

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



1. Name

historic ERSKINE B. McNEAR HOUSE RECEIVED FEB 19 1981
and/or common McNEAR HOUSE OHP

2. Location

street & number 121 Knight Drive not for publication
city, town San Rafael vicinity of _____ congressional district 05
state California code 06 county MARIN code 041

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: community center

4. Owner of Property

name Protestant Episcopal Bishop of California
street & number 1055 Taylor Street
city, town San Francisco vicinity of _____ state California

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Marin County, County Recorder
street & number Civic Center
city, town San Rafael state California

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title San Rafael Historical/Architectural has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date Jan. 1978 federal state county local
depository for survey records City of San Rafael, Planning Office
city, town San Rafael state CA 94903

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Situated on a knoll, the Erskine B. McNear House is a three storey rectangular wood frame building with brick and shingle siding in a transitional style incorporating elements of the Craftsman, Colonial Revival and Shingle styles. It rests on a raised foundation with a full basement. The main section of the building consists of 10,732 sq.ft. with the basement consisting of 4,500 sq.ft. The residence is constructed of heavy wood timbers and is set on a concrete stepped foundation. The front porch, steps, large veranda and stairs are constructed of concrete and brick reinforced with steel.

The exterior first level and foundation walls are sheathed with brick and clinker brick from the local McNear brickyard and are punctuated by decorative inset fieldstone. The upper levels are sheathed with shingles. The residence has a hip roof with hip roof dormers in each roof plane. Beneath the wide main roof eaves and dormer eaves exposed rafters are visible. There are two exterior brick chimneys and an interior brick flue.

Wood framed windows of the McNear House have a strong, horizontal line and are paired, tri-part or in ribbon bands. Windows are vertical casement and double-hung sash with windows on the first level carrying multi-light transoms. Second storey windows have modillion bracketed sills. To the rear is a slanted bay window.

Extending from the McNear House are porches on three sides. The main entrance portico is supported by brick piers and shelters the main door flanked by two large sidelights. Above the attached brick garage wing is an enclosed sunporch. A veranda with brick piers carrying Doric columns supports a wood arbor on the third side.

Preserved in the interior rooms are two brick fireplaces with high clinker brick mantels carrying wood dentil trim. Also preserved are the beamed ceilings and the natural wood wainscoting, trim and cabinetry. There have been only minor alterations to the interior.

The McNear House remains essentially unaltered although its physical setting is presently encroached upon by the encircling residential development. Also on the property is the one storey Church of the Redeemer built in 1962 following purchase of the property by the Episcopal Diocese in 1957. This building does not contribute to the significance of the historic property.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1906 Builder/Architect Brainerd Jones

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Erskine B. McNear House is significant for its historic association with the McNear family, who exerted a major influence in the economic development of Marin and Sonoma Counties in the 19th and early 20th centuries and whose interests included real estate, timber, ranching, grain and feed supply, warehousing, shipping, and railroad and steamship lines in the San Francisco Bay area and Northern California. The residence is architecturally significant as the design of Brainerd Jones, a regionally well-known and prolific architect, who designed many industrial, civic and residential buildings during the period 1898-1930.

Architect Brainerd Jones was engaged by Erskine B. McNear in 1906 to design his family residence as headquarters for a dairy ranch that was only a part of the 2440 acres owned by the McNear family on Point San Pedro east of San Rafael.(1) The residence was built in 1906 in the transitional mode favored by Brainerd Jones which emphasized Craftsman, Colonial Revival and Shingle style elements on an unusually large scale.(2) Native materials were used including brick and clinker brick made in the McNear brickyard less than a mile away.

Erskine Baker McNear was born in Petaluma in 1872, the son of John A. McNear, a native of Maine who had come to Petaluma in 1856. John A. McNear and his brother, George W. McNear, in partnership as the McNear Bros. operated warehouse and shipping interests in Petaluma, San Francisco and Contra Costa and were established as commission and grain merchants.(3) John A. McNear organized and was first President of the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad. He had previously established steamship service from Petaluma via Point San Pedro to San Francisco with the steamers Gold and Josie McNear. Erskine B. McNear, as his father's local agent, served as the landlord of the Chinese living in villages along the San Pedro shore where they operated the shrimp fishing business of China Camp (now an historic site preserved as China Camp State Park). In 1898, he joined his father in the purchase, organization and development of the McNear Brick Co., enlarging and modernizing an industry operating on the site since the 1850's.(4) John A. McNear had previously experimented with early forms of cement in the 1860's and 1870's in the flooring of his warehouses, reservoirs, etc. Erskine McNear managed, and then served as President of the McNear Brick Co., from 1906 until 1956. He concurrently ran the dairy ranch surrounding the residence and recreational facilities at McNear's Beach. He owned commercial real estate in downtown San Rafael, was one of the organizers and vice-president of the Bank of San Rafael and was the president of the Marin Dell Milk Company.

Following the death of Erskine McNear in 1956, the McNear lands surrounding the residence were sold for residential subdivision and the house was acquired by the Episcopal Diocese of California for use as the parish Church of the Redeemer in 1957.(5) The McNear House, encroached upon today by the surrounding subdivision and dwarfing the small church in front, nevertheless supplies a significant link with the earlier pastoral landscape.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.94 acres

Quadrangle name San Quentin

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	10	5	4	15	7	1	5	10	4	12	0	14	1	2	10
Zone	Easting			Northing											

B

Zone	Easting			Northing											

C

Zone	Easting			Northing											

D

Zone	Easting			Northing											

E

Zone	Easting			Northing											

F

Zone	Easting			Northing											

G

Zone	Easting			Northing											

H

Zone	Easting			Northing											

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached City of San Rafael, Assessor's Maps, Book 185, pages 8 & 14.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title

organization Dan Peterson, AIA

date 12/29/80

street & number 930 Mendocino Ave.

telephone 707-545-0895

city or town Santa Rosa

state CA 95401

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

K. M. Ellison

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 10-20-81

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register Entered in the National Register

Janet Peterson
Keeper of the National Register

date 1/1/82

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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FOOTNOTES

(1) Although the first purchase of land by the McNears on the peninsula known as Timothy Murphy's Rancho San Pedro was made in 1869 (Book G:354), Erskine McNear did not purchase the 80 acre ranch (visible on early maps as the "Simpton Place" or the "Downing Ranch") until 1905. Don Timoteo Murphy in his will dated 1843 left the 80 acres to Mary Ellen Simpton, the widow of Captain George Simpton, and her children (Liber A: 393-394) in 1854. From the Simptons ownership passed to the Downings in 1864, to Frederick and Anna Dieckmann in 1899 (Book 56:55), and to Erskine McNear in 1905 (Book 94:57).

(2) Architect Brainerd Jones, versatile and inventive, designed a wide range of buildings, several of which remain in Petaluma, a base for McNear enterprises. They include: the Neo-Classical Carnegie Library (1904); the Neo-Classical Lincoln Primary School (1911); the brick industrial Spanish Renaissance Revival H & N Hatchery building.

(3) In 1874, the McNear Bros. partnership dissolved. George W. McNear assumed control of the San Francisco business interests and added them to his operations in Contra Costa County. John A. McNear retained the business interests in Petaluma and properties in Marin.

(4) The brickyard had been operating on Point San Pedro since established by Joseph Rice in the 1850's. The brickyard continued in operation under Erskine McNear until his death in 1956 and the company still operates today. A detailed account of the McNear Brick Co. operations in the early 20th century is found in : State of California. Chapters of State Minerologists Report, Biennial 1913-14. Fletcher Hamilton, State Minerologist. Mines and Mineral Resources of the Counties of Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Marin, Napa, Solano, Sonoma, Yolo (San Francisco:1915),pp.72-75.

(5) Before his death in 1956, Erskine McNear gave the house and surrounding ten acres to his daughter, Lucretia McNear Thomas. It was subsequently sold to the Stegge Development Co. with other family holdings to be developed into what is now Glenwood, but the house and 2.94 acres were restricted and not to be subdivided. This portion Stegge sold in 1957 to the Episcopal Diocese of California. The parish built its church in front of the McNear House and has used the house as a community center for various organizations, as parish offices, and as a nursery school.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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Menary, David III. "My Family in History," University of the Pacific,
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he received in interviews with his grandmother, Kathleen B. McNear
(Mrs. Miller) and his great-aunt, Lucretia McNear Thomas (Mrs. William).
Mrs. Thomas was given the McNear House by her father, Erskine B. McNear.

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H21,25. A story of John A. McNear.

_____ "John A. McNear's Dream," May 17, 1974.

_____ Obituary of Erskine B. McNear, Oct. 1956.

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Research and Bibliography compiled by Marilyn D. Wick.

