



Proposed Mission Gardens Historic District

The Proposed Mission Gardens Historic District is roughly bound by Pedregosa Street on the south, Emerson Street on the east, Plaza Rubio on the north and Laguna Street on the west.

INTRODUCTION

The district is significant for its collection of buildings united by the various iterations of the Period Revival Movement. The Period Revival Movement encompassed a diverse range of architectural influences, such as Tudor, French Norman, Spanish, Italian Renaissance, American Colonial, and Spanish Colonial styles. The Period Revival Movement was a continuation of a stylistic movement that began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when Americans began to show a renewed interest in the architectural heritage of America and Europe. By the early 1920s, the Period Revival Movement had spread in popularity among the middle classes, many of whom looked to the regional styles of eighteenth and nineteenth America for inspiration for their own houses. Located in close proximity to Santa Barbara Mission, the district which has retained almost all of its single family residential buildings as well as the historic pattern of streets and sidewalks that date from the 1880s to 1940. The natural setting of the district that sits below the steeply sloping hillsides with rocky outcrops and stands of native oak trees characterize the Historic District.



This English Vernacular home is an example of a period revival style building in the Mission Gardens Historic District. Its simple round arched doorway with heavy wood door is a common character defining detail.

HISTORY

Period of significance: 1880-1940

Between circa-1880 and 1940, the Mission Gardens Historic District developed as a residential enclave. It was during this 60-year period that the former mission gardens and fields were transformed into a residential subdivision. In Santa Barbara, interest in the Period Revival architectural movement was seen in the architectural motifs of the City's Colonial and Mexican past. Like other neighborhoods, the survey area began to build houses in more eclectic styles including; the Spanish Colonial Revival, English Vernacular, Tudor, and American Colonial Revival. The addition of these Period Revival houses, particularly the Spanish Colonial Revival style and to a lesser extent, the Tudor style, built during an approximate 20-year period, between circa-1920 and 1940, has given the historic district its definition as it reflected trends in architecture, transportation and town planning. The growth of the neighborhood also reflected early twentieth century improvements to the City's transportation system including the expansion of the city's streetcar line, and in the late teens, the introduction of inexpensive mass produced automobiles. Improvements to the City's infrastructure included the paving of streets and sidewalks, the installation of sewer and water systems, and the introduction of electricity. Without these improvements it would have been impossible for Mission Gardens Historic District to be transformed into a picturesque residential neighborhood.

The Spanish Colonial Revival style was especially appropriate for the neighborhood of the former gardens of Mission Santa Barbara. One of the most outstanding examples of the employment of the style in area can be seen in the houses designed by the architect, Mary Craig in the mid-1920s, in the 400 block of Plaza Rubio. The houses are expressive of the renewed interest in Santa Barbara's heritage and were thought to be a particularly appropriate style for developments built so close to Mission Santa Barbara.

The 1920s was also when much of Montgomery Street was built out with an eclectic array of modest houses in a range of period revival styles. During this period the original Roosevelt Elementary School was constructed (replaced with a new school in 2000). The 1920s also saw the portion of Santa Barbara Mission grounds that bordered Plaza Rubio sold by the Franciscan order to fund earthquake repairs. The land was purchased and donated to the City as a park, by Mrs. J. A. Andrews, who lived in the house at 530 Plaza Rubio designed by the locally noted architect George Washington Smith.

Propelled by the onset of the Great Depression, which often necessitated the transformation of single-family houses into multi-unit living spaces, small detached cottages were built alongside or behind existing houses; other times existing porches or garages were remodeled into additional rental units. The consequence of this was to alter the character of the neighborhood by increasing its density.



The 1925 house is one of a group of Spanish Colonial Revival residences designed by Mary Craig on the 400 block of Plaza Rubio.



The 1922 American Colonial Revival house on Montgomery Street is typical of the eclectic array of houses designed in period revival styles in the historic district.