



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 11, 2020 REPORT NO. HRB-20-016

HEARING DATE: June 25, 2020

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – William Templeton Johnson Spec House #2**

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

APPLICANT: Glass Family Trust represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 4154 Lark Street, Uptown Community, Council District 3  
APN 443-311-03-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the William Templeton Johnson Spec House #2 located at 4154 Lark Street as a historical resource.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the William Templeton Johnson Spec House #2 located at 4154 Lark Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1912 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the south portion of the rear enclosed porch, which was enclosed 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 Italian Renaissance Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a low-pitched hipped roof, symmetrical façade, columns and pilasters around the entryway, arches above first-floor windows and entry door, simpler second-floor windows, and wide eaves.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect William Templeton Johnson and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Johnson's early work in San Diego and his work on a single-family speculation residence using one of his preferred styles, Italian Renaissance Revival.

### 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 property is located at the end of a

street in the Arnold and Choate's Addition in Mission Hills neighborhood of the Uptown Community and contains a two-story, single-family residence and a detached garage.

The property was identified in the in the 2016 Uptown Community Plan Update Historic Resource Survey and given a Status Code of 5D3, "appears to be a contributor to a district that appears eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation."

The historic name of the resource, the William Templeton Johnson Spec House #2, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of William Templeton Johnson, a Master Architect, who constructed the house as a speculation house

### ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by IS Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, C, and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D, but not HRB Criterion A. 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.*

Kate O. Sessions purchased the subject property in 1909. The 4100 block of Lark Street, which includes the subject property, was identified in the 2016 Uptown Community Plan Update Historic Resource Survey as one of four areas of the potential Kate Sessions Multiple Property Listing because it was the center of her growing grounds in Mission Hills. The survey specifically calls out Lark Street's wide parkway, double rows of Queen Palms, and pink sidewalks as well as remnant plantings from Sessions' growing grounds as being contributing elements to the Multiple Property Listing.

The property contains some remains of stone walls and trees from the Sessions period. As the Research Report states, these elements and the location of the property strongly suggest that the property was used by Kate Sessions as part of her growing operations in the area; however, there is not enough information provided at this time to confirm that the stone walls and mature trees are associated with Sessions' nursery operations. The Queen Palms can be linked to Sessions but most and possibly all of them are located off the parcel in the public right of way and therefore cannot be included in this designation. Therefore, the property does not exemplify a special element of the aesthetic and landscape development of Mission Hills in comparison to other properties that have evidence that Sessions may have used the property for nursery activities. Although the property contributes to the Lark Street area of the potential Kate Sessions Multiple Property Listing, it does not rise to the level of significance to be individually designated under HRB Criterion A as a special element of the City's, community's or neighborhood's development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A at this time.

*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 house is a two-story, single-family residence constructed in 1912 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The house is stuccoed and has a composite shingle hipped roof. The symmetrical façade of the house faces east and features a full-length, two-story porch front by six columns on the first story and enclosed with sliding wood multi-lite windows on the second story. The first-story porch is brick with brick steps. The front door features a rounded transom and sidelites, creating a Palladian style entryway. On either side of the door there is an arched wood casement window. On the outer side of each window, at the edges of the porch, are pilasters that match the 6 porch columns. The sliding windows on the second-story porch are supported by a low wall fronted by turned wood balusters. The hipped roof has deep overhangs with decorative rafter tails.

On the rear of the house is a partial-width enclosed porch. Sanborn maps and construction details reveal that the southern half of the porch was enclosed after the period of significance. This modification is not visible from the façade of the house, although it is in the public view due to the property being a corner property. This later enclosure meets the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties" because it is compatible but distinct from the house: its arched recess in the stucco is deeper and smoother than the arched recess on the north half, and the arched side window is simpler than the other arched windows on the first floor, and has a recessed stucco surround, unlike the other windows. However, due to this alteration, the rear porch is excluded from the designation recommendation. Additionally, the rear window to the south of the enclosed porch is a replacement window that was added at an unknown date. However, it is a wood, one-over-one double-hung window so it is also compatible but distinct from other windows on the building.

The house was restuccoed at an unknown date. The original stucco texture is unknown, so it is not known whether the new stucco matches the original stucco texture. However, the replacement stucco has a medium sand texture, and is historically appropriate for the period and architectural style.

The detached garage was built at the same time as the house. Like the house, it features stucco walls and a hipped roof with exposed rafter tails, although these rafter tails are not decoratively carved. A covered patio was added to north elevation of the garage at an unknown date.

The Italian Renaissance Revival style gained popularity beginning in the late 1880s and had largely fallen out of fashion by the 1940s. The major character-defining features of the Italian Renaissance Revival Style are low-pitched hipped roofs with deep eaves (though flat roofs were also used), and symmetrical façades featuring pilasters and/or columns. Other character-defining features are arched openings, cornice brackets, tile roofs, and upper-story windows that are simpler than first-story windows. In contrast to the Italianate style that preceded it and was also a revival style, Italian Renaissance Revival architecture more accurately reflected its historic precedents. According to McAlester, this was likely because more architects had visited Italy and photographs of Italy's Renaissance buildings had become accessible by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally, while Italianate buildings were often wood clad, Italian Renaissance Revival buildings used stucco or masonry, like the historic Italian precedents.

Significance Statement: The subject resource continues to convey the historic significance of the Italian Renaissance Revival style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style;

including a low-pitched hipped roof with deep eaves, symmetrical façade, columns and pilasters around the entryway, arches above first-floor windows and entry door, and simpler second-floor 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.*

William Templeton Johnson moved to San Diego in 1912 and began his solo architectural career. In the same year, he designed the subject resource as a speculation house, the nearby Spanish Eclectic Francis W. Parker School (HRB #482), and several other single-family residences. As his career progressed, he was commissioned to design numerous important public buildings such as the La Jolla Public Library and Athenaeum (HRB #228), the Junipero Serra Museum (HRB #237), and the County Administration Building (HRB #203).

Johnson has long been recognized as a Master Architect by the Historical Resources Board. Eighteen of his projects are already designated on the San Diego Historic Register. These projects include both single-family residences and large public buildings. Most of these designated properties are built in the Spanish Eclectic style, although he also built in several other styles, including Mediterranean Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival. Among his currently designated works, the La Jolla Public Library, which was built in 1921, most clearly shows an Italian Renaissance Revival influence. If designated, the subject resource would be an earlier example of his work in this style.

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains integrity and continues to reflect Master Architect William Templeton Johnson's original design, intent and aesthetic. It is a notable example of Johnson's early solo work and his work on a single-family speculation house using one of his preferred styles, Italian Renaissance Revival. Therefore, staff recommends designation 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 William Templeton Johnson Spec House #2 located at 4154 Lark Street be designated with a period of significance of 1912 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the south portion of the rear enclosed porch, which was enclosed outside of the period of significance.



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Gemma Tierney  
Associate Planner

GT/ss



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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 William Templeton Johnson Spec House # 2 (owned by Glass Family Trust 06-07-12, 467 San Fernando Street, San Diego, CA 92106) located at **4154 Lark Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-311-03-00**, further described as BLK 21 LOTS 13 THRU 17 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 William Templeton Johnson Spec House # 2 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 Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a low-pitched hipped roof, symmetrical façade, columns and pilasters around the entryway, arches above first floor windows and entry door, simpler second-story windows, and wide eaves. 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 William Templeton Johnson and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a notable example of Johnson's early work in San Diego and his work on a single-family speculation residence using one of his preferred styles, Italian Renaissance Revival. 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 south portion of the rear enclosed porch.

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