

# 2190 Alston Road

**Designation Status:** Designated a Structure of Merit on November 13, 2019.

Site also eligible for designation City Landmark and listing on the California Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places

**Assessor Parcel Number:** 015-174-019

**Historic Name:** Graholt Estate

**Constructed:** 1920



**Property Description:** As described in the Historic Structures/Sites Report prepared by Sarah Corder, Kate Keiser and Samantha Murray.

The bulk of the main (north) elevation is accessed from the circular driveway feature. The elevation is irregular and asymmetrical, presenting as two sections: a forward-projecting two-story side-gabled section and a broad, one-story section. The first section is clad with trowel-finished stucco, with the lower third clad in uncoursed, uncut native stone; fenestration consists of multi-lite wood single and double casement windows; a narrow pair of multi-lite French doors granting access onto a balconette supported by two decorative metal brackets, the whole enclosed by metal security bars; and a tripartite window consisting of a fixed picture window flanked by narrow five-lite casement windows. All windows except the picture window have metal grilles (Figure 15).



The second section, visible from the circular driveway, contains the main entrance to the building. Uncoursed, uncut native stone planters abut this section, except along the western portion where there is a small, stone paved walkway. The main entrance is set into an arched portico vestibule under a projecting front-gabled roof section, which has decorative iron gates and two large, iron, lantern-style sconces to either side of the entryway. Inside the vestibule, the floor is tiled with irregular stones. The main entry door is a large, wood, double door, elaborately carved with religious depictions. Over the door is a semicircular fan-lite, with an elaborate metal grille over the outside. The door is also flanked by ornate iron sconces, and below the left scone is a stained glass window depicting the letter "G." The remainder of the elevation features less elaborate ironwork sconces; multi-lite casement windows below multi-lite fanlights; one-over-one sash windows; double-leaf 12-lite French doors; single-lite casement windows; and one round window. While there are a variety of window types on this elevation as noted above, the windows appear to be original to the house and are either wood windows or steel windows and many feature elaborate metal grilles. Below the roofline on the gable ends and at two points along the side-gable are louvered attic vents.

**Architect:** Roland Frederick Sauter

**Architectural Style:** Spanish Colonial Revival



**Property Type:** Residence

**Original Use:** Residence

**Significance:** The building qualifies to be designated a Structure of Merit under the following criteria provided by the Municipal Code, Section 22.22.040:

**This section is an excerpt from the Historic Structures/Sites Report accepted by the Historic Landmarks Commission in August 2019 prepared by Sarah Corder, Kate Kaiser, and Samantha Murray.**

**Criterion A: Its character, interest or value as a significant part of the heritage of the City, the State or the Nation.**

Archival research indicates that Graholt is strongly associated with the early development of lavish hilltop residential estates in Santa Barbara and Montecito, initiated by the original five “Hilltop barons” as part of the development of what is currently known as the current Eucalyptus Hill neighborhood during the late 1910s and 1920s. Original owner David Gray was one of these five industrial titans who transformed the undeveloped areas around Eucalyptus Hill and Pepper Hill into a collection of lavish estates, which included his home known as Graholt completed in 1920. Therefore, Graholt is recommended eligible under City of Santa Barbara Criterion A for its association with early estate development patterns in Santa Barbara and Montecito.

**Criterion C: Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City, the State or the Nation.**

Graholt's original owner David Gray made significant contributions to the City of Santa Barbara during his time at Graholt. Gray and his family spent much of their time living in Detroit and maintaining a vacation house in Nantucket. While residing in Michigan, David Gray traveled to the Santa Barbara area on multiple occasions to visit local Ford dealer E.W. Alexander. It was during these visits that his fondness for the Santa Barbara area grew and he decided to purchase property in Santa Barbara in the 1910s. Following his arrival in Santa Barbara, Gray became known as a generous philanthropist and benefactor of the arts. He was particularly concerned that Santa Barbara's beaches remained unspoiled, and wanted to prevent Coney Island-style developments from springing up. To this end, he purchased all of the land along East Beach. He also headed a committee to buy up parcels of land from Stearns Wharf to the Bird Refuge and held them until a public bond was passed allowing the land to pass to the local government. He supported community beautification drives. He supported music education and donated money and land to the Santa Barbara School of the Arts. He subsidized annual concerts by the L.A. Philharmonic Orchestra in Santa Barbara. He donated \$100,000 for the construction of the Cabrillo Pavilion as part of a plan to support public recreation in the East Beach area. The Pavilion hosted music, plays, and conventions for many decades and was managed in its first years by Sauter (The Morning Press 1928; Tompkins 1992; Myrick 1991).

Archival research also indicates that Graholt is strongly associated with the early development of lavish hilltop residential estates in Santa Barbara and Montecito, initiated by the original five “Hilltop barons” as part of the development of what is currently known as the current Eucalyptus Hill

neighborhood during the late 1910s and 1920s. David Gray was one of these five industrial titans who transformed the undeveloped areas around Eucalyptus Hill and Pepper Hill into a collection of lavish estates, which included his home known as Graholt completed in 1920.

