



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

DATE ISSUED: November 20, 2014 REPORT NO. HRB-14-073

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of December 4, 2014

SUBJECT: **ITEM #11 – Robert and Virginia Cleator/Dell W. Harris House**

APPLICANT: Susanna Starcevic represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 1415 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Greater Golden Hill Community, Council District 3

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Robert and Virginia Cleator/Dell W. Harris House located at 1415 28<sup>th</sup> Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Robert and Virginia Cleator/Dell W. Harris House located at 1415 28<sup>th</sup> Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1914 under HRB Criteria C and D. An interior element included the designation is the original inglenook with tile fireplace surround and hearth, and decorative grapevine relief accent tile matching that used on the porch. The designation excludes the 1985 rear detached garage. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Italian Renaissance Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1914 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a low-pitched hipped tile roof with wide eave overhang and exposed rafters; symmetrical façade with central, curved porch and balcony supported by massive arches; stucco cladding; decorative brackets and beltline cornice; distinction in detail between upper and lower levels; fenestration of wood fixed, casement, and double hung windows; and a unique inglenook bump out with distinct slender chimney.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Dell W. Harris and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource reflects an example of Harris' work in the Italian Renaissance Revival style and demonstrates a skilled emphasis on quality design seen in his other known works.

## 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 two-story single family residence built in 1914 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style on the east side of 28<sup>th</sup> street in the South Park Addition of the Greater Golden Hill Community.

The building is located on APN 539-401-04-00. The property was identified in the 1996 Mid-City Survey as an individually significant structure within the South Park Potential Historic District.

The historic name of the resource, the Robert and Virginia Cleator/Dell W. Harris House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Robert and Virginia Cleator, who constructed the house as their personal residence and the name of Dell W. Harris, a proposed Master Architect.

## 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 1914 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The building features a low-pitched hipped tile roof with wide overhanging eaves with exposed rafters. The striking symmetrical façade is anchored by a central, curved partial-width entry porch with 2<sup>nd</sup> story balcony above. This massive porch and balcony structure is supported by a series of arches marked by large decorative brackets and a substantial cornice. The porch provides additional ornament with decorative ceramic tiles featuring a grapevine motif. The building is clad in medium sand finish stucco and is wrapped with a beltline cornice throughout. Fenestration consists of wood windows in casement, fixed and double hung varieties. Distinction is made between upper and lower levels with upper level fenestration and detailing being less elaborate than that seen on the first floor. The massive wood entry door features beveled glazing and a pair of matching sidelights. Flanking the porch steps are a pair of unique octagonal stoops with integrated raised planters. On the south (side) elevation is an original, distinctive inglenook bump out topped by a slender stucco chimney that meets just with the edge of the roof eave as it ascends above the roofline.

Modifications to the resource have been somewhat limited, owing in part to the restoration of a number of critical focal windows as detailed in the applicant's report. The original detached garage was removed and subsequently replaced with the addition of a new detached rear double garage in 1985. At the balcony above the porch, the original French door and sidelight arrangement seen in historic photos has been modified to contain a wider door with narrow sidelights within the original wall opening. At the south (side) elevation, two stucco piers have

been removed from the wood supports of the original pergola, possibly to accommodate wider vehicular access. At the east elevation, an original rear screened porch was enclosed sometime before 1954 and topped with a simple shed roof – this element is not visible from the public right-of-way and is readily distinguished from original construction. Also on the rear elevation, a few window replacements, a door replacement, and a window addition have occurred, as detailed in the report. Finally, the house has been restuccoed in a medium sand finish stucco. It cannot be determined through historic or transitional photos whether the new texture was applied to exactly match the original. These modifications do not singularly or cumulatively impact the building’s integrity of design, materials, workmanship or feeling to the extent that it no longer conveys the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The building retains original character defining features critical to its style and therefore remains eligible under HRB Criterion C.

The Italian Renaissance Revival style is found in early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses throughout the country but is considerably less common than the more popular Craftsman, Tudor, or Colonial Revival styles. Primarily a style for architect-designed landmarks in major metropolitan areas prior to World War I, the Italian Renaissance Revival style spread throughout the country with the perfection of masonry veneering techniques; most of these date from the 1920s. Many of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian Renaissance Revival structures borrowed many design details from the Italian originals from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among the most notable details are recessed entry porches; hipped low-pitched roofs covered in Mission tile; and wide overhanging eaves with exposed rafters and decorative brackets. Common decorative details include quoins; molded cornices and belt courses; and smaller upper-story windows. The exterior façade is usually covered in stucco, masonry, or masonry veneer.

