



Agenda Report

October 28, 2019

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF THE HOUSE AND GARAGE AT 873 NORTH HILL AVENUE 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 and detached garage at 873 North Hill Avenue meet landmark designation Criterion C in Pasadena Municipal Code (P.M.C) Section 17.62.040(C)(2)(c) because they embody the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period and represent the work of an architect whose work is of significance to the City. The house and garage are significant as an intact example of Colonial Revival architecture by significant architect Sylvanus Marston;
3. Adopt the attached resolution approving a Declaration of Landmark Designation for 873 North Hill Avenue, Pasadena, California;
4. Authorize the Mayor to execute the attached Declaration of Landmark Designation for 873 North Hill Avenue, 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 August 20, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council approve the designation of the house and garage at 873 North Hill Avenue as a Landmark under Criterion “C” of PMC Section 17.62.040.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The house and garage at 873 North Hill Avenue qualify for designation as a Landmark under criterion “C” because they are significant as an intact example of Colonial Revival architecture in Pasadena designed by significant architect Sylvanus Marston.

BACKGROUND:

On April 23, 2019, the property owner, Robert Chanpong, submitted an application for Landmark designation of the house and garage at 873 North Hill Avenue. 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: 873 North Hill Avenue, Pasadena
- Location: West side of North Hill Avenue, between Mountain Street and Loma Vista Street.
- Date of Construction Completion: 1913 (source: Building Description Blank)
- Original Owner: Walter Sydney Adams (Original Building Permit)
- Original Architect: Sylvanus Marston (source: Tuttle, K. (2001). *Sylvanus Marston Pasadena's Quintessential Architect*. Santa Monica, CA: Hennessey + Ingalls.)
- Original Builder: Wopschall, Emanuel F. (source: Original Building Permit)
- Original/Present Use: Single-Family Residence
- Property Size: 14,000 square feet (source: County Assessor)
- Building Size: 2,605 square feet (source: County Assessor)

The Site

The property is located on a rectangular shaped lot on the west side of North Hill Avenue, south of Mountain Street. The site is approximately 70 feet in width and 200 feet in depth. It has two buildings; the main house at roughly the center of the site and a detached garage at the northwest corner of the site. There is a concrete driveway at the northern end of the property that provides vehicular access to the garage. The rest of the property is lawn and other landscaping.

Exterior Features of the House

Built in 1913, the two-story house is rectangular in plan with a symmetrical street presentation and has a simple cross-gable roof covered in composition shingles with boxed eaves and detailed cornices. The exterior walls of the house have a brick masonry-clad foundation, horizontal wood siding, and engaged pilasters throughout the different sides of the house. The main entry to the house is on the north (side) elevation and is sheltered by a one-story, flat-roofed porch supported by square wood posts. The front door is a solid wood door with a recessed central panel, ornate metal hardware, and full-height sidelights with divided lights. The entry is surrounded by heavy wood framing and topped with a cornice.

Fenestration along the primary elevation is simple and largely symmetrical. The street-facing elevation has wooden French doors at the first and second stories centered on the facade providing access to outdoor terraces and wooden double hung windows flanking both sides of each door. The outdoor terraces extend across the majority of the façade and are enclosed by low perimeter wood railings. The upper terrace is supported by a series of paired square wood posts. The remainder of windows on the house include a combination of double hung and casement rectangular wood windows with divided lights and heavy wood framing. A brick chimney projects above the roof from the interior space adjacent to the second-story terrace.

Detached Garage Features

The property has a detached one-car garage toward the rear of the property near the northerly property line. It is a simple structure with appearance similar to the house including a cross-gable roof with boxed eaves, corner boards, and heavy wood framing around the vehicular door opening. With the exception of its non-original door, the garage is intact and retains all of its character-defining features, and is contributing to the significance of the property.

Documented Changes to the Property

Permit records indicate that an interior dressing room was converted into a bathroom in 1949. The exact location of the bathroom is unclear in the records, but, all exterior elements of the house appear original and intact based on staff's review of permit and other historical records (see Attachment B). Records also show the chimney was repaired in 1988, the roof replaced in 1989, and the foundation was structurally retrofitted in 2006.

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans

The exterior of the building is currently in fair condition and it is used as a single-family residence. The owners have concurrently applied for Historic Property Contract (Mills Act) with this application, including a Rehabilitation and Maintenance Plan for the property that will be evaluated by staff.

Historical Overview

Arts and Crafts Movement (1895-1918)

The Arts & Crafts movement began in England around the year 1860 as a response to industrialization and mass production of goods. The Arts and Crafts period of significance in Pasadena is 1895-1918. Its focus was one of promoting manual craftsmanship rather than machine production, which was believed to result in a harmonious society where producers and consumers could take pride in their work and, thereby, enhance their lives. Works were simple and designed to show evidence of construction methods. William Morris is widely cited as being the movement's primary proponent in England, with his Red House being one of the earliest pieces of English Arts & Crafts architecture. The movement included many other forms of craft including printmaking, decorative objects, wallpaper, textiles, furniture and stained glass.

In America, Elbert Hubbard and Gustav Stickley, who both organized Arts & Crafts guilds, were the movement's primary proponents. Stickley's magazine *The Craftsman* was influential in spreading the ideals of the movement throughout the country. The American Arts & Crafts architectural movement was centered in three primary locations: Oak Park, Illinois; Berkeley and Pasadena, each drawing on local materials. In Pasadena, the primary architectural tenet of the movement was to enhance the connection between house and landscape. This was achieved through large roofed front porches, use of wood exterior cladding materials and other locally available materials such as stones from the Arroyo Seco, elimination of ornament trim, and the planning of the house around natural features of the site (contours, trees, etc.). Architectural details were frequently handcrafted by local artisans.

American Colonial Revival architecture emerged at the end of this period with influences of embodiment of purer time and harmony with nature, values consistent with the Arts and Crafts movement. Symmetry played a stronger role in the composition of the building forms, windows and other exterior features of Colonial Revival dwellings than in most other house types during the period.

Period Revival Era (1915-1942)

The Period Revival era in Pasadena occurred generally between 1915 and 1942. During this period, architectural designs were first influenced by regional American styles (including those exhibited at the 1915 California-Panama Exposition in San Diego), then, in the second half of that period (1925–1942), by European Styles from England, Spain, Italy and France. The Colonial Revival style described in more detail below is based on Elizabethan English architecture and is identified as a historically significant architectural style in the City's historic context report "Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942."

Colonial Revival Style

The Colonial Revival Style is a general term that refers to houses that exhibit characteristics of early American houses in Colonial New England. The U.S. Centennial Exposition of 1876 brought about a sense of patriotism for all things American. After 1876, there was a revival in styles from the American Colonial period. American Colonial styles became particularly popular in Pasadena at the turn of the century. Like the rest of the nation, the early examples of the style in Pasadena borrowed 18th century details and applied them to Victorian houses. These houses were much larger than their prototypes and were only reminiscent of the earlier styles. During the 1920s, the style began to be applied to more modest homes, which often mixed and matched elements from Georgian and Federal styles. The opening of restored Williamsburg in the 1930s reenergized the popularity of the style. By this time, architects began to produce more correct interpretations of historical models.

The City's 2004 Historic Context Report entitled "Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942" identifies the character-defining features of Colonial Revival style houses as:

- Symmetrical in mass and fenestration pattern.
- Narrow clapboard siding on exterior walls.
- Classical and clean lines are keynotes of the style.
- Eaves are usually extended and boxed.
- Classically detailed entrances were often positioned on the center of the facade. In some cases, entrances are capped by hoods or small porticos. Other versions extended the porch across the facade with pediments supported by Ionic or Doric columns.
- Multi-paned, double-hung sash windows are often found in pairs and typically have shutters.

