

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
LANDMARK DESIGNATION  
STAFF REPORT

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS BUILDING  
715 ANACAPA STREET  
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA  
037-092-036  
JULY 15, 2015

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**Background:**

Constructed in 1922, the Spanish Colonial Revival style building was designed by one of Santa Barbara's most renowned architects, George Washington Smith. The building is a monument to Thomas More Storke, the editor and publisher for more than 50 years of the *Daily News*, now called the *Santa Barbara News-Press*. Visually anchoring the south side of important, Plaza de la Guerra, structure has been on the City's Potential Historic Resource list since 1978 as eligible to be designated a City Landmark for its architect, architectural style and historical significance. The building is one of the most important structures in Santa Barbara as it is an icon for the local news media

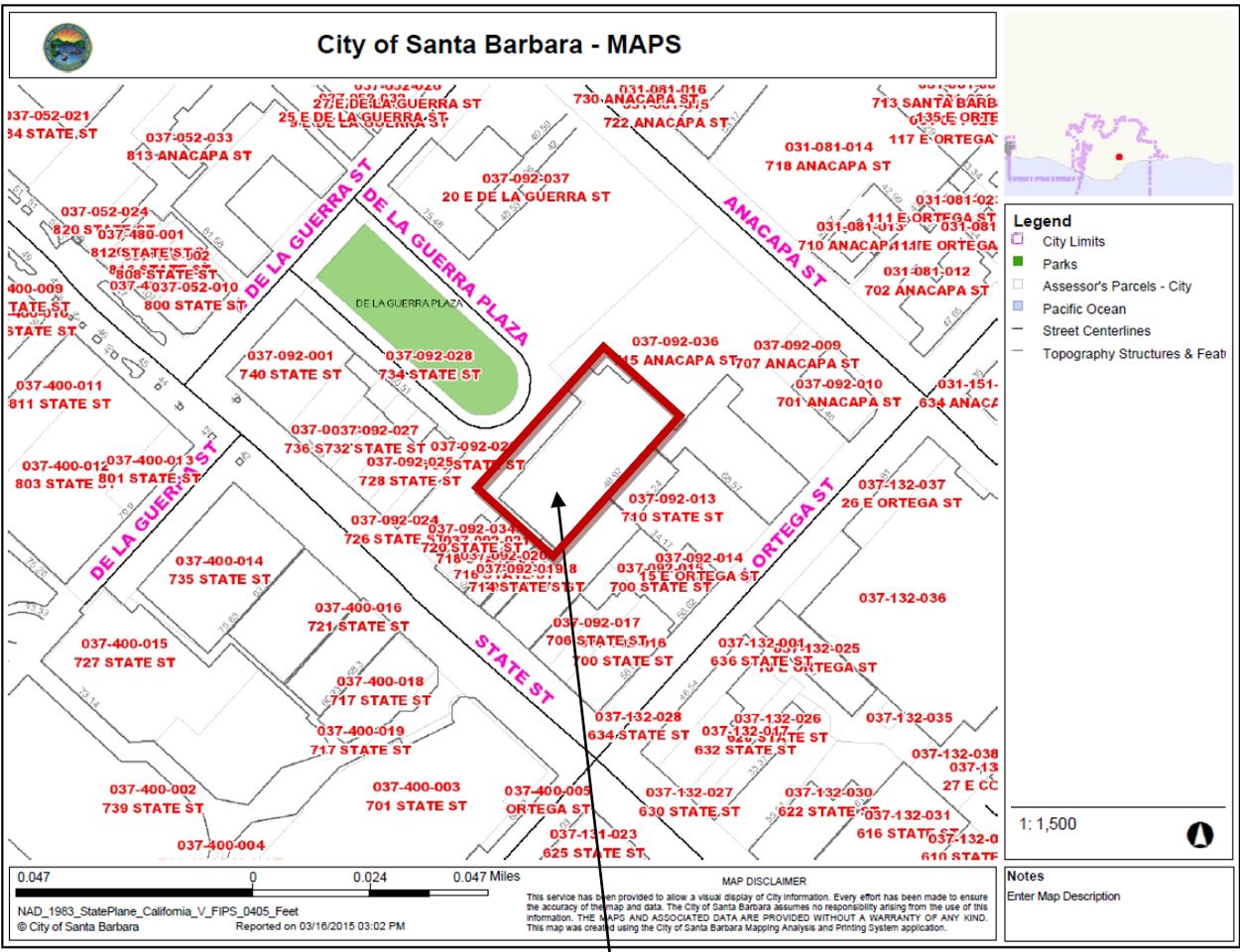


*Photograph of the Daily News building facing Plaza De La Guerra c. 1924, 2 years after construction. (Photo from La Campagna, Summer 1999).*

and it surrounds Plaza de la Guerra along with the City's most important buildings, including the Casa de la Guerra, Oreña Adobes, and Oreña Store, and City Hall, which form an integral element of Santa Barbara's historic character and appearance. It is the opinion of the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) Designation Subcommittee that the building is an excellent candidate for City Landmark designation as it is one of the architectural gems designed by one of Santa Barbara's most accomplished architects.

Because the Santa Barbara News-Press building has stood as an icon for Santa Barbara's local news media and has an association with the City's cultural, social, political, and economic life, designation of the building as a City Landmark will honor and recognize the importance of the building 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, 2013



Santa Barbara News-Press Building anchoring the south side of Plaza De La Guerra. The proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation is the 1922 building and 1951 tower and does not include the landscaping as it is out of their property line or the building fronting Ortega Street.

### Historic Context:

The Santa Barbara News-Press building sits on the south side of Plaza de la Guerra. The Plaza has been the center of the city's civic life since 1819, when Jose de la Guerra first began to build the Casa de la Guerra in that year. In 1847, the Plaza was the site of the raising of the American flag. Twenty-eight years later, in 1874, the plaza became the location of Santa Barbara's first City Hall.

In March 1922, the Community Arts Association, at the request of the City, hired George Washington Smith to develop conceptual sketches for the rebuilding of the plaza.

In Smith's plans, he envisioned the area as a paved plaza surrounded by picturesque grouping of Spanish Colonial Revival style buildings. These plans, which Smith submitted to the City in May 1922, received strong community support.



*Photograph of the Santa Barbara News-Press building in 1951, after tower addition (from Post/Hazeltine Plaza De La Guerra Historic Structure Report, courtesy the Santa Barbara Historical Museum).*

The earliest building at the south end of Plaza de la Guerra was built in the early to mid 1850s, the Sepulveda Adobe that continued to define the south boundary of the Plaza until it was demolished in 1922 to make way for the construction of publisher, Thomas Storke's Daily News Building (later changed to the Santa Barbara News-Press). The building was designed by George Washington Smith in the Spanish Colonial Revival Style, in keeping with the new theme of downtown Santa Barbara. Since 1922, the City's leading newspaper has been headquartered at the south end of the plaza in this building. In 1924, the Victorian era City Hall was replaced by a new City Hall. Following the influence of the News-Press building, the new City Hall was designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style on the northeast corner of the plaza. Just south of City Hall was the Abadie/Harmer Adobe. In 1906, the noted Santa Barbara artist, Alexander Harmer, transformed the Abadie/Harmer Adobe, which had been inherited by his wife, Felicidad Abadie into an art studio and home. Unfortunately, the Abadie/Harmer Adobe on the east side of the plaza was destroyed in the 1925 earthquake. With the completion of City Hall in 1924, El Paseo, and the Daily Press, the plaza and its surrounding buildings became one of the community's first examples of urban planning, unified by its Spanish Colonial Revival style aesthetic. In addition, the plaza has been the nexus for various community events, such as the Old Spanish Days Fiesta (first celebrated in 1924).

