



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**Historical Resources Board**

DATE ISSUED: September 12, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-046

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of September 26, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – Cecil and Dorothy Taylor/Louise Severin House**

APPLICANT: Conway Revocable Trust represented by Archaeos

LOCATION: 4170 Rochester Road, Kensington-Talmadge Community, Council District 9

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Cecil and Dorothy Taylor/Louise Severin House located at 4170 Rochester Road as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Cecil and Dorothy Taylor/Louise Severin House located at 4170 Rochester Road as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1928 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 Spanish Eclectic style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1928 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a front gable and shed Mission clay tile roof in front of a flat roof and tile capped parapet; clipped eaves with overhanging roof tiles; skip-trowel stucco finish; an entry porch covered by a shed roof supported by a large stucco column and patio wall; a wood framed arched focal window; and fenestration consisting of wood double hung windows.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Louise Severin and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource exhibits Severin's characteristic style and rustic features, including the stucco, and retains a high degree of integrity to its 1929-1930 date of construction.

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 Spanish

Eclectic style single family residence located on the north side of Rochester Road in the residential subdivision of Kensington Manor Unit No. 1.

The historic name of the resource, the Cecil and Dorothy Taylor/Louise Severin House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Cecil and Dorothy Taylor, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Louise Severin, a Master Builder.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Ruth C. Alter, 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 property is a one story Spanish Eclectic style single family residence constructed in 1928, according to the Residential Building Record. The house is built of standard frame wood construction on a concrete foundation and features an asymmetrical façade and a generally rectangular plan. The primary roof form is flat with tile capped parapets while the front portion of the house features a medium pitch front gabled Mission clay tile roof with shed roof over the entry. The front patio is concrete, and enclosed by a low stucco wall. To the right of the entry, below the gabled roof is an arched wood focal window. On the east (side) elevation is a stucco chimney flanked by a pair of original 8 over 1 double hung wood windows.

Following the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition, the romantic ideal of Spanish and Latin American architecture was revived. What resulted was the Spanish Eclectic style which was the predominant style in Southern California between 1915 and 1940, significantly altering the architectural landscape until the Modernist movement took hold during and after WWII. The style uses decorative details borrowed from the entire history of Spanish architecture. These may be of Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic, or Renaissance inspirations, an unusually rich and varied series of decorative precedents. The style employed a variety of floor plans, as well as gabled, cross-gabled, gabled and hipped, hipped and flat roof forms with parapets. Other character defining features include Mission and Spanish clay tile; focal windows; arched windows and other openings; and accented entries.

A few modifications have occurred at the subject property over the years. At the front patio, a wood trellis has been added over the low stucco wall. Although not mentioned in the applicant's report, staff has noted that four windows on the west (side) elevation and one at the front porch have been replaced with dual paned units. It is believed that new Mission clay roof tiles may have been applied to the primary structure. Finally, the applicant's report also notes other modifications not visible from the public right of way including a metal framed garden window on the east elevation, a concrete and tile deck addition at the rear of the structure, and a French door unit to access the rear deck.

The modifications to the subject building do not alter its character defining features or significantly impair the design, materials, workmanship or feeling aspects of integrity as it relates to the 1928 date of construction. The house continues to convey the historic significance of Spanish Eclectic architecture by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style, including the front gable and shed Mission clay tiles roofs in front of a flat roof and tile capped parapet; clipped eaves with overhanging roof tiles; skip-trowel stucco finish; an entry porch covered by a shed roof supported by a large stucco column and patio wall; a wood framed arched focal window; and fenestration consisting of wood double hung windows. 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.*

Louise Severin was born in Missouri in 1892 and moved to San Diego in the 1910s. She apprenticed in the construction trade and learned the necessary skills required to become a general contractor. Severin worked throughout the City of San Diego; however it appears that her most mature period was spent in the Kensington and Talmadge areas. During the 1930s, Severin exploited imagery of the region's Spanish and Mexican past combining rustic and vernacular elements with the most up to date materials and methods. While not as sophisticated, the result was something akin to Cliff May's early Hacienda style houses also found in the area. Key elements in many Severin houses was the single-story "U" or "L" shaped form as well as details such as rustic stucco, tapered chimneys and large interior rooms that opened onto small courtyards surrounded by stucco-coated walls.

Currently, there are only three known Severin-designed houses that are designated Historical Resources within the City of San Diego, HRB Site #623 located at 4185 Rochester Road, HRB Site #743 located at 4179 Norfolk Terrace, and HRB Site #1029 located at 4970 Marlborough Drive. All three were designated under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Severin. The subject property exhibits Severin's characteristic style and rustic features, including the distinct skip-trowel stucco treatment. The house retains a good degree of integrity to its 1928 date of construction. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion D, as a notable work of established Master Builder Louise Severin.

#### 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 Cecil and Dorothy Taylor/Louise Severin House located at 4170 Rochester Road be designated with a period of significance of 1928 under HRB Criteria C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style and retains integrity to its date of construction; and Criterion D as a notable work of established Master Builder Louise Severin that retains integrity

to her original design. 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.



Camille Pekarek  
Planning Intern



Cathy Winterrowd  
Interim Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

CP/jb/cw

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 9/26/2013

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 9/26/2013, to consider the historical designation of the **Cecil and Dorothy Taylor/Louise Severin House** (owned by Conway Revocable Trust, 4170 Rochester Road, San Diego, CA 92116) located at **4170 Rochester Road, San Diego, CA 92116**, APN: **440-361-04-00**, further described as BLK 8 LOT 27 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 **Cecil and Dorothy Taylor/Louise Severin 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 Spanish Eclectic style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1928 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a front gable and shed Mission clay tile roof in front of a flat roof and tile capped parapet; clipped eaves with overhanging roof tiles; skip-trowel stucco finish; an entry porch covered by a shed roof supported by a large stucco column and patio wall; a wood framed arched focal window; and fenestration consisting of wood double hung windows. 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 Louise Severin and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource exhibits Severin's characteristic style and rustic features, including the stucco, and retains a high degree of integrity to its 1929-1930 date of construction. 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: N/A

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
JOHN LEMMO, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND  
LEGALITY: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
CORRINE NEUFFER,  
Deputy City Attorney