



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: February 12, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-012

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of February 26, 2009

SUBJECT: **#9 –Minnie Gerhard/Thomas Shepherd House**

APPLICANT: Patrick and Beth Steusloff, property owners  
represented by Vonn Marie May, consultant

LOCATION: 7118 Olivetas Avenue, La Jolla Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Minnie Gerhard/Thomas Shephard House as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Minnie Gerhard/Thomas Shephard House at 7118 Olivetas Avenue as a historical resource under HRB Criterion C and D. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies distinctive characteristics through retention of character defining features of the French Eclectic Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1934 period of significance; and
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of established Master Architect Thomas Shepherd.



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## BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board at the owner's request to have the house and site designated as a historical resource. The house at 7118 Olivetas Avenue is a single family home, which was originally designed by Thomas Shephard and constructed by W. B. Watson for Minnie Gerhard in 1934.

The historic name of the house is based on the Master Architect who designed the house and the original owner of the house and is consistent with the adopted naming policy.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Vonn Marie May and Tricia Olsen on behalf of the property owners, Patrick and Beth Steusloff, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion A, C and D. Staff concurs with the determination that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion C as a good example of a French Eclectic Revival style, and under Criterion D as a notable work by Master Architect Thomas Shephard. Staff does not concur under Criterion A, 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.*

Staff does not believe that the subject structure 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 property was not the first property to be constructed within the South La Jolla First Addition neighborhood nor was there any unique elements used in the construction or design of the house. For that reason, staff does not recommend designation of the 7118 Olivetas Avenue based on 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.*

Constructed in 1934, the house provides 1,557 sq. ft. of livable space in a "U" shaped floor plan with a detached two car garage. The exterior of the house is sheathed with stucco that is smooth with slight imperfections. The roof is medium pitched hipped roof sheathed with old asphalt shingles which were installed over the original wood shingle roof. The windows are predominantly wood 6/6 double hung with the exception of three windows that are multi-light casement windows in the familiar rectangular pattern and one window that is a diamond pane leaded glass casement.

The house is oriented to the interior of the lot with the primary elevation on the south side of the house. The front entrance is accessed via a brick pathway through an 8' tall wood fence. The patio is also paved with bricks. The front entrance is wood and 9 light glass door with sidelights. Three of the double hung windows on this elevation have tongue and groove wood shutters with

a tree motif cut-out. Located to the west of the front entrance is a large stuccoed chimney with cut-in corners and horizontal bands.

The east elevation is oriented to Olivetas Street and features two double hung 6/6 wood windows with shutters evenly spaced on the wall plane. Visible between the two windows is a central chimney that appears to rise to the height of the living room chimney.

The north elevation is accessed via the driveway. This elevation also has a service entry that is flanked by a 6/6 double hung wood window and a four light wood casement window to the east of the door and a 6/3 double hung wood window and a leaded glass diamond casement window to the west. The entrance on this elevation matches the style used on the front door. To the west of the service entrance is the two car garage. The garage is accessed via a non historic metal, paneled sectional roll up door. The style of the garage mimics the style of the main house. The garage and the house are connected via a large stucco wall with a small hipped roof so as to appear like a contiguous portion of the house.

The west elevation of the house has a three part six light casement window that is flanked by 5 light wood French doors. The doors accessed a small, enclosed patio.

Overall the integrity of the house is good and the house has been mostly maintained. Staff believes that there have been a few minor changes to the exterior of the home, but the alterations do not detract from the historic character of the house. The main door with sidelights and the service entrance door appear to have been replaced with the same type of door. It seems unlikely that the main door and a service entrance door would have had the same design. The wood shingle roof has also been covered with asphalt shingles, which alters the appearance of the home. Regardless of the modifications, staff recommends that the house is designated under Criterion C as a good example embodying distinctive characteristics of French Eclectic Revival style architecture.

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

Thomas Leroy Shepherd was born in 1897 in Wisconsin and matriculated at the University of Wisconsin and Columbia University in New York, where he studied architecture. However, his designs were clearly influenced by his travels in Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean region. He moved to southern California in the 1920s and worked in Pasadena, as well as for the noted architect George Washington Smith in Santa Barbara.

In 1926, he relocated to La Jolla and designed primarily residences in new subdivisions in La Jolla, but also throughout the San Diego region. He briefly entered into partnership with Herbert Mann, also a Master Architect. This partnership was dissolved in 1932, prior to the construction of the subject house. Homes that have been designed and designated by the HRB include: the Darlington House (HRB Site #327), which established him as a Master Architect by the HRB on July 26, 1995; the Mabel Scruggs/Thomas L. Shepherd House (HRB Site #514); the Henry and May Turner/Herbert Mann-Thomas Shepherd House (HRB Site #560); the Katharine Smith/Thomas Shepherd House (HRB Site #630); and the Philip Barber/Herbert Mann and

Thomas Shepherd Spec House No. 1 (HRB Site #829). In addition to his houses, he designed the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club, the Marine Room, the Spanish-style Arcade building and an addition to the La Valencia Hotel. His architectural influence on La Jolla is substantial as he designed buildings and homes primarily in the community throughout his lengthy and prolific fifty-year career. He passed away at the age of 82 in 1979.

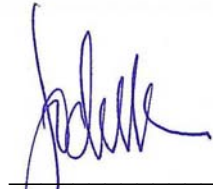
As the subject French Eclectic Revival style house is representative of Master Architect Thomas Shepherd's works in quality of design and detail, staff recommends designation of the Minnie Gerhard/Thomas Shepherd House under HRB Criterion D.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

As part of a future Mills Act Agreement, staff recommends that style of the front door with sidelights and the service entrance door are researched for authenticity, the diamond paned wood casement window is repaired and the wood fence is lowered to allow visibility of the south elevation. Detailed Mills Act conditions will be determined during the application process.


CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that 7118 Olivetas Avenue is designated as a historical resource under HRB Criterion C as a good example embodying distinctive characteristics of French Eclectic Revival style architecture and Criterion D as a notable work by Master Architect Thomas Shepherd. 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.



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Jodie Brown  
Senior Planner



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Cathy Winterrowd  
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Attachment(s):

Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover