

**HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT**  
Prepared by Nicole Hernandez, MFA, Architectural Historian

**LA ARCADA  
1110-1114 STATE STREET  
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA  
APN 039-232-009**

**Designation Status:** Listed on the Historic Resources Inventory, Contributing Historic Resource to El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District.

**Background:**

The 1926 La Arcada commercial building was designed as a mixed-use retail and restaurant destination on State Street by noted architect Myron Hunt in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The property was placed on the Historic Resources Inventory in 1978. The building is noted as an innovative departure from the traditional American pattern of urban buildings oriented to the street, with its pedestrian-oriented paseo winding through the center of the L-shaped building. Although Myron Hunt is credited with the design, officially he was a consultant to John Cooper, the architect of record. This piece of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture contributes to the collection of buildings in the style that will always be key to Santa Barbara's identity.

The proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation includes the entire parcel as the building encompasses the entire parcel. Because the building meets the City Landmark eligibility criteria for its architectural style and historical significance, it is the opinion of the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) Designations Subcommittee that the building is an excellent candidate for City Landmark designation.



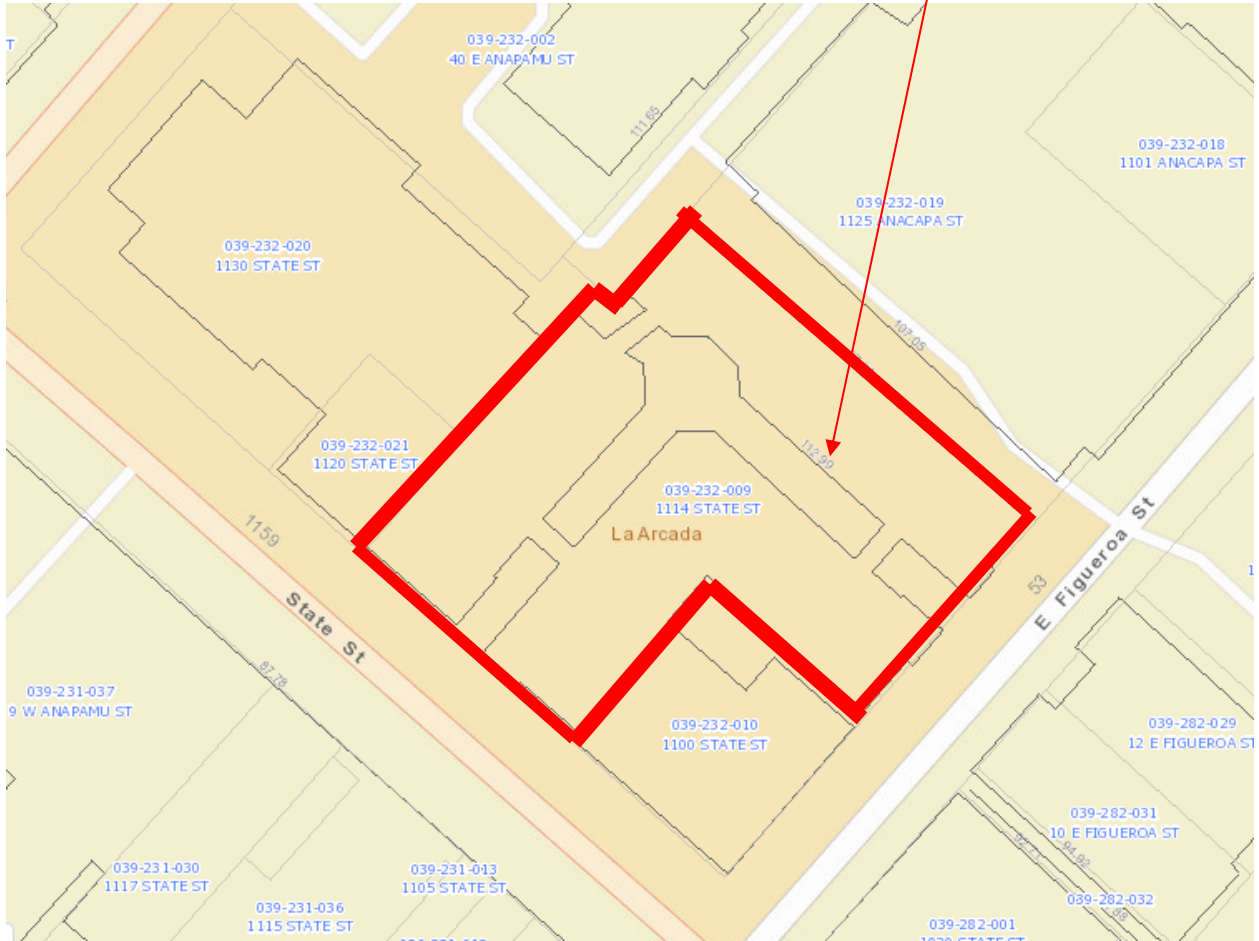
*Above: c. 1926 Historic photograph of the paseo from the fountain (courtesy of UCLA, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library).*



