



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: January 14, 2011 REPORT NO. HRB-11-005

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of January 28, 2011

SUBJECT: **ITEM #6 – Henry Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #1**

APPLICANT: Stephen & Donna Schultz represented by Legacy 106, Inc.

LOCATION: 1955 Sunset Boulevard, Uptown Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Henry Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #1 located at 1955 Sunset Boulevard as a historical resource.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Henry Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #1 located at 1955 Sunset Boulevard as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1912 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation shall exclude the 1990 first floor addition. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Craftsman style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1912 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a wide, low-pitch front gable; exposed rafter tails; wood shingle siding; a full width covered porch with cobble columns and walls; and single pane and multi-lite fixed and casement wood frame and sash windows.



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2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a highly intact and well executed example of Melhorn's work in the Craftsman style and reflects a high level of design and construction.

## 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 building is a two story house located in the residential subdivision of Inspiration Heights.

The historic name of the resource, the Henry Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #1, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Henry Nelson, who constructed the house as a speculation house and the name of Martin V. Melhorn, a Master Builder. It should be noted that the house was constructed in 1912 during which time Melhorn was working with John Wahrenberger and John Rice as the Bay City Construction Company (1911-1916). Properties currently designated under HRB Criterion D for an association with Melhorn that were built between 1911 and 1916 were designated only for the association with Melhorn and not the Bay City Construction Company or its other partners. Therefore, the appropriate historic name based on significance under Criterion D would be limited to Melhorn.

## ANALYSIS

A historical resource research report was prepared by Legacy 106, Inc., 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 *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 as a special element of the historical and architectural development of the community because it was one of the earliest houses in the Inspiration Heights subdivision. The applicant provides a great deal of information on the development of area first as Johnston Heights and then Inspiration Heights. The subject property, along with the adjacent property next door and others, were used as speculation properties to attract buyers. However, the first property built within the subdivision was the Villa Orizaba, which remains extant and is a designated historic resource. It is the Villa that better reflects special elements of the community's historical and architectural development. The subject property was one of several homes built for speculative purposes, and it is staff's position that the house does not reflect a special element of the community's development to a greater extent than the others. Therefore, staff does not 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 subject property at 1955 Sunset Boulevard is a two story Craftsman style home built in 1912 and features a wide, low-pitch front gable; exposed rafter tails; wood shingle siding; a full width covered porch; and a concrete foundation. The entry porch is accessed via concrete steps and is covered by gable roof supported on broad cobble columns and low cobble walls. The entry door is centered on the façade and is flanked by a large single pane window to the left and a tripartite window to the right, both with transoms above. At the second floor above the porch roof a shed roof with rafter tails and brackets covers four multi-light casement windows flanked by single pane tri-partite windows with transoms above. Fenestration on the remaining facades consists of single pane fixed, casement and transom windows. A detached garage is located at the rear.

Modifications include a 166 square foot first floor addition on the west side of the house toward the rear. This addition was completed in 1990 with a compatible character and is not readily visible. Other minor modifications include aluminum windows at the southeast corner of the house and a sealed window on the east elevation. All of the modifications have a minor impact on the integrity of the house.

The house embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Craftsman style, as described above, and retains integrity to its 1912 date of construction. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C. The designation shall exclude the 1990 first floor addition.

*CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.*

Martin V. Melhorn moved to San Diego in 1911 and formed the Bay City Construction Company with John J. Wahrenberger and John C. Rice as his partners. Bay City Construction lasted until 1916 and during this time Melhorn and Wahrenberger both predominantly designed in the Craftsman and Arts & Crafts styles. In 1913 Melhorn started another company, Alberta Security Company, with his wife Alberta, which focused on the financial aspects of his construction business. Bay City Construction Company was dissolved when John Wahrenberger became ill in 1916 at which time Melhorn began working under the name Martin V. Melhorn Investments. During this time Melhorn's design style shifted away from Arts & Crafts and became more experimental and he designed larger residences for leading citizens of San Diego.

The subject property reflects Melhorn's early work in San Diego in the Craftsman style as part of Bay City Construction. Only two of the seven individual resources currently designated as the work of Melhorn were designed during this early period. The subject property is a highly intact and well executed example of Craftsman architecture and reflects a high level of design and construction. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the subject property under HRB Criterion D as a resource that is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn.

The applicant's report suggests that John Wahrenberger should be established as a Master Craftsman. His son, William, has been established by the Board as a Master and three properties have been designated as examples of his work. However, neither John nor Bay City Construction as an entity have been established as Masters. With limited available information regarding John Wahrenberger's contributions and overall body of work, staff does not recommend designation under HRB Criterion D for an association with him at this time.

#### 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 Henry Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #1 located at 1955 Sunset Boulevard be designated with a period of significance of 1912 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that exhibits the distinctive characteristics of Craftsman style architecture, and HRB Criterion D as a resource that is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn. The designation shall exclude the 1990 first floor addition. 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 Stanco  
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd  
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

KS/cw

Attachment(s):

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

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 1/28/2011

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 1/28/2011, to consider the historical designation of the **Henry Nelson/Martin V. Melhorn Spec House #1** (owned by Stephen & Donna Schultz, 1955 Sunset Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92103) located at **1955 Sunset Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **443-580-03-00**, further described as BLK 6 LOT 2 E 1/2 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 Henry Nelson/Martin V. 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 Craftsman style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1912 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a wide, low-pitch front gable; exposed rafter tails; wood shingle siding; a full width covered porch with cobble columns and walls; and single pane and multi-lite fixed and casement wood frame and sash 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 resource that is representative of a notable work of Master Builder Martin V. Melhorn and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource is a highly intact and well executed example of Melhorn's work in the Craftsman style and reflects a high level of design and construction. 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**. This designation shall exclude the 1990 first floor addition.

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