



The Proposed Plaza Bonita Historic District encompasses the parcels surrounding Plaza Bonita and Bonita Way. Plaza Bonita has 9 contributing properties and 5 non-contributing properties as noted above. Boundaries are Alameda Padre Serra and Orena Streets.

DISTRICT DESCRIPTION

Period of significance: 1920-1940

Plaza Bonita Historic District is located within the City's Lower Riviera neighborhood. The district is characterized by single family houses built in various iterations of the Period Revival Styles, but predominately the Spanish Colonial Revival. Plaza Bonita has the special characteristic of being centered on a fountain set in a small plaza with extensive sandstone retaining walls, steps and curbs. The stone hardscape centered on Bonita Plaza was built by Santa Barbara's notable coterie of stone masons. The setting of the district is defined by the large scale geological features such as Mission Ridge to the east, the mouth of Mission Canyon to the north and significant public spaces such as Mission Park with its lawns rose garden and remnants of Mission Santa Barbara's outbuildings and extensive waterworks system. On the east side of the proposed district, Alameda Padre Serra with its concentration of Period Revival houses, and early 20th century institutional buildings such as the former State Normal School and Jefferson School, the El Encanto Hotel and Orpet and Hillside parks also contribute to visual character of the proposed district's setting.

Proposed Plaza Bonita Historic District

The Historic District has been added to City's List Of Potential Historic Resources but has not been designated by the Historic Landmark Commission or City Council.



The historically significant residences were designed in the mid-1920 to cluster around a small plaza featuring a Spanish style fountain.

HISTORY

The difficult topography, distance from downtown and unreliability of the City's water system prevented intensive development of the area until the early twentieth century. The neighborhood reflects the effects of a number of economic events that transformed Santa Barbara during the first two decades of the twentieth century. As a result of these changes, Santa Barbara's population grew from 7,000 in 1900 to 34,000 in 1940. This development was largely fuelled by the City's expansion after the completion of the railroad line linking the City with Northern California. With the arrival of the railroad, the development of the resort industry boomed. In addition, the State Normal School opened in the Lower Riviera and a need for housing increased for the expanding middle class. Located on the periphery of downtown, the Lower Riviera, of which the Plaza Bonita Historic District is a part, was located within commuting distance of downtown. By the 1920s, a functioning water system, streetcar line and paved streets made the neighborhood popular with the City's middle and upper middle classes.

ARCHITECTURE

During this same period, a concerted effort was made to make Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial Revival Santa Barbara's dominant architectural styles. Spanish Colonial Revival architecture flourished in Santa Barbara from 1915 through the 1940s. The concentration of original examples of the style in Plaza Bonita represents a significant period of development in the City. The City's architecture became known for the smooth stucco walls, clay tile roofs and deeply recessed wood windows of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which is exemplified in the this proposed district.

With its visual and historical references to the City's Spanish and Mexican era heritage, the Spanish Colonial Revival style particularly resonated in Santa Barbara and was responsible for the transformation of the visual character of the community from a Victorian era town into an evocative celebration of Mediterranean and Spanish inspired architecture. The style was especially appropriate for the environs of Mission Santa Barbara. One of the most outstanding examples of the employment of the style in the Lower Riviera can be seen in the houses designed around Plaza Bonita in the mid-1920s clustered around a small plaza featuring Spanish style fountain.



This Spanish Colonial Revival residence features the deeply recessed openings along smooth stucco walls that are unique to the Spanish Colonial Revival style.



An example of a 1930s Spanish Colonial Revival house in Plaza Bonita.