



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 8, 2021

TO: Historical Resources Board and Interested Parties

FROM: Suzanne Segur, Senior Planner, Historical Resources, Development Services Department

SUBJECT: **ITEM 7 - WILLIAM AND BERTHA NIEMANN HOMESTEAD**

The property at 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road was previously docketed for review by the Historical Resources Board on May 27, 2021, at which time staff recommended designation under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the Del Mar Mesa's historical development; and HRB Criterion B as a resource that is identified with William and Bertha Niemann. Staff's recommendation excluded the 1953 wooden barn, the 1959 shed, the 1978 residence, pool, 2010 barn and riding rings and corrals constructed outside of the 1892-1950 period of significance. The Historical Resources Research Report (HRRR) prepared by the applicant did not recommend the resource for designation under any HRB Criteria. At the hearing the Board voted to send the HRRR back to the applicant for more information including a 2020 archeological report, analysis on the property's 1978 residence, context for significance under Criterion B, a complete 2008 DPR form, and analysis from any available context statements or community plans. The item was scheduled to be reheard at the July 22, 2021 hearing.

The applicant provided a Cultural Resource Assessment Report by Brian F. Smith and Associates for the subject property dated January 2021 as well as a 2008 assessment by Michael Brandman Associates for a previous project. At this time, qualified Environmental staff has not reviewed the 2021 report to determine if there are any significant archeological sites located on the property. Additionally, a proposed project for the site that may impact archeological resources does not currently exist. In the future, if staff finds that a significant archeological site on the property eligible for historic designation is impacted by a proposed project it will be forwarded to the Historical Resources Board for review consistent with the City of San Diego's [Historical Resources Regulations](#).

The revised HRRR included additional information about the 1978 residence, addressed as 5075 Shaw Valley Road, as well as photos of the structure. Research concluded that the structure was a Lindal Cedar Homes kit home intended to be constructed by Robert L. McIntosh of R.L. McIntosh Construction Inc. While the residence displays many of the character defining features of the Contemporary style; such as a strong roof form with wide overhanging eaves, large windows, triangular forms and vertical wood siding; it does not rise to the level of significance to be individually eligible under HRB Criterion C. Additionally, the residence does not relate to the Niemann's occupancy of the property. Therefore, staff continues to exclude the 1978 residence from the designation.

The applicant provided additional context for William Niemann's significance under Criterion B; including more information about the roles of justice and school superintendent as well as more information about immigrants in the region during the period of significance. The report concludes that no significant accomplishments were

made by Niemann in his role as justice or superintendent. Additionally, approximately 50 percent of the population of Del Mar Township in 1900 were immigrants, making William Niemann one of many immigrants in the area. The City of San Diego's [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#) states that "a person may not be considered historical significant simply by virtue of position/title;" therefore, William Niemann could not be considered significant based on his roles as justice and superintendent. However, the Niemann family is significant as one of the first families to settle the region and William Niemann's leadership positions indicate the influence that the family had over the area. Therefore, staff does not find that the applicant has provided significant information to modify the staff recommendation and continues to recommend designation under HRB Criterion B.

The applicant provided additional context regarding extant early agricultural sites in the Del Mar Mesa region taken from the [Del Mar Mesa Specific Plan](#). The Plan names some of the early families in region including the McGonigles, Knechtels, Niemanns, Barnhardts, Rimbachs, Mecklensecks, Davies and Ginters; and goes on to state that the locations of most of the dwellings associated with these families have not been determined. Additionally, the plan calls out the Niemann home as intact and identifies the family as being among the first to plant orchards on their farmstead. The only other known extant early residence in the Carmel Valley region is the [Mount Carmel Ranch \(HRB #391\)](#) constructed in 1905 and associated with the Stephens family. Cultural Reports also include the Knetchel homestead within a half mile of the subject property; however, no intact structures were reported. With the evidence provided, it can be determined that the only known intact early residences in the region are the Stephens and Niemann properties and that the Niemann residence is the older of the two. This information indicates that the subject resource is a rare agricultural resource on the Del Mar Mesa and the oldest extant homestead in the region. Therefore, staff continues to recommend designation under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the Del Mar Mesa's historical development.

During the May 27, 2021 hearing, Board Member Coyle inquired about how the Board may forward eligible properties to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for inclusion on the California Register. Per the San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) section 143.0212(d) City staff may forward a property that is potentially eligible for designation at the local level to the Historical Resources Board for designation in conjunction with a proposed project that is not consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The SDMC does not provide a mechanism for City staff to nominate a property found to be eligible for the California Register to the SHPO. Additionally, it is not within the powers and duties of the Board as described in SDMC section 111.0206(d) to request that City staff prepare a research report for the designation of an eligible resource to any register.



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
Development Services Department

SS/ss

- Attachments:
1. Staff Report HRB-21-030 dated May 13, 2021
 2. Letter from Brian F. Smith dated June 25, 2021 and revised Historical Resources Research Report dated June 29, 2021



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

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Attachment(s):

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



June 25, 2021

Ms. Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner / HRB Liaison
Historical Resources
City of San Diego Development Services Department
1222 1st Avenue
San Diego, California 92101

Subject: Response to Comments for 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road

Dear Suzanne:

At the Historic Resources Board meeting conducted on May 27, 2021, a motion was made to return the Historical Resource Technical Report for 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road to the consultant for additional information. The motion is provided below and has been broken into separate “comments” for ease of response. Additionally, all of the requested changes to the report have been made and the relevant page numbers are provided in this letter. A revised technical report is presented along with this response letter.

MOTION BY BOARDMEMBER COYLE TO RETURN THE REPORT TO THE CONSULTANT TO INCLUDE THE 2020 ARCHEOLOGICAL REPORT REFERENCED IN THE TECHNICAL REPORT; MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE 1978 RESIDENCE INCLUDING THE ARCHITECT; MORE CONTEXT FOR SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERION B INCLUDING MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ROLES OF JUSTICE AND SUPERINTENDENT AS WELL AS IMMIGRANTS IN THE REGION DURING THIS TIME PERIOD GIVEN THE POPULATION LEVELS AND SIZE OF THE CITY; TO INCLUDE ANY MISSING PAGES FROM THE 2008 DPR FORM; AND TO PROVIDE ANY AVAILABLE ANALYSIS FROM CONTEXT STATEMENTS OR COMMUNITY PLANS THAT WOULD AID IN UNDERSTANDING THE RARITY OF AGRICULTURAL SITES. THE ITEM IS TO RETURN TO THE BOARD AT THE JULY 22ND HEARING.

Comment 1: INCLUDE THE 2020 ARCHEOLOGICAL REPORT REFERENCED IN THE TECHNICAL REPORT

Response: The Phase I and II Cultural Resource Assessment for the K-8 Project, completed in January 2021 for the property, has been provided within Appendix A under Previous Historical Resource Survey Forms.

Comment 2: MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE 1978 RESIDENCE INCLUDING THE ARCHITECT

Response: Additional information regarding the 1978 residence has been provided on page 18.

Comment 3: MORE CONTEXT FOR SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERION B INCLUDING:

- MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ROLES OF JUSTICE AND SUPERINTENDENT

Response: Additional information about the roles of justice and superintendent has been provided on page 83.

- AS WELL AS IMMIGRANTS IN THE REGION DURING THIS TIME PERIOD GIVEN THE POPULATION LEVELS AND SIZE OF THE CITY

Response: Additional information regarding the number of immigrants in the Del Mar Township and California in the early 1900s has been provided on pages 6, 8, and 83.

Comment 4: TO INCLUDE ANY MISSING PAGES FROM THE 2008 DPR FORM

Response: The full 2008 DPR form and the Cultural Resource Records Search and Site Visit (Pedestrian Survey) for AT&T Candidate SNDGCA0759 (The Barn) 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road, San Diego, San Diego County (Project Number 147239) completed in 2009 by Michael Brandman & Associates have been included within Appendix A under Previous Historical Resource Survey Forms.

Comment 5: TO PROVIDE ANY AVAILABLE ANALYSIS FROM CONTEXT STATEMENTS OR COMMUNITY PLANS THAT WOULD AID IN UNDERSTANDING THE RARITY OF AGRICULTURAL SITES

Response: Additional historic context information from the Del Mar Mesa Specific Plan has been provided on pages 77 and 78.

* * *

The revised Historical Resource Technical Report for 5175 Del Mar Mesa Road has been submitted for review along with this letter. All comments from the board that require adjustments to the technical report have been addressed as necessary. If you have any additional comments regarding the responses to comments or the report revisions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian F. Smith", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brian F. Smith
BFS:js