



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

DATE ISSUED: November 27, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-056

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of December 11, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #9 – Christian and Gertrude Baer/Dennstedt Company House**

APPLICANT: Skip Motsenbocker and Tanja Kern represented by Johnson & Johnson

LOCATION: 4600 Kensington Drive, Kensington-Talmadge Community, Council District 9

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Christian and Gertrude Baer/Dennstedt Company House located at 4600 Kensington Drive as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Christian and Gertrude Baer/Dennstedt Company House located at 4600 Kensington Drive as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1937 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the rear addition built in 1950. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1937 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features an asymmetrical façade; hipped roof of Mission clay tile with exposed rafters; battered stucco chimney with elaborated top; accented windows; and fenestration consisting primarily of wood double hung and casement windows.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Dennstedt Company and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource reflects the Dennstedt Company's commitment to quality, craftsmanship and affordability as seen in a Spanish Eclectic style custom home.

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 resource is a one and two story

Spanish Eclectic style single family residence constructed in 1937 at the northwest corner of Kensington Drive and Madison Avenue in the Kensington Park subdivision of the Kensington-Talmadge Community.

The historic name of the resource, the Christian and Gertrude Baer/Dennstedt Company House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Christian and Gertrude Baer, who constructed the house as their personal residence, and the name of Dennstedt Company, a Master Builder.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Johnson & Johnson, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and 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 applicant's report asserts that the subject property is significant under HRB Criterion A as a product of socioeconomic conditions of the Kensington Community at the time of its construction. Aside from stating that the subject property was constructed by a design-build company and financed with the help of an FHA loan program, the applicant has not demonstrated how the subject property is unique among its contemporaries. No comparative analysis has been provided to illustrate how it exemplifies or reflects a special element of local development to any greater extent than other similarly built properties. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

*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 one and two story single family residence constructed in 1937 in the Spanish Eclectic style. The building is sited on a corner lot and features an irregular plan form and asymmetrical primary and secondary façades. The building is of standard wood frame construction, clad in medium sand finish stucco, and retains an original footprint with the exception of an attached rear addition built in 1950. The hipped roof forms are moderately pitched, sheathed in Mission clay tile, and feature moderate eave overhang with exposed rafters.

The building strikingly exhibits a variety of wall planes and irregular massing indicative of the Spanish Eclectic style. The primary (east) elevation is marked by a two story mass on the north end featuring a large recessed nine lite fixed wood window and a double hung wood window with shutters above. Into the front courtyard projects a bay window featuring a pair of four lite casement windows and a 2 over 2 double hung window. The wood paneled entry door faces south into the courtyard from beneath a shed roof cover. The secondary (south) elevation is

anchored by the attached two car garage and also provides a secondary entrance to the main residence as well as access to the rear yard and contemporary addition to the west.

Following the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition, the romantic ideal of Spanish and Latin American architecture was revived. What resulted was the Spanish Eclectic style which was the predominant style in Southern California between 1915 and 1940, significantly altering the architectural landscape until the Modernist movement took hold during and after WWII. The style uses decorative details borrowed from the entire history of Spanish architecture. These may be of Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic, or Renaissance inspirations, an unusually rich and varied series of decorative precedents. The style employed a variety of floor plans, as well as gabled, cross-gabled, gabled and hipped, hipped and flat roof forms with parapets. Other character defining features include Mission and Spanish clay tile; focal windows; arched windows and other openings; and accented entries.

Alterations to the subject property have occurred over the years but do not greatly affect the building's character defining features or significantly impair its integrity. A rear addition built in 1950 along the northwest edge of the property is somewhat visible from the northeast but is readily distinguished from the original construction with its nearly flat roof and alternatively spaced rafter tails. The front walkway and front yard site walls have been modified from what is seen in the circa 1996 transitional photo. The garage doors are believed to have been replaced in the 1970s. It is also believed that at this time the non-historic sliding window was added above the garage on the south (side) elevation. It is not known exactly how this wall appeared before the addition of this window – whether there was an existing window opening or an unadorned wall. Although not mentioned in the report, it also appears that the side entry French door on the south (side) elevation is not original. Finally, a permitted retaining wall and storage room exist at unknown locations.

The limited modifications to the subject building do not greatly alter its character defining features or significantly impair the integrity as it relates to the 1937 date of construction. The house continues to convey the historic significance of Spanish Eclectic architecture by embodying the character defining features of the style including the asymmetrical façade; hipped roof of Mission clay tile with exposed rafters; battered stucco chimney with elaborated top; accented windows; and fenestration consisting primarily of wood double hung and casement windows. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property 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.*

The Dennstedt Company was established as a Master Builder in 2007 with the designation of HRB Site #818, the Hazel Weir/Dennstedt Company House/Mut kula xuy/Mut lah hoy ya Site #4. The Dennstedt brothers came to San Diego from Minnesota in 1924 and soon began their careers as builders. The Dennstedt Company became well known as a design-build company producing high quality custom homes with financing options. By the mid-1930s, the Dennstedt Company split and the resulting companies continued in custom home construction. The Dennstedt Company produced houses in the Spanish Eclectic, Mexican Hacienda, Tudor,

English Monterey and Ranch styles in San Diego communities including North Park, Talmadge, Kensington, La Jolla and Point Loma, as well as in Escondido and La Mesa. With several iterations of the firm name, the firm continued until 1988.

The subject resource was constructed by the Dennstedt Company in 1937 and likely features the Dennstedts' customary pressure treated lumber framing that they advertised heavily beginning in 1936. The home exhibits a high level of craftsmanship, was completed during a prolific period in the company's lifetime, and retains integrity to its original design. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion D as representative of a notable work of Master Builder Dennstedt Company.

#### 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 Christian and Gertrude Baer/Dennstedt Company House located at 4600 Kensington Drive be designated with a period of significance of 1937 under HRB HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Spanish Eclectic style and Criterion D as a notable work of Master Builder Dennstedt Company. The designation excludes the rear addition built in 1950. 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  
Junior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd  
Interim Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

CP/cw

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 12/11/2013

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 12/11/2013, to consider the historical designation of the **Christian and Gertrude Baer/Dennstedt Company House** (owned by Skip Motsenbocker and Tanja Kern, 4600 Kensington Drive, San Diego, CA 92116) located at **4600 Kensington Drive, San Diego, CA 92116**, APN: **440-653-18-00**, further described as BLK 20 LOT 19 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 Christian and Gertrude Baer/Dennstedt Company House 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 the Spanish Eclectic style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1937 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features an asymmetrical façade; hipped roof of Mission clay tile with exposed rafters; battered stucco chimney with elaborated top; accented windows; and fenestration consisting primarily of wood double hung and casement windows. 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 Dennstedt Company and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource reflects the Dennstedt Company's commitment to quality, craftsmanship and affordability as seen in a Spanish Eclectic style custom home. 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 exclude the rear addition built in 1950.

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