While the plaza had been reopened to widespread public acclaim, a consensus could not be reached as to an appropriate design for the square itself. In the interim, the open space was simply graded and planted with grass within the existing concrete curbing that surrounded the center of the plaza. Additional landscaping was relegated to a number of small trees set near the south end of the plaza and two queen palms planted near East De la Guerra Street. Other improvements included the installation, in circa 1923-1924 of scalloped adobe walls on three sides of the plaza. Plaza de la

Guerra itself is eligible for listing as a City of Santa Barbara Landmark, listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and is eligible for listing as a significant Cultural Landscape in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1951, the firm of Edwards and Wade constructed a two-story addition off the east end of the building's north elevation. It features a large tower capped by a belvedere with a pyramidal roof built off the east end of the north elevation. Construction of the addition included replacing the lower roofline at the east end of the 1922 building with one that matched the plate height of the building's central block. Other alterations included the removal of a door and window at the east end of the elevation and their replacement with larger windows that mimicked the elevation's larger first floor windows.



Rendering of the Daily News Building by Lulah Maria Riggs (from *Plaza De La Guerra Reconsidered*. Courtesy of the Architecture and Design Collections, University Art Museum (UCSB).

The construction of the tower introduced an emphatic vertical element that had not characterized Smith's original scheme. The insertion of two large rectangular windows that mimicked the appearance of the first floor's existing fenestration produced a more balanced if not symmetrical arrangement than had Smith's design. The tower now contributes to the significance of the original building facing Plaza De La Guerra. A rectangular building was added that fronts Ortega Street and is does not contribute to the historic significance of the original building. There have been no substantial changes to the building's street façade since 1951.

**Thomas More Storke** (November 23, 1876 – October 12, 1971)

Born in Santa Barbara, California, to eminent local citizen and politician Charles A. Storke. Storke was editor and publisher of the *Santa Barbara News-Press* and its predecessors, a rancher and citrus fruit grower, and postmaster of Santa Barbara from 1914 to 1921. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Journalism in 1963 for editorials against the John Birch Society.

He worked in the media, merging his newspaper the *Santa Barbara Daily News* with the *Morning Press* to create the *Santa Barbara News-Press*. He also founded AM radio station KTMS. He was a member of the California Crime Commission from 1951–1952, and the Board of Regents of the University of California from 1955 until 1960.

Storke's contributions to the development of Santa Barbara include spearheading numerous public ventures, including the establishment of the Santa Barbara Municipal Airport, the building of Lake Cachuma that supplies the area with water, and the upgrading of Santa Barbara State College to a University of California campus UCSB. He used his political clout to help obtain the present UCSB campus, over 900 coastal acres (3.6 km<sup>2</sup>) and a former military installation, from the US Government under the college land grant program.

Part of Storke's lasting legacy is Storke Tower, a 190-foot structure in the center of the UCSB campus. Beneath Storke Tower is the Storke Communication Plaza, which houses the offices of the campus *Daily Nexus* newspaper and the studios of community radio station KCSB-FM.

**Architect:**

**George Washington Smith**

George Washington Smith developed much of his talent as a well trained artist where he honed his knowledge of spatial relationships, he then applied these attributes to what many might consider the profession of a straight-line architect. This experience as a trained artist and an architect gave Smith his unique perspective and his sense of interior spaces are the result of a well schooled artist's attention to proportions and perspective. George Washington Smith

(1876-1930) was born in East Liberty, Pennsylvania. Smith became one of the preeminent practitioners of the interpretive Andalusian vernacular (southern-Spanish Farmhouse) as the key inspiration for the simplicity in detail found in much of his oeuvre of Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture. The architectural historian David Gebhard wrote that Smith's Spanish Colonial Revival signature was the "picturesque simplicity" of his use of extensive plain wall surfaces, arches, clay tile roofs, iron grille work, heavy wood components and deeply recessed wall openings, among other elements.

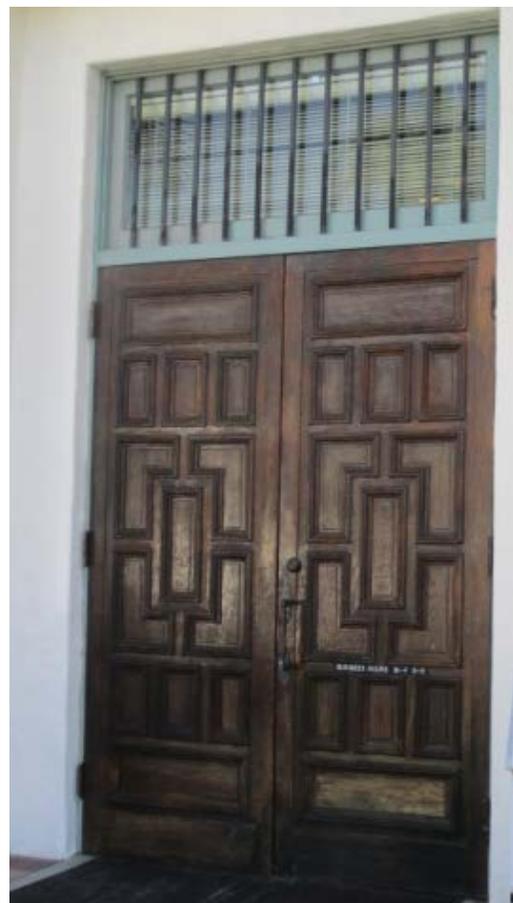
Smith's architectural career extended from about 1918 until his death in 1930, at the age of only 54. From among the approximately 116 designed projects within Mr. Smith's small office, 86 of these projects were actually constructed. The Santa Barbara area is privileged to have 58 personal residences designed by this very special architect along with at least eight significant public buildings including, The Lobero Theatre, Meridian Studios, Little Town Club, Santa Barbara Chapel and Crematorium, La Cumbre Golf and Country Club Building, and the Valley Club Building.

**Architectural Style:**

The character-defining smooth stucco walls, deeply recessed wood windows, red clay tile roof, and wrought iron rejas of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style News-Press building form a backdrop for the Plaza De La Guerra. The pair of intricately carved wood doors with a transom with a simple, slightly projecting surround is



*The North, front, façade of the New-Press building featuring a balcony over the front entrance, Photo taken 2-25-15.*



*Intricately carved wood entrance doors on the simple façade. Photo take 2-25-15.*

capped by a shallow balcony with a metal railing that are also characteristics of the style. The interior lobby has a Spanish Colonial Revival style painted wood ceiling and tile floors.

In 1951, the firm of Edwards and Wade designed a two-story addition off the east end of the building's north elevation. It features a large tower capped by a belvedere with a pyramidal roof built off the east end of the north elevation. The tower is compatible with the original 1922 building and has gained historic significance as it has been part of the News-Press building for over 60 years.

This building is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which became an important part of Santa Barbara's heritage in the early 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, who urged that the town identify its individual character and then use planning principles to develop it. The News-Press was one of the first commercial Spanish Colonial Revival buildings in Santa Barbara, and it set the precedent for the other important institutional buildings, like City Hall, schools and banks to be designed in the same style.



*1951 Tower addition introduced an emphatic vertical element that had not characterized Smith's original scheme. The insertion of two large rectangular windows that mimicked the appearance of the first floor's existing fenestration produced a more balanced if not symmetrical arrangement than had Smith's design. Photo taken 2-25-15.*

### **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 News-Press Building meets the following six criteria:

#### ***Criterion A: its character, interest or value as a significant part of the heritage of the City, the State or the Nation;***

The 1922 building is the home of Santa Barbara's oldest daily newspaper. The building was designed by one of Santa Barbara's most accomplished architects, George Washington Smith, as a monument to one of Santa Barbara's important citizens, Thomas Storke, editor and publisher for more than 50 years of the Santa Barbara News-Press (formerly known as Daily News) newspaper. The Spanish Colonial Revival style for the commercial building set an example that was followed by the adjacent City Hall and redesign of downtown Santa Barbara following the 1925 earthquake. The building stands as one of the most important structures in Santa Barbara as it surrounds Plaza de la Guerra along the City's most important buildings, including the Casa de la Guerra, Oreña Adobes, and Oreña Store, and City Hall which form an integral element of Santa Barbara's historic character and appearance. The building's character, interest and value are 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 building is a monument to Thomas Storke, the editor and publisher of Southern California's oldest daily Newspaper, the *Santa Barbara News-Press* (formerly known as Daily News), for more than 50 years. In 1963, after the John Birch Society attacked the Eisenhower administration and U.S. Chief Justice Earl Warren as being communists, Storke responded with a caustic series of editorials in the *News-Press* which won him popular acclaim as well as a number of prizes. These included the Pulitzer Prize in Journalism, for Editorial Writing in 1962.

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

The building embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style that is an important architectural style of Santa Barbara. Its smooth stucco walls, deeply recessed wood windows, red clay tile roof, and wrought iron rejas are character-defining features of the building's Spanish Colonial Revival style. The formality of the News-Press building was a departure from architect George Washington Smith's usual romantic Andalusian designs and demonstrates his great flexibility with the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Between 1922 and 1925, several major cultural buildings within the downtown core, were built using the architectural motif of the City's Colonial and Mexican past. As a result, when the earthquake occurred in 1925, the Community Arts Association viewed the disaster as an opportunity to rebuild the downtown in Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean and Mission styles that reflect the heritage of the city.



*View of the News-Press building's front elevation facing Plaza De La Guerra. Photo taken 2-25-15.*



*The iron rejas over the windows are character-defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. 2-25-15.*

***Criterion F. Its identification as the creation, design, or work of a person or persons whose effort significantly influenced the heritage of the City, the State, or the Nation;***

George Washington Smith, the building's architect, is a nationally acclaimed architect of the early twentieth century. Smith's Spanish Colonial Revival domestic and urban building designs were recognized for their "picturesque simplicity". Through his architectural designs in Santa Barbara, Smith made a significant contribution to the heritage of the City, State and Nation.

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

The building embodies not only outstanding attention to design, but extreme attention to detail, materials and craftsmanship as seen in the intricate wood trim under the eaves, the true divided light wood casement windows, the wrought iron rejas, the terra-cotta roof and intricately carved wood doors.

***Criterion I, Its unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an establish and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood;***

Since 1922, the News-Press building has anchored the south side of Plaza De La Guerra, taking its place along with City Hall and other City Landmarks to surround the Plaza. It represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood.

### **Historic Integrity:**

Integrity is the ability to convey its original appearance. There are essential physical features that must be considered to evaluate the integrity. The building retains its character-defining features, including the intricate woodwork under the eaves. Since 1922, the building has retained its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association so that north elevation facing Plaza de la Guerra can still convey its appearance of 1922. The 1951 tower is compatible with the original 1922 building and has gained historic significance as it has been part of the News-Press building for over 60 years. The east elevation facing Anacapa Street is recognized as having non-historic elements including a functional loading dock area that is necessary to be maintained for newspaper delivery operations. The City acknowledges that future exterior alterations to the East Elevation may be deemed necessary to assure continued uses, maintain or improve accessibility or to comply with code requirements. It is further agreed that such alterations shall not trigger mandatory restoration work but also not radically change, obscure, or destroy character-defining spaces, materials, features, or finishes.



*The wood rafters and carved brackets under the eaves demonstrate outstanding craftsmanship. Photo taken 2-25-15*

**Recommendation:**

The HLC Designation Subcommittee and Staff Recommend that the HLC adopt a resolution to recommend to City Council that the Santa Barbara News-Press Building at 715 Anacapa Street be designated as a City Landmark. The proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation is the 1922 building and 1951 tower and does not include and the landscaping as it is out of the property line or the building fronting Ortega Street.

**Works Cited:**

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