

**HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
STRUCTURE OF MERIT DESIGNATION
STAFF REPORT**

**THE LEWIS HOUSE, 402 PLAZA RUBIO
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
APN 025-263-001**

SEPTEMBER 7, 2016



Vicinity Map of 402 Plaza Rubio



Designation boundary is entire parcel to allow for HLC review for compatibility

Significance

The City of Santa Barbara establishes historic significance as provided 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. It is the opinion of the Historic Landmarks Commission Designations Subcommittee that the building at 402 Plaza Rubio is an excellent candidate for Structure of Merit designation per the following criteria:



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

The smooth stucco siding, deeply recessed casement windows, and terra-cotta tile roof contribute to the Spanish Colonial Revival style character.

This Spanish Colonial Revival house was designed by noted architect Mary Craig in 1925 along with six other houses on Plaza Rubio that face Mission Santa Barbara. The house sits on the corner of Plaza Rubio and Laguna Street and forms a “bookend” for the block of the Mary Craig houses of Plaza Rubio. This house mirrors a house of similar plan at the upper end of the block at the corner of Emerson Street. The house’s original owner was the Robert Lewis family for many years. Davidson and Maitland were the building contractors for all of the houses except 414 or 420 Plaza Rubio and 530 Plaza Rubio. The 1920s were a period of civic expansion in Santa Barbara; development of unoccupied land and the last pieces of the rural setting of the Mission Santa Barbara occurred. The houses on Plaza Rubio neither intrude on the Mission Santa Barbara nor are upstaged by it. They are far enough away to remain differential, yet close enough to embrace the Mission Santa Barbara in a famed composition. In Santa Barbara, examples of Spanish Colonial Revival can be found throughout the City as one of its most defining styles of architecture. Mary Craig’s work at Plaza Rubio received extraordinary civic recognition. Photographs of the first four houses were published in the *Morning Press* in Santa Barbara in January 1926, as first-prize winners of the newspaper’s photographic competition. As one of the treasured Mary Craig houses on Plaza Rubio, the house is significant to the heritage of the City.

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

The significance of the houses at Plaza Rubio is enhanced by the association with the real estate developer Margaret Andrews. Andrews started acquiring real estate when she came to Santa Barbara in 1922. This included seven of the eight lots of land across from the Mission Santa Barbara. She was a proponent of Santa Barbara's Spanish architectural image. Not only was Andrews known for real estate development, but she was also a local philanthropist and member of the City Planning Commission from June 1931 to August 1932.



The courtyard behind a front garden wall and gate is typical of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. Photo taken June 2016.

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 the Spanish Colonial Revival style's character-defining features, including the largely unadorned, whitewashed stucco walls; terra-cotta roof tiles that create a decorative edge from the roof to the wall; deeply recessed, horizontally divided casement windows; French doors; a front courtyard; and balconies. In Santa Barbara, the Andalusian vernacular (southern-Spanish farmhouse) was the key inspiration for the simplicity in detail found in much of the region's architecture. The house also emphasizes the interplay of cubic volumes, patios, pergolas, and verandas that are typical of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The front patio wall appears in early plans and photographs of the building and carries the front street wall that the Craig buildings establish.



The rear of the building has a wooden gallery with heavy timbers that are characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Photo taken June 2016.

Because the house at 402 Plaza Rubio exemplifies its architectural style, it is eligible for listing as a City of Santa Barbara Structure of Merit under Criterion D.

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 house is the work of Mary McLaughlin Craig, who was the wife of noted Santa Barbara architect Osborne Craig. Osborne Craig died of poor health in 1922, at which time Mary Craig began using her husband's architecture office on the second floor of the Orena adobe. Mary Craig hired one of the area's finest licensed architects, Ralph Armitage. With his talent and the inherited reputation of her husband as a California Spanish-style designer, Mary Craig was ready to establish her singular reputation through a masterful combination of persuasion, talent, trust, and friendships. After the earthquake struck in 1925, it was the new Spanish Colonial Revival buildings that survived with little damage. The Spanish Colonial Style, which Mary Craig intuitively understood, became the style for her plentiful work. Her patron, Margaret Andrews, held the strong aesthetic and the belief that the town should adhere to low building heights and its Spanish heritage. Andrews offered Mary Craig important opportunities, among them the Plaza Rubio houses. Mary Craig also designed large noteworthy homes in Montecito. At the time Mary Craig practiced architecture, there were very few women in the field. It was a considerable accomplishment to step into the role usually played by a man and become so successful.

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

The house embodies the following elements that demonstrate an outstanding attention to design, detail, materials, and craftsmanship: the design of the low-pitched roof with terra-cotta roof tiles that create a decorative edge from the roof to the wall; the largely unadorned, whitewashed, stucco walls; deeply recessed, wood, horizontally divided casement windows; French doors, and rear wood veranda. In addition, the design of the front entry shows outstanding attention to design in that it is recessed behind a garden wall with an iron gate in a front courtyard. The entry door is made of



The collection of Spanish Colonial Revival style houses on Plaza Rubio. Courtesy of Spanish Colonial Style: Santa Barbara and the Architecture of James Osborne Craig and Mary McLaughlin Craig.



The simple and elegant front entry door is made of wood planks that are character-defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and show outstanding attention to materials. Photo taken June 2016.

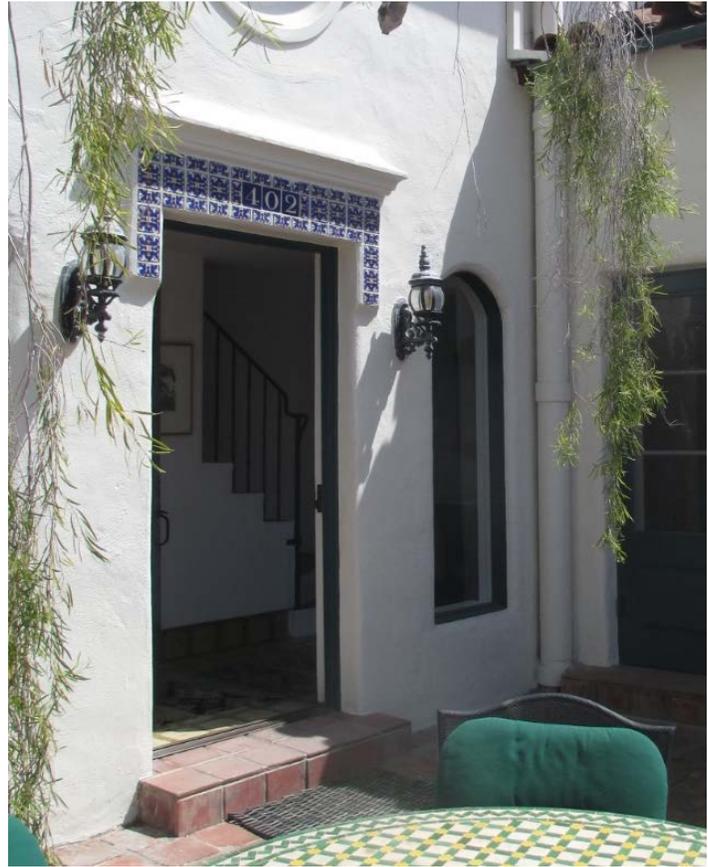
wood planks with colorful decorative tiles used as door surrounds. Because the house demonstrates these outstanding elements, it qualifies as a Structure of Merit under Criterion G.

Criterion H. Its relationship to any other landmark if its preservation is essential to the integrity of that Landmark

The Mary Craig houses of Plaza Rubio face the Mission Historical Park and the Mission Santa Barbara. These houses were conceived as an urban ensemble to complement these important elements of Santa Barbara, which are now designated City Landmarks. They create an important interaction with both the Mission Historical Park and Mission Santa Barbara and are essential to the integrity of setting of the City Landmarks.

Criterion I. Its unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood

The house at 402 Plaza Rubio is an essential part of the row of Spanish Colonial Revival houses across from Mission Santa Barbara and the rose garden of Mission Historical Park, as they sit on a unique location and have been an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood since 1925-1926, when they were constructed.



The simple and elegant front entry door is made of wood planks that are character-defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and show outstanding attention to materials. Photo taken June 2016.

Historic Integrity

The house is in good condition, with almost all of the original materials still present. Prior to the current owners purchasing the house in 2015, multiple campaigns of remodeling destroyed some of the original features of the property. A small two-story addition was placed at the rear of the property, using sub-standard construction and historically incompatible detailing. An open loggia was enclosed with large aluminum sliding glass doors, and the original windows and French doors between this space and the interior of the house were removed. The original wooden swinging garage doors were replaced with an aluminum overhead door. The kitchen was replaced with new cabinetry and fixtures c. 1970s. A remodeling and restoration plan is proposed to remove and replace these features with more appropriate ones from a historical and design point of view. However, the house retains enough of its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, allowing it to convey its original appearance. The house also contributes to the visual integrity of the Plaza Rubio streetscape, Mission Santa Barbara, and Mission Historical Park. The surrounding area has also maintained much of its historic

integrity.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission adopt a resolution to designate 402 Plaza Rubio as a Structure of Merit. Staff recommends the entire parcel be designated as many elements of the yard and garage relate to the significance of the Structure of Merit.

Works Cited

Skewes-Cox, Pamela, and Sweeney, Robert. *Spanish Colonial Style: Santa Barbara and the Architecture of James Osborn Craig and Mary McLaughlin Craig*. Rizzoli, New York. 2015.

Attachments:

1. (Draft) Resolution to designate
2. Mills Act Ten-Year Rehabilitation Plan