524 State Street

**Designation**
**Status:** Eligible to be designated a Structure of Merit and Contributing to El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District

**Assessor Parcel Number:** 037-173-039

**Constructed:** 1925

**Historic Name:** Rex Hotel

**Property Description:** A two-story, Italian Mediterranean style structure with a low-pitched, side-gabled roof covered in terracotta tiles. The building steps up to a third story approximately a third of the way toward the rear elevation. As a commercial building in a row of commercial buildings on State Street, the front elevation has the highest detailed of design while the sides and rear are utilitarian, lined with simple terracotta coping. The tiles create a decorative transition from the roof to the smooth white stucco. There are decorative dentils under the narrow eave on the front elevation. The symmetrical, stucco building has three wrought-iron balconies on the second floor. The central 2nd-floor opening has an arched door with a paired narrow rectangular doors with horizontally divided lights flanked by two arched casement windows with horizontally divided lights. The outer two balconies each have a pair of arched casement windows with horizontally divided lights. The storefront windows have original divided light transom windows with stucco scallops at the corners transitioning to the stucco. The central door retains its original, deeply recessed arched fanlight.

**Architect:** Soule, Murphy, and Hastings
**Builder:** Unknown

**Architectural Style:** Italian Mediterranean Style

**Property Type:** Commercial Storefront

**Original Use:** Commercial Storefront

**Significance:** City of Santa Barbara establishes historical significance as provided 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 structure may be significant as a Structure of Merit per the following criteria:

**Criterion A. Its character, interest or value as a significant part of the heritage of the City, the State or the
With increased leisure travel to Europe during the late 1800s and early 1900s, patrons began to request architecture strongly based on particular regions of the Mediterranean. The Italian villa was seen as a perfect model for the American country house, as a counter to the Gothic-related forms of Queen Anne and Shingle styles. With more advanced printing techniques, as well as carefully studied drawings and photographs, architects were able to base their designs on highly accurate academic books of Italian architecture. This contrasts with the earlier American Italian movement, the Victorian Italianate, whose source was primarily pattern books that were loosely based on Italian models. In Santa Barbara, Italian Mediterranean fit well with the Mediterranean-like climate and was easily mixed with the growing popularity of Spanish Colonial Revival style, as well as the thriving Mission Revival architecture. There are a few examples of commercial Italian Mediterranean style buildings in downtown Santa
Barbara, as well as many large homes in the Upper East neighborhood and on the Riviera. Another key to the success of the
Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial Revival styles in Santa Barbara was the Plans and Planting Committee, through which Pearl Chase and others helped 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 Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial Revival styles. The symmetrical rounded arch opening with the wrought-iron balconies on the second floor reflects the design envisioned by the planners as character-defining elements of Santa Barbara, a theme carried throughout downtown. 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 construction in the Spanish Colonial or Mediterranean styles enhances the cohesiveness of the area. 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. As part of El Pueblo Viejo and the commercial core of the City, the building embodies the vision of the drawings. The building is part of an 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 building qualifies under criterion A as an excellent example of an original Italian Mediterranean style commercial building in El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District that is essential to the
Criterion D. Its exemplification of a particular architectural style or way of life important to the City, the State or the Nation:

An important part of Santa Barbara’s architecture, the Italian Mediterranean style pre-dates the Spanish Colonial Revival and was key to Santa Barbara’s spirit as the new American Riviera. Having both a climate and geography similar to the coastal hill-towns of the Italian Riviera, Santa Barbara embraced the architecture well suited to the Santa Barbara lifestyle. This structure may qualify under Criterion D due to the following character-defining features:

- **Massing and form:** The form of the Italian Mediterranean building is a rectangular, two stories tall, with a gabled side roof that extends into a flat roof and bumps up into a third story toward the rear.
- **Roof:** Terra-cotta red tiles cover the low-pitched, side-gabled roof.
- **Balcony Details:** Cantilevered wrought-iron balconies on the second floor defined by delicate brackets.
- **Wall Materials:** The Italian Mediterranean style building features smooth, whitewashed, planar, stucco walls, with the emphasis on broad, uninterrupted wall surfaces punctuated by careful use of symmetrical openings.
- **Window and Door Details:** The second floor has three sets of paired, arched narrow rectangular doors with horizontally divided lights. Original divided light transoms cap the storefront windows. The central door retains its original arched fanlight.

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:

Architects, Winsor Soule, FAIA, John Frederic Murphy FAIA, and Theodore Mitchell Hastings, were all established architects in their own right before deciding to combine their talent to...
form one of Santa Barbara's most influential firms in 1921. In 1922, the firm received a commission to build Lincoln and Nelson elementary schools in Santa Barbara. So successful was their reception, that for the next 20 years, the firm would design many public elementary schools in Santa Barbara. These schools brought the Spanish Colonial Revival Style to the attention of the public. The Soule, Murphy and Hastings firm dissolved in 1926, when Hastings retired. After Hastings retirement, Soule and Murphy continued in partnership from 1926 to 1953. Soule, Murphy and Hastings's work as architects helped play an important and pivotal role in developing a regional architectural style inspired by Santa Barbara's Spanish precedents and continues to be a defining feature of the city's architectural look and character. The firm contributed greatly to Santa Barbara's architecture, designing both commercial and residential buildings and mastering multiple different styles, particularly Spanish Colonial Revival and Mediterranean. Winsor Soule, FAIA, was elevated into the college of Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1940 and John Frederic Murphy, FAIA was elevated into the college of Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1957.

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

- **Massing and form:** The form of the Italian Mediterranean building is a rectangular, two stories tall, with a side gabled roof which extends into a third floor with a flat roof lined with terra-cotta copings.
- **Roof:** Terra-cotta red tiles cover the low-pitched, side-gabled roof.
- **Balcony Details:** Cantilevered wrought-iron balconies on the second floor defined by delicate brackets.
- **Wall Materials:** The Italian Mediterranean style building features smooth, whitewashed, planar, stucco walls, with the emphasis on broad, uninterrupted wall surfaces punctuated by careful use of symmetrical openings.
- **Window and Door Details:** The second floor has three sets of arched, paired narrow rectangular doors with horizontally divided lights. Original divided light transoms cap the storefront windows. The central door retains its original arched fanlight.

**Historic Integrity**

524 State Street has been relatively unaltered and still obtains almost all of the original materials. The building conveys its original appearance with integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association.

**Work Cited:**