage.
- (2) Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past.
- (3) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values.

The subject property, built in 1929, meets each of these criteria based on 1) its design by a significant architect; and 2) its association with two significant figures in Chula Vista history.

Architect Robert W. Snyder:

The house was designed in 1926 for W.C. Stephens, founder of Security Trust and Savings Bank, by San Diego architect Robert W. Snyder. Snyder also designed the Ocean Beach Library (1928) and collaborated with noted architect William Templeton Johnson on what is now the San Diego Museum of Art in Balboa Park (1926). Johnson and Snyder were associates in an architectural firm located in the Spreckels Building in downtown San Diego, and according to Martin E. Petersen, curator emeritus of the San Diego Museum of Art, Snyder deserves much of the credit for the museum's design. His name appears on the cornerstone along with Johnson's (Petersen, 1971).

Johnson, who was considered to be San Diego's leading architect after Irving Gill's retirement in 1916, also designed the early buildings for Francis Parker School, which his wife founded in 1912; as well as the La Valencia Hotel in La Jolla (1926) and the Museum of Natural History in Balboa Park (1930-33). He was one of four architects (along with Gill, Richard Requa and Samuel Wood Hamill) selected to design the San Diego County Administration Building (1936-38).

For the house to be built on what was then Sixth Avenue in Chula Vista, Snyder followed his mentor's preference for what Gill advocates were calling "stripped" architecture, and designed a low-slung, ranch-style design with natural redwood exterior siding, a traditional southwestern tile roof, exposed beams and extensive redwood throughout the interior. He also provided his client with highly detailed plans for landscaping the two-acre site overlooking the Sweetwater Valley.

Original Owner W.C. Stephens:

In 1929, the Security Trust and Savings Bank opened a Chula Vista branch on the southeast corner of Third Avenue and F Street (the Melville Building), and its president and founder, W.C. Stephens, moved into his new Chula Vista residence that same year. In

addition to his banking career, Stephens demonstrated a keen interest in nature, and in 1931 was elected as a life member of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago (Field Museum, 1931).

Owner Burt Raynes:

Although Stephens was clearly a leading citizen of his time – in the 1920s and 1930s, that end of Sixth Avenue (now Hilltop Drive) was popularly known as “Banker’s Row” – the house is most closely associated with its second owner, former Rohr President Burt Raynes. Raynes was among the handful of men to join founder Fred H. Rohr in launching what eventually became Rohr Industries and Chula Vista’s largest employer. Raynes, an engineer who had met Rohr while working at Ryan, joined the “Eighth and J Gang” as chief inspector and quickly climbed the corporate ladder. As Rohr’s official history reports: “Through the years, Raynes moved up in the organization, becoming, successively, chief inspector, chief tool engineer, vice president-manufacturing, senior vice president, executive vice president, and in 1963, president and director” (The Story of a Corporation, 1969).

The company operated out of a garage at the corner of Eighth Avenue and J Street in San Diego before moving in August 1941 to the bayfront property Rohr had purchased in Chula Vista. The effect of this decision on Chula Vista’s growth and history cannot be overstated. Rohr quickly became the city’s largest employer and the world’s leading manufacturer of aircraft engine parts, and its presence stimulated the city’s growth from a population of just 4,000 to more than 200,000 today. During Rohr’s “boom years” in the 1940s and 1950s, the rural character of Chula Vista changed rapidly as farms and fields were converted to subdivisions that would house the thousands of men and women who moved to the city to work at Rohr.

Shortly after settling in Chula Vista, Raynes and his wife purchased the Hilltop Drive house, and he immediately set about remodeling the property to reflect his own tastes – and, perhaps, his own fears. The 3,400-square-foot basement was reconfigured to house a large office, where two or three Rohr secretaries worked full time to keep pace with Raynes’ creative mind. Raynes added a garage on the side of the house, but he retained the original garage doors to provide access from the basement to a newly built patio. As the Cold War heated up in a post-nuclear world – a threat that may have seemed particularly real to a man designing parts for military airplanes – Raynes added two bomb shelters to the property, one accessible from the floor next to his bed, the other accessible from the nearby children’s room. He also installed a high concrete wall around the property (neighbors were appalled when razor wire appeared at the top) as well as an elaborate security system that could be monitored and triggered from his bed.

Much of the work was completed by Rohr employees. A long-time staffer and unofficial historian of the organization says Raynes had a crew at the house full-time for “five or ten years.” His final, and perhaps most ambitious project is still unfinished: an indoor pool that could double as a water source in the event of nuclear attack. To accomplish

that, workers knocked out part of a basement wall and dug even deeper into the ground. Neighbors remember truckloads of dirt being hauled away from the site. Unfortunately – or perhaps fortunately, for the long-term fate of the house – complications in Raynes’ personal life forced him to move out before the work could be completed.

An engineer and inventor who holds at least three patents, Raynes also designed the table for his remodeled kitchen: press a button, and a motorized lazy susan rises from the center, providing easy access to condiments and other mealtime essentials. (Raynes’ patents include a “method and apparatus for suppressing the noise of jet-propelled aircraft,” which no doubt was a part of his design work for Rohr nacelles, as well as a combination conference chair and writing table and a “system for positioning a wheeled carrier.”)

Raynes had assumed the presidency of Rohr in 1963, two years before the death of its founder, and his inventive mind led him to branch out from Rohr’s core business as an aerospace contractor as he steered the company toward a national and, ultimately, international presence. The history of the B.F. Goodrich Corp., which eventually took over Rohr, summarizes some of these initiatives:

Believing that the use of new factory methods could revolutionize the housing industry, Rohr started its Modular Components Corp. in 1960. The Chula Vista plant began producing “unitized” bathrooms – floor, walls, ceiling, bath tub and shower unit integrated in a seamless fiberglass structure. Rohr introduced other new product lines, including boats and submersible buoys to meet the need for a stable oceanographic instrument base. (Goodrich, 2004).

Marine technology became a major Rohr activity with the incorporation of Rohr Marine in 1976. By the early 1970s, company executives boasted that they would “help rebuild the nation’s surface transportation system.” As *Time* magazine reported in July 1976, “They planned futuristic trains air cushions and people-movers. . . . With equal enthusiasm, they spoke of new vistas in space communications and automated mail systems. It added up to a grand adventure into uncharted terrain—a bit too grand.” Although Rohr made and sold cars for San Francisco’s BART and Washington’s Metro systems, the company ran into quality problems – and fallout from the 1974-75 recession. Rohr lost millions, the board and shareholders rebelled, and in November 1975 Raynes was forced out as chief executive. He stepped down as chairman three months later, and, *Time* reports, that was the end of Rohr’s “futuristic projects” (*Time*, July 1976).

Both during and after his tenure at Rohr, Raynes was a major contributor to Republican party causes and is listed on the guest lists for VIP events with Presidents Ford and Nixon and then-California Governor Ronald Reagan (Ford Library archives, Nixon Library archives).

The house has had just four owners during its 80-year history and is popularly known in Chula Vista as the “Rohr House,” in tribute to the man who owned it the longest and who, during his more than 30-year tenure at Rohr Industries, made such a significant contribution to Chula Vista’s history and growth. Clearly, the house is a unique part of Chula Vista’s history and is worthy of designation as a historic site.

Addendum to Historic/Landmark Organization, Part 2:

The current homeowner, Howard Kruegel, has what appears to be a complete set of blueprints for both the house and landscape designs. The landscaping has changed over the past 70 years, but the house – other than a mid-century garage addition and some minor revisions to a rear-facing courtyard – remains largely intact, both inside and out.

Sources:

- “Annual Report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1931,” The Field Museum, Publication 306, Vol. IX, No. 1.
- “Chula Vista’s Walk of History,” pamphlet, Chula Vista Public Library.
- Dean, Ada. Long-time Rohr employee and attendant at the Chula Vista Heritage Museum. Personal interview, 25 March 2010.
- The Decline of Transit: Urban Transportation in German and U.S. Cities, Glenn Yago. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Culture in the American Southwest: The Earth, The Sky, The People, Keith L. Bryant, College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001.
- Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Daily Diary.
- “Fred H. Rohr: A Man and His Corporation,” pamphlet, Chula Vista Heritage Museum FundingUniverse.com, 2005. FundingUniverse. 26 March 2010. <<http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/Rohr-Incorporated>>.
- Goodrich.com, 2004. Goodrich Corporation. 10 May 2010. <<http://www.goodrich.com>>.
- “History of Balboa Park,” pamphlet.
- “Living History of the Guild, A History of the San Diego Artists Guild,” pamphlet, San Diego Artists Guild.
- Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library, Daily Diary.
- “San Diego Museum of Art,” pamphlet, San Diego Museum of Art.
- The Story of a Corporation, Edward T. Austin, Rohr Corporation, 1969.
- Time*, July 17, 1976.
- U.S. Patent 3637042, “Method and Apparatus for Suppressing the Noise of Jet-Propelled Aircraft,” Burt Raynes, Inventor.
- U.S. Patent 3666118, “System for Positioning a Wheeled Carrier.” Burt Raynes, Necati Kanatsiz, Robert Otle, Inventors.
- “William Templeton Johnson: San Diego Architect, 1877-1957,” Martin E. Petersen, *The Journal of San Diego History*, Fall 1971, Volume 17, No. 4.