HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
STRUCTURE OF MERIT DESIGNATION REPORT
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326 WEST ORTEGA STREET

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
APN 037-073-016
June 22, 2022

Designation Status: Designated a Structure of Merit by HLC on June22, 2022 and is contributing historic resource to the proposed Castillo Street Historic District.

Constructed: c.1890

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Architectural Style: Gothic Revival Style

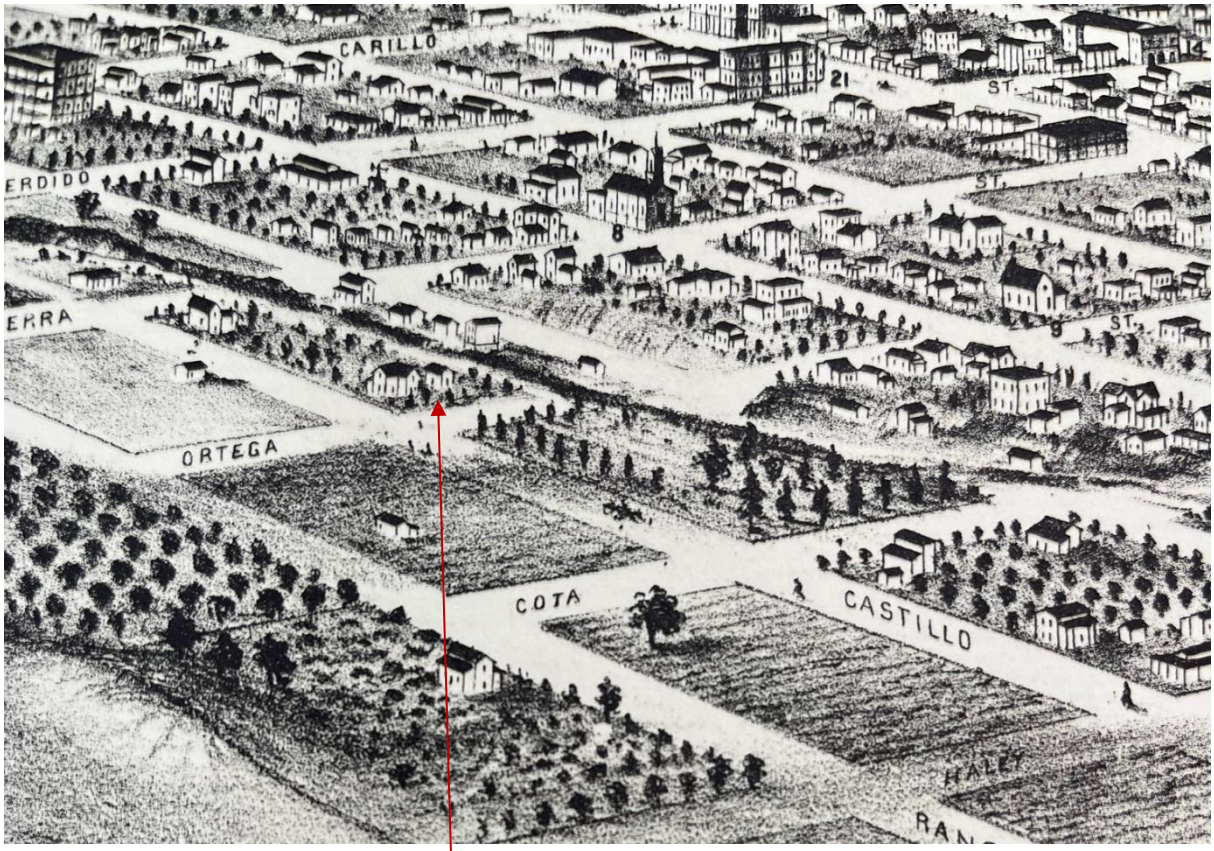
Property Type: Residence

Original Use: Residence

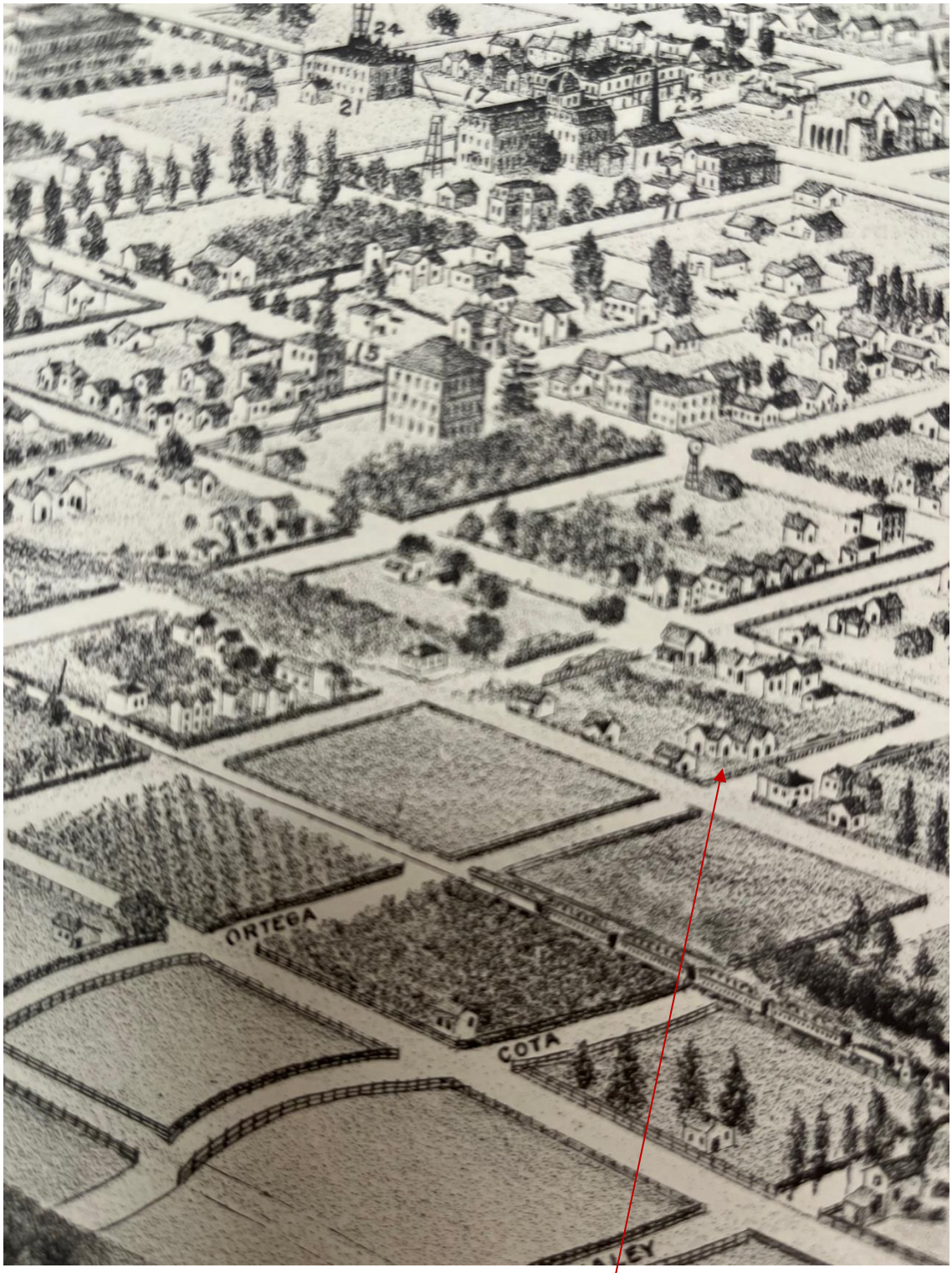
Photo taken June 2, 2022 by Nicole Hernandez. The rest of the photos in this report are by the same author taken on the same date unless otherwise noted.

Property Description: The property consists of the main house and a small outbuilding. The main house has a rectangular footprint with a steeply pitched, side facing gable with a large, intersecting, front facing gable that is lined with Gothic style filigree-ornament. The one and one-half story Gothic Revival style dwelling features wide, eight-inch drop siding. The fenestration consists of one-over-one light, double hung, wood windows as well as six-over-six light, double hung, wood windows on the remaining elevations. The front door is a wood, pane over three diamond shape panel door. The one-third width entry porch sits to the right of the front gable and has a half-hipped roof supported by square columns and features a closed balustrade and wood steps leading to it. The driveway is to the east of the property.