Sylvanus Marston (1883-1946)

Sylvanus Marston was a significant and prolific architect who designed many significant buildings in Pasadena. Marston was born in Oakland, California and his family moved to Pasadena when he was two years old. He studied at Pomona College and graduated from Cornell University with a degree in architecture. On returning to Pasadena, Marston was commissioned to design several Arts and Crafts houses, possibly under the influence of the Greene brothers (Greene & Green), for whom he is believed to have worked during his summer vacations from Cornell.

Very early in his career (1908), Marston was employed by a local land developer, Frank G. Hogan, to design a group of bungalows around a central court. This bungalow courtyard development, known as St. Francis Court, is thought to be the first bungalow court ever built. He also designed the house at 985 N. Los Robles Avenue in the beginning of his architectural career in Pasadena. This house is an Arts and Crafts period house built in 1914 and it is similar to the house at 873 North Hill Ave, in that it is

an American Colonial design built toward the end of the Arts and Crafts period of the early twentieth century. Marston became a master of many disparate architectural styles, moving from the Arts and Crafts work of his youth to the period revivals after forming partnerships separately during his career with Garrett Van Pelt and Edgar Maybury in the 1920's.

Walter Sydney Adams (1876-1956)

The original owner of this property was Walter Sydney Adams. Adams was a distinguished astronomer who helped make Pasadena one of the most renowned scientific centers in the world. Notable works included his spectra studies, and writings upon astronomical research. Adams worked together with George Ellery Hale in the planning and building of the Mount Wilson Observatory and was director of the observatory for many years. Adams also played a major part in the planning and construction of the 200-inch telescope and observatory building on Palomar Mountain, in northern San Diego County. Adams served as a member of the Pasadena Library Board for 40 years.

ANALYSIS:

The house at 873 North Hill Avenue 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.

Under Criterion C, the house at 873 North Hill Avenue is significant because it exhibits the distinctive characteristics of an Arts and Crafts period house designed in the American Colonial Revival style, as described in the City's historic context report, "The Residential Architecture of Pasadena, CA 1895-1918: The Influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement" (Lauren Brickner, Robert Winter & Janet Tearnen, 1998). Because the house was constructed toward the end of the Arts and Crafts period and at the beginning of the Period Revival era, it also exhibits some of the distinctive characteristics of Period Revival architecture as described within the City's historic context report, "Residential Period Revival Architecture and Development in Pasadena from 1915-1942" (Teresa Grimes and Mary Jo Winder, 2004), such as symmetrical composition of massing and fenestration pattern, narrow clapboard siding, and extended and boxed eaves.

The context report does not include registration requirements; however, a house from this period would typically be eligible for historic designation if it is a good example of an identified period revival architectural style and/or of the work of a significant architect or designer. It would display most of the character-defining features of its style and would retain high integrity of design, materials and setting 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.

The property exhibits the essential character-defining features of the Colonial Revival style as described above and was designed by significant architect Sylvanus Marston. The architect designed unique components for the house including a side-oriented main entry and stacked upper and lower street-facing terraces not traditionally seen in Colonial Revival houses. The property 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 is in its original location.
- Design: The building retains its form, plan, space, structure, and style, as described above.
- Setting: The single-family residence and its surrounding properties throughout the block face are developed in Period Revival and Arts and Crafts styles that appear to be intact.
- Materials: The building has all of the original materials used in its construction and appears wholly unaltered.
- Workmanship: The building demonstrates the defining characteristics of a distinct architectural movement in the City's history.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of period revival residential architecture in Pasadena.
- Association: The property at 873 North Hill Avenue retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its association with American Colonial design within the Arts and Crafts period which represents the earlier work of Marston's architectural career in Pasadena.

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, including two-story configuration with a basement, shallowly pitched roof with composition shingles, boxed eaves and detailed cornices, brick masonry base and horizontal wood siding, and wood multi-paned double hung windows. The installation of aluminum windows within original openings of the rear porch cover located at the southwest corner of the ground floor level are not publicly visible and may be easily restored to their original appearance. The original detached garage is contributing to this designation because it retains all of its original features.

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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Attachments: (4)

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