*Above: Notice in the Los Angeles Times, August 8, 1926.*

*Vicinity Map*

Red line indicates proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation that includes the entire parcel.



*Vicinity Map, City of Santa Barbara Mapping Analysis and Printing System, 2013*

Note the Paseo running through the center of the building following the L-shaped pattern and the focus being the hexagon-shaped plaza with a fountain in the center..

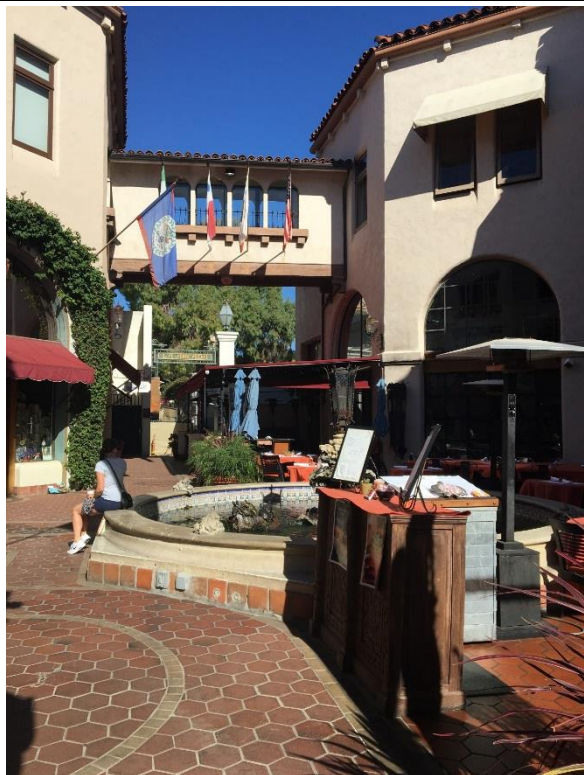
**Historic Context:**

Immediately after the First World War, Santa Barbara began its concerted effort to revamp its visual image, so that the past and present would symbolically merge as one in the Spanish Colonial Revival and Mediterranean styles. The success of State Street started with one of the most influential architects in the country, Bertram G. Goodhue, who designed the famous Panama-California Exposition of 1915 in San Diego in the Spanish Churrigueresque style. In 1917, Goodhue was hired to plan the State Street commercial streetscape in the Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean style, where he designed patios, corridors, and covered walks (paseos). In 1925, Santa Barbara suffered a major earthquake, and damage was so extensive that virtually all of State Street was reconstructed in consistent Spanish Colonial Revival and Mediterranean styles, making the 1917 vision plan a reality. Myron Hunt’s La Arcada building at the corner of State and Figueroa Streets was designed as shopping and dining destination and to be part of the Santa Barbara “paseo system,” complementing the first paseo building on State Street, El Paseo, at State and East De La Guerra Streets, and that of the San Marcos building across the street, also designed by Myron Hunt. The anchor of La Arcada is the fountain that sits within an octagon-shaped plaza as it is the focal point of both paseos leading from the State and Figueroa Streets.

