



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 11, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-016

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of April 25, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – 579 San Elijo Street**

APPLICANT: Robert and Gillian Robinson represented by IS Architecture

LOCATION: 579 San Elijo Street, Peninsula Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the property located at 579 San Elijo Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the property located at 579 San Elijo Street under any adopted HRB Criteria due to a lack of integrity.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with a preliminary review application to determine whether or not the building is historically significant as part of a constraints analysis for future development. The property is a large two story Colonial Revival style single family residence constructed in 1929 in the La Playa area of Point Loma. The residence sits on a large, sloping lot on the north side of Owen Street, between Rosecrans and San Elijo Street.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by IS Architecture, which concludes that the resource is not significant under any HRB Criteria, due to a lack of integrity. Staff concurs with the conclusions of the report. 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.

There is insufficient information to indicate that the property located at 579 San Elijo Street exemplifies or reflects a special element of any aspect of development outlined in Criterion A. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under this criterion.

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

The property located at 579 San Elijo Street was owned and occupied by relatively few individuals following the ownership of the original owner/residents, Alliene Wetmore and Edna Love Treadwell, as follows: David G. and Loula Fleet (1944), Dr. Roy M. Ledford, Sr. and Lucille Ledford (1944-1974), and others thereafter. Although some of these individuals were prominent San Diegans, either insufficient information is available to determine their historical significance and link it to the property, or their associations with the property were too brief to establish significance under Criterion B. 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 at 579 San Elijo Street was completed in 1929 in the Colonial Revival style with Classical Revival and Neoclassical design influences. It is a large two story residence with a third, lower level below grade. The primary form of the house has a symmetrical plan and façade with an attached secondary wing that projects off the northeast end of the structure. The asphalt shingle roof has a low to medium pitched hipped form with raking cornice. Gabled classical pediments and vented eyebrow dormers face both front and rear. Other Classical Revival and Neoclassical influences include the dentil cornice detailing, a Palladian window above the central entry, inset tympanums with lunette vents, and protruding entablatures supported by freestanding Ionic columns. Character defining fenestration consists primarily of one over one double hung wood sash windows with decorative louvered shutters.

The Colonial Revival styles of architecture became popular between 1925 and 1945 during San Diego's suburban growth because the style evoked patriotic memories of America's past, drawing inspiration from American architectural heritage. Earlier examples of the style typically exhibit more elaborate detailing than their Depression era and postwar counterparts. As stated in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, new printing methods and wide dissemination of information on and photographs of colonial prototypes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries led "a wide understanding of the prototypes on which the Revival was based," and influenced the design of Colonial Revival houses built between 1915 and 1935. These homes "reflect these influences by more closely resembling early prototypes than did those built earlier or later"

The subject building sits diagonally on a very large square sloping lot. The northwest (front) elevation faces a large steep rock wall, thereby obscuring much of its visibility from the public right of way. By comparison, the southeast (rear) garden elevation is highly visible from the corner of Rosecrans and Owen Street, making it the primary elevation for public viewing.

Historic photographs of the subject building taken near the time of construction present notable contrast between the original 1929 design and the building's present appearance. Several highly visible changes to the primary (rear) elevation are undated and include the replacement, removal or alteration of almost every window and door. Further window and door alterations are visible on the southwest (side) elevation facing San Elijo Street.

Documented changes include a 1957 permit to install a door panel in the basement wall; a 1961 permit for the pool shelter, bath and dressing room additions to the original northeast wing of the building; and a 1974 permit for the enclosure of the breezeway and subsequent kitchen expansion, to include the two story bay window area. The 1961 pool shelter addition was further altered and added on to in 1999-2000.

Due to alterations over time, the primary (rear) elevation of the main building form has lost its character defining symmetry and rhythm that is clearly evident in the historic photographs. The 1974 enclosure of the open breezeway and the insertion of the two story bay between the main building and the northeast wing as well as the 1961 pool shelter addition, having been set flush with the original wing and with no delineation marking the historic end of the wing, have had a detrimental effect on the building's massing and create a false sense of history.

Cumulatively, the effect of the numerous additions, alterations and removals of architectural features to the subject building are grave. Most prominent among these changes are the numerous and highly visible window and door alterations to the primary (rear) elevation and the filling in and alteration of the original open breezeway between the main portion of the house and the northeast wing projection. These changes have markedly altered character defining features of the original structure, and severely impacted and impaired the design, materials, workmanship and feeling aspects of the building's integrity. Overall, the building lacks historic integrity and fails to convey significance a 1920s Colonial Revival style home. Therefore, staff does not recommend 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.

The subject building was designed by Hayward Peirce, according to original construction contracts provided by the current owner. City directory listings dating to the 1920s list Peirce as a draftsman and civil engineer; however, he has not been established by the Board as a Master Architect or Designer, and there is presently insufficient information to do so. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

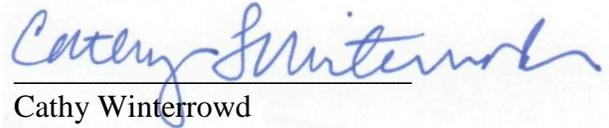
If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the property located at 579 San Elijo Street not be designated under any HRB Criteria due to a lack of integrity. 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.



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Planning Intern



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Assistant Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

CP/ks/cw

Attachment:

1. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover