Designation Status: Added to the Historic Resources Inventory in 1986

Assessor Parcel Number: 025-252-004

Constructed: 1927

Additions: 1928 (organ room), 2001 (new garage, 1st & 2nd story additions)

Architect: George Porter

Historic Name: Carlson House

Architectural Style: Spanish Colonial Revival
Property Description: The two-story Spanish Colonial Revival style residence is irregular in plan, finished with stucco siding and clad with terra cotta tile roofing. The massing consists of various volumes and heights, including a cylindrical tower entrance with a cone-shaped roof, situated at the mid-point of the north elevation (Garden Street). Several types of roofs are featured throughout, including side-gabled, shed, and flat. Fenestration consists of asymmetrically grouped wood-framed windows. The south elevation features a cantilevered wooden Monterey-style balcony and stucco-covered chimney, and an elevated concrete terrace below, surfaced with red tile pavers. In contrast, the original detached garage is rectangular in plan, finished with stucco siding, featuring a decorative stucco grill, and terra cotta tile roofing to match the primary residence, and is punctuated with a wooden garage door, pedestrian door, and double-hung casement windows. The site includes a sandstone pillars accentuating the front pedestrian walkway framing an iron gate and a sandstone retaining wall, 6” to 2’ in height, which runs along the Garden Street property line to its intersection with Padre Street, featuring breaks to accommodate site steps, a pedestrian gate, and driveway. This feature enhances the streetscape, provides distinction to the site, and showcases the artistry of local stonemasons. Sandstone site wall hardscaping is also present throughout the property.

Significance: The building qualifies to be designated a Structure of Merit under the following criteria provided by the Municipal Code, Section 30. 157.025

Historic Integrity:

The building retains much of its original character, so that it retains historic integrity of location, feeling, setting, design, materials, and association, despite the 2001 construction of first and second story additions at the rear elevation and new garage off the front elevation. The building continues to convey its original 1927 appearance because the additions do not obscure the original façade’s composition and character defining features, and were completed in a manner such that the building can convey the original intent of the architect.
Criterion 3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, architectural style or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic or historic value, or represents a significant and distinguishable collection whose individual components may lack distinction;

Designed in 1927 in the Spanish Colonial Revival style by architect George Porter for sisters Hilma S. and Irma Carlson, the residence is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, key to the architectural identity of Santa Barbara. (Architectural Research Consultants)

The Spanish Colonial Revival style emphasizes the interplay of various volumes, patios, and balconies. Examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style are present throughout the City of Santa Barbara, from the distinct commercial buildings on State Street, to large homes and estates on the Riviera, to multi-family housing and hotels in the West Beach neighborhood along the waterfront. The Spanish Colonial Revival Style 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 to a romantic Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean style city.

The subject residence employs the following character-defining elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival style:

• Roofing clad in terra cotta tiles with an emphasis on the decorative roof-to-wall edge.

• A combination of complex voids and masses creating an interplay of volumes, emphasized by the round turret in the front and the varying walls and roof lines.

• Emphasis on expansive planer wall surfaces punctured by carefully placed recessed openings.

• Stucco decorative grill in the turret and garage walls.

• Access to the front porch via a small stoop.

• Expressive front entry with arched opening and wood panel door with a decorative grill.

• Windows and doors that recess at the wall plane with a stucco return and no trim.

• Monterey style wood balcony at the rear elevation (south).

• Iron Juliette balcony at front elevation (north)

• Wood casement windows and doors to the Juliette balcony with horizontally-divided lights.

• Santa Barbara native sandstone pillars framing the iron gate, retaining wall, and site walls.

Historic Context

The project site was part of the original grounds of the Mission Santa Barbara, and was located within the original boundary of the Mission Gardens. The Mission Aqueduct crossed the lot and remnants of it may
exist on site, although there have been none located above ground. It was acquired by H.K. Winchers in 1889, and by the early 1900s the entire block was part of the Dreer Estate. In the mid-1920s, after the death of Mrs. William Dreer, the Estate was sold and subdivided, and the 2115 Garden Street lot was created. It was then purchased by Hilma and Irma Carlson. (Architectural Research Consultants; and Nelson, Chris)

The Carlton sisters moved to Santa Barbara in 1915 with their parents Greta and John Carlson. John Carlson owned a dry goods store downtown in the early 1920s. After his death in 1924, Hilma opened a furniture store at 1208 State Street in the Hitchcock building. In 1937, she opened a second store in Bakersfield. Hilma was active in the Trinity Episcopal Church, local politics, and was well known in the local music community. She frequently held organ performances and traditional Fiesta and Christmas parties at the Garden Street residence. After Hilma’s death in 1945, Irma operated Carlson Furniture into the 1960s. (Architectural Research Consultants)

A building permit was issued to Hilma Carlson on November 21, 1927 for construction of the residence, which listed George Porter as the architect.

A second building permit was issued in January of 1928 for an “organ room” addition in which Porter is also named as architect. The residence, garage, and organ room were all completed in early 1928 and the Carlson sisters occupied the home until Irma Carlson’s death in April of 1991. The current owners, Sue and Gerald DeRose, purchased the residence approximately 30 years ago, making them the second owners of the home. (Architectural Research Consultants)

**Architect: George Porter**

Porter had a varied career and was active in the Santa Barbara theatrical community. The 1924 Santa Barbara City Directory lists his occupation as a “Clerk, Standard Oil” and in 1925 as Architect. In 1936 his occupation is given as Interior Decorator, and in 1938 as Musician. In the 1950s he and a partner operated a “Decoration and Building” business, according to his obituary (Architectural Research Consultants). Porter also designed the Foster Residence, a designated a Structure of Merit located at 2209 Chapala Street, in the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

In 1916, Bertram Goodhue, author of a book on Spanish Colonial architecture, helped to kick-start the new Spanish style with his designs for the Panama California Expo in San Diego. Until then, Spanish themed architecture mimicked Mission prototypes; however, architects and patrons began to look to Spain itself for detailed examples of the Spanish style after the Expo. Throughout the territories initially settled by the Spanish in the Southwest, as well as Texas and Florida, the Spanish Colonial Revival style flourished. Santa Barbara had many architects talented in designing in the style, including George Washington Smith, Lutah Maria Riggs, Winsor Soule, Reginald Johnson FAIA, William Edwards, and Joseph Plunkett. Another key to the success of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in Santa Barbara, was the Plans and Planting Committee through which Bernhard Hoffman, Pearl Chase, and others helped to lead Santa Barbara towards a more unified architectural style based on the City’s Spanish Colonial and Mexican past (Grumbine, Anthony, Harrison Design; Hernandez, Nicole).

The subject residence is excellent example of original Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture essential to the identity of Santa Barbara; therefore, the residence is important to the heritage of the City.
**Sandstone Walls:**

Use of masonry for construction in the Santa Barbara area dates back to the time the Spanish arrived. Stone became the preferred building material because boulders could be found scattered on the ground locally, while it was necessary to travel into the woods to obtain lumber. The tradition of building with stone continued in Santa Barbara County through the nineteenth century. This method of construction was often chosen because local brown sandstone was readily available and easily transformed from round or shapeless boulders into symmetrical smooth faced stone for building purposes. Stone walls offered greater opportunity for expression and artistry in the selection, carving, and setting of stones, as they required far less engineering than other structures, such as bridges.

As a local stonemason explained in July of 1883, “When a quantity of it is wanted, a blast of powder is drilled into the heart of one of the large boulders and exploded and a number of square edged building stones are produced.” Many residences, walls, bridges, and commercial structures were constructed of local sandstone during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Immediately after World War I, Santa Barbara began a concerted effort to re-create its visual image. During this time, city planners carefully monitored all construction of new structures to ensure consistency with the Master Plan, which was based on Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean style.

The use of sandstone, a traditional building material, in the construction of the walls built during this period was consistent with Santa Barbara’s planning and design efforts. In the years from 1870 to 1940, Santa Barbara was quickly evolving into a vibrant, growing city, and an extraordinary explosion of stone construction was made possible by the abundant supply of sandstone, cadre of expert masons, and financing by private citizens. This period produced new public and private spaces, walls, bridges, gardens, as well as an assortment of other stone works, which remain as exceptional expressions of the stonemason’s art. The stone walls that exist throughout the City contribute significantly to the region’s distinction due to their excellent craftsmanship and high visibility (Santa Barbara Conservancy).

**Architectural Historian Conclusion:** The residence at 2115 Garden Street qualifies as a historic resource under Criterion 3 because it is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, key to Santa Barbara’s architectural identity.
Works Cited:


