



Agenda Report

April 26, 2021

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AT 371 PATRICIAN WAY (STAUNTON HOUSE) AS A LANDMARK

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Find that the designation of a historic resource is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15308 Class 8 of the CEQA Guidelines pertaining to Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment and there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances;
2. Find that main residence, attached garage with chauffeur's quarters, and southern exterior freestanding wall with fountain at 371 Patrician Way meet landmark designation Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040 because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period, and represents the work of an architect whose work is of significance to the City. It is a locally significant example of a Spanish Revival-style single family residence; and,
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 371 Patrician Way, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 371 Patrician Way, Pasadena, California; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to record the declaration with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

At its regular meeting of March 2, 2021, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the house, garage, and site features including the courtyard, driveway and retaining walls at 371 Patrician Way as a Landmark under Criterion “C” of PMC Section 17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The house, garage, and site features including the courtyard, driveway and retaining walls at 371 Patrician Way qualify for designation as a Landmark under Criterion “C” because they embody the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period. The building and accessory structures are locally significant, intact examples of a single-family property type built in the Spanish Revival style, designed by William F. Staunton Jr., and retains integrity.

BACKGROUND:

John LoCascio, of Historic Resources Group, submitted an application for Landmark designation of the building at 371 Patrician Way on behalf of property owners Greg Holcomb and Todd Nickey. City staff evaluated the property according to the criteria in Title 17 of the P.M.C. and determined that the building qualifies for designation as a landmark.

Property Data

- Address: 371 Patrician Way, Pasadena
- Location: West side of Patrician Way, in the San Rafael hills
- Date of Construction Completion: 1927 (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Architect: William Field Staunton Jr. (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original Builder: unknown
- Original / Present Use: Single-family residence
- Property size: 28,860 (source: County Assessor)
- Building size: 3,846 (source: County Assessor)

Site Features

The subject property is an irregularly shaped upslope lot comprised of two separate parcels (57 and 58, with 58 being added at a later date) that are located on the west side of Patrician Way, in the San Rafael hills in Pasadena. Patrician Way partially curves around the property, and the adjacent properties consist of undeveloped land and other single-family residences.

Description of Exterior Features

The application includes a very thorough historic resource analysis and report prepared by John LoCascio of Historic Resources Group (Attachment B). This document includes a detailed description of the building, which is excerpted below:

“The Staunton house is set back from, and above, Patrician Way by densely planted slopes on the west and south, atop which is a Mediterranean-style garden of decomposed granite and drought-tolerant plantings in front of the house's east facade. There is a patio of terra cotta pavers at the southeast corner of the house, flanked by three free-standing concrete piers that likely supported an arbor. A steep driveway of stamped concrete rises between board-formed concrete retaining walls along the west side of the house to a large, rectangular motor court with herringbone-patterned concrete pavers. There is a walled service yard with a brick incinerator on the south side of the motor court. A narrow concrete staircase descends from the northeast corner of the motor court, along the north wall of the garage, to the east garden. At the north end of the east garden a broad flight of brick steps leads down to the large, rectangular swimming pool that occupies Lot 58. The pool and its flanking wood pergola are surrounded by lawns, decomposed granite terraces, and landscaped planting beds.

The Spanish Revival-style house is one story over a semi-subterranean basement, and is of expressed board-formed concrete construction. It has complex massing, asymmetrical composition, and an irregular plan around a central courtyard. The roof is a combination of sheds, gables, and hips with clay barrel tile roofing, covered eaves, tight rakes, and two interior hooded chimneys. The exterior walls are of painted board-formed concrete. The gables and upper portions of the walls are pierced with ventilation grilles in concrete, terra cotta tile, and brick. Fenestration consists primarily of divided-light, steel sash casement windows, many with decorative wrought iron grilles; and divided-light wood French doors with matching screen doors. The primary entrance is asymmetrically located on the west facade and consists of a paneled wood door with four fixed viewports. The entrance is accessed from the motor court via an arcaded corridor along the west wall of the garage. The corridor has a floor of brick laid in a basketweave pattern, and a ceiling of exposed wood joists. There is a rectangular aperture with a wrought iron grille at the north end of the corridor; at the south end, brick steps lead under another arch up to the entrance, highlighted by a Mexican tile mural and lit by a decorative wrought iron pendant. The garage doors have panels of turned wood spindles.

The service porch has a partially glazed, paneled wood door. Other exterior doors are wood plank doors with wrought iron hardware. There is an enclosed sleeping porch on the west end of the south facade, off of what was originally the Staunton children's bedroom; and a raised terrace with wrought iron supports and a canvas awning on the east facade, off of the living room. There is a fabric awning on scrolled wrought iron supports over the kitchen window and service porch door on the west facade.

The central courtyard has a rectangular plan and is wrapped on its west and south sides by a corridor with chamfered wood posts, corbels and beams supporting a shed roof with clay tile roofing and exposed rafters with shaped tails. The courtyard is paved in brick laid in a herringbone pattern and has a raised concrete fountain with a star-shaped basin. The courtyard is accessed from the entrance hall by a paneled wood door with four fixed viewpoints; from the dining room, master bedroom, and guest bedroom by divided-light wood French doors; and from the service porch by a partially-glazed, paneled wood door.”

Documented Changes to the Property

The property has been minimally altered since its construction in 1927, with no major alterations to the primary facade. The few alterations include repairs to fire damage in 1956, a sleeping porch enclosure at an unknown date, the addition of a raised porch and awning on the east façade, off the living room at an unknown date, a canvass awning over a kitchen window at an unknown date, concrete pavers in the motor court at an unknown date, partial removal of an arbor on the east side of the house at an unknown date, and the replacement of a secondary door at the service porch at an unknown date. None of these alterations affect the architectural integrity of the structure.

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans

The exterior of the building is currently in good condition and it is used as a single-family residence. No significant changes to the property are proposed at this time.

Historical Overview

Period Revival Architecture in Pasadena

According to the City of Pasadena Historic Context Report entitled, “Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942,” Pasadena was solidly established in the early part of the 20th century as a national center of residential architectural design in the Arts and Crafts genre, and continued to be in the innovative forefront of architectural design during the period 1915-1942. In this era of Period Revival design, an affluent population, rapid growth and the presence of highly trained and skilled architects ensured that Pasadena would be a place where trends in California architecture were happening. In Pasadena, these architects produced designs that interpreted both national and regional precedents. The Arts and Crafts philosophy of design idealized the Colonial past. After 1915, it became a desire for a literal translation of classical architectural elements within the confines of the philosophy of not copying classical design but creating new designs based on the older elements to meet contemporary needs. New England and Southern Colonial and English vernacular residential designs were a major influence in residential architecture in Pasadena during the early part of the period (1915 through the early 1920s). Beginning in the mid 1920’s, the revivals were predominantly influenced by Italian, Spanish and

California Colonial styles. Because of the influences of designers during the Arts and Crafts period, architects, mostly classically educated, chose to practice in Pasadena in existing firms, such as Greene and Greene, Reginald Johnson, Myron Hunt and Sylvanus Marston; or established their own offices and partnerships. By 1915, talented architects designing residences to house the growing population of the city included Cyril Bennett, Gordon Kaufmann, Paul Williams, Edgar Maybury and Garrett Van Pelt, among others. Period Revival houses appeared in residential neighborhoods in existing annexed tracts in the second decade of the twentieth century where, in some cases, houses replaced orange orchards, or in others, filled a vacant parcel in an established neighborhood of Arts and Crafts period houses. Development of newly annexed lands along transit lines expanded the city's boundaries to include new tracts of land west of the original city. This pattern continued with additional annexations, beginning in the 1920's, to the east and northeast. By 1929, most of the current city, except sections of the northeastern part, had been annexed.