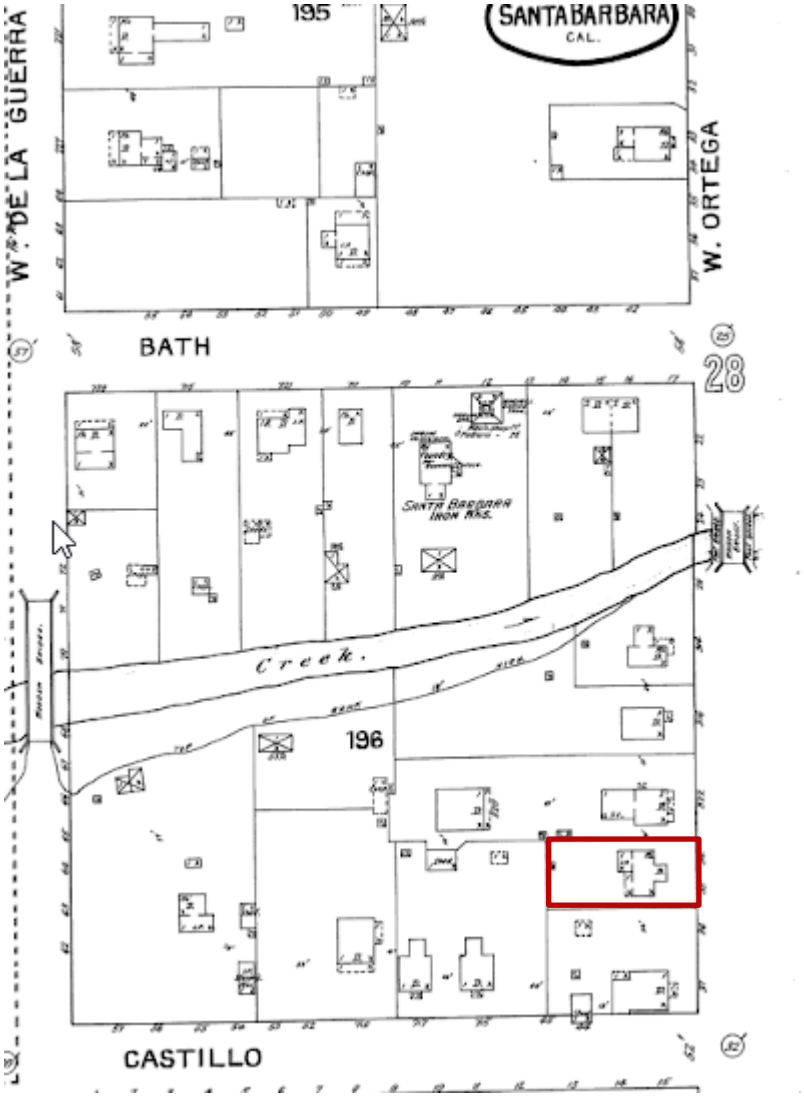
Wall: A low, four course ashlar cut sandstone wall lines the streetscape and has sandstone steps leading to the pedestrian path to the building.



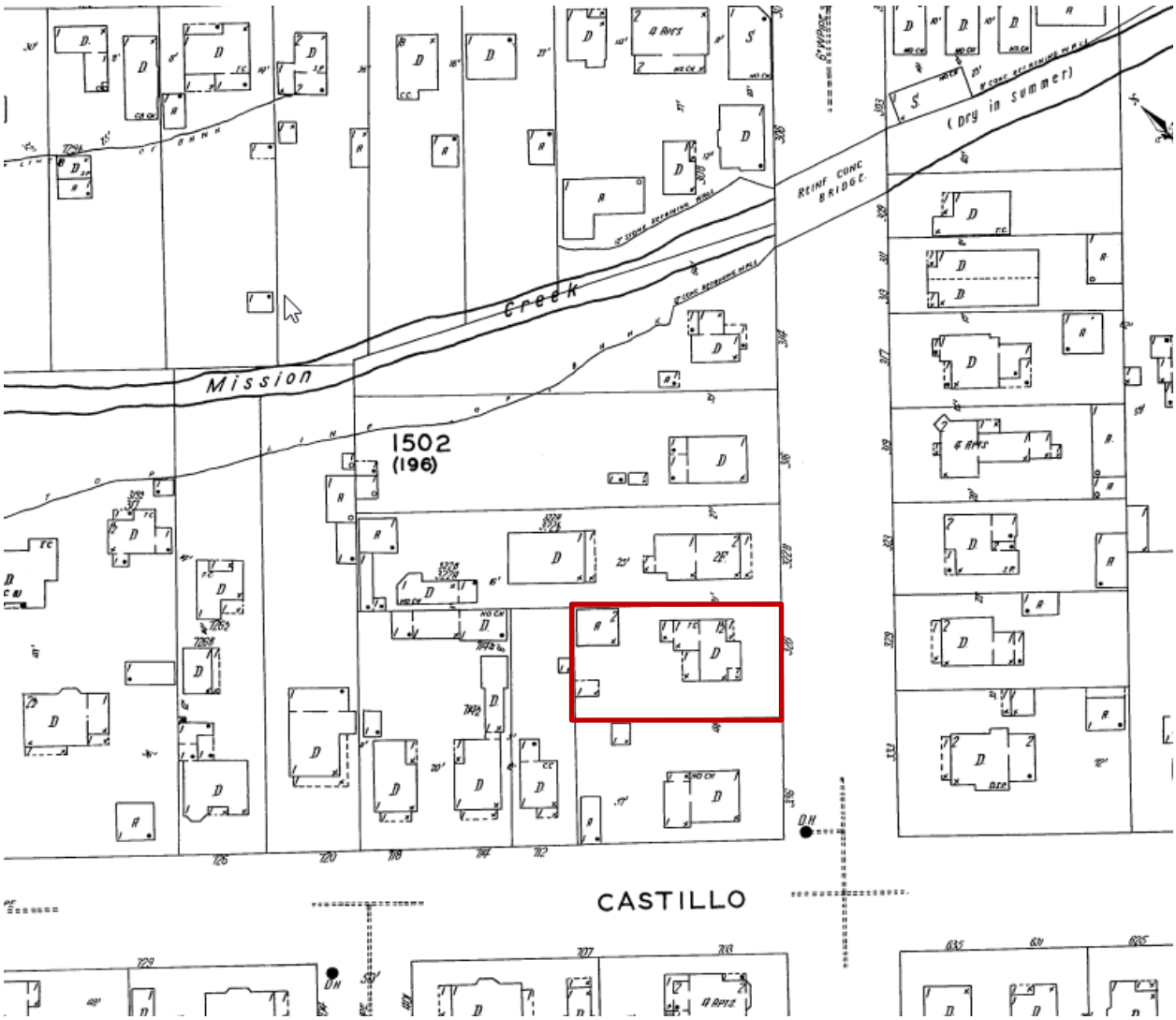
1877 Birdseye view of West Ortega on Santa Barbara Map.



1888 Birdseye view of Santa Barbara Map, illustrating the house at 326 West Ortega Street.



1892 Sanborn Map, shows the house this site. Courtesy, Gledhill Library. Page 27



1931 Sanborn Map, shows the house this site. Courtesy, Gledhill Library. Page 119

Left: 2020 Aerial Map provided by City of Santa Barbara Maps and Printing System.

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 criteria listed in the Code can be considered a significant historic resource. The structure may be significant as a Structure of Merit per the following criteria:

Historic Integrity

A house on this lot is depicted in the 1877 and 1888 Birdseye views of the City of Santa Barbara. The house with the matching footprint is depicted on the 1892 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. By 1907 the entrance porch is depicted on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. By 1925 an addition was added to the left front façade that matches the existing construction of the house. The house had a rear addition added and exterior stairs to the upstairs apartment in 1976. The minor alterations on the front were completed so early in the life of the house, they have gained historic significance and contribute to the significance of the house. The alterations do not diminish the visibility of the character-defining features of the Gothic Revival style house. The 300 block of West Ortega and Castillo Street retain many of the late 19th and early 20th Century houses so that the house retains its integrity of setting. The house has integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, allowing it still to convey its early 20th century appearance when the porch was added.

