



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 11, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-040

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of June 25, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 –4186 Jackdaw Street**

APPLICANT: Bill and Astrid Shannon, property owners  
Represented by Christianne Knoop, consultant

LOCATION: 4186 Jackdaw Street, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of 4186 Jackdaw Street as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not designate the house at 4186 Jackdaw Street as a historical resource under any HRB Criteria due to a loss of integrity.

## BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board at the owner's request to have the house and site designated as a historical resource. The house at 4186 Jackdaw Street is a single family home that was originally constructed ca. 1920 by the Alberta Security Company. The house was constructed in the Craftsman style with Japoneseque influences.



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## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Christianne Knoop, the consultant on behalf of the property owners, Bill and Astrid Shannon, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D. Staff disagrees with the determination that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D, 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 house was originally constructed ca. 1920 in the Craftsman Bungalow style with Japoneseque influences by the Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn. The house is a one story frame and wood shingle structure which flares at the foundation. The roof is low pitched gable and hipped roof with exposed rafter tails.

The low pitched roof has a gable that runs east/west with an intersecting gable that runs north/south. The main façade of the house has a small hipped gable that sits slightly above the gable for the front porch. The front porch gable is located at the southeast corner of the house. Each gable roof has a peaked roof line and false beams.

The front porch is supported by three large multi-level brick columns. On the north wall of the front porch is an original wood and glass front door and the west wall features a pair of 12 light French doors. The French doors feature screen doors.

Original windows on the house are a mixture of double hung and fixed wood windows. The large center window in the living room and the dining room feature multi-lights on the upper portion. Windows on either side of the chimney on the north side also feature stained glass.

The property owners are also proposing to designate the interior (dining and living room) of the house. The living room has a beamed ceiling with non-historic pendant lights in the beams. Portions of the beams are flared, repeating the angular oriental roof detail. The stained wood beams, wainscot and trim have never been painted. Both rooms contain crown molding with the dining room being larger and more ornate. The north end of the living room contains a tiled fireplace, with built-in cabinets on both sides and stained glass above the built-ins. The fireplace tile is in an earth tone mottled brown/green color and has a slightly raised hearth. The cased doorway into the dining room is detailed with wood block dentil work, which is repeated elsewhere in the house. The cased doorway has built-in cabinetry on either side. One built-in serves as a fold down desk and the other is a book shelf. The fold down desk has art glass doors, which mimics the angular oriental roof detail. The dining room has a built-in buffet and wood wainscot walls with a plate rail. The upper cabinet on the buffet has an angular front with clear leaded glass doors. The buffet base cabinet also has art glass doors.

The consultant's report concludes that the house was constructed in 1914 based on the Residential Building Record, an ad from the Southwest Builder and Contractor and an ad from the Daily Transcript both from 1914. While the lot and the block listed in the ads correspond with 4186 Jackdaw Street, the addresses listed in the ads do not correspond. The address listed

in the ads is for 4636 Jackdaw Street. Unfortunately, no Notice of Completion was found and based on the directory search the property was not listed until it was purchased in 1920 by John and Julia Shuyler. Additionally, the Sewer Permit that was provided for the house does not have a date (year) specified. Staff is concerned that the property was not constructed until a later date than proposed by the consultant.

Staff has several concerns with a number of alterations that have been completed on the house. Originally, the wood shingles on the house had a very distinct pattern. The wall sheathing alternated between wide and narrow horizontal bands of wood shingles while the flared portion of the wall had vertical wood slats. Separation between the horizontal wood shingles and the vertical wood slats was provided by a continuous wood board and just above the windows and doors was a continuous band that matched the lower band. Prior to the current property owners purchasing the property, the original wood shingles were covered with asbestos siding. The current owners removed the asbestos siding and replaced the original wood shingles. The new wood shingles lack any pattern to replicate the original style. The owners also added a new decorative element with round shingles just below the header height of the windows and doors. The vertical slats on the flared portion of the wall and the two trim boards were not replicated in the new wall sheathing. Additionally, while they were originally unpainted, the porch columns and the chimney have been painted and a carport was added to the south side of the house. The carport is not recessed and appears to be flush with the front of the house. The ribbon driveway that leads to the detached garage has been removed and replaced with an in-ground support/turf system. In 2002 a bedroom and bathroom were added to the rear of the house with no street visibility. Based on these alterations, staff does not recommend designation under 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 consultant has stated that the property is also eligible under Criterion D for its association with the Alberta Security Company and Martin V. Melhorn.

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. With John J. Wahrenberger and John C. Rice as his partners, Martin formed the Bay City Construction company in 1911. 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. Some of his experimental designs at this time included cottages and bungalows in which he incorporated Prairie, Neoclassical, Colonial Revival and Japanese inspired elements.

Martin V. Melhorn Investments gave way to M.V. Melhorn & Son in 1922 when he partnered with his son William. This partnership lasted until Martin Melhorn's unexpected death in 1926. There are several homes that have been listed on the Register that have been designed by Melhorn. These homes include: HRB Site #318—The Melhorn/King Residence, 1302 Washington Place; HRB Site #583—Neil Brown/Martin V. Melhorn House, 4195 Palmetto Way; HRB Site #780—Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn Spec Home #1, 1201 West Arbor Drive; HRB Site #790—Tudor Rogers/Martin V. Melhorn House, 4060 Alameda Drive; and HRB Site #823—Franklin and Helen Boulter/Martin V. Melhorn House, 4119 Palmetto Way. Given the number of alterations that have occurred to the exterior of the home, staff believes that the property is no longer representative of Martin V. Melhorn and is not a notable example of his work, therefore staff does not recommend designation under 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 to not designate the house at 4186 Jackdaw Street as a historical resource under any HRB Criterion. 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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Jodie Brown  
Senior Planner



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Cathy Winterrowd  
Senior Planner/Program Coordinator

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Attachment: Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover