



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: May 12, 2022 REPORT NO. HRB-22-016

HEARING DATE: May 26, 2022

SUBJECT: **ITEM #04 – Verna Werner/A.L. & A.E. Dennstedt Building Company House**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Gerald W. Schubert & Linda J. Living Trust represented by Landmark Historic Preservation

LOCATION: 3522 Dumas Street, Peninsula Community, Council District 2
APN 450-101-07-00

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Verna Werner/A.L. & A.E. Dennstedt Building Company House located at 3522 Dumas Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Verna Werner/A.L. & A.E. Dennstedt Building Company House located at 3522 Dumas Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1937 under HRB Criteria C and D. The designation excludes the 1960 rear two-story addition constructed outside the period of significance. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Colonial Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1937 period of significance. Specifically, the resource displays a side gable roof, two-story massing with symmetrical primary façade, elaborated door surround, paneled front door, gabled dormers, bay windows, multi-lite fixed and double hung wood windows and wooden shutters.
2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Builder, A.L. and A.E. Dennstedt Building Company and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1937 design. Specifically, the house is notable as an example of the A.L. and A.E. Dennstedt Building Company's work in the Colonial Revival style.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The subject resource is a two-story, single-family residence located in the Loma Portal neighborhood in the Peninsula Community.

The property was identified by the Quieter Homes Program (QHP) and was determined to be a contributor to the National Register eligible Loma Portal Historic District.

The historic name of the resource, the Verna Warner/ A.L. and A.E. Dennstedt Building Company House, has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Verna Warner who constructed the house as her personal residence and the name of A.L. and A.E. Dennstedt Building Company, a Master Builder.

ANALYSIS

A Historical Resource Research Report was prepared by Landmark Historic Preservation which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria C and D and staff concurs. This determination is consistent with the [Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria](#), as follows.

CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.

The subject resource is a single-family residence constructed in 1937 in the Colonial Revival style. The property is two-stories with a moderately pitched side gable roof with shallow eave overhang and decorative rafters. The house has a varied exterior cladding with stucco covering the first floor and horizontal wood siding above. The front façade is symmetrical and features two second-story shallow gable dormers. The most prominent feature is the recessed entrance which is accentuated by a decorative entablature supported by classical fluted pilaster supports. The front door is constructed of wood panels and more paneling lines the sides of the entry recess. An original brick path and steps lead to the front entry which is flanked by two bay windows with brick cladding. Fenestration consists of multi-lite fixed and double hung wood windows in various sizes. Windows on the second-story front façade are ornamented with wooden shutters and a two-story stucco chimney is located on the southeast elevation. The front yard features a large cedar tree that was likely planted near the date of the house's construction. The original detached garage is accessed by a long drive on the east elevation of the site.

Several modifications have been made to the home since its construction in 1937. A rear one-story addition was constructed in 1937, a two-story rear addition was constructed in 1960, in-kind window replacements in 2009 as a part of the QHP program, and wood shutters were added to the windows on the second-story gable dormers between 2009 and 2011. These modifications do not significantly impair integrity of design, materials or feeling.

Following the Centennial Exposition of 1876 America experienced a rebirth of interest in its colonial past. Primarily popular from 1880 to 1955, Colonial Revival buildings reference the early English and Dutch homes of the Atlantic seaboard, particularly the Georgian and Adam styles. As with their prototypes, Colonial Revival structures generally have a symmetrical front façade with the principal areas of elaboration being entrances, windows and cornices. Roofs can be hipped, gable or gambrel and some variations feature a center gable projecting slightly from the primary façade. One-story side wings are common. Windows are typically double-hung sash with multi-lite glazing in one or both sashes and are commonly found in pairs, triples or bay windows.

The Regency Revival style is indigenous to Los Angeles and was popular from the mid 1930's until about 1970. The origins of this style are based loosely on British precedents from the Regency of the Prince of Wales (1811 to 1820) rather than American Colonial examples. The Regency Revival includes elements of Neoclassical and French Empire design with influences of modern styles and the exaggerated qualities of Hollywood film sets. Character defining features of this style include a symmetrical façade, blank wall surfaces veneered in smooth plaster, vertically exaggerated fenestration, entrances and windows with arched tops and exaggerated applied ornamentation. Roofs are generally steeply pitched and can be mansard, hipped or gable. The HRRR asserts that the subject resource exhibits influences of the Regency Revival style however the property features only one character defining feature; smooth blank wall surfaces. The sleekness of the house in comparison to other Colonial Revival style homes is more likely influenced by Wahrenberger's evolution toward more modern designs. Therefore, staff is not recommending the property as having Regency Revival influences.

Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Colonial Revival style by embodying the historic characteristics associated with the style. Specifically, the resource displays a side gable roof, two-story massing with symmetrical primary façade, elaborated door surround, paneled front door, gabled dormers, bay windows, multi-lite fixed and double hung wood windows and wooden shutters. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C.

CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.

Brothers A.L., C.A., E.L. and A.E. Dennstedt, originally from Minnesota, sold real estate in the Midwest in the early part of the 20th century until the market collapsed in 1923. In 1926, they moved to San Diego and established the Dennstedt Company. They hired skilled architectural drafter Henry Landt to be the director of drafting. The company built custom houses, mostly in the Spanish Eclectic style.

By 1929, the Dennstedt Company had built hundreds of houses, and were advertising themselves as the largest homebuilder in San Diego. They were known for building high-quality custom houses of different sizes, hiring skilled craftsmen and retaining those employees long-term. Henry Landt also kept the company at the cutting edge of innovations in the field. They adopted the business strategy of buying vacant lots in existing subdivisions, finding buyers who were willing to contract with them to build a house on the lot, and offering clients financing for both the lot purchase and home construction costs. In this way, they became prolific builders of custom houses. They also constructed hotels and other commercial buildings.

In 1933, A.L. sold his interest in the company as a result of a dispute with his brothers, likely over whether to enter the tract housing market and work with low-cost FHA loans. In 1934, A.L. recruited Henry Landt and his brother A.E to join him in forming the "A.L. and A.E. Dennstedt Building Company." A.L. and A.E. continued to build custom houses, using their method of selling lots to clients who were willing to contract with them to build their houses. They never built tract housing, but they eventually began building speculation houses for clients with FHA loans. One of their projects was the Reynard Hills subdivision, which exhibits a variety of architectural styles including Spanish Eclectic, Monterey, Cape Cod, and Old English. The company lasted until 1941, at which point residential construction largely stopped as the US entered World War II, and Landt became a construction engineer for Convair.

The A.L. & AE. Dennstedt Building Company was established as a Master Builder in 2007 when the Historical Resources Board designated the Hazel Weir/Dennstedt Company House/Mut kula xuy/Mut lah hoy ya Site #4, HRB #818.

Verna Warner hired the A.L. & AE. Dennstedt Building Company in 1936, per the notice of completion, to construct the house for her and her husband on Dumas Street. Completed in 1937, the property is a rare example of the A.L. & AE. Dennstedt Building Company's work in the Colonial Revival style and helps to illustrate the progression of their work throughout the years.


Significance Statement: The subject resource retains excellent integrity and continues to reflect A.L. & AE. Dennstedt Building Company's original design, intent and aesthetic. The house is notable as an example of the A.L. & AE. Dennstedt Building Company's work in the Colonial Revival style. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion D as a notable work of Master Builder, A.L. and A.E. Dennstedt Building Company.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives. If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Verna Werner/A.L. & A.E. Dennstedt Building Company House located at 3522 Dumas Street be designated with a period of significance of 1937 under HRB Criterion C as a resource that exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the Colonial Revival style and HRB Criterion D as a resource that is representative of a notable work of Master Builder, A.L. & A.E. Dennstedt Building Company. The designation excludes the 1960 rear two-story addition constructed outside the period of significance.


Shannon Anthony
Senior Planner

SA/sa

Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 5/26/2022

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 5/26/2022, to consider the historical designation of the **Verna Werner/A.L. & A.E. Dennstedt Building Company House** (owned by Gerald W. Schubert & Linda J Living Trust 06-15-94, 3522 Dumas Street, San Diego, CA 92106) located at **3522 Dumas Street, San Diego, CA 92106**, APN: **450-101-07-00**, further described as BLK A LOT 7 in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. 0**, and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/ site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the Verna Werner/A.L. & A.E. Dennstedt Building Company House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Colonial Revival style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its 1937 period of significance. Specifically, the resource displays a side gable roof, two-story massing with symmetrical primary façade, elaborated door surround, paneled front door, gabled dormers, bay windows, multi-lite fixed and double hung wood windows and wooden shutters. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Builder, A.L. and A.E. Dennstedt Building Company and retains integrity as it relates to the original 1937 design. Specifically, the house is notable as an example of the A.L. and A.E. Dennstedt Building Company's work in the Colonial Revival style. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the 1960 rear two-story addition constructed outside the period of significance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote:

BY: _____
DAVID MCCULLOUGH, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
LINDSEY SEBASTIAN,
Deputy City Attorney

RECORDING REQUESTED BY
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD
ATTN: HRB SECRETARY
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 501
SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

SPACE ABOVE THIS LINE FOR RECORDER'S USE

RESOLUTION NUMBER **N/A**

HISTORICAL DESIGNATION OF PROPERTY ON

3522 Dumas Street, San Diego, CA 92106

ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER **450-101-07-00**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD NUMBER **0**