Residential development in Pasadena during the 1915 to 1942 period has two distinct phases. Residential building activity in the first phase encompasses the time through World War I up to 1925. Architect and builder-designed houses alike from this ten-year period reflect, almost exclusively, influences of residential styles of the American Colonial period, including the regions of New England, Mid-Atlantic, Southeastern, Southwestern and Monterrey, although the architecture of the 1915 California-Panama Exposition in San Diego is reflected in upper-class architect-designed houses of the late teens and early 1920's. In the second phase, the approximate fifteen years up to World War II, architects and designers were influenced more predominately by the European residential styles of England, Spain, Italy and France, although in the late 1930's there was a re-emergence of designs that reflected Colonial California that was a major force in the development of the California Ranch style. Residential architectural designs beginning in the late 20's also incorporated distinctly proto-modernist elements and materials in new classical design interpretations.

Spanish Revival Subtype

The Spanish Revival style was among the many Period Revival subtypes. The style is derived from various cultures around the Mediterranean region and often deemed as an appropriate choice because of the similarities between Southern California's temperate climate and that of the Mediterranean region. By the 1910's and 1920's the various architectural features distinguishing the Period Revival subtypes (Spanish Revival, Mediterranean, Italian Renaissance Revival) were increasingly blended by architects who drew upon trends from across the Mediterranean region. The aesthetic that emerged was known as Mediterranean Revival. The style was interpreted in many ways, but, in general, Mediterranean Revival style buildings were known for their formality and elaborate composition, a popular choice for high style, single-family residences whose owners and occupants sought to project a sense of prominence and wealth.

According to the City of Pasadena Historic Context Report entitled, “Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942,” many scholars attribute the rise of the Spanish Revival style to the Panama-California Exposition in 1915. Bertram Goodhue was the principal architect of the exposition. The style he chose was an adaptation of the ecclesiastical architecture of 18th century Spain. Now referred to as Churrigueresque, the style was named after a family of Spanish architects and sculptors who applied elaborate ornamentation to the Spanish Baroque architecture. The Panama-California Exposition helped to promulgate Spanish architecture as the appropriate California tradition, and soon Spanish forms were adopted as the leitmotif for building types and whole urban districts to which the style had not been previously applied. Several towns, including Fullerton and Santa Barbara, established policies requiring the use of the style. Between 1920 and 1930, thousands of single-family residences and apartment buildings were designed in the style to house the soaring population. By this time, the style contained a greater element of fantasy and less of a scholarly examination of what the buildings of the Spanish colonists had looked like. The buildings were often composed of details and elements drawn directly from the buildings of Spain and other countries of the Mediterranean, more often than from the actual Spanish Colonial buildings remaining in the region such as the California missions.

Character-defining features are those visual aspects and physical features or elements constructed during the property’s period of significance that give the building its character. In general, a property that retains its character defining features continues to convey its significance and therefore retains integrity as an historic resource. Removal or alteration of just one character-defining feature does not necessarily alter the integrity of an historic resource. Impacts to historic integrity can result from a single major change or from many incremental changes over time.

The character-defining features of Spanish Revival style single-family residences include:

- Irregular plans
- Horizontal massing
- Asymmetrical composition
- Courtyards and patios
- Gabled or hipped tiled roofs
- Plastered walls forming wide uninterrupted expanses, often with slightly rustic exterior plaster finish
- Divided light casement or double hung windows in wood or steel
- Arched openings
- Arcades
- Churrigueresque ornamentation,
- Wrought iron details such as door and window grilles
- Pierced stucco screens, fountains, and decorative glazed tile (the last three being references to Islamic Spain.)

Webber, Staunton & Spaulding, Architects:

The application includes a very thorough historic resource analysis and report prepared by John LoCascio of Historic Resources Group (Attachment B). This document includes a detailed description of the original architect, which is excerpted below:

“The William F. Staunton Residence, constructed in 1927, was designed by the architectural firm Webber, Staunton & Spaulding as the family residence of partner William F. Staunton. The firm was among the most prominent in Los Angeles in the 1920’s. Founding partner Walter Webber (1864-1943) was originally from Massachusetts but settled in Southern California and by 1919 had opened an architectural office in Los Angeles. In the early 1920’s he formed a partnership with Sumner M. Spaulding (1892-1952), a young architect in Michigan. Spaulding had earned his BS from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1916, and by 1921 had earned his architect’s license and settled in the Los Angeles area where he worked as a draftsman for architect Myron Hunt. In about 1923, Webber and Spaulding were joined by a third partner, William F. Staunton Jr. (1893-1977). Staunton was born in Tombstone, Arizona and earned his BA degree from Cornell University in 1916; soon thereafter he relocated to Los Angeles where he partnered with Webber and Spaulding.

The firm executed a number of high-profile commissions in and around Los Angeles in the mid-1920’s, exhibiting a great degree of design skill in various revival styles as well as the emergent Art Deco. These included the Malaga Cove Plaza in Palos Verdes Estates (1922-24) and the Catalina Casino (1928) in Avalon. The firm also designed a number of private residences, apartment buildings, schools, and commercial buildings in the Los Angeles area.

Staunton left the firm in 1928 to open his own practice in Pasadena, specializing in residential projects until his retirement in 1961. Webber and Spaulding remained in partnership until at least 1930, when Webber retired. Spaulding later partnered with architect John Leon Rex and engineer Clarence Gordon Dewswarte in the firm Spaulding, Rex and Deswarte.

ANALYSIS:

The main residence at 371 Patrician Way is eligible for designation as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.C.2, which states:

[The property] embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the City or, to the region or possesses artistic values of significance to the City or to the region.

Generally, in order to qualify under Criterion C, a property type would display most of the character-defining features of its style. It must retain high integrity of design,

materials and workmanship that convey its period of construction. While most buildings undergo alteration over time, these alterations should not significantly change the historic appearance of the building.

Under Criterion C, the building at 371 Patrician Way is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a Spanish Revival style architecture. The building has a high level of architectural integrity (its ability to demonstrate why it is significant) through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, as follows:

- Location: The building and other site features are in their original locations.
- Design: The building has undergone few alterations and retains all of the exterior character defining features.
- Setting: The building is surrounded by single-family development in a hillside neighborhood, as it was historically.
- Materials: The building retains its original exterior materials.
- Workmanship: The building retains its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of Period Revival era design and construction, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship.
- Feeling: The property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship, and continues to reflect the aesthetic and historic sense of 1920's Spanish Revival architecture.
- Association: This property is not significant for an association, therefore this aspect of integrity is not applicable.

Based on the above, the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C. The building retains all of its original character-defining features and all minor alterations are compatible with the original structure.

Contributing features to this designation include the main building, attached garage, and site features such as the courtyard, driveway and retaining walls.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The General Plan Land Use Element – Guiding Principle 2: “Pasadena’s historic resources will be preserved. Citywide, new development will be in harmony with and enhance Pasadena’s unique character and sense of place. New construction that could affect the integrity of historic resources will be compatible with, and differentiated from, the existing resource;” and Goal 8: “Preservation and enhancement of Pasadena’s cultural and historic buildings, landscapes, streets and districts as valued assets and important representations of its past and a source of community identity, and social, ecological, and economic vitality.”

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

Class 8 exemptions consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or

protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for the protection of the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

In some instances, owners of designated historic properties may apply to the City for a Historic Property Contract (Mills Act), which allows an alternative and often lower property tax assessment. The City Council reviewed the projected loss of property tax revenue from this program in 2002 when it adopted the local Mills Act ordinance. As a result of this program, the reduced property tax amount which comes out of the City's local share amount from the State, is a small fraction of the City's overall property tax revenue.

Respectfully submitted,



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Reviewed by:



Leon E. White
Principal Planner

Approved by:



STEVE MERMELL
City Manager

Attachments (4):

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Application & Historical Documentation (Building Description Blank; Sanborn Map)
- C. Current Photographs
- D. Effects of Historic Designation