

131-137 East De La Guerra Street (also known as 811 Santa Barbara Street)

Designation Status: Eligible for Designation as a Structure of Merit

Assessor Parcel Number: 031-011-008, 031-011-009, 031-011-010, 031-011-011

Constructed: 1927

Architect: unknown

Architectural Style: Spanish Colonial Revival

Property Type: Commercial Storefronts

Original Use: Commercial Storefronts

Significance: The building qualifies for designation as a Structure of Merit under the following criteria provided by the Municipal Code, Section 22.22.040.

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

In 1916, Bertram Goodhue, author of a book on Spanish Colonial architecture, helped to kick-start the new Spanish style

with his designs for the Panama California Expo in San Diego. Until then, the only Spanish themed architecture mimicked Mission prototypes. Soon, however, architects and patrons began to look to Spain itself for detailed examples of the Spanish style. Throughout the territories initially settled by the Spanish in the Southwest, as well as Texas and Florida, the Spanish Colonial Revival flourished. Santa Barbara had many architects, including George Washington Smith, Lutah Maria Riggs, Winsor Soule, Reginald Johnson, William Edwards, and Joseph Plunkett, talented in designing in the style. Another key to the success of the Spanish Colonial Revival in Santa Barbara was the efforts of the Plans and Planting Committee through which Bernhard Hoffmann, Pearl Chase and others helped



Photograph of the building in the 1978 Survey.





to sway Santa Barbara towards a more unified architectural style based on the City's Spanish Colonial and Mexican past. After the earthquake of 1925, much of the rebuilding of State Street and the El Pueblo Viejo area was in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. As the building sits in the center of El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District whose purpose is to preserve and enhance the unique heritage and architectural character of the central area of the city developed around the Royal Presidio. El Pueblo Viejo has many of the City's important historic and architectural landmarks. Regulation of architectural styles of new

1920s Drawing of Spanish Colonial Revival Commercial Streetscape courtesy of UCSB Archives.



construction in the Spanish Colonial or Mediterranean styles enhances the cohesiveness of the area, however preservation of the original pieces of architecture from the 1920s is essential to keeping the Landmark District authentic and illustrate the art, materials and creativity of the 1920s when architects and planners sketched and envisioned the Spanish Colonial Revival streetscapes of Santa Barbara. Between 1923 and 1925 George Washington Smith, other local noted architects of Santa Barbara, the Community Drafting Room and the Allied Architectural Association of Los Angeles, demonstrated, through a public exhibition of drawings, how individual blocks of State Street could be reconstructed within the unifying Spanish Colonial Revival style. Although not on State Street as part of El Pueblo Viejo and the commercial core of the City, the building embodies the vision of the drawings. The large wood storefront windows with divided light transoms with recessed openings, smooth stucco walls and a small decorative band of arches over the corner storefront and terra-cotta roof represent an authentic and original streetscape constructed just after the earthquake as envisioned by the planners with the character-defining elements of Santa Barbara; a theme carried

throughout downtown. The volume, height, massing, footprint and character-defining features demonstrate the goal of the early plans for downtown Santa Barbara.

The Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation purchased the property in two parcels. They purchased 131-135 in 1989 and sold to the State in 1990. This included the L-shaped property at 131 that also fronted Santa Barbara Street at 811 Santa Barbara St. The former storefront at 811 Santa Barbara Street was destroyed by fire on April 18, 2007 and not rebuilt. The Trust purchased corner property 137 and 137 ½ in 1994 and sold to the State of California in 1995.

The building qualifies under criterion A as an example of a Spanish Colonial Revival style commercial building that is essential to the identity of Santa Barbara.

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

Known for its Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, Santa Barbara owes much of its charm to the many thick plaster walls and clay tile roofs of this style. The various subtle details carved in wood or crafted in iron add to the quality of the architecture and character of the City. Spanish Colonial Revival architecture will always be key to Santa Barbara's identity. As an authentic example of the style from 1927, the commercial buildings may qualify under Criterion D due to the following character-defining features:

- **Roof:** Terra-cotta red tiles cover the low-pitched intersecting hipped and shed roofs. The tiles create a decorative transition from the roof to the smooth stucco walls.
- **Wall Materials:** The Spanish Colonial Revival style building features smooth, whitewashed, planar, stucco walls, with the emphasis on broad, uninterrupted wall surfaces punctuated by careful use of openings. The architect added subtle arches cut into the stucco coating just below the roofline, emphasizing the texture and movement of the terra cotta tiles.
- **Window Details:** The East De La Guerra Street facade features large storefront windows with divided light transoms and heavy beam lintels. The second-floor features wood horizontally divided light casement windows.
- **Doors:** The front entry doors have wood divided lights.

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

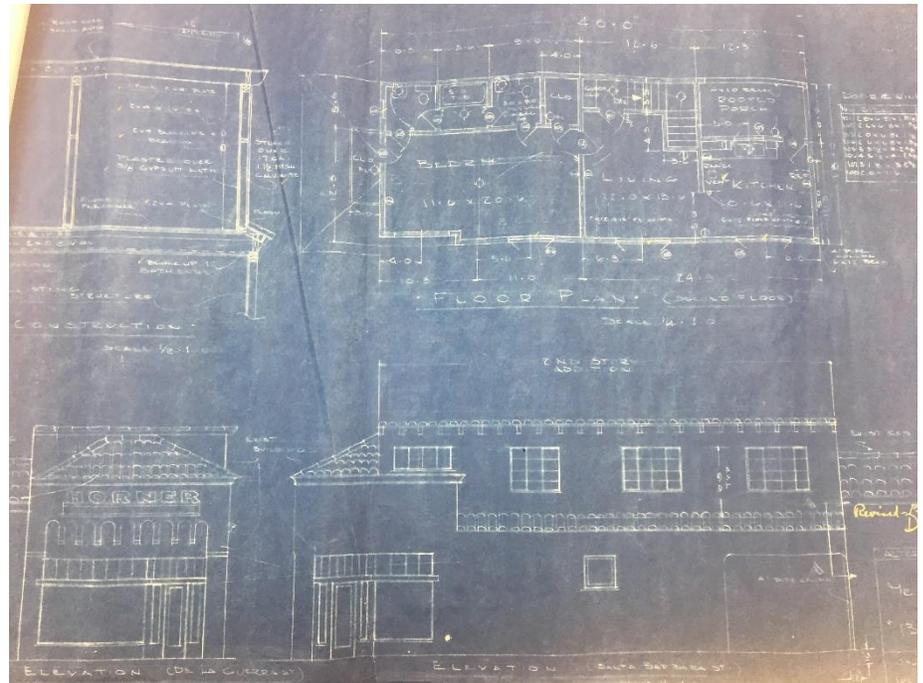
As part of El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District, this is an important building that contributes to the historic significance of the district as a whole and essential the historic integrity of the district. The building is surrounded by Landmarks, Structures of Merit and historic resources eligible for historic designation.

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

The storefront building has been an anchor for the corner of Santa Barbara and East De La Guerra Streets since 1927 and is an established familiar visual feature of the El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District and Presidio Neighborhood. The shops served the community since 1927 with different venders but all serving a vibrant community by offering essential services and artistic enterprises that enhance the uniqueness of Santa Barbara's downtown. The intimacy of the small

storefronts with quality detail and materials enhances the pedestrian experience of the Commercial core of El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District.

Historic Integrity: In 1949, the owners added a second story for a residence to the corner storefront, as seen in the 1949 drawing. In 1987, the owner added the front-facing dormer over the corner storefront. The plans noted the window and sill to match existing casement windows and that the building had historic fabric and to use care in the removal and protection of existing building elements. The building retains most of its Spanish Colonial Revival features so that it has high historic integrity of location, feeling, setting, design, and association. The building can still convey its c. 1927 appearance.



1949 Drawings of the 2nd floor residential addition.

Survey completed in 2019 by Urban Historian Nicole Hernandez.

Works Cited:

Belsher, Bessy. Willey, Helene. Days, Mary Louise. Historic Resources Survey, 1978.