



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 9, 2011 REPORT NO. HRB-11-073

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of November 18, 2011

SUBJECT: **ITEM #5 – Louise Severin Spec. House #2**

APPLICANT: Richard and Gail Nye

LOCATION: 4970 Marlborough Drive, Kensington-Talmadge Community, Council District

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Louise Severin Spec. House #2 located at 4970 Marlborough Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Louise Severin Spec. House #2 located at 4970 Marlborough Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1929-1930 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the rear detached cabin structure and the carport in front of the original garage, both of which were constructed outside of the period of significance. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Spanish Eclectic style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1929-1930 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits cross gable and shed single barrel clay tiles roofs in front of a flat roof and parapet; clipped eaves with overhanging roof tiles; a heavy, distinct skip-trowel stucco finish; a stucco-coated brick chimney; an entry porch covered by a shed roof supported on large stucco columns; and 8-over-1 and 1-over-1 double hung wood frame and sash windows.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Louise Severin and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource exhibits Severin's characteristic style and rustic features, including the stucco, and retains a high degree of integrity to its 1929-1930 date of construction, retaining all aspects 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 house is a one story single family home located in the residential subdivision of Kensington Manor Unit No. 1.

The historic name of the resource, the Louise Severin Spec House #2 has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the established Master Builder who constructed the house as a speculation house. While the 1930 City Directory lists Louise and her husband Hilmer at this address in 1930, it appears based on Severin's fleeting ownership of the property that the house may in fact have been built as a speculation house. Severin purchased the property in August 1929 and pulled a water permit that same month. A Notice of Completion was not filed for the property, and it is not known precisely when the house was completed. Severin sold the house to the next owner in March of 1930, seven months after purchasing the property. Any occupancy of the house would therefore have been extremely limited, and perhaps only for the purpose of selling the house before moving on to another project.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc., which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D, but not HRB Criterion A. 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 applicant's report states that the subject property is significant under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the Kensington manor subdivision, as it was Louise and Hilmer Severin's personal residence while they built numerous homes in the immediate vicinity. As stated in the background section, it appears that if the Severins did in fact reside at the subject property, it was for a very limited time. Construction of the house would not have been completed until late 1929 at the earliest, and the house was sold in March of 1930. Based on this limited association, the house does not exemplify or reflect a special element of the subdivision's development. Therefore, staff does not recommend 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 property located at 4970 Marlborough Drive is a one story Spanish Eclectic style home constructed in 1929-1930, and features cross gable and shed single barrel clay tiles roofs in front of a flat roof and parapet; clipped eaves with overhanging roof tiles; a heavy, distinct skip-trowel stucco finish over wood frame construction; a stucco-coated brick chimney; and a

concrete foundation. The front façade exhibits a forward-projecting bay under front facing gable tile roof. A large single pane fixed window is centered on the façade. The entry porch is set to the left of and back from the projecting bay. A stucco courtyard wall encloses the “L” shape created by the forward-projecting bay. The shed roof of the entry porch is supported on large stucco columns. The original wood entry door is set to the north end of the porch, perpendicularly to the street. Multi-lite French doors and a single 8-over-1 double hung wood frame and sash window is set to the south end. Remaining fenestration consists of 8-over-1 and 1-over-1 double hung wood frame and sash windows. A detached garage original to the house with the original sliding doors is located on the south side of the lot.

Modifications are minimal and consist of a detached cabin structure at the rear of the lot and a carport structure in front of the original garage, both of which were built outside of the period of significance and are therefore excluded from the designation. Wood frame window screens were recently custom-built for the historic windows, and the lower sash at the kitchen window was replaced in-kind. Prior to the preparation of the historic report, the house had been clad in a historically inappropriate texture coat. The previous owner was able to carefully hand-remove the stucco coat, revealing the original stucco texture beneath, which was simply painted. The house as restored retains a high degree of integrity to the 1929-1930 date of construction and embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property 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.

Louise Severin was born in Missouri in 1892 and moved to San Diego in the nineteen-teens. She apprenticed in the construction trade and learned the necessary skills required to become a general contractor. Severin worked throughout the City of San Diego; however it appears that her most mature period was spent in the Kensington and Talmadge areas. During the 1930s, Severin exploited imagery of the region’s Spanish and Mexican past combining rustic and vernacular elements with the most up to date materials and methods. While not as sophisticated, the result was something akin to Cliff May’s early Hacienda style houses also found in the area. Key elements in many Severin houses was the single-story “U” or “L” shaped form as well as details such as rustic stucco, tapered chimneys and large interior rooms that opened onto small courtyards surrounded by stucco-coated walls.

Currently, there are only two known Severin-designed houses that are designated Historical Resources within the City of San Diego, HRB Site #623 located at 4185 Rochester Road and HRB Site #743 located at 4179 Norfolk Terrace. Both were designated under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Severin. The subject property exhibits Severin’s characteristic style and rustic features, including the stucco. The house retains a high degree of integrity to its 1929-1930 date of construction, retaining all aspects of integrity. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion D, as a notable work of established Master Builder Louise Severin.

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 Louise Severin Spec House #2 located at 4970 Marlborough Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1929-1930 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style and retains integrity to its date of construction; and Criterion D as a notable work of established Master Builder Louise Severin that retains integrity to her original design. The designation excludes the rear detached cabin structure and the carport in front of the original garage, both of which were constructed outside of the period of significance. 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.

Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner

Cathy Winterrowd
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

KS/cw

Attachment(s):

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