



# HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE REPORT

Prepared by

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714 Chiquita Road  
Santa Barbara, California

**Designation Status:** Listed  
on the Historic Resources  
Inventory

**Assessor Parcel Number:** 031-142-013

**Constructed:** 1933

**Designer:** Alexander D'Alfonso

**Architectural Style:** Transitional  
design with Spanish Colonial Revival  
and Art Deco elements.

**Property Description:** Built into the  
hillside, the stucco house features a low-  
pitched, hipped roof covered in terra  
cotta tiles with wide overhanging eaves.  
The linearly aligned house features a large  
windows flanked by casement windows.  
The house features four sets of French  
doors on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor that open out to  
round balconies with iron railings. The  
solid wood front door at the top of the  
steps on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor is wood plank.



1933 Original drawings of the house by  
Alexander D'Alfonso



**Significance:** City of Santa Barbara establishes historical significance as provided by the Municipal Code, Section 30.157.025. Any historic building that meets one or more of the five criteria established for a City Landmark, or a City Structure of Merit can be considered significant. The structure may be significant as a Structure of Merit per the following criteria:

**Historic Integrity:**

714 Chiquita Road is in good condition. *The windows have been replaced with metal, without proper permits and the window configuration is currently being resolved.* However, the house conveys integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association so that it can convey its original 1933 appearance.

Erin Graffy dedicated seven pages of her article titled “The Italian Renaissance in Santa Barbara”, published in the 1995 winter issue of *Noticias Magazine*, a publication of the Santa Barbara Historical Society, to the influence of Alexander D’Alfonso on Santa Barbara. Graffy noted that although the Spanish influence is seen every day in Santa Barbara, it was “the Italians, who, over the last century, built Santa Barbara into the City we know, both literally and figuratively.” Known for their orchards, dairies, farming and fishing, markets, hotels, and home building, the Italian influence is evident throughout the City. D’Alfonso initially came to the United States in 1904, at the urging of his brother, Carlo, who, at the time was living in Portland, Oregon. Born in Apulia, Italy in 1889, D’Alfonso left Italy at the age of 15. After a year of attending high school in Portland, he became an apprentice to a cabinet maker, staying in the cabinetry business for the next four years. Following a brief relocation in Vancouver, D’Alfonso moved to Los Angeles and then, in 1915, to Santa Barbara when he began work as a carpenter at the Flying A Studios. In a desire to improve his education, particularly his language skills, he enrolled in night courses and even rented a room with a Spanish-speaking family, the Mosteros, so he could become fluent in Spanish. He married Maria Belino, the Mostero family granddaughter, in 1917.



1086 Garcia Road, designed in 1927 by Alex D’Alfonso with his signature large fixed windows flanked by horizontally divided casement windows.

In 1920, D’Alfonso started his own contracting and building company. His design and contracting firm was active until 1978. Best known for his residential work, D’Alfonso also designed a number of commercial buildings in Santa Barbara. In 1921, he began designing and building houses. He drew the plans and maintained his own crew of plasterers, painters, carpenters, electricians, and

plumbers. In the 1920s, D'Alfonso favored the type of architecture that not only drew upon his Italian Mediterranean heritage, but reflected the then-popular regional motif of the day: the Spanish Colonial Revival style. One of his first jobs in 1921 was a small tract of homes near Alisos Street, including one for his own family. Noted for his well-built and well-crafted houses, D'Alfonso designed virtually every house he built, often sketching out his ideas at his small kitchen table. D'Alfonso also designed several commercial buildings. In 1926, he designed the Sanchez building at 301 East Haley Street, in the Mission Revival style, with two towers and arched windows. His houses started to dot the Lower Riviera landscape in the mid-1920s with his character-defining features of large fixed windows flanked by horizontally divided casement windows and terra-cotta roofs as seen at 1086 Garcia Road designed in 1927. The Lower Riviera, below Alameda Padre Serra, consisted primarily of middle and working class housing. By 1925, D'Alfonso built nearly 200 houses, working out of his office, then at 1120 State Street, completing on the average one house a week.



1710 Mira Vista Avenue designed by Alex D'Alfonso in 1930 as his own residence and office. This is designated a City Landmark and has the large window flanked by horizontal divided lights and fluted stucco balcony shape.

From 1910 through the 1930s most houses built in the Lower Riviera included modest sized Craftsman and modest interpretations of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. With its visual and historical references to the City's Spanish and Mexican era heritage, the Spanish Colonial Revival style resonated deeply in Santa Barbara and was responsible for the visual character of the community as evocative Mediterranean inspired architecture. The style was especially appropriate for the Lower Riviera whose steep topography, irregular layout of streets, prominent stonework, expansive views, and lush landscaping provided a picturesque setting for clusters of white plastered houses capped by red-tiled roofs overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

It was the tragic death of D'Alfonso's nine-year old son, Carl, killed by an automobile in 1929, that motivated D'Alfonso to move back to Italy with his wife and 10-year-old son, Daniel. During this trip he also travelled to Spain and France. They returned in 1930, and in less than one year, D'Alfonso built 32 houses, including his own at 1710 Mira Vista Avenue. D'Alfonso noted that he drew inspiration for his Santa Barbara houses from the architecture of Spain in his company brochure, illustrated with a picture of his own house (see page 4).

It was in this year after his return that D'Alfonso built the house at 830 De La Guerra Terrace along with 822 De La Guerra Terrace (in 1954 he built 825 De La Guerra Terrace across the street from these 1930s interpretation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style.) D'Alfonso was one of the first developers to take an environmental approach to building. He was not one to level a piece of land by bulldozing. Instead, he would design a building to fit the contours of the terrain and the natural habitat of the area, building around trees and boulders and using local materials for the stone walls. 714 Chiquita Road is an excellent example of this technique as it is nestled into the hillside with two stories on the street elevation and one story in the backyard with the first floor at grade of the front yard and the second floor at the grade of the backyard.

D'Alfonso's work transitioned from the Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial Revival styles in the 1920s into other popular styles that came into popularity over the six decades he built houses in Santa Barbara. The house at 714 Chiquita Road is constructed in a time of transition from the Spanish Colonial Revival style into the modern style of the 1930s: Art Deco and Streamline Moderne.



### *Modern Spain Overlooks the Pacific*

Situated on a picturesque Santa Barbara hillside, this house of purely Old Spain design, built by Alex C. D'Alfonso, is one of the latest additions to Santa Barbara's colony of beautiful homes. Its many windows overlook a charming vista of hills and water, and its interior is most conveniently arranged for the pleasure and comfort of the modern American family.

In this lovely home is very artfully combined the best of modern Spain with the best of up-to-date America. And this particular combination is especially well suited to our Santa Barbara coast.

**ALEX C. D'ALFONSO**  
BUILDER

1723 Mission Ridge Telephone 6512 Santa Barbara, California



Above: An example of a Streamline Moderne building designed by Alex D'Alfonso in 1939. His work expanded six decades in Santa Barbara transitioning from popular styles reflecting changing tastes and trends of the different eras.

The Spanish Colonial Revival style emphasizes the interplay of cubic volumes, patios, pergolas, and verandas. Local architects interpreted and redefined each element to their own oeuvre of the form, massing, and decorative treatments. In Santa Barbara, examples of Spanish Colonial Revival style can be found throughout the City as one of its most defining styles of architecture. There are many c. 1920-1930s small, single-family, Spanish Colonial Revival style homes throughout the City. This building is an example of a small, residential interpretation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which became an important part of Santa Barbara's heritage in the 1920s, when the City deliberately transformed its architecture and look from an ordinary western style town into a romantic Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean style city. This transformation was the result of the planning vision of a number of Santa Barbara citizens in the early 1920s with the founding of the Santa Barbara Community Arts Association, which urged that the town identify its individual character and then use planning principles to develop it. The designer Alex D'Alfonso designed many buildings in his interpretation the Spanish Colonial Revival style, however by 1933, when he designed this particular house, the Art Deco style of architecture was becoming popular across the United States, with many examples constructed in nearby Los Angeles by the Hollywood elite. The distinguishing features of the style are simple: clean shapes, often with a "streamlined" look. The 714 Chiquita Road house exemplifies the transition with Spanish Colonial Revival elements like the massive chimney, the play of light and shadow across the thick, white plaster walls with the overhanging eaves acting as a transition from the terra-cotta roof to wall. The house has elements of the Art Deco style of the 1930s with its linearity and minimally recessed fenestrations reminiscent of modern ocean liners, emphasizing speed and modernity. The French doors leading out to the balconies, symmetrically placed on either side of the expansive windows, and the simple clean line of the bell curves under the balconies, hint at a transition to the modern Art Deco style. The characteristic features of the style reflected admiration for the modernity of the machine and for the inherent design qualities of machine-made objects (e.g., relative simplicity, planarity, symmetry, and unvaried repetition of elements). As an example of D'Alfonso's transition period from Spanish Colonial Revival to a modern style, the house is a good representation of a transformation happening after the big boom of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in the 1920s to the more modern styles becoming popular in 1930. The large façade window became a character-defining feature of D'Alfonso, as he used this feature in houses in his Mediterranean interpretation of the ranch style as well, as it brings in light to the homes and offers expansive views. Later in 1939, Alex D'Alfonso designed one of his most noted buildings, the Live Oak Dairy on Milpas Street in the Streamline Moderne style.

During World War II, D'Alfonso completed dairy and ranch commissions outside of Santa Barbara, in Moorpark, Lompoc, Buellton, San Julian, and Santa Maria. In 1946 at the end of World War II, D'Alfonso's son Daniel joined the firm when he returned from war service. In 1947, D'Alfonso built a mixed-use building at 631-635 N. Milpas Street, housing four commercial storefronts and a second-floor office for his contracting firm. Designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, its notable features are the tile work on the bulkheads, entry surround, and stair risers, as well as the roof cresting and balcony railings modeled on a 1940s geometric pattern.



*D'Alfonso, late in life, with a map showing all the buildings he constructed in Santa Barbara.*

A Photograph of Alex D'Alfonso with a map showing all the buildings he designed in Santa Barbara.

The firm bought a tract of land on the lower Riviera above Ortega and De La Guerra Streets and built 34 houses along Diana Road and Lane, between 1946 and 1948. D'Alfonso designed the single-family houses in a post-World War II interpretation of the Mediterranean style, laying out the roads lined with native Santa Barbara sandstone retaining walls. The houses are rectilinear with large windows flanked by divided casement windows that overlook the streetscape, like the house 714 Chiquita Road. This is a signature feature of many D'Alfonso homes as it brings a sense of interaction with the street and house. The houses feature elements of the ranch style combined with the Mediterranean style terra-cotta roofs, smooth, stucco white walls, and horizontally divided lights to fit into the Santa Barbara aesthetic established in the 1920s to create a Mediterranean/Spanish Colonial Revival style town. This development, along Diana Lane and Diana Road (named after his daughter), remains intact and serves as an excellent example of house siting and design. Almost all of the houses still display the craftsmanship and inherent character of D'Alfonso, including tucked-in porches and large, expansive front facing windows. The small collection of D'Alfonso houses retain their Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century character due to their unique layout on the



Above: 631 North Milpas. 1947 mixed use design by Alex D'Alfonso.

rounded streets that sets the development apart from the grid of streets. They have a cohesiveness as a collection of houses that are a mid-century interpretation of the Spanish Colonial style with repeated features like the large front windows and terra-cotta roofs on the linear buildings that create a special character. The houses sold for \$12,500 to \$15,000. D'Alfonso continued to create distinctive developments in the 1950s including Roble Lane on the Lower Riviera, with 13 houses, and Arbolado Road. The 1950s houses are more Mid-Century modern than those on Diana Road/Lane as they are stripped of Spanish features and ornament and have aluminum windows and simplified materials illustrating how his designs changed with the trends of the era in which he worked.



Above: One of the 34 houses on Diana Lane/Road designed from 1946-48.

In 1978, D'Alfonso closed the business following the death of his son Daniel. Alex D'Alfonso died on January 14, 1991, at the age of 101, leaving Santa Barbara with a body of work that helps define Santa Barbara as a unique City with Spanish Colonial Revival influences of distinct terra-cotta roofs and smooth plaster walls. Crossing six decades of transforming tastes, style, and economic eras, D'Alfonso made his work fit uniquely into Santa Barbara, giving the City a unique sense of place. As an intact example of D'Alfonso's work, the house at 714 Chiquita Road is an important representation of a large body of work that defines Santa Barbara neighborhoods.

The building embodies elements that demonstrate an outstanding attention to design, detail, materials, and craftsmanship with the low hipped roof that emphasizes the terra cotta tile that creates a decorative edge from the roof to the wall, and the smooth stucco walls. In addition, the façade features a large windows flanked by casement lights. The North elevation has two sets of French doors that open onto balconies, made with wrought iron railings, which have a stucco curve. The house also features a massive, expressive chimney on the East elevation.

**Historic Integrity:** The building retains most of its original features and most of the surrounding neighborhood is intact, so that it has high historic integrity of location, feeling, setting, design, materials, workmanship, and association. The building can convey its 1931 original appearance.

#### **Work Cited:**

Graffy, Erin. "The Italian Renaissance in Santa Barbara, Part One." *Noticias*, Quarterly Magazine of the Santa Barbara Historical Society, Volume XLI, No.4, Winter 1995.

Post/Hazeltine Associates. "Historic Structure Sites Report for 1710 Mira Vista Rd." July 26, 2006

Post/Hazeltine Associates. "Lower Riviera Survey Context Study". April 4, 2011.

