



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 11, 2018 REPORT NO. HRB-18-051

HEARING DATE: October 25, 2018

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – Pacific Building Company Spec House #3**

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

APPLICANT: Amir Aghassi; represented by Scott A. Moomjian

LOCATION: 3941 Albatross Street, Uptown Community, Council District 3  
APN 444-650-1000

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Pacific Building Company Spec House #3 located at 3941 Albatross Street as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Pacific Building Company Spec House #3 located at 3941 Albatross Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1914 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the garage and rear porch enclosure constructed outside of the period of significance. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Craftsman style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1914 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a low-pitched gable roof with wide, overhanging eaves; exposed roof rafters; decorative beam and attic vents; partial width porch with stone piers and square column; wood shingle siding; wood windows and exterior stone chimney.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder the Pacific Building Company and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a good example of the Pacific Building Company's work in the Craftsman style and its design and construction is representative of the company's quality craftsmanship.

### BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a proposed building modification or demolition of a structure of 45 years or more, consistent with San Diego

Municipal Code Section 143.0212. The subject resource is a single-family residence located on a corner lot in the Mission Hills neighborhood.

The property was identified in the 2016 Uptown Community Plan Area Historic Resources Survey Report and given a Status Code of 5S3, "appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation."

The historic name of the resource, the Pacific Building Company Spec House #3, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of the Pacific Building Company, a Master Builder.

### ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Scott A. Moomjian, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria. Staff disagrees and concludes that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D. 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.*

Research into the history of the property at 3941 Albatross Street did not reveal any information to indicate that the property exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's or Uptown's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

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

Research into the owners and tenants of the property at 3941 Albatross Street did not reveal any individuals who could be considered historically significant in local, state or national history. Furthermore, no events of local, state or national significance are known to have occurred at the subject property. Therefore, the property is not eligible for 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 resource is a one-story, single family residence constructed in 1914 in the Craftsman style. The wood shingle covered house features a simple rectangular plan with an inset porch on the north side of the front façade. Projecting from the rear of the structure is a one-story enclosed porch. A low-pitched, front facing gable roof displays a wide eave overhang and exposed rafters. The concrete front porch features stone piers, one of which supports a square wood column, and a low wood railing. The porch also displays ornamental beams projecting from beneath the roof line and decorative attic vents. On the front façade three decorative beams project from beneath a tripartite wood window. On the south façade is an exterior chimney which features stone cobbles at

the base with concrete above. Fenestration includes a variety of wood casement, fixed and double hung windows.

Several alterations have been made to the subject resource since its construction in 1914. Analysis of Sanborn maps and the Assessor's Building Record indicate that the rear porch was enclosed sometime shortly before 1957. The apparent addition of the wood balustrade at the front porch and modern hardscaping at the front façade were done at an unknown date. The Historic Resource Research Report asserts that the cobblestones were added to the porch piers and chimney at an unknown date; however, staff does not concur that this is a modification. The use of cobblestones is consistent with the Craftsman style and stones were a decorative feature commonly used by the Pacific Building Company. The cobblestones are likely an original feature of the house. These modifications do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling.

With origins in the British Arts and Crafts movement, born in response to the overly ornate Victorian aesthetic and the highly mechanized Industrial Revolution, Craftsman style architecture was popular in the United States largely between 1905 and 1930. Early examples by Greene and Greene were highly publicized in magazines, thus familiarizing the rest of the nation with the style. As a result, a flood of pattern books appeared, offering plans for Craftsman bungalows. One story vernacular examples are often called simply bungalows. Character defining features of Craftsman architecture include a low-pitched, gabled roof with wide, unenclosed eave overhang; exposed roof rafters; decorative beams or braces; full or partial-width porches supported by tapered square columns or pedestals; decorative attic vents; wood or stucco cladding; and wood frame and sash windows in fixed, double hung and casement varieties. In southern California small rounded stones were often used as a decorative feature for piers, columns and balustrades.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Craftsman style and retains integrity from its 1914 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a low-pitched gable roof with wide, overhanging eaves; exposed roof rafters; decorative beam and attic vents; partial width porch with stone piers and square column; wood shingle siding; wood windows and exterior stone chimney. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the 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 Pacific Building Company was established as a Master Builder in September 2001 with the designation of HRB Site #491, the Wight/Jenkins House located at 1621 29<sup>th</sup> Street. The Pacific Building Company was inarguably the most important and prolific real estate company in San Diego in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Founded by O.W. Cotton in 1906, the company specialized in well built, yet cost-effective products, to extend home ownership to those of modest means. The company not only developed dozens of tracts, it engineered creative ways for the average buyer to finance the purchase of both a lot and house. Throughout the 1910's, the company focused more on designing and constructing homes on lots purchased either by individuals or by the company itself. Draftsman, many hired from Irving Gill's office, would create plans for both large and small homes. Renderings of these designs were incorporated into advertisements along with costs to build any particular model. Financing options were also included. By the 1920's, Pacific Building Company expanded its focus and began to promote lot sales and financing. Because the company maintained

experienced architects in its employ and built houses on many of the lots it sold, homes in neighborhoods affiliated with the company tended to develop a harmonious look. The company built in a variety of styles including Craftsman, Prairie and Colonial Revival.

The Board has designated a number of properties built by the Pacific Building Company, including HRB Site #365 #491, #513, #547, #641, #778, #836 and #1090. Not all of these properties were designated under Criterion D; however, all the above-mentioned resources appear eligible for designation under Criterion D. Additionally, the company built many homes in the South Park Historic District after buying the land from the Bartlett Estate Company. The design and construction of the residence at 3941 Albatross Street by the Pacific Building Company is representative of the quality and character of their craftsmanship, and therefore staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D as the work of an established Master Builder.

Significance Statement: The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder the Pacific Building Company, an important and prolific real estate company in San Diego in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Specifically, the resource is a good example of the Pacific Building Company's work in the Craftsman style and its design and construction is representative of the company's quality craftsmanship. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the property 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 3941 Albatross Street 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 3941 Albatross Street 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 Pacific Building Company Spec House #3 located at 3941 Albatross Street be designated with a period of significance of 1914 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Craftsman style; and HRB Criterion D as a resource that is representative of the notable work of Master Builder the Pacific Building Company. The designation excludes the garage and rear porch enclosure constructed outside of the period of significance.



Suzanne Segur  
Associate Planner



Kelley Stanco  
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison  
Planning Department

SS/ks

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 10/25/2018

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 10/25/2018, to consider the historical designation of the **Pacific Building Company Spec House #3** (owned by Aghassi 2001 Family Trust A 07-17-01, 5868 Soledad Mountain Road, San Diego, CA 92037) located at **3941 Albatross Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **444-650-10-00**, further described as BLK 6 LOT 8/EXC ST/ 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 Pacific Building Company Spec House #3 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 Craftsman style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1914 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a low-pitched gable roof with wide, overhanging eaves; exposed roof rafters; decorative beam and attic vents; partial width porch with stone piers and square column; wood shingle siding; wood windows and exterior stone chimney. 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 Pacific Building Company. Specifically, the resource is a good example of the Pacific Building Company's work in the Craftsman style and its design and construction is representative of the company's quality craftsmanship. 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 garage and rear porch enclosure 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: N/A

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,  
CITY ATTORNEY

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

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
JEREMY JUNG,  
Deputy City Attorney

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