



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 10, 2024 REPORT NO. HRB-24-037

HEARING DATE: October 24, 2024

SUBJECT: **ITEM #3 – GARRET AND ESTHER BRADT/WILLIAM B. MELHORN SPEC. HOUSE #1**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: James and Rebecca Smith 2008 Revocable Living Trust; represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 1115 Alberta Place, 92103, Uptown Community, Council District 3
APN 451-060-14-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Garret and Esther Bradt/William B. Melhorn Spec. House #1 located at 1115 Alberta Place as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Garret and Esther Bradt/William B. Melhorn Spec. House #1 located at 1115 Alberta Place as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1928 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the rear detached cabana constructed outside the period of significance. 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 integrity from its 1928 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a flat parapet roof, a mission barrel tile shed roof entry porch with a square wood support post, stucco cladding with decorative finish, an arched wood front entry door, a picture window under a mission barrel tile shed roof with decorative iron posts, tile attic vents, and fenestration consisting primarily of single-lite and multi-lite double-hung windows.
2. The resource is representative of the notable work of Master Builder William B. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is an early example of Melhorn's work in building "moderate and affordable" single-family residences in Mission Hills and continues to convey his skill as a builder through its quality construction and craftsmanship.

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 property was identified in the [2016 Uptown Community Plan Area Historic Resources Survey Report](#) and given a Status Code of 5D3, "Appears to be a contributor to a district that appears eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation."

The resource's historic name, the Garret and Esther Bradt/William B. Melhorn Spec. House #1, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the names of Garret and Esther Bradt, who constructed the house as a speculation house and William B. Melhorn, a Master Builder.

In order to be eligible for designation and listing on the City's Register, a resource must meet one or more of the City's designation criteria as specified in the Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Manual and retain integrity as it relates to the significance of the resource. Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance, which requires an understanding of the physical features and characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance. The National, California, and City of San Diego Registers recognize location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as the seven aspects of historical integrity.

Although not all seven aspects of integrity need to be present for a property to be eligible for designation, the record must demonstrate that the property retains enough physical and design characteristics to reflect and convey the significance of the property. Each resource depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects are most important to a particular property requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#) provide information regarding the City's designation criteria, as well as guidance on their application and how to evaluate the integrity of a resource.

ANALYSIS

The property located at 1115 Alberta Place is a one-story Spanish Eclectic style single-family residential building constructed in 1928 in the Uptown Community Planning Area. Other buildings and structures present on the site include a detached cabana located at the rear southeast corner. The property is located on the south side of Alberta Place in a residentially zoned neighborhood containing other Spanish-style homes. The property is in its original location.

Since its construction in 1928, the property has been modified as follows: in 2007, a metal fence was added to the rear stucco walls and a metal gate was added to the driveway on the east elevation. In 2010, a remodel to the property removed and infilled windows on the east and rear elevations, added a stucco post to the driveway gate on the east elevation, demolished the original detached garage, and constructed a 350-square-foot cabana on the southeast corner of the property. Other modifications made during this remodel include the addition of a pair of French doors, a set of five single-lite folding doors, and a trellis with a mission barrel tile roof on the rear elevation. The 2010 remodel was reviewed by Heritage Preservation staff and determined consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

In 2015, a fixed window on the east elevation was replaced with a wood sliding window within the existing opening. Other modifications to the property include the addition of mission barrel tile to the roof parapet circa 2010, the replacement of the front picture window within the original opening in 2014, re-roofing in 2021, and the installation of solar panels to the roof in 2022.

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 resource is a one-story single-family residence constructed in 1928 in the Spanish Eclectic style. It features a flat parapet roof with mission half-barrel tile and stucco cladding with a decorative finish. Fenestration consists of single-lite and multi-lite fixed, double-hung, and sliding wood windows.

The property's primary elevation faces north and is accessed by a walkway that leads to the front entryway from the street. There is a concrete front entry porch with a mission half-barrel tile shed roof, cross beams, a square support post, and two-over-two double-hung wood windows. An arched wood front entry door is set perpendicular to the street. This elevation also features a picture window with a mission half-barrel tile shed roof, a stucco lintel and decorative iron posts, and a pair of two-over-two double-hung windows with wood shutters. The rear elevation of the building consists of a pair of single-lite French doors, a set of five single-lite folding doors, and a trellis with a mission barrel tile roof. Other features include a Hollywood driveway, decorative tile attic vents, and an internal chimney. A detached cabana, constructed in 2010, is located at the rear southeast corner of the property.

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, and 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.

Of the seven aspects of integrity, design, materials, and workmanship are the most critical to the property's ability to convey significance under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of Spanish Eclectic style. The property, which has been modified as detailed in the beginning of the analysis section of this report, retains overall integrity of design, materials, and workmanship despite the modifications. The 2010 remodel was approved as consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Other changes include the additions of a metal gate and fence, the addition of mission barrel tile to the roof parapet, the replacement of a fixed window with a sliding window, the replacement of the front picture window, the reroofing of the property, and the installation of solar panels to the roof do not significantly impact the overall integrity.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Spanish Eclectic style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style; including a flat parapet roof, a mission barrel tile shed roof entry porch with a square wood support post, stucco cladding with decorative finish, an arched wood front entry door, a picture window under a mission barrel tile shed roof with decorative iron posts, tile attic vents, and fenestration consisting primarily of single-lite and multi-lite double-hung windows. Therefore, the property does retain integrity to its 1928 period of significance 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.

