



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 12, 2015 REPORT NO. HRB-15-053

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of November 20, 2015

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #4**

APPLICANT: Kravets Family Trust represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 3917 Alameda Drive, Uptown Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #4 located at 3917 Alameda Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #4 located at 3917 Alameda Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1917 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 Prairie style with Spanish Eclectic influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1917 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains a strong horizontal emphasis provided by a flat roof form with wide enclosed eaves and decorative cornice line brackets; partial width front porch and second floor balcony with solid balustrade and massive battered columns; smooth stucco cladding; fenestration of single-light double hung and multi-light fixed wood windows; flattened ogee arches at the front porch; and eight-sided turret elements at the front and side elevations.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1917 design. Specifically, the resource is an early example of Melhorn's work in the Prairie style during a period of independent and stylistically experimental work after the dissolution of the Bay City Construction Company, demonstrating his skill for elegant design and quality 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 subject house is a two-story Prairie style single-family residence built in 1917 on the north side of Alameda Drive, just west of Saint James Place in the Inspiration Heights Subdivision of the Uptown Community.

The building is located on APN 443-601-11-00. The property was identified in the Draft 2007 Uptown 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 Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #4, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Alberta Security Company, who constructed the house as a speculation house 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 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 is a two-story single-family residence built in 1917 in the Prairie style. The building is of hollow clay tile construction on a concrete foundation, sited on a sharply sloped lot with a commanding stance over Alameda Drive to the south. The building maintains an original footprint and box-like form. The flat roof exhibits widely overhanging eaves to impart a strong horizontal emphasis. Cornice line brackets appear singly or in pairs throughout.

The building's horizontality is further emphasized with the series of broad stairs and landings leading to the partial width front porch with second story balcony and solid balustrade. The porch is marked by flattened ogee arches framed by massive battered columns. Near the center of the primary façade is a two-story, eight-sided turret – a unique feature that is repeated in the form of a first story bay on the west (side) elevation. The building is clad in a smooth stucco to match historic photos and to replace the historically inappropriate Spanish lace style stucco that had been applied in recent decades. Fenestration consists primarily of 1-over-1 wood double hung windows appearing singly or in groups with 9-over-1 fixed wood windows. The original detached garage sits at the north end of the property, facing the rear alley.

The Prairie style originated in Chicago and was popular primarily in the Midwest for the early part of the 20th century. An indigenous American style, the Prairie School shared the ideals of the British Arts and Crafts movement and was popularized by architects including Frank Lloyd Wright, George Maher and others. Character defining features of Prairie style architecture

include low-pitched, usually hipped roofs, wide overhanging eaves, and façade detailing emphasizing horizontal lines. Pattern books and popular magazines spread vernacular examples widely to suburbs throughout the country, with most being built between 1905 and 1915.

The historic report asserts that certain elements on the subject property give this Prairie style home Exotic Revival, “Oriental” secondary detailing inspired from the Middle or Far East. The reports lists only the ogee arches and turret elements as indications of this secondary style and does not provide a detailed comparative analysis to known Exotic Revival style examples to support this. Staff agrees that the resource does not appear to fit squarely into a Prairie style classification, however disagrees on the secondary stylistic influence. Staff feels that if Melhorn had truly intended an Exotic Revival influence, its markings would be more explicit; and that the building’s stucco cladding, turret elements and flat roof with parapet are more readily interpreted as a Spanish Eclectic style influence.

Recent extensive restoration and repairs to the home have significantly improved the building’s integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling. Remaining non-historic elements are fairly minimal and do not greatly impair the building’s character defining features or integrity. These include, an altered or non-historic front door in the original opening; at the east side, two replacement louvered windows in existing openings and a single modified window at the rear; and an enlarged French door opening at the north (rear) elevation.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Prairie style with Spanish Eclectic style influence by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the styles; including a strong horizontal emphasis provided by a flat roof form with wide enclosed eaves and decorative cornice line brackets; partial width front porch and second floor balcony with solid balustrade and massive battered columns; smooth stucco cladding; fenestration of single-light double hung and multi-light fixed wood windows; flattened ogee arches at the front porch; and eight-sided turret elements at the front and side elevations. 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.

Martin V. Melhorn was born in Indiana in 1866. He lived and worked in Falls City, Nebraska and Denver, Colorado before moving to San Diego in 1911 with his wife, Alberta, and their son William. Melhorn established the Alberta Security Company in 1913 which focused primarily on the financial aspects of building construction. The Alberta Security Company and Melhorn purchased and built the subject property in 1919. Melhorn and his affiliates were prolific builders in the City of San Diego – particularly in the areas of Mission Hills, Hillcrest, University Heights, North Park and South Park – and numerous Melhorn-built homes have been listed on the San Diego Register. Melhorn’s status as a Master Builder was established in 2003 with the designation of the Neil Brown/Martin V. Melhorn House at 4195 Palmetto Way (HRB Site #583).

The subject property was constructed in 1917, shortly after the dissolution of Melhorn’s Bay City Construction Company in 1916, and during a period of transition for Melhorn in which he

began to move away from the building of Craftsman styled homes in favor of the Prairie, Colonial Revival, and Spanish Eclectic styles.

Significance Statement: The subject resource retains excellent integrity and continues to reflect Melhorn's original design, intent and aesthetic. The house is notable as an early example of Melhorn's work in the Prairie style during a period of independent and stylistically experimental work after the dissolution of the Bay City Construction Company, demonstrating his skill for elegant design and quality construction. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB 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 Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #4 located at 3917 Alameda Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1917 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that exhibits the distinctive characteristics of Prairie style architecture with Spanish Eclectic style influences; and HRB Criterion D as a resource that is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn. 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
Associate Planner



Kelley Stanco
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

CP/ks

Attachments:

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 11/20/2015

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 11/20/2015, to consider the historical designation of the **Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #4** (owned by Kravets Family Trust 05-07-11, 3917 Alameda Drive, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **3917 Alameda Drive, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-601-11-00**, further described as BLK 2 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 Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #4 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 Prairie style with Spanish Eclectic influences and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1917 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains a strong horizontal emphasis provided by a flat roof form with wide enclosed eaves and decorative cornice line brackets; partial width front porch and second floor balcony with solid balustrade and massive battered columns; smooth stucco cladding; fenestration of single-light double hung and multi-light fixed wood windows; flattened ogee arches at the front porch; and eight-sided turret elements at the front and side elevations. 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 Martin V. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1917 design. Specifically, the resource is an early example of Melhorn's work in the Prairie style during a period of independent and stylistically experimental work after the dissolution of the Bay City Construction Company, demonstrating his skill for elegant design and quality 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: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
CORRINE NEUFFER,
Deputy City Attorney