



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 20, 2014 REPORT NO. HRB-14-071

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of December 4, 2014

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – The Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter/Martin V. Martin Melhorn House**

APPLICANT: Charles Arensman and Socorro Gonzalez represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 3916 Alameda Place, 92103, Uptown Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter/Martin V. Martin Melhorn House located at 3916 Alameda Place as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter/Martin V. Martin Melhorn House located at 3916 Alameda Place as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1914 and 1964 to 1969 under HRB Criteria B, C, and D. The designation includes the cobblestone walkways and retaining walls at the rear of the property. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource is identified with Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter, historically significant people and retains integrity for that association from 1964 to 1969. Specifically, the resource is associated with important contributions to the performing arts in San Diego. Johnson and Carter founded and directed the original San Diego Ballet, the city's first professional ballet company.
2. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Craftsman style architecture with airplane and Japanesque influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1914 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains its low pitched gable roof with exposed rafter tails, stucco exterior, exposed decorative brick work, corner porch, divided light wood frame and sash windows, and recessed second floor.
3. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1914 design. Specifically, the resource is an example of Melhorn's work in the Craftsman style with airplane and Japanesque influences and reflects a high level of design and 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 property is located in the Mission Hills neighborhood in a predominantly single family neighborhood.

The building is located on APN 451-741-03-00. The property was identified in the 2007 Draft Uptown Survey and given a Status Code of 7R, "Identified in Reconnaissance Level Survey: Not Evaluated."

The historic name of the resource, the Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter/Martin V. Martin Melhorn House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter, who were historically significant people and the name of Martin V. Melhorn, a Master Builder.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc. which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, B, C, D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria B, C, 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.

The consultant has stated that the property is significant under HRB Criterion A for the cobblestone walkways and retaining walls that cross the rear of the lot, neighboring lots and the canyon area behind the house. The rear yard features were designed in unison with and complementing the Craftsman style of the house. The use of cobblestone reflects one of the common materials typically found on Craftsman homes and encouraged communion with nature. While the rear yard features express the "back to nature" movement associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, the design encompassed a larger area and was not associated with only one house. The cobblestone walk ways, retaining walls and associated features should be designated as a Cultural Landscape as a whole. Staff recommends that the designation of the entire landscape area be revisited by the consultant for designation as a Cultural Landscape. Staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

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

The historic research report notes that the property is significant under HRB Criterion B for its association with Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter. Johnson and Carter founded the original San Diego Ballet and served as its artistic directors from 1961 to 1969. Prior to their arrival in San Diego, Johnson and Carter had established themselves as professional ballet dancers in San Francisco. They traveled regularly as principal dancers for the San Francisco Ballet and the San Francisco Opera Ballet.

Johnson and Carter studied ballet under the Christensen brothers, who were responsible for establishing ballet in the American West. In the early 20th century ballet did not exist west of the Mississippi. William Christensen is credited with growing the San Francisco Ballet into an independent company in the 1930s as its director. Johnson studied under the Christensen brothers starting at the age of eight. By 19, Johnson was a principal dancer with the ballet. Carter also traveled extensively as a principal of the San Francisco Ballet appearing as a soloist during his tenure.

In 1960, the president of San Diego's California Western University invited Johnson and Carter to develop a university dance department. As the university program developed at a steady pace, Johnson recognized the need to provide a ballet teaching experience for school aged children. Johnson and Carter took a leave of absence to develop a new ballet school. The San Diego Ballet debuted with the San Diego Symphony in the summer of 1961. As a small independently owned operation, the San Diego Ballet was financed by Johnson and Carter with one employee. With their growing success, they decided to form a non-profit organization. They developed a touring program and continued to grow the program and in 1964 moved to a new location to accommodate their growth. In 1964, the Johnson Carter family purchased the subject house. By 1966, the ballet company gained national recognition when *The Boston Sunday Herald* profiled Johnson and Carter and their success establishing the ballet company. In 1966, the company hosted ballet companies including the Royal Danish Ballet and the Mexican Folklorico. They also had 250 students with many receiving daily instruction. In an effort to educate the students about the many aspects of ballet, they regularly hosted artists to provide instruction on the art of choreography. By 1969, Johnson and Carter resigned the directorship of the San Diego Ballet. After struggling financially for several years and coping with failed mergers, the San Diego Ballet folded after 1984. While the heyday of the San Diego Ballet was short lived, many former students continue to work within similar ballet organizations.

Significance Statement: The subject property is significant for its association with Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter, who founded and directed the original San Diego Ballet, the city's first professional ballet company. During Johnson and Carter's tenure in the house from 1964 to 1969, the San Diego Ballet had begun its transition from a fledgling ballet school and company to a highly acclaimed professional organization. The ballet company has left a legacy in San Diego with former students who have successfully developed similar ballet programs based on the knowledge they received from Johnson and Carter. Staff 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.

