



Cultural Heritage Committee  
AGENDA

Monday, June 24, 2024, 5:30 p.m.

Council Chambers, 990 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo

The Cultural Heritage Committee holds in-person meetings. Zoom participation will not be supported at this time.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Public Comment prior to the meeting (must be received 3 hours in advance of the meeting):**

**Mail - Delivered by the U.S. Postal Service.** Address letters to the City Clerk's Office at 990 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo, California, 93401.

**Email - Submit Public Comments via email to [advisorybodies@slocity.org](mailto:advisorybodies@slocity.org).** In the body of your email, please include the date of the meeting and the item number (if applicable). Emails *will not* be read aloud during the meeting.

**Voicemail - Call (805) 781-7164 and leave a voicemail.** Please state and spell your name, the agenda item number you are calling about, and leave your comment. Verbal comments must be limited to 3 minutes. Voicemails *will not* be played during the meeting.

*\*All correspondence will be archived and distributed to members, however, submissions received after the deadline may not be processed until the following day.*

**Public Comment during the meeting:**

**Meetings are held in-person.** To provide public comment during the meeting, you must be present at the meeting location.

**Electronic Visual Aid Presentation.** To conform with the City's Network Access and Use Policy, Chapter 1.3.8 of the Council Policies & Procedures Manual, members of the public who desire to utilize electronic visual aids to supplement their oral presentation are encouraged to provide display-ready material to the City Clerk by 12:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Contact the City Clerk's Office at [cityclerk@slocity.org](mailto:cityclerk@slocity.org) or (805) 781-7114.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Crotser will call the Regular Meeting of the Cultural Heritage Committee to order.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

The public is encouraged to submit comments on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Cultural Heritage Committee that *does not* appear on this agenda. Although the Committee will not take action on items presented during the Public Comment Period, the Chair may direct staff to place an item on a future agenda for discussion.

**3. CONSENT**

Matters appearing on the Consent Calendar are expected to be non-controversial and will be acted upon at one time. A member of the public may request the Cultural Heritage Committee to pull an item for discussion. The public may comment on any and all items on the Consent Agenda within the three-minute time limit.

**3.a CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES - APRIL 22, 2024 CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

5

Recommendation:

To approve the Cultural Heritage Committee Minutes of April 22, 2024.

**4. PUBLIC HEARING**

Note: The action of the Cultural Heritage Committee is a recommendation to the Community Development Director, another advisory body, or to City Council and, therefore, is not final and cannot be appealed.

4.a 1133 PISMO STREET (HIST-0211-2024) REVIEW OF A REQUEST TO ENTER INTO A HISTORICAL PROPERTY PRESERVATION CONTRACT (MILLS ACT) FOR THE MASTER LIST PROPERTY KNOWN AS THE "BRECHEEN HOUSE"

9

Recommendation:

Provide a recommendation to the City Council regarding a Mills Act Historic Property Contract between the City and the owners of property at 1133 Pismo Street, to encourage maintenance and restoration of the "Brecheen House".

5. **COMMENT AND DISCUSSION**

5.a STAFF UPDATES AND AGENDA FORECAST

Receive a brief update from Senior Planner Brian Leveille.

## 6. ADJOURNMENT

The next Regular Meeting of the Cultural Heritage Committee is scheduled for July 22, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 990 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo.

LISTENING ASSISTIVE DEVICES are available -- see the Clerk

The City of San Luis Obispo wishes to make all of its public meetings accessible to the public. Upon request, this agenda will be made available in appropriate alternative formats to persons with disabilities. Any person with a disability who requires a modification or accommodation in order to participate in a meeting should direct such request to the City Clerk's Office at (805) 781-7114 at least 48 hours before the meeting, if possible. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (805) 781-7410.

Agenda related writings or documents provided to the Cultural Heritage Committee are available for public inspection on the City's website:

<https://www.slocity.org/government/mayor-and-city-council/agendas-and-minutes>. Meeting video recordings can be found on the City's website:

<http://opengov.slocity.org/WebLink/Browse.aspx?id=60971&dbid=0&repo=CityClerk>



## Cultural Heritage Committee Minutes

April 22, 2024, 5:30 p.m.

Council Chambers, 990 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo

Cultural Heritage Committee Members Present: Member Benjamin Arrona, Member Daniel Bernard, Member Leslie Terry, Vice Chair John Tischler, Chair Chuck Crotser

CHC Absent: Member John Ashbaugh, Member Sabin Gray

City Staff Present: Senior Planner Brian Leveille, Deputy City Clerk Kevin Christian

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### 1. CALL TO ORDER

A Regular Meeting of the San Luis Obispo Cultural Heritage Committee was called to order on April 22, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 990 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo, by Chair Crotser.

### 2. OATH OF OFFICE

Deputy City Clerk Kevin Christian administered the Oath of Office to Daniel Bernard.

### 3. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

**Motion By** Vice Chair Tischler

**Second By** Member Bernard

Nominate Chuck Crotser to the position of Cultural Heritage Committee Chair for a one-year term.

Ayes (5): Member Arrona, Member Bernard, Member Terry, Vice Chair Tischler, and Chair Crotser

CARRIED (5 to 0)

**Motion By** Chair Crotser

**Second By** Member Terry

Nominate John Tischler to the position of Cultural Heritage Committee Vice Chair for a one-year term.

Ayes (5): Member Arrona, Member Bernard, Member Terry, Vice Chair Tischler, and Chair Crotser

CARRIED (5 to 0)

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

Public Comment:

None

*--End of Public Comment--*

**5. CONSENT**

5.a CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES - MARCH 25, 2024, CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Motion By** Vice Chair Tischler

**Second By** Member Arrona

To approve the Cultural Heritage Committee Minutes of March 25, 2024.

