



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

DATE ISSUED: February 9, 2012 REPORT NO. HRB-12-012

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of February 23, 2012

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec House #2**

APPLICANT: Owner represented by Vonn Marie May

LOCATION: 4181 Stephens Street, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec. House #2 located at 4181 Stephens Street as a historical resource.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Designate the M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec. House #2 located at 4181 Stephens Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1920 under HRB Criteria C and D as an example of Craftsman architecture and a notable work of Alexander Schreiber, a Master Builder. The 308 square foot addition at the northeast corner of the structure as well as the 32 square foot utility room at the northern side of the structure were constructed in the 1950's and are excluded from this designation. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Craftsman style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1920 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a low-pitched front gable roof; a moderate overhang and no exposed rafters; stucco siding on the exterior; a full-width front porch with a curvilinear roofline achieved by low-point arches on each side supported by elephantine porch columns and a predominant, central arched opening to the Craftsman style front door.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Alexander Schreiber and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource represents Schreiber's distinctive architectural design featuring the low-arch or "eyebrow" porch covers and traditional gable covers with the predominant, central arched opening to the front door.

**Development Services Department**

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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 house is a one story Craftsman style residence built in 1920 on the eastern side of Stephens Street within the residential subdivision of North Florence Heights in the Uptown Community.

The historic name of the resource, the M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec House #2, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and includes the name of M.B and Ida Irvin who constructed the house as a speculation house, and the name of Alexander Schreiber, an established Master Builder who built the house with Irvin.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Vonn Marie May, 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 Criteria C and D. 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 property at 4181 Stephens Street is a one story Craftsman style single-family residence built in 1920 is symmetrical in form and features a low-pitched front gable roof covered in composition shingles a moderate overhang and no exposed rafters; stucco siding on the exterior; a full-width front porch with a curvilinear roofline achieved by low-point arches on each side supported by elephantine porch columns and a predominant, central arched opening to the Craftsman style front door all supported by a concrete foundation. The house, located on the eastern side of Stephens Street, is accessed by a concrete walkway and stair leading from the sidewalk to the porch, which is covered by a flat half-circle porch cover supported on over-sized columns and brackets centered on the main façade. The entry is flanked by large single pane windows with fixed 8-lite transoms above. Remaining fenestration consists primarily of 1-over-1 double hung wood frame and sash windows and single pane fixed and casement windows. All windows appear to be original. The stucco chimney is located on the south elevation of the structure and was reconstructed circa 2002. The original detached garage is located at the southeast corner of the property.

Transitional photographs were provided in the report which show the house prior to restoration in 2002 and current photos after restoration had taken place. Modifications to the house include a travertine/marble clad steps and porch floor on the front porch which appears to have been added during restoration of the house after 2002. An off-centered vinyl sliding door was installed at some point in time on the east or rear elevation. The most predominant modifications were a 308 square foot addition at the northeast corner of the structure as well as a 32 square foot utility room at the northern side of the structure. Although building permit information was not located, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps dated 1950 and 1956 reflect the same footprint as the County Assessors Residential Building Record which shows the addition at the northeast corner of the

structure, thus staff believes that the additions were constructed sometime in the 1950's. These additions are not visible from the street however they are excluded from this designation due to the construction being outside of the 1920 period of significance.

The house has retained architecturally defining features consistent with Craftsman design which include but are not limited to a low-pitched front gable roof covered in composition shingles a moderate overhang and no exposed rafters; stucco siding on the exterior; a full-width front porch with a curvilinear roofline achieved by low-point arches on each side supported by elephantine porch columns and a predominant, central arched opening to the Craftsman style front door. Through these elements the house continues to convey the character defining features of a Craftsman style residence and is significant as such. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the property at 4181 Stephens Street 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.*

Alexander Schreiber was born in Kansas in 1887 and moved to San Diego in 1912, at age 25. Little is known of his early career in San Diego; however, in 1912 he was listed as a carpenter in the City Directory. He progressed to the building contractor profession by 1916 and in the mid 1920s he operated a real estate office in the then burgeoning district of Hillcrest. While his dealing in real estate has yet to be fully researched, his primary occupation was as a building contractor until his retirement in the 1940s.

During his career, Schreiber was a prolific builder, designing and building houses and commercial buildings throughout the City in neighborhoods including North and South Park, University Heights, Loma Portal, Encanto and Mission Hills. Most of his house designs were in the Craftsman and Spanish Eclectic vernacular so popular in the 1920s and 30s, though he did design at least two houses in Mission Hills in the Prairie style: 1866 Fort Stockton Drive (HRB #730) and the slightly higher-style house at 4205 Arden Way (HRB #618). In addition to being a skilled builder, he was an early experimenter in the use of electricity in houses, his obituary crediting him with building the first home in San Diego completely wired for electrical appliances. Alexander died at age 60 in June of 1947. There are presently six designated historic resources listed on the City's register which were built by Schreiber and designated for that association.

The subject property at 4181 Stephens Street is one of several highly recognizable houses built by Schreiber in North Florence Heights (at least 7 of which are on Stephens Street). The subject property is a significant, notable representation of Schreiber's distinctive architectural design aesthetic throughout the North Florence Heights subdivision, featuring the low-arch or "eyebrow" porch covers and traditional gable covers with the predominant, central arched opening to the front door. The house retains a high degree of integrity to its 1920 date of construction, retaining all aspects of integrity. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion D, as a notable work of established Master Builder Alexander Schreiber.

## 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 M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec House #2 located at 4181 Stephens Street be designated with a period of significance of 1920 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that exhibits the distinctive characteristics of Craftsman architecture and HRB Criterion D as a resource that is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Alexander Schreiber. The 308 square foot addition at the northeast corner of the structure as well as the 32 square foot utility room at the northern side of the structure were constructed in the 1950's and are excluded from this designation. 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.



Jeffrey E. Oakley  
Associate Planner



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 2/23/2012

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 2/23/2012, to consider the historical designation of the **M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec. House #2** located at **4181 Stephens Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-471-09-00**, further described as BLK 3 LOT 10 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 M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec. House #2 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 Craftsman style architecture and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1920 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a low-pitched front gable roof; a moderate overhang and no exposed rafters; stucco siding on the exterior; a full-width front porch with a curvilinear roofline achieved by low-point arches on each side supported by elephantine porch columns and a predominant, central arched opening to the Craftsman style front door. 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 Alexander Schreiber and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource represents Schreiber's distinctive architectural design featuring the low-arch or "eyebrow" porch covers and traditional gable covers with the predominant, central arched opening to the front door. 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, exterior of the building and the detached garage as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**. The 308 square foot addition at the northeast corner of the structure as well as the 32 square foot utility room at the northern side of the structure were constructed in the 1950's and are excluded from this designation.

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