



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: May 10, 2023 REPORT NO. HRB-23-015

HEARING DATE: May 25, 2023

SUBJECT: **ITEM #2 – Helmhurst Cottage**

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

APPLICANT: Sheila Palmer; represented by Nexus Planning & Research

LOCATION: 1570 Virginia Way, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 350-132-2800

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Helmhurst Cottage located at 1570 Virginia Way as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Helmhurst Cottage located at 1570 Virginia Way as a historical resource with a period of significance of circa 1911 under HRB Criterion A. The designation excludes the modified garage and 1957 second story addition constructed outside of the period of significance. The designation includes the cobblestone retaining walls flanking the driveway. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource is a special element of La Jolla's historical, cultural, social, economic, aesthetic, and architectural development and retains integrity to the circa 1911 period of significance. Specifically, the resource, which embodies the character defining features of Beach Cottage architecture, are part of a finite and limited number of beach cottages remaining which reflect the early development history of La Jolla and retain integrity for that association.

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 resource is a one-story, single family residence and guest house located on a steep hillside above Torrey Pines Road in the La Jolla Community. The property consists of a large wooded lot with views of the Pacific Ocean.

The property, then addressed as 1575 Torrey Pines Road, was identified in the 1977 La Jolla Historical Survey as "Helmhurst" cottage.

The historic name of the resource, the Helmhurst Cottage, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name historically associated with the property.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Nexus Planning & Research, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A and C. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion A but not HRB Criterion C. 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.

The village of La Jolla began in the 1880s during the "boom" period of San Diego's history as a small coastal community. One of the first land tracts in the area was La Jolla Park, which was developed in 1887 by Frank Botsford and was the first subdivision to have identified lots and streets. The first permanent residence in La Jolla was constructed that same year. Historian Patricia Schaechlin described La Jolla's early history as follows: "In 1888, the land collapse left a scraggly collection of cottages, few residents, no improvements and little hope.... La Jolla experienced a steady growth in the first two decades of the twentieth century, a time when the community became a village. It grew from a 350 population, some one hundred houses, to a village and a popular resort with a commercial base of tourism large enough to support its permanent residents."

Beach Cottages were the dominant housing type in La Jolla during this early period through the 1930's. The Beach Cottage style was ideal for use as a summer or winter retreat or, even though lacking in many modern conveniences, they could be and were used as permanent residences. Early beach cottages were characterized (in part) as smaller dwellings, typically one story, with a low pitched roof and exposed rafters; wood siding; a small front porch and garden area; and an orientation toward any available beach or coastal view. Originally known by name, the cottages were not given proper addresses until 1913. By the 1920s, the population had increased to over 2,500 people and the tourism industry was firmly established. Hotels were constructed in increasing numbers, and as the famous and wealthy began to vacation there, the cottages were no longer seen as suitable accommodations. Increased population, tourism and wealth, coupled with shifting architectural preferences, caused Beach Cottages to fall out of favor through the late 1920s and 1930s. In the following decades, many of these early cottages were relocated to less desirable inland lots.

The resource located at 1570 Virginia Way, formerly 1575 Torrey Pines Road, was identified as "Helmhurst" cottage in the 1977 La Jolla Historical Survey. The cottage exhibits the primary characteristics typical of La Jolla beach cottages; one story, small dwelling, low pitched roof, wood siding and orientation toward an available coastal view. The resource has been modified since the period of significance for La Jolla beach cottages (see discussion under HRB Criterion C); however, the resource is still able to convey its significance under Criterion A as an early residential structure in La Jolla. The resource retains integrity of location, setting, feeling and association which are the

fundamental aspects of integrity related to historical, cultural, social and economic development under Criterion A.

Significance Statement: The Helmhurst Cottage is a special element of La Jolla's historical, cultural, social, economic, aesthetic, and architectural development and retains integrity to its circa 1911 period of significance. Specifically, the resource, which embodies the character defining features of Beach Cottage architecture, are part of a finite and limited number of beach cottages remaining which reflect the early development history of La Jolla and retain integrity for that association. Therefore, staff recommends 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 subject resource is a one-story, single family residence constructed circa 1911 in the Craftsman style. The house is located on a large wooded parcel that overlooks the Pacific Ocean. The exterior of the structure is clad in wood shingle siding and features a low-pitched, side gable roof with exposed rafters. Two shed dormers are present on the west façade of the roof. The main entrance is recessed in the center of the west façade and is accessed by concrete and cobblestone stairs. An interior cobblestone chimney is present on the southern portion of the structure. A secondary entrance is located in the center of the east façade beneath a flat roof and is accessed by a large wood deck. A garage with living space above is located on the northern side of the property. The house features wood framed windows in a variety of shapes and operations including multi-lite, double hung and cottage windows. The house and garage are both accessible from Torrey Pines Road by a concrete driveway flanked with cobblestone retaining walls. The walls appear to have been constructed during the period of significance for La Jolla beach cottages.

Modifications to the resource since its date of construction include the enlargement of the original garage and addition of living space over the garage in 1957. In 1975 the porch on the east façade was enclosed with glass and a flat roof and the garage was further enlarged. The large deck was also added on the eastern side of the house in 1975.

The resource located at 1570 Virginia Way was originally constructed in the Craftsman style and exhibits several character defining features of the style including a low-pitched gable roof, wide overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails and multi-lite wood windows; however, the 1957 addition over the garage and the rear porch enclosure significantly impair integrity of design, materials and workmanship as it relates to HRB Criterion C. The addition of the second story shifts the building's massing towards the north and detracts from the original design of the structure. The resource can be approached from multiple directions making both the east and west facades visually important. The porch enclosure on the east façade impairs the integrity of design, materials, and workmanship of a primary elevation by enclosing a portion of the building that was originally open to the elements. Therefore, staff does not recommend 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.

The applicant's request for designation for the property located at 1570 Virginia Way did not include information to support a determination under HRB Criterion D; therefore, staff has not made a

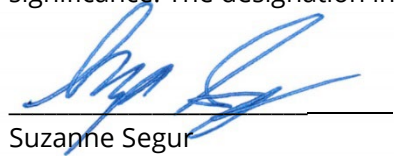
determination regarding eligibility under Criterion D at this time. Eligibility under this criterion may be reevaluated at a future date pending submittal of additional information and analysis.

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 that the Helmhurst Cottage located at 1570 Virginia Way be designated with a period of significance of circa 1911 under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the development of the La Jolla community. The designation excludes the modified garage and 1957 second story addition constructed outside of the period of significance. The designation includes the cobblestone retaining walls flanking the driveway.



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
Development Services Department

ss/SS

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 5/27/2023

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 5/27/2023, to consider the historical designation of the Helmhurst Cottage (owned by Sheila A Palmer Separate Property Trust 08-10-92, 1570 Virginia Way, San Diego, CA 92037) located at **1570 Virginia Way, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **350-132-28-00**, further described as BLK 45 LOTS 27 THRU 33 0.64 AC M/L IN ST CLSD&IN LOTS 1-3&IN 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 Helmhurst Cottage on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION A as a resource that is a special element of La Jolla's historical, cultural, social, economic, aesthetic, and architectural development and retains integrity to the circa 1911 period of significance. Specifically, the resource, which embodies the character defining features of Beach Cottage architecture, are part of a finite and limited number of beach cottages remaining which reflect the early development history of La Jolla and retain integrity for that association. 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 include the cobblestone retaining walls flanking the driveway.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the modified garage and 1957 second story 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

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

1570 Virginia Way, San Diego, CA 92037

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER **350-132-28-00**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD NUMBER **0**