

September 13, 2025

To: City of San Diego Historic Resource Staff & Board

From: La Jolla Historical Society

Lauren Lockhart, Executive Director,

Seonaid McArthur, La Jolla Landmark Group

Re: Charles D. Larkins/Herbert E. Palmer House - *La Estrella del Mar*
306 Sea Lane

La Estrella del Mar is a rare and significant Spanish Revival residence. Its location and 1924 date of construction link it to the earliest wave of permanent homebuilding that began just after 1920, south of the La Jolla Park subdivision. In 1922, investor and developer Phillip Barber completed his own oceanfront home tucked among the dunes, on the newly named "Dunemere." The first subdivision south of La Jolla Park – the "Barber Tract" soon followed, with Barber's guest houses along Sea Lane and Dunemere Avenue. For a time, Barber even owned property later incorporated into La Estrella del Mar.

The house is among La Jolla's earliest examples of Spanish Revival architecture and a distinguished expression of Herbert Palmer's interest in craftsmanship, fine detail, and "Old World" design. A massive beam in the living room bearing Palmer's name, along with an inscription of the house name on a beam along the south façade, testify to the architect's pride in this project.

Although the residence was altered in 1928, 1939, 1957, and again in a remodel and restoration in 2005, these changes have not diminished its essential character-defining features.

Like its European precedents, the home presents a solid exterior wall, punctuated by arched leaded-glass windows and heavy wood panel doors, shielding the private interior from the street. Inside, the space opens dramatically into a light-filled living room with a high ceiling and exposed wood beams. Doors extend to a sunlit courtyard animated by decorative iron balconies, a fountain, colorful tilework, iron sconces, and finely crafted hardware.

For these reasons, we strongly support the historic designation of La Estrella del Mar under Criterion C for architecture and Criterion D as a notable work of San Diego Master Architect Herbert E. Palmer.