The fountain sits in front of a restaurant space that has had a variety of restaurant tenants since 1927, the first being the Sears Café, which was only there a year. In 1929, Café De La Arcada used the space, followed by Russell Fine Foods that opened in September of 1930 through 1934 and that became La Arcada Find Foods, then La Arcada Café. The



*Above: 1926 image of the fountain in La Arcada that is the focal point of both paseos (courtesy of UCLA, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library).*



*Above: Current view of the fountain in the hexagon shaped plaza. Photo taken September 25, 2017.*

restaurant El Cielito opened in 1946 and stayed until to the mid-1970s, owned by Harry Davis. In 1973, it became Josie's El Cielito. In the 1980s, the space was one rented by the chain Acapulco Y Los Arcos. The new Cielito opened in 2011, followed by the current tenant, Viva. Of interesting note is that one of the original La Arcada tenants was also the Community Arts Association Plans and Plantings Committee.

### Architect Myron Hunt:

Myron Hunt was one of Southern California's most accomplished early-twentieth-century architects. Dapper and bespectacled, Hunt had a fondness for tweed suits, and his appearance was always tidy, reserved, and precise. He did not seem like the type of person who could have created some of Southern California's most iconic architectural structures, his formal dress and manners belying the creative whirlwind inside his head. Santa Barbara deeply bears Hunt's vision with the Santa Barbara County Bank, the La Arcada Building, the San Marco Building, and the Faulkner Gallery. Hunt studied at Northwestern University and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and spent time in Florence, Italy. By the time he was 34, he had already designed 39 buildings in Massachusetts. Hunt's solo architectural accomplishments include an impressive array of commercial and institutional buildings. His numerous projects included many noted landmarks in Southern California. Hunt was a contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright, and in 1903, he moved to Los Angeles, where he entered into a partnership with architect Elmer Grey (1871–1963). Opening an office in Pasadena, the firm of Hunt and Grey soon became popular. Some of the firm's Pasadena work was featured in the national magazine *Architectural Record* as early as 1906. They were soon designing large houses in communities throughout Southern California, including the summer ranch home for cereal magnet Will Keith Kellogg. They also began receiving commissions to design larger projects, including hospitals, schools, churches, and hotels. By 1912, Hunt was no longer in partnership



*Above: The restaurant Russel Fine Foods that was behind the turtle pond from 1930-34 (courtesy Food and Home Magazine, Winter 2016-2017).*



*Above: Current view of the restaurant space behind the turtle pond, with the same ornately decorated lintel and heavy timber sill of the deeply recessed arched window of the second story as seen in 1930 photograph. Photo taken on September 25, 2017.*

with Elmer Grey but had established a new firm with Los Angeles architect Harold C. Chambers. In this partnership, Hunt designed a number of libraries, including the Faulkner Gallery in Santa Barbara, and libraries in Redlands, Palos Verdes Estates, and Pasadena. He also designed one of the three major buildings making up the Pasadena Civic Center. Hunt was the principal architect of all of Occidental College's buildings through 1940. In 1913, Hunt designed a new wing for the Mission Inn in Riverside, California. He designed the impressive Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, which opened in 1921. Hunt's association with Henry Huntington was established in 1909 when he designed his house in San Marino. With a large addition built in 1934, the house was to become the main art gallery of the cultural center built around the Huntington Library. Hunt also designed the Pasadena Rose Bowl. Hunt designed Santa Barbara's San Marcos building in 1926. Santa Barbara is fortunate to have a few Myron Hunt masterpieces in the downtown architectural repertoire.

**The Spanish Colonial Revival Style:**

California's 52-year period of Spanish-Franciscan cultural impact and the subsequent brief Mexican period brought in piecemeal elements of the Spanish period styles in the early twentieth century. The formal influence was a combination of high style details with vernacular mission and adobe buildings. This building is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival movement, which became an important part of Santa Barbara's heritage in the early 1920s. Many architects, later notable for their use of this style, created commercial façades and whole new buildings in variations of the style.



*Above: Looking down the paseo of La Arcada from Figueroa Street.*



*Above: The State Street Arcade with intricately decorated heavy wood timbers on the ceiling. Photo taken September 25, 2017.*

In 1920s Santa Barbara, the Spanish Colonial Revival style sources were broadly and loosely interpreted. Each architect and educated client developed a favorite formal Spanish repertoire, and some were inspired by buildings seen in travels to Spain, Mexico, or Spain's former South American colonies. However, both architects and clients tended to like examples clearly based on Spanish European designs rather than Mexican or South American interpretations of original Spanish structures. La Arcada demonstrates this with its intricate paseo with smooth stucco walls contrasted by the subtle details of intricately decorated, heavy wood timbered ceiling, windows sills, and cornice brackets and delicate iron balconies. La Arcada features a heavy cornice line with brackets and terra-cotta tile parapet roofs. The building features deeply recessed, paired windows on the second floor and large arched windows and storefronts on the first floor.



*Above: The bridges that are over the paseos create an interplay of cubic volumes as you walk through La Arcada. September 25, 2017.*

Along the State Street elevation is an arcade with a roof of decorated heavy timbers. Over the paseo are connecting interior bridges supported by heavy timber lintels and corbels and a rhythm of arches over deeply recessed windows with heavy timber sills.

The building employs many character-defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The building has an emphasis on the interplay of cubic volumes as the building has diagonally cut corners forming the hexagon-shaped plaza, enclosed bridges spanning over the intimate paseo, and arched arcades lining the State Street elevation, giving it an additional grandeur and importance. Compositionally the design is unorthodox with exaggerated vertical proportions of the ground floor and large arched openings that create excellent storefronts. La Arcada's success as both an urban space and retail center since 1926 is due to the pedestrian-friendly scale established in the arcades and the paseo by the sense of enclosure created by the walls, bridges, columns, and ceiling of the arcade. It has clay tile parapet roofs; simple, smooth, yet thick plaster walls contrasted by the subtle details of intricately decorated heavy wood timbered ceilings over arcades and on lintels; heavy wood window sills; distinctly shaped corners of the arch openings that vary along the facades; and bold brackets under the overhanging cornice.

**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. La Arcada meets the following four criteria:

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

This building is an excellent example 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 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. As an original 1926, Spanish Colonial Revival structure, it qualifies as a City Landmark because it is a significant part of the heritage of the City.

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

La Arcada exemplifies the Spanish Colonial Revival style. It is an outstanding example of the important architectural style of Santa Barbara. The building has an emphasis on the interplay of cubic volumes

as the building has diagonally cut corners forming the hexagon-shaped plaza, enclosed bridges spanning over the intimate paseo, and arched arcades lining the State Street elevation, giving it an additional grandeur and importance. Compositionally the design is unorthodox with exaggerated vertical proportions of the ground floor and large arched openings that create excellent storefronts. La Arcada’s success as both an urban space and retail center since 1926 is due to the pedestrian-



***Above:*** A c. 1926 view down the paseo from State Street (courtesy of UCLA, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library).

