

814 Santa Barbara Street

Designation Status:

Eligible for Designation as a Structure of Merit

Assessor Parcel

Number: 031-012-018

Constructed: 1941

Property Description:

One-story shiplap building in an 'L' shape with a front facing and intersecting gable roofs. A long porch runs down the side elevation. The building features wood, eight over eight double hung windows. And simple doors. The building has a two course, ashlar cut stone wall along the streetscape.

Architect: Allison and Allison of Los Angeles

Architectural Style: vernacular

Property Type: School

Original Use: Hoff General Hospital

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:

Originally part of 65 structures constructed at Las Positas Road and State Street that functioned as a World War II military hospital. The City issued a permit for the 65-structure general army hospital issued to the County National Bank and US Army on January 27, 1941. By 1945 when the army was deactivating the hospital, the *Santa Barbara News-Press* article reported “There were



100 buildings, with a floor area of 330,467 square feet. They are set up on 46 acres of Federal Government owned land. There are approximately two miles of pavements of varying widths.” The hospital also had athletic fields, a swimming pool, chapel, animal shelter, fire station and post office. By 1947 some of the buildings of the deactivated hospital were used for housing university students. The government placed twenty-seven Hoff Hospital buildings on the auction block in April 1947. The government gave high priority to government agencies, non-profit organizations and small businesses. The Schott Continuing Education Center bought the building for one of their education buildings and moved it to 814 Santa Barbara Street (the campus location at the time).

The State of California Parks bought the building in 1987 as part of the Presidio Complex and it is managed by the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation. The building continues to be an education buildings for the Anacapa School.

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

The sandstone wall lining the streetscape demonstrates outstanding attention to materials and craftsmanship.

- **Sandstone Wall:** There is a two-course sandstone retaining wall abutting the sidewalk, lining the front streetscape. A feature that gives the region such distinction while offering a surprising and pleasing bit of artistry. Walls usually require far less engineering compared to bridges, so they offer more opportunity for stonemasons to express themselves and their artistry in the selection, carving, and setting of stones. Use of masonry for construction in the Santa Barbara area dates back to the time the Spanish arrived. Since it was necessary to travel some distance into the woods to obtain lumber, but rocks were found scattered on the ground, stone became the preferred building material. The tradition of building with stones continued in Santa Barbara County through the 19th century. This method of construction was often chosen because local brown sandstone was readily available and easily transformed from round or shapeless boulders into symmetrical smooth faced stone for building purposes.

A local stonemason explained in July of 1883, “When a quantity of it is wanted, a blast of powder is drilled into the heart of one of the large boulders and exploded and a number of square edged building stones are produced” (Santa Barbara News-Press July 1883). Many residences, walls, bridges, and commercial structures were constructed out of local sandstone during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Immediately after World War I, Santa Barbara began a concerted effort to revamp its visual image. During this time, city planners carefully monitored all construction of any new structure to make sure it was consistent with the master plan that was based on Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean streetscape mode (Conrad and Nelson, 1986: 14).

The use of a traditional building material, sandstone, in the construction of the walls built during this period was in line with Santa Barbara’s planning and design efforts. In the years from 1870 to 1940, when Santa Barbara was quickly evolving into a vibrant, growing city, the period witnessed an extraordinary explosion of stone construction made possible by the abundant supply of sandstone, cadre of expert masons, and financing by private citizens. This period provided an atmosphere conducive to the building of public and private spaces of all kinds, walls, bridges, gardens, and an assortment of other stone works and encouraged some exceptional expressions of the mason’s art. Among the most apparent expressions of the beauty in stone that give the region such distinction are the stone walls.

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

The building has a direct relationship with the City Landmark Presidio complex. The preservation of the school is integral to the ability of the Presidio complex to portray the entire history of the complex. In addition, the building is part of the El Pueblo Viejo Landmark district and contributes to the historic significance of the district as a cohesive whole.

Historic Integrity: Since its relocation in 1947, the building has been relatively unaltered and still obtains almost all of the original materials. The building conveys integrity of design, setting, and materials. It does not retain integrity of location, feeling or association, as it does not retain the feeling or association with its original purpose as part of the Hoff Army Hospital as it is now used as a school in an urban environment.

Survey completed in 2019 by Urban Historian Nicole Hernandez.

Works Cited:

Days, Mary Louise. "Hoff General Hospital, Reminders of a War." *Noticias Quarterly Magazine of the Santa Barbara Historical Society*. Spring 1991. Pages 12-20.

Santa Barbara Conservancy, Images of America, Stone Architecture in Santa Barbara. Arcadia Publishing, 2009