While David Gray's philanthropic and development endeavors do not rise to the level of significance required under NRHP and CRHR Criteria B/2, he did make significant contributions to the culture and development of the City of Santa Barbara. Therefore, Graholt is recommended eligible under City of Santa Barbara Criterion C.

**Criterion D: Its exemplification of a particular architectural style or way of life important to the City, the State or the Nation.**

The Graholt residence and grounds are good examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style architecture after the exposition of the style at the Panama-California Exposition, with decorative elements from the Rustic style, which is popular in the early twentieth century at lodges, parks, granges, and recreational houses. Elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style still present at Graholt include the following:

- Low pitched and gabled rooflines
- Terra cotta roof tiles
- Asymmetrical in plan
- Recessed entry ways
- Wooden entry doors
- Use of stucco on exterior walls
- Decorative stonework

**Criterion F: Its identification as the creation design, or work of a person or persons whose effort has significantly influenced the heritage of the City, the State or the Nation.**

Archival research, in-person survey, and studying architectural plans identified that the original Graholt designed was by locally important architect Roland F. Sauter in 1916, and completed under his direction in 1920. Sauter designed components of Clarence A Black's El Cerrito Estate, and was the architect for Frank Hendry's Casa Loma Estate, Santa Barbara City Hall, and Cabrillo Pavilion. Sauter regularly incorporated elements of rustic design into the Spanish Colonial Revival style that was newly popular in California after the Panama-California Exposition (1915). Like many of his other designs, Sauter used both traditional Spanish Colonial Revival finishes, such as terra cotta tile and stucco, and elements of rustic design, such as unfinished wood timbers, and large walls of unfinished, un-coursed, local stone, making the building appear to "grow" naturally out of the surrounding hillside. While Sauter used some of these techniques at the El Cerrito estate, Graholt was his first opportunity to fully develop a design that incorporated mature Spanish Colonial Revival

Style exhibited at the Panama-California Exposition and Rustic design elements that were popular at lodges and recreational homes for the wealthy.

Character-defining features of Sauter's design are still evident at Graholt including:

- Use of unfinished, un-coursed, local stone for wall bases and wall ends;
- Battered (sloping) walls
- Large exposed timbers emerging from the roofline
- Incorporation of naturalistic elements, like local boulders and natural terraces;
- Closely arranged planting beds around the house.

The subject property retains a strong association with architect Roland F. Sauter as one of the few remaining examples of his early works. Sauter was contracted to design Graholt at the beginning of his formal architect career. Though he was a foreman and designer for Clarence Black's El Cerrito estate, he was not the named architect. Sauter's contract with David Gray for the design of Graholt, likely aided him in getting commissions for later civic projects such as the design of Santa Barbara City Hall (1924) and Cabrillo Pavilion (1927). Therefore, Graholt is recommended eligible under City of Santa Barbara Criterion F for its representation of architect Roland F. Sauter's work.

#### **Criterion G: Its embodiment of elements demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials,**

The evidence of workmanship is evident throughout the building through the inclusion of many handcrafted building and finish components created by master craftspeople. These include, most notably, the ornate ironwork, which took over 6 years to create for the property, and the artfully placed, un-coursed, local stonework incorporated into the building exterior which was a hallmark of Roland Sauter's architectural style. The building also contains ornate ironwork lighting fixtures, and uniquely closing windows that were specially crafted for the property (determined from personal communication with Sharon Kemper), and the ornate and elaborately carved wooden doors on the main elevation are just a few examples of the workmanship evident at the property. Though some of the original materials have been removed, the property still conveys a high degree of workmanship and the involvement of several master craftspeople. Similar to the issue with materials, the physical evidence of craftsmen's skills in constructing the original building was diminished by the two-story additions in 1963 and the concomitant removal of original windows, openings, and detailing. Despite the additions and the diminished integrity workmanship in certain areas of the building, the bulk of the workmanship is still well represented. Therefore, Graholt is recommended eligible under City of Santa Barbara Criterion G for its outstanding craftsmanship and attention to architectural materials and details.

**Historic Integrity:** Despite alterations to the property throughout its history, the property still retains a great deal of the character defining features associated with the Spanish Colonial Revival Style of architecture. The building retains most of its original features so that it has high historic integrity of location, feeling, design, and association. However, the property has diminished integrity

of setting due to numerous parcel subdivision and visual separation from the water tower that was once part of the property that is not on another property and separated by a large fence. The building can still convey its 1920 original appearance as the property retains requisite integrity in all other aspects to warrant Structure of Merit designation.

**Works Cited:**

Corder, Sarah; Kaiser, Kate; Murray, Samantha; with contributions by Beemer, Bryce; Dudek. Phase I Historic Structures/Sites Report, Graholt: 2190 Alston Road, Santa Barbara, California. City of Santa Barbara Community Development Department. August 2019.