



Proposed West Beach 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 proposed West Beach Historic District includes properties roughly bounded by West Cabrillo Boulevard on the south, Chapala on the east, Natoma and Yanonali Streets on the north, and Bath Street on the west.

INTRODUCTION

The proposed West Beach Historic District represents Santa Barbara's residential and tourist development along the waterfront from 1900 through 1950. The district has an important collection of Spanish Colonial Revival multi-family residential buildings and courtyard apartment buildings. A portion of the district includes an area originally known as Burton Mound, an archeological site that was once the location of a prehistoric Chumash settlement. In the early 1900s, this same area was the site of the Potter Hotel, a large luxury resort. After the hotel was destroyed by a fire in 1921, the land was subsequently divided for multi-family residential use and became known as the Ambassador Tract. The district's contributing properties include residences, hotels/motels, and small commercial buildings. The district's predominant architectural style is Spanish Colonial Revival, with a few examples of other styles such as Arts and Crafts and Minimal Traditional.



The deeply recessed windows, stucco walls and clay tile roof are features that define the Spanish Colonial Revival style of this contributing historic resource in the proposed West Beach Historic District.

HISTORY

Period of significance: 1901-1953

Once the railroad connected Santa Barbara to San Francisco in 1901, tourists flocked to Santa Barbara, exposing a shortage of accommodations for wealthy travelers. In response to the new demand, hotel developer from Los Angeles, Milo Potter built a five-story 600-room Mission Revival hotel on Burton Mound. The hotel's 36-acre grounds were lushly landscaped. The Potter Hotel was a showplace and a popular tourist destination from its inception until it burned down in 1921.

The destruction of the Potter Hotel left a void in upscale tourist facilities along the waterfront. In addition, between 1920 and 1930, the population of Santa Barbara increased by over fifty percent with people lured by the climate and the prospect of employment in the booming tourist industry. Consequently, West Beach became the center for smaller hotels, motels and cottages, apartment buildings, boarding houses, restaurants, bathhouses, and an amusement area.

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, and the concentration of original examples of the style in West Beach are representative of a significant period of development in the City. The City's architecture became known for the smooth stucco walls, clay tile roofs and recessed wood windows of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which is exemplified in the this proposed district.



The unique collection of authentic Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in the proposed West Beach Historic District sets Santa Barbara apart from other coastal communities.