



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: July 11, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-038

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of July 25, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – 1515 West Lewis Street**

APPLICANT: Elizabeth Willis Revocable Trust represented by Legacy 106, Inc

LOCATION: 1515 West Lewis Street, 92103, Uptown Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 1515 West Lewis Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 1515 West Lewis Street under any adopted HRB Criteria due to a lack of integrity.

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 property is a two story single family residence built in 1910 on the south side of West Lewis Street, just west of Randolph Street in the North Florence Heights Subdivision of the Uptown Community.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc., which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D. Staff does not concur that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C or D. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

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 property was constructed in 1910 as a two story single family residence. The building exhibits a roughly symmetrical square box form with a partial width front porch and

second story balcony. The low pitch side gabled roof is sheathed in composition shingle and features wide eave overhang with exposed rafter tails and purlins at the gable ends. The building is clad in wide wood clapboard at the first floor and narrow wood clapboard at the second floor, while the gable ends feature wood shingles and lattice attic vents. Fenestration consists generally of single pane double hung wood windows with the front elevation being reserved for wood windows of 4 over 1 double hung and large 10 over 1 fixed varieties. At the southeast corner of the property is a circa 1950 detached two car garage. Some interior elements of the building that the applicant has proposed be included in any designation are the cut brick fireplace, interior battered columns with shelving, dining room leaded glass buffet, and exposed boxed beam ceiling.

Modifications to the subject property are relatively few in number, but significantly impair the integrity of the building. Minor alterations have occurred at the west and south elevations. At the west (side) elevation is the addition of an oriel window. At the south (rear) elevation, a horizontal band of 7 windows spanning the southwest corner of the structure was removed and replaced with a modern wood double French door and two small horizontal windows. At the southeast corner of the property, the original detached single garage was destroyed by fire in 1949 and replaced in the 1950s by the two car detached garage that exists today.

Although not addressed in the applicant's report, historic photographs and field conditions observed by staff that include scarring and replacement siding reveal a significant alteration to the front elevation that drastically impacts the building's integrity as it relates to the 1910 date of construction and period of significance (Attachment 1). The front porch has been modified at least twice – once between the 1940s and 1951, and again after the late 1960s. The original front porch was in fact much wider and covered a greater portion of the front elevation than the porch that exists presently. Originally, the front porch covered a portion of both of the first story windows in the front, and spanned nearly the entire length of the 28-foot façade. Today, the porch no longer covers the front windows and only covers half the length of the façade. The 1921 Sanborn Map also shows the original front porch with a much longer footprint. Furthermore, the porch headers originally sat lower and the balustrade was of wood lap siding rather than of a more open design as seen today. Although likely, it can only be speculated that a second floor balcony originally existed above the front porch. The alteration of the front porch footprint and design is a significant adverse impact to integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling.

The historical report classifies the style of the subject building as a Craftsman influenced Prairie style; a 1981 survey by Compushare, Inc. classifies it as Colonial; and staff feels it is best classified as a Craftsman with Prairie influence. Indeed, without the critical design element provided by the original front porch, it is challenging to be sure of the original intended design style. The architectural details of the subject building such as the gabled roof form with exposed rafter tails and purlins, and the variety of wood clapboard and shingle siding exhibit a strong Craftsman influence. And the simple square form, low pitch of the roof, wide eave overhang, and horizontal bands of windows exhibit a Prairie influence. The original porch was wider, sat lower, and likely had a more weighty appearance than what is extant – it would have provided a greater horizontal emphasis and likely enhanced the Prairie influence to the style.

The loss of the original front porch is an alteration to a character defining feature that significantly impairs the design, materials, workmanship and feeling aspects of integrity as it relates to the 1910 date of construction. The front porch of the subject building is integral to its design, and the proportions and massing of the façade are now considerably different from their historical appearance. As a result, the building can no longer convey its historic significance. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion C due to a lack of integrity.

CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.

The applicant has also recommended that the subject property be designated under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of established Master Builder Nathan Rigdon. Rigdon was established as a Master by the HRB in May 2005 with the designation of the Carl H. Heilbron/Nathan Rigdon House (HRB Site #711) under Criteria B, C, and D.

Nathan Rigdon was born in Harford County Maryland in 1867. It is unclear when he arrived in San Diego; however by 1909 he was noted on permit listings in the Daily Transcript. The 1910 census listed him as a “builder and speculator.” He was responsible for the design and construction of houses as well as commercial and apartment buildings throughout the City; however a significant portion of his work was in Mission Hills, especially along West Lewis Street and Fort Stockton Drive. He designed houses in several styles including many in his own version of the Prairie style, which is sometimes called the Nathan Rigdon Box or Mission Hills Box. Rigdon also planned buildings in the Craftsman style. Characteristic of Nathan Rigdon’s designs in Mission Hills are the conspicuous front entry porches with integrated second floor balconies – many of his houses are easily identified by this signature element.

The subject building was constructed early in Rigdon’s career in 1910, and the original front porch and balcony configuration likely contained the germ of what would later become known as the Nathan Rigdon Box or Mission Hills Box. The building’s original façade configuration would have contributed greatly to an understanding of Nathan Rigdon’s early design sensibilities. However the loss of the original front porch’s footprint and design have resulted in a loss of integrity such that the building no longer reflects the original design or intent of the Master. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion D.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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.

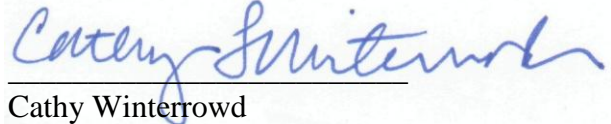
CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the property located at 1515 West Lewis Street not be designated under any HRB Criteria due to a lack of

integrity. 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.



Camille Pekarek
Planning Intern



Cathy Winterrowd
Interim Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

CP/ks/cw

Attachments:

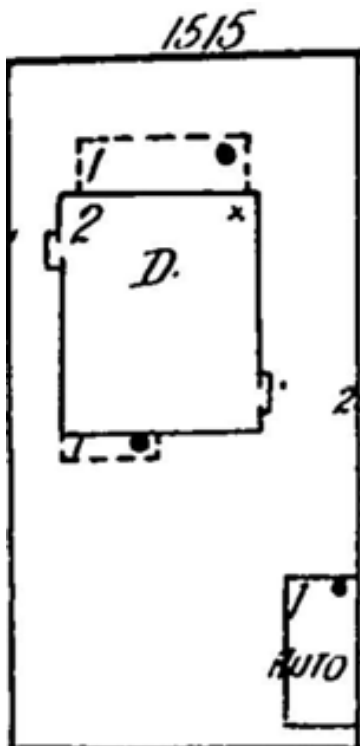
1. Photo Exhibit Illustrating Porch Alterations Observed by Staff
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

Attachment 1

Photo Exhibit – Porch Alterations Observed by Staff – 1515 West Lewis Street



North (front) elevation, June 2013



1921 Sanborn Map



Front porch – circa 1940s



New siding above left side 1st story window, June 2013



Scarring below left side 1st story window, June 2013



New siding above right side 1st story window, June 2013



Scarring below right side 1st story window, June 2013