



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 12, 2018 REPORT NO. HRB-18-020

HEARING DATE: April 26, 2018

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – Thomas Shepherd House**

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

APPLICANT: Karsten Trust and Susan Trust represented by Seonaid McArthur and Susan Ketring

LOCATION: 345 Via Del Norte, 92037, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 357-030-02-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Thomas Shepherd House located at 345 Via Del Norte as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Thomas Shepherd House located at 345 Via Del Norte as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1940 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation includes the following landscape features of the back yard: Mediterranean terra cotta tile pathways, a terra cotta wellhead at the center of the courtyard surrounded by four putti statues, wood pergolas supported by stucco-clad columns and garden walls, a wrought iron gate, a decorative wrought iron grille at an arched entryway, original stucco garden walls inset with glazed Middle Eastern and Mediterranean tiles, stone griffin statues perched on low stucco walls, a mounted terra cotta medallion with a relief depicting St. Martins, and a bronze putti statue framed by an arch inset into the south garden wall. The designation excludes the original loggia/sunporch toward the rear of the property, which was later enclosed, widened, and converted into a kitchen. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character-defining features of the Italian Renaissance style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource displays Italian Renaissance style character-defining features including low-pitched simple hipped roof covered with ceramic tile, symmetrical front façade, a central entrance accented by classical pilasters, wide cornice and molding, and stucco cladding. The backyard landscape also displays character-defining features of the style that include wood pergolas, original putti and griffin statues, decorative wrought iron details, and garden walls inset with glazed tiles.

2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect, Thomas Shepherd, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is representative of a marked shift in Shepherd's residential work from the 1940s onward, inspired by travels to Europe. Whereas earlier Depression-era works reflected a quest for economics of scale, materials and design, the resource is a notable example of Italian Renaissance style architecture that served as a model for Shepherd's subsequent work.

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-story residence designed in the Italian Renaissance Style. It faces north onto Via Del Norte, near the intersection of Vista De La Mesa, in the Lower Hermosa neighborhood of La Jolla.

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 Thomas Shepherd House has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and is the single designator that reflects the name of the Master Architect, Thomas Shepherd, who designed, resided in, and owned the property.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research was prepared by Seonaid McArthur and Susan Ketring, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria B, C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D, but not HRB Criterion B. This determination is consistent with the [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#), as follows.

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

The applicant's report seeks designation under Criterion B for association with Thomas Shepherd, the Master Architect who designed and built the house as his own personal residence during his significant productive years as an architect, and for association with original home owners Ruth and Thomas Shepherd as persons significant in local history as philanthropists and civic leaders in the La Jolla community.

Although the report notes that Thomas Shepherd served as President of the La Jolla Conservation Society in 1940, and that large donations were left as gifts to the Scripps Memorial Foundation and to the YMCA of San Diego County following the death of Ruth Shepherd in 1986, the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria* specifically state that Criterion B is generally restricted to those properties that are associated with a person's important achievements, rather than those that are associated with their birth or retirement, or that are commemorative in nature. Also, a person would not be considered historically significant simply by virtue of position/title, association, affiliation, race, gender, ethnicity, or religion. As such, these noted associations with Thomas and Ruth Shepherd would not qualify the property for significance under HRB Criterion B. Furthermore, the *Guidelines* state that resources associated with a Master would not be significant under HRB Criterion B, unless the resource was the office of the Master, which is not the case for the property at 345 Via del Norte. Associations with Master Architects and Builders

are evaluated under HRB Criterion D. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation 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 property resource is a one story single family residence constructed in 1940 in the Italian Renaissance style. The front façade is symmetrical and is set far back from the street, centered on axis with a circular driveway in front. An uncovered, terra cotta tile porch leads to a central entry located on a portion of the house that projects slightly forward of east and west wings. Four flat pilasters with simple Tuscan order capitals support a wide horizontal cornice at the building's central massing. The front door features recessed paneling and two leaded lites, and is framed in a raised, plaster surround with plinth and lintel extensions. To the right of the door is an original bronze mail slot, and above the door is an original bronze lighting feature. Fenestration at the front elevation consists of paired, multi-lite wood casement windows with heavy wood shutters that are evenly spaced between pilasters. Fenestration on the side and rear elevations of the house includes multi-lite wood windows, diamond-paned leaded windows, and diamond-paned French doors. The house is covered by a simple hipped roof of ceramic tile. A chimney extends from the left side of the roof on its central massing, which is topped by matching ceramic roof tiles. The house is clad in stucco. The house retains its original color scheme as designed by Shepherd, consisting of a two-tone interplay of light and dark coral to direct emphasis to the sculpted classical details of the house, and green-painted ceramic roof tiles and wood shutters to contrast and complement the stucco colors.

