



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 9, 2011 REPORT NO. HRB-11-039

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of June 23, 2011

SUBJECT: **ITEM #11 – John and Emilie Wahrenberger/Martin V. Melhorn House**

APPLICANT: Brian Wright represented by Johnson & Johnson Architecture

LOCATION: 1329 Fort Stockton Drive, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the John and Emilie Wahrenberger/Martin V. Melhorn House located at 1329 Fort Stockton Drive as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the John and Emilie Wahrenberger/Martin V. Melhorn House located at 1329 Fort Stockton Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1911 under HRB Criterion D. The designation shall exclude the current detached garage that replaced the original fire damaged garage in 2007. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource is representative of 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 and reflects a high level of design and construction.



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## 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 building is a one-story, Craftsman house located in the Mission Hills Neighborhood within the Uptown Community Planning Area.

The historic name of the resource, the John and Emilie Wahrenberger/Martin V. Melhorn House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the names of John and Emilie Wahrenberger, the original tenants and owners of the house and Martin V. Melhorn, a Master Builder, who built the house while with the Bay City Construction Company.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Johnson & Johnson Architecture which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion D but not under Criterion C. 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 house located at 1329 Fort Stockton Drive is a one story single-family home constructed in 1911 in the Craftsman style. The house features a cross gable composition shingle roof with exposed rafter tails; larger barge boards supported by stepped cantilevered beams; stucco siding on the larger gable walls and square wood shingle siding with offset joints on the rest of the structure; decorative wood slat attic vents on the east and west upper gable roof; larger wood entry door; original single and multi-lite wood frame and sash windows, with double-hung, casement and fixed operations; and a wood floor framed foundation with a crawl space and a continuous concrete footing perimeter.

The most significant modification to the structure is the enclosure of the original Craftsman style porch prior to 1919. Sanborn maps incorrectly indicate that the front porch was enclosed sometime after 1956, but there is no building permit record for the enclosure. The 1921 Sanborn Map indicates that the front porch was 50 percent open. This conflicting information was resolved with paint analysis showing that the windows enclosing the porch have the same paint layers and colors as the original windows to the house. Although there is evidence that this porch enclosure is very old and the original front brick walls and porch floor are still intact; the open porch with elephantine columns and brick masonry is a primary character-defining feature of the Craftsman style of architecture. Other modifications that have taken place on the property are the expansion of a bedroom and bathroom prior to 1996 which are not easily visible from public view and the construction of a new detached garage that replaced the original fire damaged garage in 2007. The new detached garage has been excluded from the designation.

The enclosure of the original Craftsman style porch has significantly and adversely impacted the building's integrity as it relates to design, materials, workmanship and feeling, all of which are critical to conveying significance as a resource which embodies the distinctive characteristics of Craftsman architecture. As a result, the building no longer retains architectural integrity to its 1911 date of construction. 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.*

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 first project in San Diego in the Craftsman style as part of Bay City Construction. Only two of the seven individual resources currently designated as the work of Melhorn were designed during this early period. Although staff is not recommending designation under HRB Criterion C due to the overall architectural integrity being impacted by the porch enclosure, staff concurs with the report that the porch enclosure was prior to 1919 while Wahrenberger owned the home. Further, paint analysis strongly suggests that the enclosure was original to the home. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion D as a resource that is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn.

The applicant's report suggests that John Wahrenberger should be established as a Master Craftsman along with the Bay City Construction Company. His son, William, has been established by the Board as a Master and three properties have been designated as examples of his work. However, neither John nor Bay City Construction as an entity have been established as Masters. With limited available information regarding John Wahrenberger and Bay City Construction Company's individual contributions and overall body of work, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D for an association with him or the company at this time.

#### 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 John and Emilie Wahrenberger/Martin V. Melhorn House located at 1329 Fort Stockton Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1911 under HRB Criterion D as a resource that is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. The designation shall exclude the current detached garage that replaced the original fire damaged garage in 2007. 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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Jeffrey E. Oakley  
Associate Planner



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Cathy Winterrowd  
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

JO/ks/cw

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 6/23/2011

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/23/2011, to consider the historical designation of the **John and Emilie Wahrenberger/Martin V. Melhorn House** (owned by Bryan J. Wright, 1329 Fort Stockton Drive, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **1329 Fort Stockton Drive, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-684-01-00**, further described as BLK 59 LOTS 1 THRU 4 ST CLSD ADJ & /EXC E 67 FT 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 John and Emilie Wahrenberger/Martin V. Melhorn House on the following finding:

(1) The resource is representative of 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 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**. The designation shall exclude the current detached garage that replaced the original fire damaged garage in 2007.

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: \_\_\_\_\_  
KEITH BAUERLE  
Deputy City Attorney