



The City of San Diego

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 11, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-018

HEARING DATE: June 25, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #10 – Rev. Nassau and Estelle Stephens/Thomas Shepherd House**

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

APPLICANT: Craig Family Survivors Trust represented by Seonaid McArthur

LOCATION: 1802 Amalfi Street, La Jolla Community, Council District 1
APN 350-161-01-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Rev. Nassau and Estelle Stephens/Thomas Shepherd House located at 1802 Amalfi Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Rev. Nassau and Estelle Stephens/Thomas Shepherd House located at 1802 Amalfi Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1931 under HRB Criteria C and D. 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 Eclectic style and retains integrity to its 1931 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a smooth stucco exterior, low-sloped hipped roofs arranged at varying heights and clad in Mission tiles, asymmetrical façade, elaborately paneled front door flanked by pilasters and decorative stucco vents, arched openings and a wood plank door on the entry portico, multi-lite wood windows and French doors, and wrought iron features.
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 a notable example of Shepherd's work in the 1920s and early 1930s on large houses done in the Spanish Eclectic and other Mediterranean styles.

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 subject resource is a single-family

residence located in the La Jolla Hills Subdivision, on a site that slopes downwards to the north, providing the rear of the property with views of the ocean.

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 Rev. Nassau and Estelle Stephens/Thomas Shepherd House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Rev. Nassau and Estelle Stephens, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Thomas Shepherd, a Master Architect. Rev. Nassau's name does not appear on the deed from the date of construction; however, the original set of plans for the house clearly specify him as the owner.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research was prepared by Seonaid McArthur, 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 originally constructed in 1931 as a large two-story single-family residence in the Spanish Eclectic style. It features a lower level towards the rear of the building accommodated by the sloping site. The building features a smooth stucco exterior, low-sloped hipped roofs clad in irregularly-laid Mission tiles, shallow eaves and exposed rafter tails, multi-lite wood windows and French doors, and wood shutters around windows and doors. The resource features multiple indoor-outdoor connections, including an enclosed front courtyard, twin patios in the rear, and a wraparound balcony at the southwest corner of the upper story.

The primary facade of the house faces southeast onto Amalfi Street but is set back from the property line. Along the property line is the entrance to the attached garage, a stucco privacy wall, and a wood plank door leading to a gable-roofed portico. Like the main house, this entry portico features smooth stucco and a Mission tile roof with exposed rafter tails. The courtyard features a hand-painted tile fountain on the interior of the privacy wall. The main entrance to the house features a heavy, elaborately paneled wood door flanked by fluted pilasters. On each side of the door is a 3x4 block of square stucco vent holes. Directly above the door is a set of French doors flanked by wood shutters that opens onto a wrought iron Juliet balcony.

On the rear (northwest) elevation, a one-story wing projects from the center of the main block and features three symmetrically arranged windows facing the rear of the property. The central window aligns with the front door opening. On either side of this one-story wing are patios with low walls and steps that join at a landing and a final set of steps directly below the center window. The final set of steps leads to the backyard.

The building has undergone few alterations since its 1931 date of construction. The center window on the rear one-story wing, which was originally 4x5 lites, has been replaced with a single-pane

window. The original paneled garage doors were replaced by vertical wood board doors. A door facing onto the courtyard near the garage has been replaced. Additionally, there are some discrepancies between door and window openings shown on Thomas Shepherd's plans and those on the existing building. However, photographs from the 1930's show some of these discrepancies to match their current configuration rather than Shepherd's drawings, suggesting that they are not later alterations.

The Spanish Eclectic style uses decorative details borrowed from the entire history of Spanish architecture. Its vocabulary is influenced by Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic and 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, Mission and Spanish terra cotta tile roof coverings, 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 Eclectic style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style, including a smooth stucco exterior, low-sloped hipped roofs arranged at varying heights and clad in Mission tiles, asymmetrical façade, elaborately paneled front door flanked by pilasters and decorative stucco vents, arched openings and a wood plank door on the entry portico, multi-lite wood windows and French doors, and wrought iron features. 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, in the Spanish Eclectic style, and retains integrity as it relates to the original design.

Twenty of Shepherd's buildings have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. Among these are the Darlington House (HRB Site #327), which established him as a Master Architect by the HRB on July 26, 1995, the Parker Office Building (HRB Site #230), and the Lester Palmer/Herbert Mann-Thomas Shepherd House (HRB #689).

Thomas Leroy Shepherd was born in Wisconsin in 1897. He studied architecture at, and graduated from, the University of Wisconsin and Columbia University. Although Shepherd studied in the US, his designs were clearly influenced by his travels in Europe, particularly from the Mediterranean region. He moved to Southern California in the 1920s and began working in Pasadena. He then worked for noted architect George Washington Smith in Santa Barbara.

In 1926, he relocated to La Jolla. While he designed residences throughout the San Diego region, he primarily worked in the La Jolla area. He briefly entered into a partnership with architect Herbert Mann, which ended in 1932. His body of work includes over 200 houses and other buildings in La Jolla. He also designed nonresidential structures such as the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club and the Marine Room.

Most of Shepherd's buildings from the 1920s and 1930s were designed in the Spanish Eclectic style. He sometimes included English, Japanese, and French Eclectic influences. He also designed in a variety of other styles, including Monterey, Colonial Revival, Ranch, Zigzag Moderne, Mediterranean Revival, and Italian Renaissance. The Historical Resource Research Report notes that the subject resource is one of his last large single-family residences built in a Mediterranean style. Soon after, he shifted to working on smaller, more modest home designs in response to the Great Depression. 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 Shepherd's work in the 1920s and early 1930s on large houses done in the Spanish Eclectic and other Mediterranean styles. 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 Rev. Nassau and Estelle Stephens/Thomas Shepherd House located at 1802 Amalfi Street be designated with a period of significance of 1931 under HRB Criteria C and D.



Gemma Tierney
Associate Planner

GT/ss



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner
Development Services Department

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 6/25/2020

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/25/2020, to consider the historical designation of the (owned by Craig Family Survivors Trust 11-14-08 and Craig Family Decedents Trust 11-14-08, 1802 Amalfi Street, La Jolla, CA 92037) located at **1802 Amalfi Street, La Jolla, CA 92037**, APN: **350-161-01-00**, further described as LOT 1285 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 Rev. Nassau and Estelle Stephens/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 Spanish Eclectic style and retains integrity to its 1931 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a smooth stucco exterior, low-sloped hipped roofs arranged at varying heights and clad in Mission tiles, asymmetrical façade, elaborately paneled front door flanked by pilasters and decorative stucco vents, arched openings and a wood plank door on the entry portico, multi-lite wood windows and French doors, and wrought iron features. 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 Architect Thomas Shepherd and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Shepherd's work in the 1920s and early 1930s on large houses done in the Spanish Eclectic and other Mediterranean styles. 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 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