The indoor-outdoor relationship of the house is integral to its design. The L-shaped plan of the house framed a backyard courtyard, and originally consisted of a rear garage that was separated from the east wing of the main house by a covered loggia. Original character-defining landscape features of the backyard include terra cotta tile pathways that match the tile used at the front entry porch, a terra cotta wellhead at the center of the courtyard, original garden statues, wrought iron details, and stucco garden walls inset with glazed Middle Eastern and Mediterranean tiles.

The property has undergone a number of alterations since its 1940 construction. Modifications to the property done by the Shepherds include the conversion of the loggia to an enclosed sun porch by the enclosing the loggia's west wall with aluminum sliding doors in 1961-1962, and installation of a pool and pool equipment shed in 1969. Alterations by subsequent owners occurred in 1997 and consisted of removal of the 1961-1962 aluminum sliding doors and replacement with five pairs of single lite French doors, the expansion of the sun porch area with a 250 square foot addition to convert the space into a kitchen, infill of the 1969 pool, and replacement of the original concrete circular driveway with a more modern exposed-aggregate concrete, placed in the original driveway footprint. Overall, the modifications noted do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling and do not result in a loss of integrity of the building, remaining recognizable to its 1940 construction as a single family residence in the Italian Renaissance style.

The Italian Renaissance style developed in the 1880s and flourished through the 1920s. In *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Virginia Savage McAlester states that although the style was used in houses throughout the United States, it was much less commonly used than the contemporaneous styles of the time, and steadily declined in popularity by the 1930s and 1940s, with examples from the 1940s noted as being particularly rare. The style was more commonly used in the design of upscale residences and public buildings. Common character-defining features of the style include low-pitched hipped and flat roofs; widely overhanging eaves supported by decorative brackets;

ceramic roof tiles; symmetrical façade; stone, brick, or stucco cladding; round arches above doors, windows, and porches; and recessed entryways usually accented by small columns or pilasters. Other common decorative details of the style are molded cornices, belt courses, roofline balustrades, and pedimented windows.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Italian Renaissance style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including low-pitched simple hipped roof covered with ceramic tile, symmetrical front façade, a central entrance accented by classical pilasters, wide cornice and molding, and stucco cladding. The backyard landscape also displays character-defining features of the style that include wood pergolas, original putti and griffin statues, decorative wrought iron details, and garden walls inset with glazed tiles. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property 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.*

The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect, Thomas Shepherd, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Shepherd designed and built the house in 1940 for himself and his wife Ruth as their personal residence. Thomas and Ruth Shepherd rented the house to George and Adelaide Harrison from 1941-1942, and lived in the house from 1943 until their respective deaths in 1979 and 1986.

Whereas Shepherd's earlier Depression-era works were predominately of Spanish Eclectic style and often reflected a quest for economics of scale, materials and design, the subject property resource is representative of a marked shift in Shepherd's residential work from the 1940s onward, influenced by a 4 month trip to Italy in 1939. The subject property resource is a notable example of Italian Renaissance style architecture that served as a model for Shepherd's later work, such as the property at 7741 Lookout Drive, which utilizes a similar façade design, layout, and site arrangement.

Thomas Shepherd was born in 1897 in Plateville, Wisconsin, and studied architecture at the University of Wisconsin, and Columbia University.

He moved to southern California in the 1920s, working for Wallace Neff in Pasadena, Roy Seldon Price in Beverly Hills, and for George Washington Smith in Santa Barbara. In 1926, he relocated to La Jolla and joined Mann Building Company to work in partnership with Herbert Mann, also a Master Architect. Shepherd primarily designed residences in new subdivisions in La Jolla. His partnership with the Mann Building Company ended in 1932 when Mann relocated to Pasadena.

Shepherd's body of work includes over 200 houses and other buildings in La Jolla, but he also practiced throughout the San Diego region. Most of his buildings in the 1920s and 1930s embodied a Spanish Eclectic style and often incorporated other styles including English, Japanese, and French Eclectic influences. However, Shepherd also designed in a variety of other styles, which included Monterey, Colonial Revival, Ranch, Zigzag Moderne, Mediterranean Revival, and Italian Renaissance. Shepherd received recognition and numerous awards for his work, including having his designs featured on the covers of publications such as *Country Life of America* (Doubleday in 1929), and *House Beautiful* in 1929 and 1930. Shepherd's career spanned 1927-1979, making him the longest practicing Master Architect in La Jolla's history.

Nineteen of Shepherd's buildings have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. Among these includes the Darlington House (HRB Site #327), which established him as a Master Architect by the HRB on July 26, 1995; the Mabel Scruggs/Thomas

L. Shepherd House (HRB Site #514); the Henry and May Turner/Herbert Mann-Thomas Shepherd House (HRB Site #560); the Katharine Smith/Thomas Shepherd House (HRB Site #630); and the Philip Barber/Herbert Mann and Thomas Shepherd Spec House No. 1 (HRB Site #829). In addition to his houses, he designed the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club, the Marine Room, the Spanish-style Arcade building and an addition to the La Valencia Hotel. He worked as an architect until his death in 1979 at the age of 82.

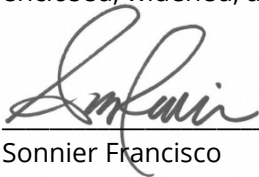
Significance Statement: The subject resource retains excellent integrity and continues to reflect Shepherd's original design, intent and aesthetic. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Italian Renaissance style architecture that marked a shift from Shepherd's earlier designs that were more often of Spanish Eclectic style and reflected more economical use of material, scale, and design. Shepherd's design for the subject property also served as a conceptual model for some of his subsequent work. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Thomas Shepherd.

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 Thomas Shepherd House located at 345 Via Del Norte be designated with a period of significance 1940 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation includes original features of the backyard landscape including: Mediterranean terra cotta tile pathways, a terra cotta wellhead at the center of the courtyard surrounded by four putti statues, wood pergolas supported by stucco-clad columns and garden walls, a green-painted wrought iron gate, a decorative wrought iron grille at an arched entryway, original garden walls inset with glazed Middle Eastern and Mediterranean tiles, stone griffin statues perched on low stucco walls, a mounted terra cotta medallion with a relief depicting St. Martins, and a bronze putti statue framed by an arch inset into the south garden wall. The designation excludes the original loggia/sunporch toward the rear of the property, which was later enclosed, widened, and converted into a kitchen.



Sonnier Francisco
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

SF/jb

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 4/26/2018

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 4/26/2018, to consider the historical designation of the **Thomas Shepherd House** (owned by Karsten Trust 03-24-15, Susan Trust 12-04-12, PO Box 1983, San Diego, CA 92038) located at **345 Via Del Norte, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: **357-030-02-00**, further described as BLK 7 LOT 1 & 2 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 Thomas Shepherd 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 Italian Renaissance style, and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1940 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a low-pitched simple hipped roof covered with ceramic tile, symmetrical front façade, a central entrance accented by classical pilasters, wide cornice and molding, and stucco cladding. The backyard landscape also displays character-defining features of the style that include wood pergolas, original putti and griffin statues, decorative wrought iron details, and garden walls inset with glazed tiles.

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Architect Thomas Shepherd, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is representative of a marked shift in Shepherd's residential work from the 1940s onward, inspired by travels to Europe. Whereas earlier Depression-era works reflected a quest for economics of scale, materials and design, the resource is a notable example of Italian Renaissance style architecture that served as a model for Shepherd's subsequent work. 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 include the following landscape features of the back yard: Mediterranean terra cotta tile pathways, a terra cotta wellhead at the center of the courtyard surrounded by four putti statues, wood pergolas supported by stucco-clad columns and garden walls, a wrought iron gate, a decorative wrought iron grille at an arched entryway, original stucco garden walls inset with glazed Middle Eastern and Mediterranean tiles, stone griffin statues perched on low stucco walls, a mounted terra cotta medallion with a relief depicting St. Martins, and a bronze putti statue framed by an arch inset into the south garden wall.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the original loggia/sunporch toward the rear of the property, which was later enclosed, widened, and converted into a kitchen.

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: N/A

BY: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
JEREMY JUNG,
Deputy City Attorney