Criteria C. 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;

Historic Context: This Gothic Revival style house was constructed c. 1890. Between 1850 and 1880, several blocks within the west downtown area were planted with fruit and nut orchards intermingled with many single-family dwellings. Subdivided city lots closer to State Street began to line the streets. A small real estate boom occurred from 1872 to 1874 due to the widely advertised beauty and climate of Santa Barbara. Between 1860 and 1874, property values in the city increased from $100 to $5,000 for an entire city block. At a time when skilled laborers such as carpenters, bricklayers, plasters, machinists, and blacksmiths made $3–4 a day, a workingman's family might still be able to afford to purchase land and build a home. A drought that occurred over the winter of 1876–1877 caused a drop in real estate value that would persist for the next several years. American commercial development of lower State Street and residential areas west of Chapala Street increased exponentially during the late nineteenth century. As the Southern Pacific Railroad neared Santa Barbara, the value of land rose, creating a short-lived real estate boom in 1887 that died with the realization that the railroad would not be connecting with San Francisco anytime soon. Several residential subdivisions such as the Verona Tract, the Mission Hill Addition, and the Brinkerhoff Block developed as a result of this boom.

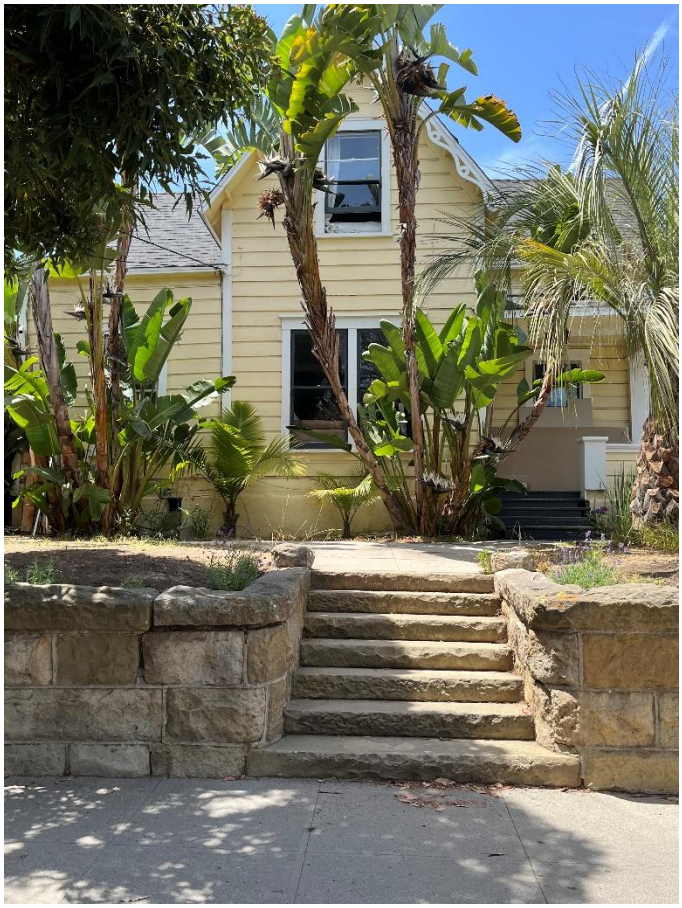
By 1892, west downtown streets such as Chapala, De la Vina, Bath and Castillo Streets were lined with residential buildings. In 1896 the trolley line on State Street was converted to electric cars and the line was again extended to reach areas farther north and east as residential development continued. When the city began to improve streets, which included grading, curbing, installing gutters, laying sidewalks, and eventually paving, the costs were divided among the property owners. Often residents of a particular area would petition the council to allow the owners to hire the contractor themselves, skipping the city bidding process and potentially saving a few dollars. This fiscal practice was continued in the laying of sewer and water pipes beginning in the 1890s. The west downtown streets closer to State Street experienced this development earlier than those west of Bath Street. By 1907, the entire west downtown area had new water pipelines, sometimes replacing the earlier lines; some disgruntled residents had to pay a second time for water lines. From 1903 to 1907, the city escalated street grading, curbing, and guttering, issuing several contracts a month for single and multiple block projects. Contracts for sewer lines during this time period were issued just as frequently (Santa Barbara City Council 1903–1907). Infrastructure costs were eventually assumed by the City in the 1910s. This period of increased infrastructure development parallels the growth in available subdivided land and increased number of new homes in the west downtown area.

Originally, the proposed Castillo Street Historic District area was cultivated land owned by Thomas B. Dibblee. Upon his death in 1895, the land was sold, and by 1904 a residential tract was created with the dividing street named Dibblee Avenue. In 1905, Carl William Dewlaney created a residential tract with a dividing street named Ruth Avenue after his mother Ruth Ann Dewlaney. At the time, the cost of constructing a modest home was $900 or less, with the total investment for the homeowner anywhere from $1,000 to $2,000. Thus, from 1904 to 1906, 50 dwellings were constructed on the 73 lots within the two subdivided blocks and an additional 17 dwellings were constructed between 1907 and 1918. The Castillo Street Historic District is an area reflective of the architectural movements of the late 1800s and early 1900s. The dwellings constructed in the district are primarily Folk Victorian style with a few Gothic Revival, Queen Anne and Craftsman styles. This neighborhood is the product of the average working class citizen and a symbol of financial success for each homeowner.

