Desgination Status: Designated a Structure of Merit on September 16, 2020

Historic Name: Howard Residence

Constructed: 1888

Architect: Unknown

Architectural Style: Queen Anne

Property Type: residence

Original Use: Residence

Property Description:

This large, late 19th century wood house has a composition shingle, hipped roof. The first story walls are of grooved ship-lap siding and the second story of elaborate wood, shingles in a rectangular pattern. The boxed eaves have a dentil molding frieze board. A large dormer is above the central doorway that retains the original wide door. The front porch has a definitive arched porch with corners decorated in applied scrolls. The front porch is characterized with sandstone bases for the columns as well as the property is surrounded by an ashlar cut, sandstone wall and also has sandstone hitching posts.

Significance: The City of Santa Barbara defines historic significance as outlined by the Municipal Code, Section 22.22.040. Any historic building that meets one or more of the eleven criteria (Criteria A through K) established for a City Landmark or a City Structure of Merit can be considered significant. The Queen Anne house at 1721 Santa Barbara Street meets the following seven criteria:

View of house after porch enclosure removed and front window restored.
Photo from June 2020.

Historic Photograph of the house showing original configuration.
Historic Integrity: The Historic Landmarks Commission found that the building does not qualify as a historic resource on November 29, 2017 and voted to remove the property from the Potential Historic Resources List, with the condition that if historic integrity is restored, the building may become eligible as a historic resource. The building had part of the porch enclosed as well as several original windows replaced and several additions. A new owner has purchased the home and has started restoring the home, including; removing the porch enclosure to expose the original porch; reinstalling original windows found stored in the house; and removing inappropriate alterations. Because historic integrity is being returned to the house, the house warrants consideration as a Structure of Merit and will qualify the new owner for the Mills Act Program to assist in the extensive restoration. The building does retain many of its important 1888 original features including its original sandstone retaining wall, the original hitching post and sandstone curb in front of the entrance.

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

The residence retains character-defining features that identify it as an example of the Queen Anne Style. As few Victorian buildings remain in the Upper Eastside neighborhood of Santa Barbara, this residence is a rare example of a once-common architectural style; thus, the building’s character is a significant part of the heritage of Santa Barbara. Few styles of architecture allow for the exuberant level of detail found in the Queen Anne style. The culmination of Victorian taste, this style shows the eclectic range found in the new era and the ability for manufacturers of the time to distribute these details throughout the country. Thanks to these factors, a variety of ornate columns, spindle work, and elaborate shingles adorn Queen Anne properties.

Queen Anne architecture was born in the later part of the Victorian era, which included Gothic Revival, Italianate, Stick, and Second Empire styles. In the 1870s, in England, architect Richard Norman Shaw introduced the Queen Anne residential design. It was
intended to evoke domestic architecture of some 200 years earlier.

In the United States, our own first centennial was then approaching, and at the huge Philadelphia Centennial Exhibit in 1876, two model houses were built in the Queen Anne style. Americans immediately took to the style. Massively popular in America, Queen Anne spread across the nation at a rapid pace.

The Queen Anne style was characterized by a break with the box shape, a freer articulation of outer wall shapes, and a taste for outside living on wide verandahs. By 1886, it was still new on the West Coast and first appeared in San Francisco.

Queen Anne homes display irregular rooflines with corner towers, variegated walls, and an emphasis on the horizontal that lends a dynamic, restless quality to the composition as a whole. Surface textures became a defining characteristic of Queen Anne decoration. The Queen Anne taste for drama and asymmetry became apparent in complex roof shapes and an eclectic appropriation of ornamental features from earlier styles.

Although it had little to do with its namesake Anne of Great Britain (1665-1714), Queen Anne architecture did look to the past. Whether it was ancient Rome with its swags, garlands, and high-classical columns, or the richly patterned walls of the earlier High Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne combined a wide variety of architecture features into one decorative whole. As an example of a Queen Anne style building, the building qualifies under criterion A.

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

The house embodies Queen Anne characteristics in its steeply pitched roof, the irregular shape with a dominant front-facing dormer, patterned shingles, cutaway bay windows, and asymmetrical façade with an ornate porch. The property is one of few examples of Victorian residential architecture in the Upper Eastside area.

**Criterion G. Its embodiment demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship**

The building embodies not only outstanding attention to design, but also extreme attention to detail, materials, and craftsmanship in the intricate wood shingles on the second floor, the arched front porch with decorative applied scrolls; wood, double-hung, bay windows; and wide, wood front door.

**Sandstone Wall:** There is a three-course sandstone retaining wall abutting the sidewalk, lining the front streetscape. A feature that gives the region such distinction while offering a surprising and pleasing bit of artistry. Walls usually require far less engineering compared to bridges, so they offer more opportunity for stonemasons to express themselves and their artistry in the selection, carving, and setting of stones. Use of masonry for construction in the Santa Barbara area dates back to the time the Spanish arrived. Since it was necessary to travel some distance into the woods to obtain lumber, but rocks were found scattered on the ground, stone became the preferred building material. The tradition of building with stones continued in Santa Barbara County through the 19th 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.
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” (Santa Barbara News-Press July 1883). Many residences, walls, bridges, and commercial structures were constructed out of local sandstone during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Immediately after World War I, Santa Barbara began a concerted effort to revamp its visual image. During this time, city planners carefully monitored all construction of any new structure to make sure it was consistent with the master plan that was based on Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean streetscape mode (Conrad and Nelson, 1986: 14).

The use of a traditional building material, sandstone, in the construction of the walls built during this period was in line with Santa Barbara’s planning and design efforts. In the years from 1870 to 1940, when Santa Barbara was quickly evolving into a vibrant, growing city, the period witnessed an extraordinary explosion of stone construction made possible by the abundant supply of sandstone, cadre of expert masons, and financing by private citizens. This period provided an atmosphere conducive to the building of public and private spaces of all kinds, walls, bridges, gardens, and an assortment of other stone works and encouraged some exceptional expressions of the mason’s art. Among the most apparent expressions of the beauty in stone that give the region such distinction are the stone walls.

Works Cited:

Grumbine, Anthony, Harrison Design. Hernandez, Nicole. *Santa Barbara Style Guides, Queen Anne.*
City of Santa Barbara, Community Development Department. November 2014.