William Harmon Buchtel Melhorn was born in Denver, Colorado, in 1894. He was the son of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn. William moved with his parents to San Diego in 1911. He attended Stanford University and served in World War I before becoming a full-time contractor.

William began working with his father around 1920. Together, they formed M. V. Melhorn & Son in 1922. One of the first projects that William worked on with his father was a row of Craftsman-style houses on Palmetto Way. He also built a series of stucco bungalows along Alberta Place (named after his mother) in Mission Hills, and most of the houses on Shirley Ann Place, which was named after his sister. His father died in 1925, just before the construction of Shirley Ann Place began.

After World War II, William formed the Melhorn Construction Company, which later incorporated and still exists today. He also began to build more commercial buildings, such as an addition to the Gustafson Furniture Building (HRB #517), and buildings for Mission Hills Plumbing, Standard Furniture Company, San Diego Burglar Alarm Company, and San Diego Electric Company Showroom.

At least 23 of William B. Melhorn's or the Alberta Security Company's works have been designated as historical resources by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board. They include the Albert D. and Allie M. Hagaman/William B. Melhorn House (HRB #870), which established him as a Master Builder by the HRB in 2008, the Alfred and Helen Cantoni/Ralph L. Frank and William B. Melhorn House (HRB #1160), and most of the houses in the Shirley Ann Place Historic District (HRB #424, attributed to Alberta Security Company) and the Melhorn & Son Historic District (HRB #1319).

Master Builder, William B. Melhorn, purchased the subject resource shortly after it was completed in 1928 from the original owners, Garret and Esther Bradt. It was sold a month later to Frank and Laura Watson. The subject resource is an early example of Melhorn's work in building "moderate and affordable" single-family residences in Mission Hills and conveys his skill as a builder through its quality construction and craftsmanship.

Of the seven aspects of integrity, design, materials, and workmanship are the most critical to the property's ability to convey significance under HRB Criterion D as a resource that represents the notable work of Master Builder William B. Melhorn. The property, which has been modified as detailed in the beginning of the analysis section of this report, retains overall integrity of design,

materials, and workmanship despite the modifications. The 2010 remodel was approved as consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Other changes including the additions of a metal gate and fence, the addition of mission barrel tile to the roof parapet, the replacement of a fixed window with a sliding window, the replacement of the front picture window, the reroofing of the property, and the installation of solar panels to the roof do not significantly impair the integrity or the resource's ability to convey its significance as a resource that represents the notable work of Master Builder William B. Melhorn. Therefore, the property retains integrity to its 1928 period of significance under HRB Criterion D.

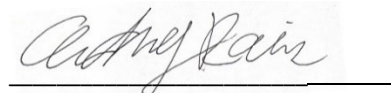
Significance Statement: The subject resource is representative of the notable work of Master Builder William B. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is an early example of Melhorn's work in building "moderate and affordable" single-family residences in Mission Hills and continues to convey his skill as a builder through its quality construction and craftsmanship. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

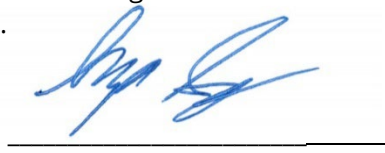
Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility 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. 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 Garret and Esther Bradt/William B. Melhorn Spec House #1 located at 1115 Alberta Place be designated with a period of significance of 1928 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Eclectic style and Criterion D as a resources that is representative of the notable work of Master Builder William B. Melhorn. The designation excludes the rear detached cabana constructed outside the period of significance.



Audrey Rains
Management Intern



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
City Planning Department

AR/SA/SS

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 10/24/2024

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 10/24/2024, to consider the historical designation of the **Garret and Esther Bradt/William B. Melhorn Spec. House #1** (owned by James and Rebecca Smith 2008 Revocable Living Trust, 1115 Alberta Place, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **1115 Alberta Place, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **451-060-14-00**, further described as LOT 15 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 Garret and Esther Bradt/William B. Melhorn Spec. House #1 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 integrity from its 1928 period of significance. Specifically, the resource features a flat parapet roof, a mission barrel tile shed roof entry porch with a square wood support post, stucco cladding with decorative finish, an arched wood front entry door, a picture window under a mission barrel tile shed roof with decorative iron posts, tile attic vents, and fenestration consisting primarily of single-lite and multi-lite double-hung 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 William B. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is an early example of Melhorn's work in building "moderate and affordable" single-family residences in Mission Hills and continues to convey his skill as a builder through its quality construction and craftsmanship. 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 detached cabana constructed outside the period of significance.

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:

BY: _____
TIM HUTTER, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney