



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 14, 2010 REPORT NO. HRB-10-001

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of January 28, 2010

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec House #1**

APPLICANT: Jim and Donna Turbyfill represented by Vonn Marie May

LOCATION: 4195 Stephens Street, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec House #1 located at 4195 Stephens Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec House #1 located at 4195 Stephens Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1920 under HRB Criteria C and D. 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.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Alexander Schreiber and retains integrity as it relates to the original design.



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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 a corner lot in the residential subdivision of North Florence Heights.

The historic name of the resource, the M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec House #1, 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 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 Board's adopted *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 states that the house is significant under HRB Criterion A, and provides a discussion of the development of the North Florence Heights Subdivision and Kate Sessions' ownership of the land prior to selling it to M.B. Irvin for subdivision, sale and speculative development. The discussion of the resource's eligibility under HRB Criterion A does not address how the building reflects a special element of either Kate Session's ownership or the early development of North Florence Heights. The Board's adopted *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria* (Criteria Guidelines) states:

"It is important to note that Criterion A states that a resource must exemplify or reflect special elements of development. Special elements of development refer to a resource that is distinct among others of its kind or that surpass the usual in significance. It is not enough for a resource to simply reflect an aspect of development, as all buildings, structures and objects do."

Therefore, without evidence that the house reflects a special element of the development of North Florence Heights, staff cannot 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 property at 4195 Stephens Street is a one story Craftsman style single family residence built in 1920 and features a low-pitch front gable roof with asphalt shingles, overhanging eaves and

exposed rafter tails; decorative stucco brackets at the corners; slightly textured stucco over tile walls; and a concrete foundation. The house, located on a corner lot, fronts onto Stephens Street and is accessed by a 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 with multi-lites above. All windows appear to be original.

Modifications to the house include a recent bathroom addition (2005) at the back of the property which replaced an earlier, slightly smaller bathroom addition. The addition, which is set back far from the street, is minimally visible through the landscaping on site. Other minor modifications include the tile at the entry and the site wall. It is unclear whether or not the room over the garage is original. While there are other garages in the neighborhood with a similar configuration (including the property directly behind the subject property) the Sanborn maps indicate that the garage at 4195 Stephens Street was 1 story (the garage on the property behind is labeled as 2 stories). The Sanborn maps continue to show the garage as 1 story through 1956; however, the room over the garage appears to be of older construction, and no post-1950's building permits for this room can be found. The construction date for this room remains unknown. If it is an addition, it does not significantly detract from the building's integrity or its ability to convey its style and period of significance; nor do the other noted modifications.

Therefore, staff recommends designation of the property at 4195 Stephens Street under HRB Criterion C as a house which reflects the character defining features of the Craftsman style from its 1920 period of significance.

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 4195 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 notable, however, as the only one to use the distinctive flat half-circle porch cover supported on over-sized columns and brackets; as opposed to the more common low-arch or "eyebrow" porch covers and traditional gable covers. This unique variation of the Craftsman style is distinct from Schreiber's other work in the neighborhood and yet highly characteristic of his design aesthetic. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the property at 4195 Stephens Street under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of 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 #1 be designated under HRB Criterion C as a house which reflects the character defining features of the Craftsman style with a 1920 period of significance; and HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Builder Alexander Schreiber, designed with a distinctive half-circle porch cover supported on over-sized columns and brackets. 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.



Kelley Saunders
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

KS/cw

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 1/28/2010

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 1/28/2010, to consider the historical designation of the **M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec House #1** (owned by Jim & Donna Turbyfill, 4195 Stephens Street, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **4195 Stephens Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-471-11-00**, further described as Lot 12 in Block 3 of North Florence 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 M.B. and Ida Irvin/Alexander Schreiber Spec House #1 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 style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1920 period of significance. Specifically, the house retains a low-pitch front gable roof; overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails; decorative stucco brackets at the corners; slightly textured stucco over tile walls; a flat half-circle porch cover supported on over-sized columns and brackets; and -over-1 double hung wood frame and sash windows and large single pane windows with fixed multi-lite transoms above. 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 through the use of a distinctive flat half-circle porch cover supported on over-sized columns and brackets as opposed to the more common low-arch or “eyebrow” porch covers and traditional gable covers. This unique variation of the Craftsman style is distinct from Schreiber’s other work in the neighborhood and yet highly characteristic of his design aesthetic.

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