



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 9, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-071

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of October 22, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM # 9 – Helen Schnepf House**

APPLICANT: Sonya Celeste-Harris

LOCATION: 3636 Herbert Street, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Helen Schnepf House located at 3636 Herbert Street as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Helen Schnepf House located at 3636 Herbert Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1925 under HRB Criterion C. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

The resource embodies distinctive characteristics through retention of character defining features of the Craftsman Bungalow architectural style and retains a high level of integrity from its period of significance, the construction date of 1925. Specifically, the building features low-pitched, multi-planed roofs with wide eave overhangs and exposed rafter tails, decorative beams at the gable, wood windows, horizontal wood lap siding, and a partial porch supported by tapered columns.



## 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 Bungalow built in 1925 on Block 236 of University Heights. Helen Schnepf hired James Slaughter to build the home.

The historic name of the resource, the Helen Schnepf House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and includes the name of the individual who commissioned the home and was its first occupant.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by the owner, Sonya Harris, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, B, C and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criterion C, but not HRB Criteria A, B or D, 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 states 3636 Herbert Street is significant under Criterion A as a special element of the historical, cultural, economic, aesthetic, and architectural development of the University Heights subdivision. However, there is nothing about 3636 Herbert Street that distinguishes it from other similar resources. The home is typical of other Craftsman homes constructed during the 1920s in University Heights and does not reflect a special element of development. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under Criterion A.

*CRITERION B - Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state or national history.*

Helen Schnepf hired James Slaughter to construct the home at 3636 Herbert Street. Though Helen was listed in the 1921-1922 *Who's Who Among Women in California*, this is not enough of a sufficient accomplishment for her home to qualify under Criterion B. The applicant's report did not explain how Helen Schnepf was significant in local, state or national history. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under Criterion B.

*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 Craftsman Bungalow at 3636 Herbert Street was built in 1925 by James Slaughter for Helen Schnepf. The one story wood frame home sits on a perimeter concrete footing and interior wood footings. The home features a prominent front facing, low-pitched gable roof with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. Decorative beams are located below the gables and the bargeboard rafter is enlarged. A partial porch is located along the south end of the front (east facing) facade. Tapered wood columns support the gable porch roof; a vertical slat grill is

located within this gable. The exterior walls are clad in narrow, horizontal lap siding, typical of Craftsman Bungalows. Fenestration throughout the home consists of wood double hung and horizontal sliding windows. The applicant's report indicates that James Slaughter often reused construction materials from other structures and this may explain the different types of windows found throughout the home. In addition, the applicant's report indicates that horizontal sliders may have been used in cases where furniture placement required a higher windowsill.

Other character defining features include the scored concrete front walkway and concrete porch. In addition, the concrete style ribbon driveway is a character defining feature of the style and time period. A wood frame, gable roof garage is located at the rear of the property and appears to have been constructed at the same time as the home.

Alterations include the construction of an addition in 2007-2008 along the north side of the property and at the rear. This addition is set back from the original home and is distinguished by its wide wood siding and use of wood shingles along its base. The addition was determined to be consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards)*. Staff is aware that the owner is planning to renovate most of the landscaping on the property. Staff met with the owner and their landscape architect in August 2009 to discuss the project and consistency with the *Standards*. Overall, staff felt the plan was in compliance with the *Standards* and the owner will submit plans for review should the home receive historic designation.

The Helen Schnepf House embodies distinctive character defining features of the Craftsman Bungalow style through the retention of character defining features including low-pitched, multi-planed roofs with wide eave overhangs and exposed rafter tails, decorative beams at the gable, wood windows, horizontal wood lap siding, a partial porch supported by tapered columns, and a scored concrete front walkway, porch, and ribbon driveway. Therefore, staff recommends designation under this 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.*

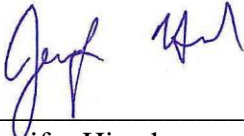
The building at 3636 Herbert Street was built by James Slaughter. In the 1930s, Slaughter worked with Ralph L. Frank and Ralph E. Hurlburt and the three men formed the firm Hurlburt, Frank and Slaughter. While Frank and Hurlburt have been established as master designers by the HRB, Slaughter has not been established as a master builder. In addition, while Slaughter may have been responsible for the construction of homes throughout San Diego as well as public facilities such as the Boy Scout Headquarters, the applicant's report did not provide sufficient documentation to establish Slaughter as a master builder. Therefore, staff does not recommend designation under HRB 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 that the Helen Schnepf House located at 3636 Herbert Street be designated under HRB Criterion C as an example of Craftsman Bungalow style architecture. 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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Jennifer Hirsch  
Senior Planner



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Kelley Saunders  
Acting Principal Planner

JH/ks

Attachment(s): Draft Resolution  
Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 10/22/2009

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 10/22/2009, to consider the historical designation of the **Helen Schnepf House** (owned by Sonya Celeste-Harris, 3636 Herbert Street, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **3636 Herbert Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **452-331-39-00**, further described as South 50 feet of North 90 feet of Lots 9-12 inclusive in Block 236 of University Heights 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 Helen Schnepf House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through retention of character defining features of the Craftsman Bungalow architectural style and retains a high level of integrity from its period of significance, the construction date of 1925. Specifically, the building features low-pitched, multi-planed roofs with wide eave overhangs and exposed rafter tails, decorative beams at the gable, wood windows, horizontal wood lap siding, and a partial porch supported by tapered columns.

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 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
NINA FAIN  
Deputy City Attorney