

**HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
CITY LANDMARK DESIGNATION
STAFF REPORT**

**THE GEORGE EDWARDS HOUSE
1721 SANTA BARBARA STREET
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
027-111-005**

Background:

Constructed in 1887, the Queen Anne style building was designed by one of Santa Barbara's most accomplished late-nineteenth-century architects, Thomas Nixon. The Queen Anne house features original intricate woodwork and complex asymmetrical façade with bay windows that characterize the Queen Anne style. The structure has been on the City's Potential Historic Resource List since 1978, eligible as a City Landmark 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 because it meets seven of the eleven required criteria outlined in the Municipal Code, Section 22.22.040. The building was designed by an important architect as the home for George S. Edwards, Mayor of Santa Barbara from 1902-1905. Not only is the house associated with an important person in Santa Barbara's history, the house is an excellent example of a restored Queen Anne style house in a city that has few Queen Anne buildings from the late 1880s remaining. The recent restoration of the building restored the original materials to an excellent condition, and the alterations are minimally visible so that the building has a high level of integrity.



Above: View of the east elevation of the 1721 Santa Barbara Street with its two story elaborate front porch. February 5, 2016.

The designation of the building as a City Landmark will honor and recognize the importance of the Queen Anne residence as it will join the elite list of important structures contributing to the City's unique historical and architectural traditions.

Vicinity Map, City of Santa Barbara Mapping Analysis and Printing System, February 2016.

Red line indicates proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation, which includes the entire parcel to allow for adequate review of any changes to the parcel for compatibility.



Historic Context:

The Edwards House faces Santa Barbara Street between East Islay Street and East Valerio Street, in the Upper Eastside neighborhood. Though surveyed and named in 1851, Valerio and Santa Barbara Streets were not graded until many years later.

During the 1850s-1870s, the City began to transfer former pueblo lands to private ownership. Transportation between the waterfront and downtown improved in 1876, when a mule trolley service provided transportation between the base of State Street and the Arlington hotel.

Because of construction of the wharf, coupled with the development of the area’s tourist industry and the anticipated arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad, a speculative real estate boom surrounded the area of downtown. In the mid-1870s, speculators began to subdivide land surrounding the downtown into smaller parcels that were sold for residential development and small farms.

The neighborhood surrounding the project parcel is defined in the City of Santa Barbara General Plan as the Upper East. Development of the 1700 block of Santa Barbara Street occurred primarily between the 1880s and circa 1930.

A number of architectural styles are represented in the houses and buildings built in the surrounding neighborhood, including Italianate, Queen Anne, Eclectic, Craftsman, American Colonial Revival, and Spanish Colonial Revival.

The original owner, George S. Edwards, was Mayor of Santa Barbara from 1902-1905 and was recognized for his business, political, civic, and philanthropic leadership. Among his accomplishments during his term as Mayor included appointing the City’s first park commission.



Early photograph of the east and south elevations (courtesy the Santa Barbara Historical Museum).



Early photo of the east elevation of the 1721 Santa Barbara Street residence when the upper porch was enclosed with windows (courtesy the Santa Barbara Historical Museum.)

In 2015, a rear two-story addition was completed. The addition is minimally visible from the streetscape. The addition is compatible with the historic house in size, scale, proportion, and massing so that the integrity of the building is intact and it still qualifies as a City Landmark. The rear addition was completed so that minimal historic materials on the front and side elevations were removed and original windows, front door, and siding remain intact.

**Architect:
Thomas Nixon**

In 1887, George Edwards and his wife Anne commissioned architect Thomas Nixon to design the Queen Anne residence at 1719 Santa Barbara Street (the address changed to 1721 in the 1910s).

Thomas Nixon worked in Santa Barbara as an architectural designer, builder, and wood mill operator. Nixon's architectural commissions involved supplying the design, materials, interior furnishings, and building construction. He specialized in using redwood burls and high-quality, first-growth redwood. Thomas Nixon is recognized as one of Santa Barbara's most accomplished late-nineteenth-century architects. Nixon, who also often worked as the building contractor on his design commissions, was particularly known for his Queen Anne style homes with Eastlake style details, and his home interior workmanship.



The gable has square fish scale shingles and twin double hung windows with decorative divided lights. February 5, 2016.



The front porch features elaborate decorative woodwork including turned wood balustrade that is a character-defining feature of the Queen Anne Style. February 5, 2016.

Architectural Style:
Queen Anne

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.



The front corner of the Queen Anne house features a large bay window that turns the corner with decorative brackets under the eaves. January 13, 2016.

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 (Naverson, 1987).

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.

Thomas Nixon incorporated Stick style patterning from the furniture motifs of English designer Charles Locke Eastlake in the mid-1880s. This ornamentation became characteristic of Queen Anne

decorative schemes. Other Eastlake style homes include decorative bull's eyes, stars, rosettes, strips, and bars applied in the gables.

The Edwards 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 two-story decorative porch. The property is one of few examples of Victorian residential architecture in the Upper Eastside area. The second-story addition to the rear elevation in 2015 was reviewed by the HLC to ensure that the character-defining features of the original building were restored and that it would not have a negative impact to the historical resource.



The corner window sits at a diagonal and is crossed by a decorative bracket. January 13, 2016.

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:

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 work of designer Thomas Nixon. 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.

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 1721 Santa Barbara Street residence is associated with one of the most important Victorian period architects in Santa Barbara, Thomas Nixon. It is also associated with its first owner, George Edwards, an important civic leader, Mayor of Santa Barbara, and banker.

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

The residence is an excellent example of the Queen Anne/Eastlake architectural style that dominated Santa Barbara from the 1870s until the 1910s. The house has the character-defining

features of the style in its decorative wood trim work, the elaborate central gable, the ornate front porch, and wood bay windows. The building is important to the development of Santa Barbara's architectural repertoire.

Criterion E. Its exemplification of the best remaining architectural type in a neighborhood

The 1721 Santa Barbara Street residence is one of the best examples of Queen Anne/Eastlake residential architecture in the City of Santa Barbara and Upper Eastside neighborhood.

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

Thomas Nixon designed and constructed the exterior and interior furnishings of the 1721 Santa Barbara Street residence. He was one of the most influential architects of nineteenth-century Santa Barbara.

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

Thomas Nixon was a high-end designer hired for the quality of his work by affluent City residents, with a reputation for producing buildings with very high-quality craftsmanship on both the interior and exterior. The building embodies not only outstanding attention to design, but also extreme attention to detail, materials, and craftsmanship in the intricate wood trim work spindles; wood, double-hung, bay windows; wood front door; and decorative shingle siding.



The side gable features decorative shingles and divided light window and a decorative finial.. January 13, 2016.

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

The 1721 Santa Barbara Street residence is located in a residential neighborhood of large, well-designed homes on generously sized lots. As one of the earliest residences built in the immediate neighborhood, it established a high level of design standards and visual character, which subsequent home designers have sought to emulate and that has become a familiar visual feature of the neighborhood.

Historic Integrity:

Integrity is the ability to convey its original appearance. In 2015, a full rehabilitation was undertaken on the building as well as a rear addition. The project was completed under the review of the HLC and meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. The addition was completed without sacrificing the integrity of the historic resource. There are essential physical features that must be considered to evaluate the integrity. The house retains its character-defining features, including the intricate woodwork; elaborate gable; porch columns; spindle work; wood, double-hung, bay windows; wood front door; and decorative shingle siding. Since 1887, the building has retained its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, allowing it to convey its original 1887 appearance.



Photograph of the front elevation prior to the 2015 rehabilitation. Note the enclosed porch windows were removed to restore the original two story open porch. 2014.



Photograph of the rear elevation prior to the 2015 rehabilitation. The rear wall was removed and in deteriorated condition for many years. 2014.



Photograph of the rear elevation, with the 2015 rear addition that has a two-story, full porch. January 13, 2016.

Recommendation:

The HLC Designations Subcommittee and staff recommend that the HLC adopt a resolution to recommend to City Council that the Queen Anne style Edwards residence at 1721 Santa Barbara Street be designated as a City Landmark. The proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation is the entire parcel to allow for adequate review of any changes to the parcel for compatibility.

Works Cited:

Nye, Ronald L. *Historic Structures/Sites Report 1721 Santa Barbara*. October, 2014. City of Santa Barbara Community Development Department, Planning Division.

Palmer, Christine. *Historic Structures/Sites Report 1721 Santa Barbara*. August, 2005. City of Santa Barbara Community Development Department, Planning Division.



Photograph of the side of two-story front porch with detailed turned posts and balusters. January 13, 2016.