The building was identified as a contributing historic resource to a proposed Castillo Street Historic District in the West Downtown survey accepted by the Historic Landmarks Commission in 2013.

The Ralph Brooks family owned the parcel in 1889 (Mensch Map 1889). Ralph worked as a street sprinkler in 1895 (Santa Barbara Directory Company 1895:21). After Ralph died in 1902, his widow Sarah and son Frank lived in the house. Frank, who worked as a driver for the Keran Laundry, owned the house until at least the 1930s (Santa Barbara City Directory Company 1931:640). Sarah Brooks, passed in 1913. No other significant biographical information was obtained.

Gothic Revival Style: Once Stearns Wharf was open, elaborate wood work was shipped from the east coast. The ease of shipping materials in the late 1800's allowed popular east coast architectural styles to be more available in Santa Barbara. Gothic Revival is noted for intricate wood detailing cut from a scroll saw that was improved enough to be used to cut the delicate ornamental patterns at the roof eaves of the gabled ends and porches. Gothic Revival improvises upon features that were carved in stone in authentic Gothic architecture. The result was a style that was familiar in its close relation to several other Victorian styles, yet unique in a variety of ways. Popular throughout the United States from 1830 to 1870, Gothic Revival architecture was influential during Santa Barbara's early period of growth. The style originally began as the Gothic Revival style in England in the 1700's and soon the trend spread to America and was championed by Andrew Jackson Davis, and Andrew Jackson Downing by their popular book at the time, Rural Residences and The Architecture of the Country House (Grumbine).



Primarily influential in the single-family, rural residential architecture, the Gothic Revival style also found favor in religious and some public buildings. Since the style was promoted as a rural residence, and since the steeply pitched roofs and wide porches did not adapt well to narrow lots, it was rarely used in an urban residential setting. (Grumbine)

Gothic Revival continued to be influential in Santa Barbara through the late 1800's. Although few in number, existing examples of Gothic Revival architecture in Santa Barbara range from small, simple residences, to churches that dot the downtown neighborhoods.

The building embodies the following character defining features of the Gothic Revival style:

Massing and Roof Form: The building has a strong, steeply pitched gable this is a hallmark of the Gothic Revival style. The house features a centered gable, where the main body of the structure is a sideways-facing gable which has a prominent, central cross gable with entrance directly below that is common for Gothic Revival style homes.

Gables and Eave Details: Gables are an expressive feature of Gothic Revival style. This house has delicate wood ornament lining the triangular gables. Another important development is the move away from boxed-in eaves. This Gothic Revival style has an overhanging eaves with exposed rafters that was common for the Gothic Revival style houses.

Porch details: This porch has square posts as was typical of Gothic Revival front porches. There are wood steps leading up to the wood front porch.

Doors: The front door follows similar Victorian era doors with a large pane over cross panel door, surrounded by wide wood trim.

Windows: Windows are a fundamental part of defining Gothic Revival architecture. This house features one-over-one wood windows with ogee lugs on the front elevation and six-over-six light windows on other elevations.

Wall Material: Wall material of Gothic Revival in Santa Barbara was made of wide wood drop siding.

Sandstone wall: There is a four course, ashlar cut, 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 and 20th centuries. 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.

. 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 conductive 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.

Conclusion: The c. 1890 house and its associated sandstone wall qualifies for Structure of Merit designation as it retains historic integrity and meets criterion C.

Works Cited:

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

Morlet, Aubrey, Applied Earthworks, Inc. "City of Santa Barbara, West Downtown Historic Building Survey." City of Santa Barbara, Community Development Department. January 2012.

Santa Barbara Conservancy. *Images of America, Stone Architecture in Santa Barbara*. Arcadia Publishing, 2009.

Maps:

1877 Birdseye Map of Santa Barbara
1888 Birdseye Map of Santa Barbara
Sanborn Maps 1892 and 1931. Courtesy Gledhill Library of the Santa Barbara Historic.