Significance Statement: The house retains a great deal of original architectural detailing and continues to convey the historic significance of the Italian Renaissance Revival style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a low-pitched hipped tile roof with wide eave overhang and exposed rafters; symmetrical façade with central, curved porch and balcony supported by massive arches; stucco cladding; decorative brackets and beltline cornice; distinction in detail between upper and lower levels; fenestration of wood fixed, casement, and double hung windows; and a unique inglenook bump out with distinct slender chimney. 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.*

Dell W. Harris was born in San Jose, California in 1875. He did not immediately begin his career in architecture, but rather in sales. He completed his schooling at Hoover’s Business College in Santa Barbara. In 1900, he lived in San Jose with his new wife Clara Alena Powers and worked as a solicitor for a national correspondence school. Two years later, while working for a carpenter, Harris engaged a correspondence school himself and enrolled in an architectural drawing course. Harris’ formative years in the architecture trade began under Architect D. W. Willard until 1904 when he started working for Greene and Greene Architecture in Pasadena. From 1904-1906, Harris worked for the Greene brothers during the firm’s peak productive period with a primary focus on custom residential design in the Craftsman style. For two years beginning in 1906, Harris worked as head draftsman and engineer for prominent San Francisco

architect Frank Van Trees, known for building grand mansions for wealthy clients in high-end San Francisco neighborhoods.

Harris moved his family to San Diego in 1908 to begin work as an architect. Examples of his works can be found primarily near downtown and also in Cardiff, Chula Vista, La Mesa and Coronado. He designed a wide range of building types including high quality apartments, commercial buildings, churches, and custom residences. His range of style included Craftsman, Tudor, Mission Revival, and Italian Renaissance Revival. Many of his works and designs were published nationally and locally, and some within San Diego have been historically designated including the Fehlman Morgan House at 2470 A Street (HRB Site #130-007), built as a Swiss Chalet variant of the Craftsman style in 1911; the Amelia Apartments at 901 Tenth Avenue (HRB Site #661), built in the Italian Renaissance style in 1911; and the Elwyn Gould House at 2333 Albatross Street (HRB Site #802) in the Tudor Revival Style in 1914. Other notable works of Harris include the Hotel Cardiff, built in 1911 at the corner of San Elijo Avenue and Chesterfield Drive in Cardiff, and a custom mansion in La Mesa at 9951 El Granito Avenue built in 1913 for famous opera singer Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink.

By 1916, Harris had moved to Los Angeles where he continued work as an architect before serving in the Army during the war. He returned to architecture and continued moving along the west coast from Olympia, Washington to San Francisco and finally Seattle. Most notable among his later works was Seattle's popular roadside attraction and landmark, the Twin T-P's (or Twin Teepees) restaurant built in 1936.

The subject resource designed by Harris was built in 1914 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The building's high build quality and distinct architectural detailing effectively demonstrate Harris' aptitude as an architect. The house exhibits well executed design features including the round cut rafter tails, massive arches, decorative brackets and beltline cornice. The building shares an aesthetic and quality seen in his other notable and published works, especially with the Schumann-Heink mansion in La Mesa and the Los Angeles Dwelling for Two Families published in a 1908 issue of *Carpentry and Builder*.

Significance Statement: Harris' career as an architect in San Diego lasted only eight years as he worked and lived in many places along the west coast – though his mark on the local architectural landscape is clearly demonstrated through a high quality of craftsmanship and design seen in his known works. The subject resource retains good integrity to its original design and is representative of Harris' work in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. Therefore staff recommends that the Board establish Dell W. Harris as a Master Architect and designate the subject property under HRB Criterion D as a good example of the notable work of Master Architect Dell W. Harris.

#### 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 Robert and Virginia Cleator/Dell W. Harris House located at 1415 28<sup>th</sup> Street be designated with a period of significance of 1914 under HRB Criterion C as a good example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style, and Criterion D as a notable work of Master Architect Dell W. Harris. An interior element included the designation is the original inglenook with tile fireplace surround and hearth, and decorative grapevine relief accent tile matching that used on the porch. The designation excludes the 1985 rear detached garage. 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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Camille Pekarek  
Associate Planner



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Kelley Stanco  
Senior Planner/HRB Liaison

CP/ks

### Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Interior Element included in the designation
3. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 12/4/2014

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 12/4/2014, to consider the historical designation of the **Robert and Virginia Cleator/Dell W. Harris House** (owned by Susanna P. Starcevic, 1415 28th Street, San Diego, CA 92102) located at **1415 28th Street, San Diego, CA 92102**, APN: **539-401-04-00**, further described as BLK 27 LOT 5 S 35 FT LOT 4 & N 1/2 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 Robert and Virginia Cleator/Dell W. Harris 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 Italian Renaissance Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1914 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a low-pitched hipped tile roof with wide eave overhang and exposed rafters; symmetrical façade with central, curved porch and balcony supported by massive arches; stucco cladding; decorative brackets and beltline cornice; distinction in detail between upper and lower levels; fenestration of wood fixed, casement, and double hung windows; and a unique inglenook bump out with distinct slender chimney. 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 Architect Dell W. Harris and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource reflects an example of Harris' work in the Italian Renaissance Revival style and demonstrates a skilled emphasis on quality design seen in his other known works. 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 include the interior original inglenook with tile fireplace surround and hearth, and decorative grapevine relief accent tile matching that used on the porch.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the 1985 rear detached garage.

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

# A.5 Site Plan with Footprint

Taken from the Residential Building Record

