



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 13, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-56

HEARING DATE: November 19, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – Emma Watt Rental**

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

APPLICANT: Brian McIntosh and Brittany Bailey

LOCATION: 1915 Howard Avenue, North Park Community, Council District 3  
APN 445-502-0200

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Emma Watt Rental located at 1915 Howard Avenue as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Emma Watt Rental located at 1915 Howard Avenue as a historical resource with a period of significance of circa 1888 under HRB Criterion C. The designation excludes the garage. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource is a rare example of the historically significant single-wall method of construction popular during San Diego's economic boom of the 1880's and retains a good level of integrity from its circa 1888 period of significance. Specifically, the resource continues to convey the historic significance of this vernacular method of construction through its vertically stacked plank interior redwood walls and horizontal wood exterior siding.

### 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-and-a-half story single family residence and garage located in the University Heights neighborhood of North Park.

The property was identified in the 2016 North Park Community Plan Area Historic Resources Survey and determined to be individually eligible for designation at the local level. The survey identified the property as a rare example of turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup> century residential development in North Park and significant under the *Early Settlement as an Agricultural Community* theme within the *Early Settlement*

*of North Park: 1893-1906*; however, the property was erroneously identified as being constructed in 1906 and it was not known at the time that the structure was moved to the site from an unknown location.

The historic name of the resource, the Emma Watt Rental, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Emma Watt, who was the owner of the property when the subject resource was relocated to the site.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Brittany Bailey, 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 C 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.*

In 1885 San Diego was established as the terminus of a railroad line which ushered in an era of economic boom. The city's population began to increase at an exponential rate bringing with it land speculation opportunities for real estate investors. The massive influx of visitors, businessmen and laborers led to a serious housing shortage. New residences were constructed for all economic classes; however, there was an immediate need for quickly built structures. "Tent Cities" began to pop up in the beach communities of Coronado and La Jolla while single-wall construction was preferred for middle to lower class residents who worked on the Railroad. In 1888 the real estate bubble burst and San Diego's population began to dwindle leaving behind a plethora of empty dwellings. While the more solidly built structures continued to be used, much of the single-wall construction housing stock was left to deteriorate.

A second population boom occurred in the early twentieth century following the arrival of the United States Navy and the Panama-California Exposition in 1915. The Navy brought increasing numbers of military personnel and their families to the city, while the Exposition brought nearly four million tourists, many of which returned to the City to settle permanently. The arrival of the streetcar allowed residents to settle outside of downtown as areas such as North Park became more easily accessible. The 1920's were a time of rapid development in North Park encouraged by streetcars as well as the growing popularity of the private automobile.

The subject resource is a one-and-a-half story single family residence constructed circa 1888. The resource's approximate date of construction was confirmed by the physical features of the property including its single wall method of construction, architectural form and style, hardware and building materials. Primary resources, such as Sanborn Maps, the County Lot and Block Book, city directories and building permits strongly suggest that the structure was relocated to the site from an unknown location in approximately 1925 with its first occupants being recorded in the 1926 directory.

Currently there is not enough information to determine if the subject resource is a special element of the City's development or if it simply reflects an aspect of development as all buildings do. There

is evidence that strongly suggests that the subject resource was originally constructed in a location closer to downtown and moved to its current location in North Park. The resource was possibly removed from its original location in order to accommodate a higher use and brought to North Park where there was a need for single-family residential structures in the 1920's. Because the original location of the resource is unknown, it cannot be determined if the property reflects a special element of development at this time. 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 resource is a one-and-a-half story single family residence constructed in the Queen Anne style circa 1888 and relocated to its present location in North Park circa 1925. The residence is situated in close proximity to the front property line and a detached garage is slightly set back on the east side of the lot. The building features an irregular plan and is sheltered by a combination gable and hipped roof. A front facing gable dominates the primary façade and the entrance to the home is setback from the front wall plane and situated under a shed roof porch. Primarily clad in horizontal wood drop siding, the gable end features a contrasting vertical siding. The front façade features a nine lite focal window and additional fenestration includes wood windows in awning, double hung and casement varieties.

The Queen Anne style of architecture was a late Victorian style popular in America from about 1880 to 1910 and borrowed heavily from late Medieval English precedents. The style sought to minimize smooth-walled appearances, and was typically characterized by steeply pitched irregular roofs, dominant front-facing gables, patterned shingles, bay windows, and asymmetrical façades with full or partial-width porches.

Single-wall construction was historically popular during times of economic boom and rapid population growth. These "wood tents" were quick to build and meant to provide temporary shelter. Single-wall construction consists of vertically stacked plank interior walls covered by exterior horizontal wood siding or shingles. These structures typically had no foundations and could easily be dismantled and relocated. Due to the temporary nature of these structures, many did not survive. In San Diego, single wall houses became popular during the economic boom of the 1880's when the city faced a demand for housing due to a sharp increase in population. These structures were typically found in the highest areas of population concentration; downtown and in the beach communities. The San Diego Register of Historical Resources currently only has one property specifically designated for its single wall construction, HRB #373 the Monteiro Family Residence; however, other resources, such as the La Jolla Beach Cottages, also exhibit this feature.

Several modifications have been made to the resource since its circa 1888 date of construction. The structure was relocated from its unknown original location around 1925. Photographic evidence of the property is lacking; however, it can be concluded that the decorative stickwork in the gable end of the front façade was removed sometime between 1927 and 1996. Also, the original pair of double hung windows on the front façade were removed and replaced with a nine pane fixed window and the window in the gable end was also modified. Both the front and rear porches were altered at an unknown date. Physical evidence reveals that the awning window on the east façade was swapped with the double hung window at the northeast corner. A second story attic dormer on

the rear was added at an unknown date. Recent restoration work included adding spindlework to the front porch and restoring the window in the gable end to its original size. These modifications significantly impair the resource's ability to convey its significance as a good example of the Queen Anne style of architecture; however, integrity of design, materials and workmanship are still retained as it relates to the single-wall method of construction. Additionally, the relocation of the structure is characteristic of single-wall construction and adds to its historic significance.

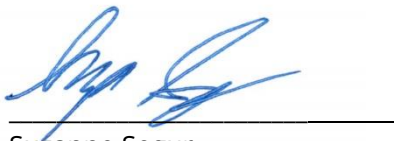
Significance Statement: The resource is a rare example of the historically significant single-wall method of construction popular during San Diego's economic boom of the 1880's. Specifically, the resource continues to convey the historic significance of this vernacular method of construction through its vertically stacked plank interior redwood walls and horizontal wood exterior siding. Therefore; staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C.

#### 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 Emma Watt Rental located at 1915 Howard Avenue be designated with a period of significance of circa 1888 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the single-wall method of construction. The designation excludes the garage.



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 11/19/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 11/19/2020, to consider the historical designation of the Emma Watt Rental (owned by Brian McIntosh and Brittany Bailey, 1915 Howard Avenue, San Diego, CA 92104) located at **1915 Howard Avenue, San Diego, CA 92104**, APN: **445-502-02-00**, further described as BLK 143 LOTS 1 & 2 W 40FT OF E 77.5 FT 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 Emma Watt Rental on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C as a rare example of the historically significant single-wall method of construction popular during San Diego's economic boom of the 1880's and retains a good level of integrity from its circa 1888 period of significance. Specifically, the resource continues to convey the historic significance of this vernacular method of construction through its vertically stacked plank interior redwood walls and horizontal wood exterior siding. 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 exclude the detached garage.

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: \_\_\_\_\_  
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,  
Deputy City Attorney