Constructed in 1914 in the Craftsman style of architecture with airplane and Japanesque influences, the subject house features two stories with a stucco exterior. The low pitched gable roof has Japanesque peaked gable ends and exposed rafter ends. The exterior walls are sheathed with a fine sand stucco finish and decorative exposed brick work. Fenestration consists of wood frame and sash windows with a variety of operations from casement to double hung to fixed. A small front porch is located at the southeast corner of the house. The porch is integrated into the main roof of the house and features a single horizontal beam as the porch railing and stucco,

wood and brick support posts. The main entrance is located on the north façade of the porch with a pair of French doors located to the west of the entrance.

The front façade of the subject house features a rounded bay window centrally located on the wall plane. The second story of the front façade is stepped back and stepped in from the first floor. The second floor front façade and south facade have divided light casement windows dominating the façade. The chimney located on the north façade features a brick motif similar to the front porch columns. The remaining facades feature windows spaced evenly on the wall plane. The south façade also features a two story one car garage recessed from the front façade.

Over the years there have been some modifications to the house. As some point the front porch was enclosed and the current owners restored the porch based on photo and physical evidence. The exterior of the house was restuccoed and the front walkway and steps were restored to a scored concrete. The work that was done to the house have restored its original character and have had no adverse impact.

With origins in the British Arts and Crafts movement, which was 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. 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; wood or stucco cladding; and wood frame and sash windows in fixed, double hung and casement varieties.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Craftsman style with airplane and Japanesque influences by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including its low pitched gable roof with exposed rafter tails, stucco exterior, exposed decorative brick work, corner porch, divided light wood frame and sash windows, and recessed second floor.

CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.

Martin V. Melhorn moved to San Diego in 1911 and formed the Bay City Construction Company with John J. Wahrenberger and John C. Rice as his partners. Bay City Construction lasted until 1916 and during this time Melhorn and Wahrenberger both predominantly designed in the Craftsman and Arts & Crafts styles. In 1913 Melhorn started another company, Alberta Security Company, with his wife Alberta, which focused on the financial aspects of his construction business. Bay City Construction Company was dissolved when John Wahrenberger became ill in 1916 at which time Melhorn began working under the name Martin V. Melhorn Investments. During this time Melhorn's design style shifted away from Arts & Crafts and became more experimental and he designed larger residences for leading citizens of San Diego.

The subject property reflects Melhorn's early work in San Diego in the Craftsman style as part of Bay City Construction. The subject property is a highly intact and well executed example of Craftsman architecture with airplane and Japonese influences and reflects a high level of design and construction.

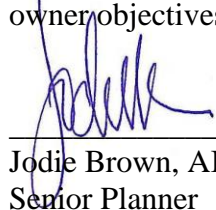
Significance Statement: The subject resource retains excellent integrity and continues to reflect Melhorn's original design, intent and aesthetic. The house is notable as a well-executed Craftsman style home. Therefore, staff recommends designation under Criterion D as a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn.

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 Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter/Martin V. Martin Melhorn House located at 3916 Alameda Place be designated with a period of significance of 1914 and 1964 to 1969 under HRB Criterion B, for its association with historically significant people; Criterion C, as a good example of a Craftsman style architecture with airplane and Japonese influences; and Criterion D, for its association with Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn. The designation includes the cobblestone walkways and retaining walls at the rear of the property. 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.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

JB/ks

Attachments:

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 12/4/2014

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 12/4/2014, to consider the historical designation of the **Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter/Martin V. Melhorn House** (owned by Charles A Arensman and Socorro P Gonzalez, 3916 Alameda Place, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **3916 Alameda Place, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **451-741-03-00**, further described as BLK 55 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 Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter/Martin V. Melhorn House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION B for its association with Nancy Johnson and Richard Carter, historically significant people and retains integrity for that association. Specifically, the resource is associated with important contributions to the performing arts in San Diego with a period of significance from 1964 to 1969. Johnson and Carter founded and directed the original San Diego Ballet, the city's first professional ballet company. 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 C for its distinctive characteristics of Craftsman style of architecture with airplane and Japanesque influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1914 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains its low pitched gable roof with exposed rafter tails, stucco exterior, exposed decorative brick work, corner porch, divided light wood frame and sash windows, and recessed second floor. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(3) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is an example of Melhorn's work in the Craftsman style with airplane and Japanesque influences and reflects a high level of design and 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 designation shall include the cobblestone walkways and retaining walls at the rear of the property.

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