



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: May 13, 2021 REPORT NO. HRB-21-030

HEARING DATE: May 27, 2021

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – William and Bertha Niemann Homestead**

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

APPLICANT: Keshif Properties LLC; represented by Brian F. Smith and Associates, Inc.

LOCATION: 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road, Del Mar Mesa Community, Council District 1
APN 307-041-0900

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the William and Bertha Niemann Homestead located at 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the William and Bertha Niemann Homestead located at 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1892-1950 under HRB Criterion A and B. The designation excludes the 1953 wooden barn, the 1959 shed, the 1978 residence, pool, 2010 barn and riding rings and corrals constructed outside of the period of significance. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is a special element of the Del Mar Mesa's historical development and retains integrity from its 1892-1950 period of significance. Specifically, the resource is significant as one of the first homesteads in the region and for its association with the Niemann family, one of the early pioneering families of the Carmel Valley area.
2. The resource is identified with William and Bertha Niemann, historically significant persons and retains integrity from its 1892-1950 period of significance for that association. Specifically, the resource was the home of the Niemann family from 1892-1952 during the most productive years of their lives. William and Bertha were some of the first settlers in the Carmel Valley region and used the surrounding property to farm and raise livestock. Additionally, William was a significant local figure on the individual level, serving as a justice of the Del Mar Township for approximately twenty years and as a school superintendent for the Soledad School District.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The property is an eight-acre site located on the Del Mar Mesa which contains a number of structures including the historic residence constructed between 1892 and 1916, a wooden barn constructed in 1953, a shed constructed in 1959, a 1978 residence, pool, a 2010 barn and riding rings and corrals from the 1980's and 1990's.

The property was previously evaluated in 2008 in conjunction with a telecom project on the site. At that time the 1892-1916 historic residence was determined to be historically significant under HRB Criterion A as an example of early pioneer ranch activities in the Carmel Valley area and Criterion B for its association with William and Bertha Niemann. The property was also determined to be eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources.

The historic name of the resource, the William and Bertha Niemann Homestead, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of William and Bertha Neiman, who constructed the property as their personal residence.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Technical Report was prepared by Brian F. Smith and Associates, which concludes that the resource is not significant under and HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees and finds that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria A and B. 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 first white settlers in the area now known as Carmel Valley were Irish immigrant John McGonigle and his family who homesteaded their property sometime prior to 1876. The McGonigles' property eventually grew to include 2,040 acres and the valley became known as "McGonigle Valley." Additional families began to homestead the area beginning in the 1890s, including the Niemann family in 1891 and the Knechtel family in 1896. The area was mostly used for raising horses and growing drought tolerant crops such as lima beans. Since one of the McGonigles needed constant care, the family gave 1,000 acres of land to the Carmelite Sisters of Mercy in return for perpetual health care. The Sisters of Mercy's association with the area likely was the reason why the valley became known as the Carmel Valley.

In 1891 William and Bertha Niemann homesteaded a 40-acre site on the Del Mar Mesa. The eight-acre subject property formed the core of the original homestead. The Niemanns, began constructing their residence on the site in 1892 and continued expanding as their family grew until 1916 (see Criterion C discussion below). The Neiman family farmed beans and other crops on the site during the first decades of the twentieth century and William created a variety of erosion control projects

on the property during the 1940s. The Neiman family continued to own the property until 1952 when it was sold to Joy Way and Marie Harlan.

Since the Niemans occupation of the subject property from 1891 to 1952 there have been many additions to the site including the construction of a wooden barn in 1953, a shed in 1959, a new residence in 1978, a pool, riding rings and corrals in the 1980's and 1990's and a new barn in 2010. These modifications significantly impair the property's significance as a ranch complex; however, the 1892-1916 Niemann residence has been only minimally altered. The roof of the 1916 portion of the residential structure was raised in 1959; however, this modification does not significantly impair integrity of location, setting, feeling or association as it relates to the property's historic significance HRB Criterion A.

Significance Statement: The property is historically significant as a special element of the historical development of the Carmel Valley area. Specifically, the resource is significant as one of the first homesteads in the region and for its association with the Niemann family, one of the early pioneering families of the Carmel Valley area. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the property under HRB Criterion A.

CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.

As previously discussed under Criterion A, the Niemanns were one of the first families to settle in the Carmel Valley area. William Niemann also served as the justice of the Del Mar Township for approximately twenty years and as a school superintendent for the Soledad School District. Bertha Niemann lived on the property until her death in 1950 and the family sold the property in 1952. William passed away a year later in 1953.

Similarly to Criterion A, the roof modification to the 1892-1916 Niemann residence does not significantly impair integrity of location, setting, feeling and association as it relates to the property's historic significance under HRB Criterion B.

Significance Statement: The resource is identified with William and Bertha Niemann, historically significant persons and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource was the home of the Niemann family from 1892- 1952 during the most productive years of their lives. William and Bertha were some of the first settlers in the Carmel Valley region and used the surrounding property to farm and raise livestock. Additionally, William was a significant local figure on the individual level, serving as a justice of the Del Mar Township for approximately twenty years and as a school superintendent for the Soledad School District. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject resource under HRB Criterion B.

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 was the Niemann's residence and was constructed in four phases from 1892-1916. The first structure on the site, constructed in 1892, was a simple, one-story, single-wall structure covered in board and batten siding with wood windows. Circa 1895, the Niemanns constructed a shed addition on the north side of the residence. In 1900 the residence was further expanded by the construction of a one-and-a-half story addition in the Gable Front Family substyle

of the Folk National style. This portion of the residence features a front porch, horizontal wood siding and tall wooden windows. In 1916 the largest addition was constructed also in the Folk National Style. This two-story addition features horizontal wood siding, an inset porch and wood windows.

Neither the 1892, 1895 or 1916 phases of construction rise to the level of significance to be individually eligible as a good example of any architectural style. Furthermore, the roof of the 1916 addition was raised in 1959, severely modifying the original design. The 1900 structure retains many of the character defining features of the Gable Front Family substyle of the Folk National style; however, the large 1916 addition severely impacted the integrity of the resource so that it no longer retains its historic significance. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation 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.

Research into the construction of the property at 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road failed to conclusively identify a builder, designer or architect. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion D.

CRITERION E - Is listed or has been determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historical Resources.

The property at 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road has not been listed on or determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion E.

CRITERION F - Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest or aesthetic value or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the City.

The property at 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road is not located within a designated historic district. Therefore, the property is not eligible for designation under HRB Criterion F.

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 William and Bertha Niemann Homestead located at 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road be designated with a period of significance of 1892-1950 under HRB Criterion A and B. The designation excludes the 1953 wooden barn, the 1959 shed, the 1978 residence, pool, 2010 barn and riding rings and corrals constructed outside of the period of significance.



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 5/27/2021

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 5/27/2021, to consider the historical designation of the William and Bertha Niemann Homestead (owned by Keshif Properties LLC, 11512 El Camino Real #340, San Diego, CA 92130) located at **5175 Del Mar Mesa Road, San Diego, CA 92130**, APN: **307-041-09-00**, further described as SEC 20-14-3W POR 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 William and Bertha Niemann Homestead on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION A as a special element of the Del Mar Mesa's historical development and retains integrity from its 1892-1950 period of significance. Specifically, the resource is significant as one of the first homesteads in the region and for its association with the Niemann family, one of the early pioneering families of the Carmel Valley area. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION B as a resource that is identified with William and Bertha Niemann, historically significant persons and retains integrity from its 1892-1950 period of significance for that association. Specifically, the resource was the home of the Niemann family from 1892-1952 during the most productive years of their lives. William and Bertha were some of the first settlers in the Carmel Valley region and used the surrounding property to farm and raise livestock. Additionally, William was a significant local figure on the individual level, serving as a justice of the Del Mar Township for approximately twenty years and as a school superintendent for the Soledad School District. 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 1953 wooden barn, the 1959 shed, the 1978 residence, pool, 2010 barn and riding rings and corrals constructed outside of the period of significance.

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: _____
SUZANNE SEGUR,
Senior Planner, HRB Liaison

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney