



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: AUGUST 15, 2023

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION AS A LANDMARK
627 SOUTH EUCLID AVENUE (THE LANGFORD RESIDENCE)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Historic Preservation Commission:

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 pertaining to Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment such as designation of historic resources;
2. Find that the single-family residence at 627 S. Euclid Avenue meets Criterion "C" for designation as a landmark pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) Section 17.62.040.D.2 because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a locally significant property type, architectural style and period. It is a locally significant example of a Queen Anne style single-family residence; and,
3. Recommend that the City Council approve the designation of the property at 627 South Euclid Avenue as a landmark.

BACKGROUND:

On June 5, 2023, property owner Cynthia Torres submitted an application for Landmark designation of the building at 627 South Euclid 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.

DESCRIPTION:

Property Data

- Address: 627 South Euclid Avenue, Pasadena
- Location: West side of south Euclid Avenue, south of E. California Boulevard
- Date of Construction Completion: ca. 1886 (source: “Building Biography” Report by local historian Tim Gregory)
- Original Architect: Unknown
- Original Builder: Unknown
- Original Owner: Charles E. Langford
- Original / Present Use: Single-family residence
- Property size: 27,108 square feet (source: County Assessor)
- Building size: 4,353 square feet (source: County Assessor)

Architectural Description:

The Site:

The property is located on a rectangular shaped lot on the west side of South Euclid Avenue, south of East California Boulevard. The building is set back and elevated from the street, supported by a brick retaining wall at the street edge, and maintains deep separations from the multi-family residential building to the north and single-family residence to the south. The site includes a heavily landscaped front yard with fencing and gates, a driveway to the north, and a detached garage with attached non-original guest house at the northwest corner of the site.

Exterior Features of the Building:

The Langford Residence is a three-story-over-basement, asymmetrical building with an irregular plan that exhibits many features illustrative of the Queen Anne architectural style. The residence is characterized by a steeply pitched roof comprised of irregularly shaped hipped forms with shallow boxed eaves, cornices and a third-floor, front-facing, dormer with a wide double hung wood window, cut out wood bargeboard and sunburst detail in the gable end. The primary entrance faces east and includes a projecting, covered porch that extends across a portion of the front façade and wraps around the northeast corner. The primary entryway consists of a single, wood door with paneling, vertically oriented stained-glass panels and a matching sidelight to the right. Above the entry door and sidelight is a wood-framed transom window with leaded glass in a diamond pattern design. The entirety of the entry opening is surrounded by a simple wood frame. Access to the primary entrance is via brick steps leading up to the raised porch. The brick is carried over through the exposed foundation throughout.

The design of the house incorporates two-story projecting polygonal bays with hipped roofs at the primary (east) façade, and north side façade, both with one-over-one double-hung wood sash windows at each level as well as a more rectilinear polygonal tower with a gabled roof at the south elevation. The northern façade of the house is characterized by a prominent full-height projecting bay, roughly centered on the façade, and flanked by first floor porches. Details on this façade continue and are consistent with the other facades. The southern façade has a

covered deck that protrudes from the otherwise flat façade. The western façade has an enclosed porch that projects from the otherwise flat façade. The basement is also accessed from this side of the house. The primary cladding of the exterior is wood clapboard with a band of fish scale shingles forming a visual break between floors. The front porch posts and railings are simple and square in nature, but originally were originally more decorative. Original extant details include the wood clapboard siding, the band of wood fish-scale shingles, and wood double-hung and casement windows.

Accessory Structures:

The property also includes a one-story two-car garage constructed ca. 1910. The garage is simple in design but related to the Queen Anne style of the residence. It is oriented east-west and is capped with a side gabled roof form with two separate front-gabled forms above each opening. Its exterior is clad in similar clapboard siding and the garage carriage style doors are solid wood with applied wood design at the exterior.

There is a guest house/carriage house attached to the west side of the garage, in an L-shape, that is not original to the property's development and was constructed in 1925.

Documented Changes to the Property:

No original building permit for the residence is available, as the City of Pasadena did not begin issuing permits until 1902. Based on permit records and physical inspections, the property has undergone few major exterior changes since it was originally built ca. 1886 as follows:

- Enclosure of south-facing porch with glass (1915)
- Garage addition (1923)
- Interior remodel including some changes to window openings (1930)
- Removal of cement step – possibly front steps – and replacement with brick step and brick foundation finished in plaster (1945)
- Dormer added to roof (1970)
- Pool added (1986)

Some original details that have been removed since original construction (without permit documentation) include roof cresting and finials and spindle-work balustrades.

Current Conditions, Use, and Proposed Plans:

The exterior of the house is in good condition and it is used as a single-family residence. No significant changes to the property are proposed at this time. The property is being considered for inclusion in the City's Mills Act Program, which proposes extensive rehabilitation projects over the course of ten years.

Historical Overview:

Pasadena in the Late 19th Century¹

The real estate and development boom of the 1800s transformed Pasadena from an agricultural community into a growing resort town with an expanding year-round and seasonal population. It was during this decade that the City incorporated on June 19, 1886. The transition from agricultural community to resort town was made possible by the new railroad system that connected Los Angeles, and Pasadena, to the Midwest and East Coast, allowing an influx of wealthy seasonal and year-round residents that heralded from out-of-state. Nationally, the boom period of the 1880s ended in 1888, resulting in an economic depression that lasted through the late 1890s. However, Pasadena as a whole managed to weather the economic downturn and continued to show signs of growth, in part due to the influx of wealthy residents choosing to reside year-round. The continued growth of the City in the 1890s resulted in the founding of California Institute of Technology in 1891, the Tournament of Roses in 1890, and the Pasadena and Los Angeles Electric Railroad in 1894, which brought connecting streetcar lines to the City from Los Angeles.

Residential Architecture in Pasadena (1883-1904)²:

Residential architecture in Pasadena of the late 19th and early 20th centuries evoked the zeitgeist of national trends alongside local phenomena including the availability of materials, advancements in technology, and the influence of European, Midwest and East Coast architectural styles that were promoted by European-trained American architects, and wealthy American transplants. Advancement in building construction technologies such as the balloon frame, led to the development of new architectural styles that were distinctly American, or influenced by the European architecture, with an American translation. Balloon frame construction, which grew out of the advancement of the mechanization of the Industrial Revolution and the mass production of nails, windows, doors, decorative details, and milled lumber, allowed for faster construction and, importantly, more complex building forms. Also during this time, Pasadena became a localized hub of building trades resulting in several lumber yards, brick manufacturers, and planing mills being established within the City.

In Pasadena, there were two categories of residential architecture: high-style and vernacular. According to the “Late 19th and Early 20th Century Development and Architecture in Pasadena” context statement, high-style houses “were often created by schooled, self-conscious, and professionally trained architects and builders. Style is essentially a means of categorizing architectural details on the basis of common, shared, basic characteristics that mark historic architectural periods.”

Together with these advancements in building technologies, the proliferation of localized and readily available building materials, European and transcontinental stylistic influences, and the increasing accessibility of how-to designs found in architectural pattern books, the residential

¹ Late 19th and Early 20th Century Development and Architecture in Pasadena; pp. 5-9

² Late 19th and Early 20th Century Development and Architecture in Pasadena; pp. 10-13

architecture of this period began to reflect broader trends of the Victorian Era including Queen Anne, Eastlake, Stick, Second Empire, Shingle, and Folk Victorian architectural styles.

Queen Anne Style Architecture^{3,4}

Relative to American architectural history, the Victorian era refers to the architectural styles that grew from the last decades of Britain's Queen Elizabeth's reign, particularly the period of 1860 to 1900. During this time in Pasadena, there was uncommonly high demand for high-style residential architecture and the style iterations of the Victorian Era, in part due to the influx of wealthy residents.

According to the "Late 19th and Early 20th Century Development and Architecture in Pasadena" context statement, "the Queen Anne style was developed by Scottish architect Richard Norman Shaw, which referenced medieval building forms with dramatic, steeply-pitched gabled roofs, asymmetrical plans, and multi-textured walls, multi-colored walls" (p. 13). Furthermore, there are four common subtypes of this style pertaining to decorative architectural detailing, including Spindework, Free Classic, Half-timbered, and Patterned Masonry (McAlester, pp. 345-346).

The character-defining features of Queen Anne style are:

- One to two stories
 - Irregular plans and asymmetrical massing
 - Wood clapboard, shingle, or a combination of siding
 - Hipped, gabled, or combination of roof forms
 - Wrap-around porches
 - Cut away bay windows, oriels, or corner towers
 - Narrowly proportioned double-hung windows, often with bordered glass
 - Leaded and colored glass often used in transoms
 - Decorative millwork detailing
 - Steeply pitched roof of irregular shape, usually with a dominant front-facing gable
 - Patterned shingles
 - Other devices to avoid a smooth-walled appearance
- Asymmetrical façade with partial or full-width porch usually one story high extending along one or more side walls

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.

³ Late 19th and Early 20th Century Development and Architecture in Pasadena; pp. 13

⁴ A Field Guide to American Houses, McAlester; pp. 345-346; 397-398

Charles E. Langford

The property's first owner for whom the residence was constructed, Charles Elliot Langford, was born in New York in 1828 to a family who owned a woolen mill. Langford established himself as a "capitalist" across the country, beginning with a real estate venture in his early 20s and expanding later to establishing various types of mills. Langford came to Pasadena in 1886 and, at that time, purchased 20 acres that would encompass his home (the subject property) as well as land in East Pasadena. Locally, he set up a Pasadena branch of the Langford & Hall Lumber Company, which he had initially established in Illinois with his business partner at the time. Charles Langford lived at the subject property with his second wife, Maria, and died in 1893.

Julia Child

The property passed ownership to Calvin Durand in 1909 who then sold the property to John McWilliams, Sr. in 1912. McWilliams was the son of an Illinois legislator and was born in 1833. He and his family, including his son John McWilliams, Jr., moved to California in the mid- to late 1800s. McWilliams, Jr., was the father of Julia Carolyn McWilliams, who later became Julia Child, famed "French Chef." Child was born at Huntington Hospital in 1912 and spent the first two years of her life at her grandfather's Euclid Avenue home, after which she and her parents moved to a nearby home on Magnolia Avenue. The residence stayed in the extended McWilliams family until 1957.

ANALYSIS:

The building at 627 South Euclid Avenue is eligible for designation as a landmark under Criterion C of PMC Section 17.62.040.D.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 possesses artistic values of significance to the City.

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 627 South Euclid Avenue is significant because it is a locally significant, intact example of a Queen Anne style single-family residence built ca. 1886. 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 retains the majority of its form, plan, space, structure, and style, including its massing, mostly original fenestration and exterior materials, roof form, entryway and porch.

- Setting: The setting surrounding the existing residence has developed since its early construction and includes a combination of early and late or current day single-family and multi-family residential developments. However, the changes to the surrounding setting of the subject site are common in urban environments and does not significantly impact the significance of this property.
- Materials: The building retains a majority of its original exterior materials.
- Workmanship: The building retains the majority of its exterior materials and features that reflect the craftsmanship of late 19th century single-family design and construction, and therefore retains integrity of workmanship. Those features that are missing from the original design are not crucial to the understanding of the house as an example of the Queen Anne architectural style.
- Feeling: The property clearly expresses the characteristics of the Queen Anne architectural style and evokes the feeling of the early residential development within the larger context of the history of Pasadena.
- Association: The property at 627 South Euclid Avenue retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and feeling, and therefore continues to convey its association with late 19th century residential development in Pasadena.

Based on the above, the property retains sufficient integrity to qualify for designation as a landmark under Criterion C. The building retains a majority of its original character-defining features, including three-story configuration with a basement, steeply pitched hipped roof, irregular plan, asymmetrical facades, use of integrated polygonal forms with bay windows, porches, original wood windows in punched patterns, and decorative exterior detailing such as the band of fish-scale shingles, cut-out wood barge boards and sunburst detailing.

Although the property was the residence of Charles E. Langford and, later, Julia (McWilliams) Child, it is not directly associated with the important works of their personal or professional lives such that it would be significant under Criterion B (association with the productive lives of significant people)

Contributing features to the landmark designation include the three-story residence and its exterior Queen Anne features. The detached garage and carriage/guest house are non-contributing elements of the site as they were constructed outside of the period of significance, which is ca. 1886, the year of construction of the residence. The brick retaining wall at the street edge also appears to be a later addition to the property and would, therefore, also be non-contributing to this designation.

CONCLUSION:

The building at 627 South Euclid Avenue qualifies for designation as a landmark under Criterion C as an intact, locally significant example of a Queen Anne style single-family residence.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jennifer Paige, AICP
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



Stephanie Cisneros
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



Kevin Johnson
Principal Planner

Attachments:

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Application & Historical Documentation
- C. Current & Historic Photographs
- D. Effects of Historic Designation