



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: February 9, 2022 REPORT NO. HRB-22-003

HEARING DATE: February 24, 2022

SUBJECT: **ITEM #01 – John and Harriet Monahan/ Olmstead Building Company House**

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

APPLICANT: 3761 La Cresta Drive LLC; represented by Johnson & Johnson Architecture

LOCATION: 3761 La Cresta Drive, Peninsula Community, Council District 2  
APN 449-330-1200

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the John and Harriet Monahan/ Olmstead Building Company House located at 3761 La Cresta Drive as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the John and Harriet Monahan/ Olmstead Building Company House located at 3761 La Cresta Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1929 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the detached garage. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1929 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a stucco exterior, asymmetrical front façade, low pitched clay tile roof with little eave overhang, exposed rafter tails, large rectangular focal window, exposed beams, arched main entry with wood door, decorative screen, clay tile vents and wood windows.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder the Olmstead Building Company, a prominent and accomplished building company responsible for the construction of many quality houses in San Diego, and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1929 design. Specifically, the resource is an example of the company's Spanish Colonial Revival Style that expresses a quality of craftsmanship seen in the company's other known works.

## 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 two-story, single family residence with detached garage located in the Point Loma area of San Diego.

The property has not been identified in any historic surveys, as the subject area has not been previously surveyed.

The historic name of the resource, the John and Harriet Monahan/ Olmstead Building Company House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of John and Harriet Monahan, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of the Olmstead Building Company, a Master Builder.

## ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Johnson & Johnson Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D and staff concurs. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

*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 constructed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style in 1929 by the Olmstead Building Company. The two-story, stucco residence sits at the crest of a steep hillside lot with the original detached garage built into the bank of the hill. A concrete flight of stairs leads from the street to the front entrance. The residence has varying roof types; however, they are all low pitched and covered in red clay tile. Additionally, the roof has little eave overhang and exposed rafter tails. The street façade is asymmetrical, with a one-story wing at the southern side of the two-story main massing. The wooden front entry door is recessed within an arched surround. A second story projection cantilevers on exposed beams just to the right of the primary entrance. A large, rectangular focal window is located on the street façade of the one-story wing. Other fenestration consists of wood casement windows in a variety of sizes and styles. Decorative details include an ornate lintel over the focal window, an ornamental screen and clay tile vents.

Modifications since the resource's 1929 date of construction are few and include a porch enclosure on the second story of the north façade between 1956 and 1960, the addition of retaining walls prior to 2007 and the extension of the garage and installation of modern garage doors at an unknown date. The garage is a separate structure which sits subordinate to the house and its alterations do not significantly detract from the architectural significance of the main residence above. These modifications do not impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling as it relates to HRB Criterion C.

The Spanish Colonial Revival style uses decorative details borrowed from the entire history of Spanish architecture. Its vocabulary is influenced by Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic or Renaissance precedents. The style became popular after the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 and reached

its height in the 1920's and early 1930's before rapidly declining in the 1940's. Identifying features include a low-pitched roof with little or no eave overhang, red tile roof covering, stucco exterior wall finishes, an asymmetrical façade and arches above doors and principle windows. Common decorative details are patterned tiles, carved stonework, large focal windows, wooden or iron window grilles, decorative vents and balconies.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Spanish Colonial Revival style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a stucco exterior, asymmetrical front façade, low pitched clay tile roof with little eave overhang, exposed rafter tails, large rectangular focal window, exposed beams, arched main entry with wood door, decorative screen, clay tile vents and wood windows. Therefore, staff recommends 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.*

Lester Olmstead was born in Ohio in 1890. He first gained experience in construction while serving as a Quartermaster Corps Service Sergeant and as a supervisor of a carpentry shop in San Francisco during World War I. In 1924, Olmstead joined C.H. Martinez and Charles W. Brown to form the Brown-Olmstead Building Company. In 1928, the company dissolved and Olmstead created his own company, the Olmstead Building Company. The company built custom houses primarily in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, as well as the Craftsman style. Olmstead built numerous residences in Point Loma, Kensington, Mission Hills, and East San Diego, although few of his buildings have survived. Olmstead is most known in San Diego for his work on the DeWitt C. Mitchell American Legion Hall Post 201 (HRB #525), built in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. He also worked on the Naval Training Center in Point Loma, the Naval Airfield on North Island, and the Lindbergh Field Terminal and Ryan Aeronautical buildings that were located on Pacific Highway.

At least three of Lester Olmstead's works have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board.

- HRB #525 – DeWitt C. Mitchell Memorial American Legion, Post 201, 4061 Fairmount Ave., 1931
- HRB #937 – Olmstead Building Company Spec House #1, 4276 Trias Street, 1933
- HRB #1130 – Dr. Charles Brown/ Lester Olmstead House, 11614 Torrance Street, 1927

The subject resource was constructed for the Monahans by the Olmstead Building Company in 1929 and is an example of his work in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The building demonstrates the high quality of design and craftsmanship seen in Lester Olmstead and the Olmstead Building Company's other known works that are historically designated.

Significance Statement: The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder the Olmstead Building Company, a prominent and accomplished building company responsible for the construction of many quality houses in San Diego. Specifically, the resource is an example of the company's Spanish Colonial Revival Style that expresses a quality of craftsmanship seen in the company's other known works. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion D.

## 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 John and Harriet Monahan/ Olmstead Building Company House located at 3761 La Cresta Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1929 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and Criterion D as a notable work of Master Builder the Olmstead Building Company. The designation excludes the detached garage.



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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 2/24/2022

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 2/24/2022, to consider the historical designation of the John and Harriet Monahan/ Olmstead Building Company House (owned by 3761 La Cresta Drive LLC, 1134 Laguna Creek Lane, Pleasanton, CA 94566) located at **3761 La Cresta Drive, San Diego, CA 92107**, APN: **449-330-12-00**, further described as LOT 30 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 John and Harriet Monahan/ Olmstead Building Company House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and retains a good level of integrity from its 1929 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a stucco exterior, asymmetrical front façade, low pitched clay tile roof with little eave overhang, exposed rafter tails, large rectangular focal window, exposed beams, arched main entry with wood door, decorative screen, clay tile vents and wood windows. 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 D as a notable work of Master Builder the Olmstead Building Company, a prominent and accomplished building company responsible for the construction of many quality houses in San Diego, and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1929 design. Specifically, the resource is an example of the company's Spanish Colonial Revival Style that expresses a quality of craftsmanship seen in the company's other known works. 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

RECORDING REQUESTED BY  
CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

**WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD  
ATTN: HRB SECRETARY  
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 501  
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

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SPACE ABOVE THIS LINE FOR RECORDER'S USE

RESOLUTION NUMBER **N/A**

HISTORICAL DESIGNATION OF PROPERTY ON

**3761 La Cresta Drive, San Diego, CA 92107**

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER **449-330-12-00**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD NUMBER **0**