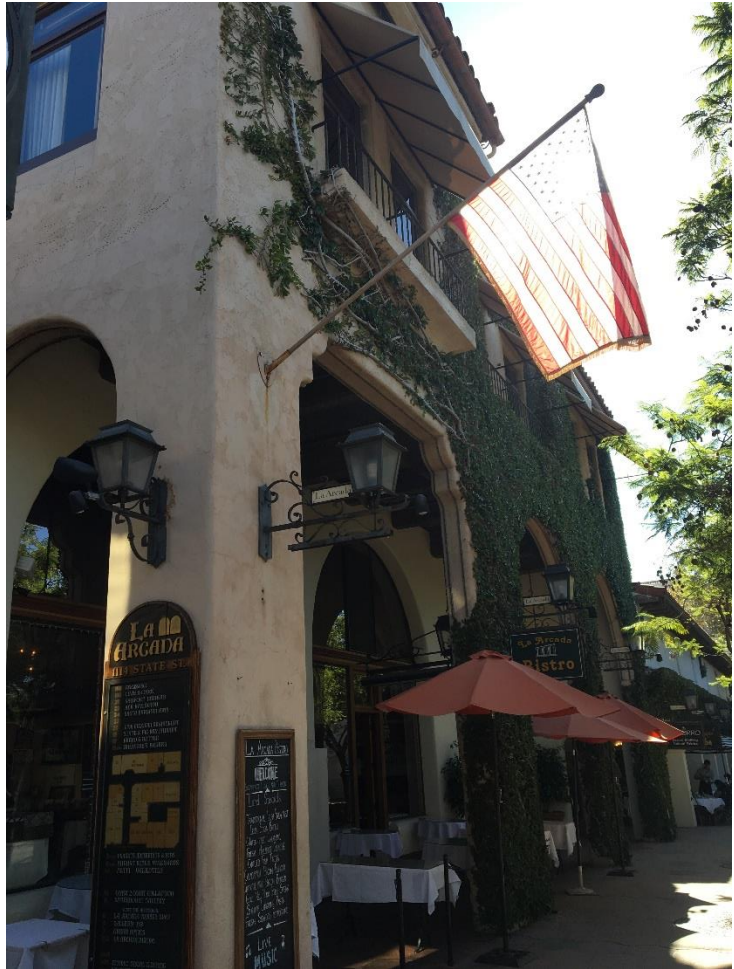


***Above:*** Current view down the paseo from State Street. Photo taken September 25, 2017.

friendly scale established in the arcades and the paseo by the sense of enclosure created by the walls, bridges, columns, and ceiling of the arcade. It has clay tile parapet roofs; simple, smooth, yet thick plaster walls contrasted by the subtle details of intricately decorated heavy wood timbered ceilings over arcades and on lintels; heavy wood window sills; distinctly shaped corners of the arch openings that vary along the facades; and bold brackets under the overhanging cornice.

***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***

The building was designed by Myron Hunt, one of Southern California's most accomplished early-twentieth-century architects. Hunt is noted for his design efforts that significantly influenced the heritage of the City, State, and Nation. He is recognized for several well-known public buildings and landmarks in the Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and Pasadena areas.



***Above:*** Current photo illustrating the decorative corners on the arch facing State Street with an iron balcony above. Photo taken September 25, 2017.

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

La Arcada's composition and massing create an intimate paseo with smooth stucco walls contrasted by the subtle details of intricately decorated heavy wood timbered ceilings over arcades and lintels, heavy wood windows sills, distinctly shaped corners of the arch openings that vary along the facades, and bold brackets under the overhanging cornice, which demonstrates outstanding design. In addition, the intricately painted wood ceilings and window lintels demonstrate outstanding attention to detail, materials, and craftsmanship.

**Historic Integrity:**

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its original appearance. There are essential physical features that must be considered to evaluate the integrity of a significant building. Although La Arcada has had some alterations by varying tenants, the building's design and detailing featured in the early photographs of the building remain, giving it a high level of integrity. Since 1926, La Arcada, which still is a dining and shopping destination as it was when designed, has high integrity of location, setting, association, and feeling. The original design, materials, and workmanship have been retained so that the building conveys its original 1926 appearance. Thus, the building has retained a high level of



historical integrity.

**Recommendation:**

The HLC Designations Subcommittee and staff recommend that the HLC adopt a resolution to recommend to City Council that La Arcada building be designated as a City Landmark. Staff recommends the proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation include the entire parcel.

**Works Cited:**

Cervin, Michael. "The Hunt for Distinction." *Pasadena Weekly*. September 1, 2011.  
[www.pasadenaweekly.com](http://www.pasadenaweekly.com).

Dumain, Kevin. "Renovation of La Arcada: 'A Less is More' Success Story." *The Santa Barbara News-Press*. Gledhill Library La Arcada File.

*Los Angeles Times* Photographic Archives. UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library. [www.calisphere.org](http://www.calisphere.org).

"Santa Barbara Project." *Los Angeles Times*. August 8, 2016.

Westbrook, Leslie A. "La Arcada: A Perfect Mix of Historic and Modern." *Food & Home*. Winter 2016-2017. p. 26-30.