Ayes (4): Member Arrona, Member Bernard, Vice Chair Tischler, and Chair Crotser

Abstained (1): Member Terry

CARRIED (5 to 0)

**6. STUDY SESSION**

6.a UPDATE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE AND HISTORIC CONTEXT SURVEY

Senior Planner Brian Leveille introduced the Item and Page and Turnbull project consultants, Clare Flynn and Stacy Kozakavich, presented initial recommendations for updates to the Historic Context Statement and the Historic Preservation Ordinance and solicited feedback from the Committee.

Public Comment:

Paula Carr

Robert Pavlik

*--End of Public Comment--*

Chair Crotser closed Public Comment

**Action:** No formal action taken on this item.

## **7. COMMENT AND DISCUSSION**

### **7.a STAFF UPDATES AND AGENDA FORECAST**

Senior Planner Brian Leveille noted the following upcoming events:

- Advisory Body member and Staff training, 4/30/2024 at 5:30 p.m.
- California Preservation Foundation Conference, May 29 - June 1, 2024
  - Committee Members Ashbaugh, Crotser, and Gray are scheduled to attend.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 p.m. The next Regular Meeting of the Cultural Heritage Committee will be held on June 24, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 990 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo. The Regular Meeting of May 27, 2024, will be cancelled due to the Memorial Day holiday.

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APPROVED BY CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE: XX/XX/2024





## **CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE AGENDA REPORT**

**SUBJECT:** 1133 PISMO STREET (HIST-0211-2024) REVIEW OF A REQUEST TO ENTER INTO A HISTORICAL PROPERTY PRESERVATION CONTRACT (MILLS ACT) FOR THE MASTER LIST PROPERTY KNOWN AS THE “BRECHEEN HOUSE”

**BY:** Walter Oetzell, Assistant Planner  
Phone Number: (805) 781-7593  
Email: woetzell@slocity.org

**FROM:** Brian Leveille, Senior Planner  
Phone Number: (805) 781-7166  
Email: bleveille@slocity.org

**APPLICANT:** Christopher & Heidi Frago

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Provide a recommendation to the City Council regarding a Mills Act Historic Property Contract between the City and the owners of property at 1133 Pismo Street, to encourage maintenance and restoration of the “Brecheen House”.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

The owners of the Brecheen House at 1133 Pismo Street submitted an application to enter into a Mills Act historical property contract with the City (Attachment A). The Committee will make a recommendation to the City Council about the request, as provided in § 14.01.030 (B) (8) of the City’s Historical Preservation Ordinance.

### **2.0 DISCUSSION**

#### **Site and Setting**

The property is located on the south side of Pismo Street, between Santa Rosa and Toro Streets, in the Old Town Historic District, and is developed with a single-family dwelling built around 1907. On November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the City Council designated the property as a Master List Historic Resource (see Resolution No. 11372, Attachment B), because it is more than 50 years old, exhibits a high degree of integrity, and satisfies the Eligibility Criteria set out in the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance (HPO), specifically Architectural Criteria for Style and Design (HPO §§ 14.01.070 (A) (1) & (A) (2)).

The Resolution described several of the characteristic features of the dwelling’s Neo-Classical Cottage style, including an asymmetric unenclosed porch with a single Tuscan column, a low-pitched bell-cast roof, and geometric fenestration design. A fuller description of the property, the “Brecheen House” (so named because of its association with Thomas Brecheen, teacher, principal, and Board of Education president, and his wife May Miller Brecheen), and its architectural style is provided in an evaluation of the property’s historical significance, prepared by James Papp, PhD (see Attachment C).

**Mills Act Contracts**

The Mills Act Program is a property tax reduction program for protection of cultural resources that encourages their maintenance and restoration (§ 3.6.2 of the General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element). Participation in the program is limited to Master List Resources; the most unique and important historic resources in terms of age, architectural or historical significance, rarity, or association with important persons or events in the City's past (HPO § 14.01.050 (A)).

The City and owners of a Master List Resource enter into an historical property contract under which the owners agree to restore, maintain, and protect the property in accordance with historical preservation standards. Owners may qualify for property tax relief, potentially realizing tax savings of between 40% and 60% per year. Contracts have a minimum term of ten years, and contain standard elements set out in the Mills Act (Govt. Code §§ 50280-50290), including: a provision for preservation (or, where necessary, restoration and rehabilitation) of the property in conformance with state historic preservation guidelines; periodic examination of the property for compliance with the contract; and a provision binding the contract upon successive owners. Automatic one-year extensions are provided, unless either party gives notice of non-renewal of the contract. On acceptance and recordation of the contract, the property is assessed using an "income approach" that values the property by an income capitalization method, following guidelines provided by the State Board of Equalization.

**Proposed Improvements**

Several improvements and maintenance items are identified by the applicant (Attachment D) for completion during the term of the proposed contract. All of the items discussed appear to be relevant to the preservation and maintenance of this property and are included in Exhibit A of the proposed draft contract (Attachment A). Additionally, any work undertaken on the property must, under the terms of the contract, be carried out in a manner consistent with the City's historical preservation standards and guidelines and with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties, so as to retain and preserve original, character-defining architectural features and the historical character of the property.

**3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Entering into a "Mills Act Contract" with the owners of historical property is not subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project as defined in CEQA Guidelines § 15378 (Definitions-Project). Implementation of the Mills Act is a government fiscal activity which does not involve commitment to any specific project resulting in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment (CEQA Guidelines § 15378 (b) (4)).

HIST-0211-2024 (1133 Pismo)  
Cultural Heritage Committee Report – June 24, 2024

#### **4.0 ACTION ALTERNATIVES**

1. Staff Recommendation: Recommend to the City Council that the City enter into a Mills Act historic property contract with the property owners, to encourage maintenance and restoration of the historic property at 1133 Pismo Street.
2. Continue consideration of the request with direction to the applicant and staff.
3. Recommend to the City Council that the City not enter into the proposed historical property contract. This action is not recommended because the City participates in incentive programs that encourage maintenance and restoration of historic properties, (General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element, Program 3.6.2), and as a Master List Resource, this property is eligible for this program.

#### **5.0 ATTACHMENTS**

- A - Historic Property Contract - Draft (1133 Pismo)
- B - Council Resolution No 11372
- C - Evaluation of Eligibility (1133 Pismo)
- D - Applicant Request Letter and List of Improvements (HIST-0211-2024)



**HISTORIC PROPERTY PRESERVATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN  
THE CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO AND THE OWNERS OF THE HISTORIC  
PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1133 PISMO STREET, IN THE CITY AND THE COUNTY  
OF SAN LUIS OBISPO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA.**

**THIS AGREEMENT** is made and entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024, by and between the City of San Luis Obispo, a municipal corporation (hereinafter referred to as the “City”), and Christopher David Frago and Heidi A Howland-Frago (hereinafter referred to as “Owners”), and collectively referred to as the “parties.”

**Section 1. Description of Preservation Measures.** The Owners, their heirs, or assigns hereby agree to undertake and complete, at their expense, the preservation, maintenance, and improvements measures described in “Exhibit A” attached hereto.

**Section 2. Effective Date and Term of Agreement.** This agreement shall be effective and commence upon recordation and shall remain in effect for an initial term of ten (10) years thereafter. Each year upon the anniversary of the agreement’s effective date, such initial term will automatically be extended as provided in California Government Code Section 50280 through 50290 and in Section 3, below.

**Section 3. Agreement Renewal and Non-renewal.**

- a. Each year on the anniversary of the effective date of this agreement (hereinafter referred to as “annual renewal date”), a year shall automatically be added to the initial term of this agreement unless written notice of nonrenewal is served as provided herein.
- b. If the Owners or the City desire in any year not to renew the agreement, the Owners or the City shall serve written notice of nonrenewal of the agreement on the other party. Unless such notice is served by the Owners to the City at least ninety (90) days prior to the annual renewal date, or served by the City to the Owners at least sixty (60) days prior to the annual renewal date, one (1) year shall automatically be added to the term of the agreement as provided herein.
- c. The Owners may make a written protest of the notice. The City may, at any time prior to the annual renewal date, withdraw its notice to the Owners of nonrenewal.
- d. If either the City or the Owners serves notice to the other party of nonrenewal in any year, the agreement shall remain in effect for the balance of the term then remaining.

**Section 4. Standards and Conditions.** During the term of this agreement, the historic property shall be subject to the following conditions:

- a. Owners agree to preserve, maintain, and, where necessary, restore or rehabilitate the building and its character-defining features, including: the building’s general

architectural form, style, materials, design, scale, proportions, organization of windows, doors, and other openings; interior architectural elements that are integral to the building's historic character or significance; exterior materials, coatings, textures, details, mass, roof line, porch, and other aspects of the appearance of the building's exterior, as described in Exhibit A, to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director or his designee.

- b. The building's interior closely relates to the property's eligibility as a qualified historic property. The Owners agree to allow pre-arranged tours on a limited basis, to the approval of the Community Development Director or his designee.
- c. All building changes shall comply with applicable City specific plans, City regulations and guidelines, and conform to the rules and regulations of the Office of Historic Preservation of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, namely the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Standards and Guidelines for Historic Preservation Projects. Interior remodeling shall retain original, character-defining architectural features such wood details, pillars and arches, special tile work, or architectural ornamentation to the greatest extent possible.
- d. The Community Development Director shall be notified by the Owners of changes to character-defining exterior features prior to their execution, such as major landscaping projects and tree removals, exterior door or window replacement, repainting, remodeling, or other exterior alterations requiring a building permit. The Owners agree to secure all necessary City approvals and/or permits prior to changing the building's use or commencing construction work.
- e. Owners agree that property tax savings resulting from this agreement shall be used for property maintenance and improvements as described in Exhibit A.
- f. The following are prohibited: demolition or partial demolition of the historic building; exterior alterations or additions not in keeping with the standards listed above; dilapidated, deteriorating, or unrepaired structures such as fences, roofs, doors, walls, windows; outdoor storage of junk, trash, debris, appliances, or furniture visible from a public way; or any device, decoration, structure, or vegetation which is unsightly due to lack of maintenance or because such feature adversely affects, or is visually incompatible with, the property's recognized historic character, significance, and design as determined by the Community Development Director.
- g. Owners shall allow reasonable periodic examination, by prior appointment, of the interior and exterior of the historic property by representatives of the County Assessor, the State Department of Parks and Recreation, the State Board of Equalization, and the City as may be necessary to determine the owners' compliance with the terms and provisions of this agreement.

**Section 5. Furnishing of Information.** The Owners hereby agree to furnish any and all information requested by the City which may be necessary or advisable to determine compliance with the terms and provisions of this agreement.

**Section 6. Cancellation.**

- a. The City, following a duly-noticed public hearing by the City Council as set forth in Government Code Section 50285, may cancel this agreement if it determines that the Owners have breached any of the conditions of this agreement or has allowed the property to deteriorate to the point that it no longer meets the standards for a qualified historic property; or if the City determines that the Owners have failed to preserve, maintain, or rehabilitate the property in the manner specified in Section 4 of this agreement. If a contract is cancelled because of failure of the Owners to preserve, maintain, and rehabilitate the historic property as specified above, the Owners shall pay a cancellation fee to the State Controller as set forth in Government Code Section 50286, which states that the fee shall be 12 ½% of the full value of the property at the time of cancellation without regard to any restriction imposed with this agreement.
- b. If the historic building is acquired by eminent domain and the City Council determines that the acquisition frustrates the purpose of the agreement, the agreement shall be cancelled and no fee imposed, as specified in Government Code Section 50288.

**Section 7. Enforcement of Agreement.**

- a. In lieu of and/or in addition to any provisions to cancel the agreement as referenced herein, the City may specifically enforce, or enjoin the breach of, the terms of the agreement. In the event of a default, under the provisions to cancel the agreement by the Owners, the City shall give written notice of violation to the Owners by registered or certified mail addressed to the address stated in this agreement. If such a violation is not corrected to the reasonable satisfaction of the Community Development Director or designee within thirty (30) days thereafter; or if not corrected within such a reasonable time as may be required to cure the breach or default of said breach; or if the default cannot be cured within thirty (30) days (provided that acts to cure the breach or default may be commenced within thirty (30) days and shall thereafter be diligently pursued to completion by the Owners); then the City may, without further notice, declare a default under the terms of this agreement and may bring any action necessary to specifically enforce the obligations of the Owners growing out of the terms of this agreement, apply to any court, state or federal, for injunctive relief against any violation by the owners or apply for such relief as may be appropriate.
- b. The City does not waive any claim of default by the Owners if the City does not enforce or cancel this agreement. All other remedies at law or in equity which are not otherwise provided for in this agreement or in the City's regulations governing

historic properties are available to the City to pursue in the event that there is a breach or default under this agreement. No waiver by the City of any breach or default under this agreement shall be deemed to be a waiver of any other subsequent breach thereof or default herein under.

- c. By mutual agreement, City and Owners may enter into mediation or binding arbitration to resolve disputes or grievances growing out of this contract.

**Section 8. Binding Effect of Agreement.** The Owners hereby subject the historic building located at 1133 Pismo Street, San Luis Obispo, California, Assessors Parcel Number 003-545-004, to the covenants, reservations, and restrictions as set forth in this agreement. The City and Owners hereby declare their specific intent that the covenants, reservations, and restrictions as set forth herein shall be deemed covenants running with the land and shall pass to and be binding upon the Owners' successors and assigns in title or interest to the historic property. Every contract, deed, or other instrument hereinafter executed, covering or conveying the historic property or any portion thereof, shall conclusively be held to have been executed, delivered, and accepted subject to the covenants, reservations, and restrictions expressed in this agreement regardless of whether such covenants, restrictions, and reservations are set forth in such contract, deed, or other instrument.

**Section 9. Notice.** Any notice required by the terms of this agreement shall be sent to the address of the respective parties as specified below or at other addresses that may be later specified by the parties hereto.

To City:           Community Development Director  
                          City of San Luis Obispo  
                          919 Palm Street  
                          San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

To Owners:       Christopher David Frago  
                          Heidi A. Howland-Frago  
                          1133 Pismo St  
                          San Luis Obispo CA 93401

**Section 10. General Provisions.**

- a. None of the terms, provisions, or conditions of this agreement shall be deemed to create a partnership between the parties hereto and any of their heirs, successors, or assigns, nor shall such terms, provisions, or conditions cause them to be considered joint ventures or members of any joint enterprise.
- b. The Owners agree to hold the City and its elected and appointed officials, officers, agents, and employees harmless from liability for damage or from claims for damage for personal injuries, including death, and claims for property damage which may arise from the direct or indirect use or activities of the Owners, or from



those of their contractor, subcontractor, agent, employee, or other person acting on the Owners' behalf which relates to the use, operation, maintenance, or improvement of the historic property. The Owners hereby agree to and shall defend the City and its elected and appointed officials, officers, agents, and employees with respect to any and all claims or actions for damages caused by, or alleged to have been caused by, reason of the Owners' activities in connection with the historic property, excepting however any such claims or actions which are the result of the sole negligence or willful misconduct of City, its officers, agents, or employees.

- c. This hold harmless provision applies to all damages and claims for damages suffered, or alleged to have been suffered, and costs of defense incurred, by reason of the operations referred to in this agreement regardless of whether or not the City prepared, supplied, or approved the plans, specifications, or other documents for the historic property.
- d. All of the agreements, rights, covenants, reservations, and restrictions contained in this agreement shall be binding upon and shall inure to the benefit of the parties herein, their heirs, successors, legal representatives, assigns, and all persons acquiring any part or portion of the historic property, whether by operation of law or in any manner whatsoever.
- e. In the event legal proceedings are brought by any party or parties to enforce or restrain a violation of any of the covenants, reservations, or restrictions contained herein, or to determine the rights and duties of any party hereunder, the prevailing party in such proceeding may recover all reasonable attorney's fees to be fixed by the court, in addition to court costs and other relief ordered by the court.
- f. In the event that any of the provisions of this agreement are held to be unenforceable or invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, or by subsequent preemptive legislation, the validity and enforceability of the remaining provisions, or portions thereof, shall not be affected thereby.
- g. This agreement shall be construed and governed in accordance with the laws of the State of California.

**Section 11. Amendments.** This agreement may be amended, in whole or in part, only by a written recorded instrument executed by the parties hereto.

**Section 12. Recordation and Fees.** No later than twenty (20) days after the parties enter into this agreement, the City shall cause this agreement to be recorded in the office of the County Recorder of the County of San Luis Obispo. Participation in the program shall be at no cost to the Owners; however the City may charge reasonable and necessary fees to recover direct costs of executing, recording, and administering the historical property contracts.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the City and Owners have executed this agreement on the day and year written above.

**OWNERS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher David Frago

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Heidi A. Howland-Frago

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Erica A. Stewart

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teresa Purrington, City Clerk

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christine Dietrick, City Attorney

**ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE NOTARIZED**

EXHIBIT A

**MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT MEASURES FOR THE BRECHEEN HOUSE  
LOCATED AT 1133 PISMO STREET, SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA**

1. Owners shall preserve, maintain, and repair the historic building, including its character-defining architectural features in good condition, to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director or designee, pursuant to a Mills Act Preservation Contract with the City of San Luis Obispo for property located at 1133 Pismo Street. Character-defining features shall include, but are not limited to: roof, eaves, dormers, trim, porches, walls and siding, architectural detailing, doors and windows, window screens and shutters, balustrades and railings, foundations, and surface treatments.

2. Owners agree to make the following improvements and/or repairs during the term of this contract but in no case later than ten (10) years from the contract date. All changes or repairs shall be consistent with the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties:

- Repair of dry rot damage to wood materials
- Replacement of roofing materials
- Interior and exterior painting
- Maintenance of windows and window features
- Foundation improvements
- General maintenance and upkeep

OWNERS

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher David Frago

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Heidi A. Howland-Frago

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

State of California }  
County of San Luis Obispo }

On \_\_\_\_\_, before me \_\_\_\_\_, Notary Public  
Date Name and Title of the Officer

personally appeared, \_\_\_\_\_,  
Name of Signer(s)

who proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the person(s) whose name(s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their authorized capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument the person(s), or the entity upon behalf of which the person(s) acted, executed the instrument.

I certify under PENALTY OF PERJURY under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing paragraph is true and correct.

WITNESS my hand and official seal.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Notary Public

Place Notary Seal Above

State of California }  
County of San Luis Obispo }

On \_\_\_\_\_, before me \_\_\_\_\_, Notary Public  
Date Name and Title of the Officer

personally appeared, \_\_\_\_\_,  
Name of Signer(s)

who proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the person(s) whose name(s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their authorized capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument the person(s), or the entity upon behalf of which the person(s) acted, executed the instrument.

I certify under PENALTY OF PERJURY under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing paragraph is true and correct.

WITNESS my hand and official seal.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Notary Public

Place Notary Seal Above

**RESOLUTION NO. 11372 (2022 SERIES)**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA, ADDING THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1133 PISMO STREET TO THE MASTER LIST OF HISTORIC RESOURCES AS “THE THOMAS AND MAY BRECHEEN HOUSE” (HIST-0171-2022)**

**WHEREAS**, the applicants, Christopher and Heidi Frago, filed an application on March 23, 2022, for review of the inclusion of the property at 1133 Pismo Street on the City’s Master List of Historic Resources; and

**WHEREAS**, the Cultural Heritage Committee of the City of San Luis Obispo conducted a public hearing from the City of San Luis Obispo, California on May 24, 2022 and voted to continue the item to a date uncertain, with direction given to the applicant to specifically identify unique qualities or characteristics of the property which would meet eligibility criteria to be designated as a Master List Resource and to demonstrate compliance with the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance; and

**WHEREAS**, the Cultural Heritage Committee of the City of San Luis Obispo conducted a public hearing from the City of San Luis Obispo, California on September 26, 2022 and recommended that the City Council add the property at 1133 Pismo Street to the Master List of Historic Resources; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council of the City of San Luis Obispo conducted a public hearing on November 15, 2022 for the purpose of considering the request to add the properties to the Inventory of Historic Resources; and

**WHEREAS**, notices of said public hearings were made at the time and in the manner required by law; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council has duly considered all evidence, including the record of the Cultural Heritage Committee hearing and recommendation, testimony of the applicant and interested parties, and the evaluation and recommendation presented by staff.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of San Luis Obispo as follows:

**SECTION 1. Findings.** Based upon all the evidence, the City Council makes the following findings:

- a) The subject property is eligible for inclusion in the City’s Inventory of Historic Resources as a Master List Resource because the dwelling on the property satisfies at least one of the evaluation criteria for historic resource listing described in § 14.01.070 of the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance (HPO), exhibits a high degree of historic integrity, and is more than 50 years old.

- b) The dwelling on the subject properties satisfies Architectural Criteria for Style and Design (§§ 14.01.070 (A) (1) & (2)) to a degree that qualifies the property for designation as a Master List Historic Resource.

The dwelling conveys a purity of style, exhibits attractiveness through detailing and craftsmanship, and exhibits many characteristic features of the Neo-Classical Cottage style in a manner that expresses interesting details with notable attractiveness. Unique character-defining features that the property exhibits include an asymmetric unenclosed porch with a single Tuscan column, a low-pitched bellcast roof, and geometric fenestration design.

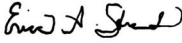
**SECTION 2. Environmental Determination.** The project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Inclusion of the subject properties on the City's Inventory of Historic Resources does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment, and is covered by the general rule described in § 15061 (b) (3) of the CEQA Guidelines.

**SECTION 3. Action.** The City Council of the City of San Luis Obispo does hereby include the property located at 1133 Pismo Street in the Master List of Historic Resources as “The Thomas and May Brecheen House”.

Upon motion of Council Member Pease, seconded by Vice Mayor Christianson, and on the following roll call vote:

AYES: Council Member Marx, Pease, Shoresman, Vice Mayor Christianson, and Mayor Stewart  
NOES: None  
ABSENT: None

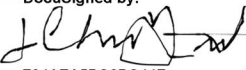
The foregoing resolution was adopted this 15<sup>th</sup> day of November 2022.

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Mayor Erica A. Stewart


ATTEST:

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Teresa Purrington  
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

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J. Christine Dietrick  
City Attorney

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the official seal of the City of San Luis Obispo, California, on 11/21/2022 | 7:24 AM PST.

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Teresa Purrington  
City Clerk





## Thomas and May Brecheen House • 1133 Pismo Street • Master List Application



### Summary Conclusion

Despite or perhaps because of its modest scale, the T. L. Brecheen House in the Old Town Historic District is the most highly refined example of asymmetric Colonial Revival—or Streamline Colonial—in San Luis Obispo. The bungalow communicates both its classical antecedents and modern aesthetic with an almost Zen-like economy and rhythm of forms.

Apparently built on spec by real estate agent A. F. Fitzgerald, president of San Luis Obispo's Chamber of Commerce, it was advertised on 19 July 1907. Its purchase by Thomas Levin Brecheen was announced four days later in the *Telegram*. One month earlier, Brecheen, at age twenty-nine, had been appointed principal of San Luis Obispo's public grammar schools. Three weeks earlier, the County Board of Education had elected him its president.

His brand new house on the north edge of La Vina tract expressed both classicism and progress—much like Brecheen himself, whom the *Telegram* praised as “a hard student and a thorough disciplinarian.” The Fates had elevated him to the zenith of a career that would, through hubris, spectacularly self-destruct, with two precedent-setting California Supreme Court defeats and a doomed populist coup. Likewise, the new stone-built Neoclassical high school that his house looked out on would be demolished as an earthquake hazard, and the brick built Colonial Revival Nipomo Street school where he taught would be torn down. But in the reverse of the Three Little Pigs saga, the wood frame Brecheen House is still with us.

Though architect and builder are unknown, the Brecheen House is far more accomplished than buildings of clearer provenance, embodying the Streamline Colonial as a descendant of Shingle and purification of Queen Anne. This embodiment and its high artistic values qualify it for historic listing. Its architectural significance and integrity make it one of the “most unique and important” resources in San Luis Obispo, qualifying it for the Master List.

*Submitted on behalf of Christopher Frago and Heidi Howland-Frago by  
James Papp, PhD • Historicities LLC • 10 March 2022*

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**Foreword on Terminology: Embodiment**

The concept of how a resource might “embody” the distinctive characteristics of a type, or a period, or a method of construction is left undefined by the National Register, which allows communities to make their own decisions about their own resources. To embody is to give tangible or visible form to an idea. In architectural history, this normally includes specific decorative iconography—a column that refers to ancient Greece, for instance, and may in extension refer to a culture’s sense of its kinship with ancient Greek ideas. But architectural styles don’t just consist of decorative pastiche but of a different way of organizing space and living. Greek Revival architecture in North America’s hotter climates, for instance, often expressed itself with full-width porticos or encompassing peripteroi, hence the Monterey style adobe, which is the most famous California expression of the Greek Revival. The style also emphasized interior symmetry and linear order and extended this concept to such details as the squaring off of fanlights (since the ancient Greeks didn’t have arches).

Embodiment of an architectural style, therefore, means not just treatment of iconic decorative elements, and not just the organization of lines, planes, and spaces, but the consistent unification of the two for expressing an aesthetic and social conception.



**Foreword on Historic Designation: Landmark, Register, Master, and Contributing**

San Luis Obispo’s Master List may be unique for demanding **uniqueness** as a standard of inclusion. Other historical preservation systems in the United States, including state and local systems, follow the half-century-old regulations of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), whereby the standard is **significance**, including resources (1) associated with significant events or figures; (2) embodying types, periods, or methods of construction; (3) representing the work of a master; (4) possesses high artistic values; or (5) representing a significant and distinguishable entity.

Unfortunately, any resource that is significant, in embodying a type or period or representing the work of a master, is unlikely to be unique. A resource that is truly unique is unlikely to be significant, being disconnected from “the broad patterns of our history.”

In national and state designations, any resource of at least **local** significance qualifies for the National Register, and any resource of national significance qualifies as a National Landmark. Similarly, any resource of at least local significance qualifies for the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), and any resource of statewide or regional significance as a California Historical Landmark.

The perverse result of San Luis Obispo's departure from the national standard is that a resource that qualifies for the California or National Register or even as a California or National Landmark may not qualify as a Master List resource, because of the demand for uniqueness rather than local, regional, statewide, or national significance.

Another anomaly is San Luis Obispo's unique use of the term *contributing*. In an individual National or California Register listing or historic district, *contributing* is a technical term for a component deemed to be part of its significance. In the NRHP Jack House property, for instance, the Jack House itself and the Wash House are contributing, while the modern restroom and catering pavilion is non-contributing, and the Carriage House is non-contributing because, despite predating the Jack House, it has been covered with plywood.

San Luis Obispo's 1987 *Historical Preservation Program Guidelines* codified two classes of resources, Master List and Contributing List, without defining the difference between them or the standards of inclusion for either. In practice, San Luis Obispo's Contributing List was the result of windshield or reconnaissance surveys for each proposed historic district, and the Master List consisted of those resources on which supporting research, in an equivalent of a DPR 523, was done. This is not normal practice in historic resource designation, where documentary evidence is expected as a minimum of listing, and it has resulted in a large number of Contributing Listings unsupported by age, significance, or integrity and a Master List dominated by size and prominence and little diversified by race, class, and gender.

Subsequently, the uniqueness standard was introduced for Master List resources, while Contributing List resources were defined as "maintain[ing] their original or attained historic and architectural character" (i.e., rejecting the standard of integrity for a specific period of significance) and "contribut[ing] ... to the unique or historic character of a neighborhood, district, or to the city as a whole" (i.e., rejecting the standard of significance for individual properties or the larger area of which they're a part, as any neighborhood can—and every neighborhood does—have "unique ... character"). The fifty-year standard was also lifted for the Contributing List, so at this point the Contributing standard was effectively no standard.

As a result, though given the same de jure protections in the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Contributing List resources, de facto, have not been treated with the same seriousness as Master List resources, and many have suffered significant degradation to their integrity as a result. When the Mills Act was introduced to San Luis Obispo, Contributing List properties were, not surprisingly, barred from benefits.

Possibly to mitigate this situation, the NRHP standards of significance and integrity were also subsequently introduced as a minimum for any listed resource in San Luis Obispo, Contributing or Master. Now any resource applying for the Contributing List would require the same standards as for the National Register. But in fact no one applies to put resources on the Contributing List, because the Contributing List confers no tangible tax benefits or intangible benefits of pride. Of those resources already on the Contributing List, roughly

half might qualify for the National Register in terms of significance and integrity, and a few would qualify for state or national landmark status, but they are not eligible for Mills Act, and roughly half would not qualify under significance or integrity, and they are subject to pointless restrictions.

Most of San Luis Obispo's Master List resources would qualify for the National and California Registers. For the ones that would not, integrity is usually the problem rather than significance. In practice, uniqueness has often been jettisoned as the guide, so we have not ended up with a Master List of bizarre anomalies. Yet too often admittance to the Master List has depended on a vague sense of what is "special" rather than significant, and "special" usually equates to what is expensive and noticeable, which usually means White and upper-middle-class.

Most local California jurisdictions have a single level of historic designation, and those with Mills Act make it available to all designees. A few jurisdictions, like Pasadena and Santa Barbara, also maintain an additional, higher level of listing that resembles State and National Landmarks by including local resources of regional, state, or national significance.

As far as my research on California's five dozen Certified Local Governments has been able to discover, San Luis Obispo is the sole jurisdiction with two levels of designation of which one did not originally have significance and integrity as its standard and does not have Mills Act as a benefit and of which the other has uniqueness rather than significance as a standard and does have Mills Act as a benefit. This departure from national norms may be why San Luis Obispo has such a small proportion of resources on the National and California Registers and why historic resource protection is considered a bone of contention rather than a source of community pride, a means of recognizing underrepresented communities, and a magnet for cultural tourism.

**Timelines: Streamline Colonial • 1133 Pismo Street • Thomas Levin Brecheen**  
**Streamline Colonial**

- 1870 With the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Pennsylvanian Charles F. McKim returns from studying architecture at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and goes to work for Gambrill and Richardson in New York, assisting Henry Hobson Richardson on Trinity Church, Boston, a foundational Richardsonian Romanesque design.<sup>1</sup>
- 1872 After two years at Gambrill and Richardson, McKim sets up his own office in the same building and in 1873 is joined by William R. Mead, who has just spent two years in Florence. McKim is replaced at Gambrill and Richardson by the nineteen-year-old Stanford White.<sup>2</sup>
- 1874 McKim hires William James Stillman to take photographs of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century buildings in around Newport, RI, where the family of his Ecole contemporary and brief architectural partner William Bigelow and McKim's soon-to-be wife Annie Bigelow has a summer house.<sup>3</sup>



*Hip, front- and side gable, and gambrel roofs on clapboard and shingle houses in one of Stillman's 1874 Newport photographs, entitled "Tory Corner Thames Street" in McKim's handwriting. Newport Historical Society.*

One of the Stillman photographs, of the shingled rear of the clapboard Bishop Berkeley House, is published in the inaugural January 1874 issue of Richardson's journal *The New York Sketchbook of Architecture* as a gelatin transfer, the first photomechanical reproduction of a building in the United

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1. Allan Greenberg and Michael George, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead, and White: 1879–1915* (Lanham: Taylor Trade, 2013), p. xxii–xxiii.

2. *Ibid.* and Samuel G. White, *The Houses of McKim, Mead, and White* (New York: Universe, 2008), p. 8.

3. Newport Historical Society collection notes.

States.<sup>4</sup> The *New York Sketchbook* will publish monthly for the next three years, becoming the foundational text for revival of Colonial era architecture with articles by McKim and drawings by White.

1874 Modern shingle-sided structures are designed for the first time by Richardson (William Watts Sherman House, Newport, RI, extant), Gambrill (Tinkham House, Oswego, NY, no longer extant), and McKim (Blake House, Newton Lower Falls, MA, no longer extant), commencing the East Coast Shingle style.<sup>5</sup> Richardson's Watts Sherman House is a Tudor Revival modeled on Norman Shaw's "Queen Anne" tile-hung work in England.



*Early Colonial cabin, Centennial International Exposition, Philadelphia, 1876*

1876 The Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia features a log cabin with a sign above its door, "YE OLDEN TIME; Die Alten Zeiten; Les Vieux Temps; WELCOME TO ALL." It contains "relics of old Puritan and Revolutionary days" (some of dubious origin) and demonstrations by costumed reenactors: "a maiden, whose Puritan garb does not detract from the brightness of her eyes, is in waiting to welcome the visitor."<sup>6</sup> Other than this example of early American kitsch, the architecture at America's first

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4. Leland M. Roth, *Shingle Styles: Innovation and Tradition in American Architecture, 1874 to 1982* (New York: Abrams, 1999), p. 9.

5. Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style*, revised edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 14.

6. "A New England Cabin," *Red Wing, MN Grange Advance*, 7 June 1876, p. 2.

world's fair was contemporary rather than nostalgic: Gothic, Stick, Beaux Arts, and cast iron and glass.

- 1876–1877 The Reverend Joseph Worcester builds the first Bay Area Shingle style house in Piedmont, CA.<sup>7</sup>
- 1877 William Bigelow joins the partnership of McKim and Mead. With Stanford White, they make an architectural sketching tour of Marblehead, Salem, and Newburyport, MA and Portsmouth, NH. *Harper's* in 1875 has already published illustrated articles on Colonial towns, whose buildings are part of the attraction of the new oceanside resorts (Scully, p. 30, note 36).
- 1877–1878 The firm of McKim, Mead, and Bigelow designs the Samuel Gray Ward House, Oakwood, in Lenox, MA (demolished), likely the first Colonial Revival house and first Colonial Revival Shingle house.
- 1878 Stanford White leaves Gambrell and Richardson for a year in Europe, initially accompanied by Charles McKim (Greenberg and George, p. xxiii).
- 1879 With the fraught dissolution of McKim's marriage to Annie Bigelow, William Bigelow leaves the firm. White, returning from Europe, is invited to replace him (*Ibid.* and White, p. 8). McKim, Mead, and White is born.
- 1879–1881 McKim, Mead, and White introduces curved porches and a bellcast roof in the Shingle Colonial Revival style Newport Casino.



*Bellcast roof of tower (left) and curved porches (center) of the Newport Casino*

- 1881–1883 In Newport's Shingle Colonial Isaac Bell House, down the street from the Casino, McKim, Mead, and White uses curvature in both interior and

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7. Richard Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World: Four Architects in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 112.



exterior extensions. Bell is brother-in-law of newspaper publisher James Gordon Bennett, who commissioned the Newport Casino.

- 1882–1883 The firm introduces eyebrow windows in the Benson House of the Montauk Point Association Homes, NY.
- 1883–1884 McKim, Mead, and White designs the Alice and Julia Appleton House in Lenox, MA, a clapboard house that is the first Streamline Colonial. McKim later marries Julia Appleton and moves into the house.
- 1885–1886 McKim, Mead, and White designs the H. A. C. Taylor House in Newport, RI, another clapboard Colonial seen by twentieth-century scholars to have a more traditionalizing influence.
- 1886–1887 The house-encompassing gable that McKim has experimented with in Bytharbor (1878–80) for his friend Prescott Hall Butler is elongated and simplified for the William G. Low House (demolished), Bristol, RI, to become the purest expression of Shingle minimalism.



*The cottage designed by S. B. Abbott for Ernest Graves, known as the Righetti House, at Palm and Essex (now Johnson) in the Fire Department's Souvenir of San Luis Obispo in 1904*

- 1889 "Major" S. B. Abbott designs a curving, rambling "cottage" for attorney Ernest Graves in San Luis Obispo, employing Colonial Revival elements—among others—and described by the architect as "Romanesque."<sup>8</sup>
- 1902–1906 San Luis Obispo's leading architects—including William H. Weeks, Hilamon Spencer Laird, and W. C. Phillips—design Streamline Colonial and Shingle

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8. "A Fine Residence," daily *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 17 May 1889, p. 3.

Colonial houses now on the city's Master List, for clients whose lives do not always approach the rational and uncluttered ideals of their architecture.

- 1903–1911 Various known builders and presumed builder-architects—such as R. S. Aston, William Thompson, John Chapek, B. Morganti, James Rasmussen and Lee R. Parsons, Harry Lyman, Joseph Maino, and James J. Maino—construct Streamline Colonials and Shingle Colonials now on San Luis Obispo's Master List for themselves and clients.
- 1901–1910 Streamline Colonials and Shingle Colonials now on the Master List are created by now unknown architects and builders.
- 1907 Real estate agent A. F. Fitzgerald has the bungalow at 1133 Pismo in La Vina tract built on spec.<sup>9</sup> The architect and builder are unknown, but the house distills local Streamline Colonial to its most minimalist, planar, linear, and delicately curvilinear combination.

### 1133 Pismo Street

- 1907 July 19 Real estate agent A. F. Fitzgerald lists the newly built bungalow at 1133 Pismo for sale.
- July 23 The *Daily Telegram* announces purchase of A. F. Fitzgerald's new house by Professor T. L. Brecheen, newly appointed principle of San Luis Obispo's Mission District grammar schools and newly elected president of the County Board of Education.<sup>10</sup>
- Aug. 1 T. L. Brecheen and his new bride, May Miller of Berkeley, will be at home at 1133 from this date.<sup>11</sup>
- 1908 Dec. Brecheen announces his departure from San Luis Obispo to Alameda.<sup>12</sup>
- 1909 Sep.– Dec. & Homer J. Ridle, agent for the Standard Gear Motor, provides 1133 Pismo as his address, and Mrs. Ridle hosts the Parthenon Club there, assigning parts for a reading of *A Comedy of Errors*.<sup>13</sup>
- 1910 Jan Mrs. S. E. McCool, dress fabric saleswoman, provides 1133 as her address.<sup>14</sup> The McCools are friends of the Ridles.
- Apr.– May Mrs. Anna English, leasing agent for Santa Maria oil land, provides 1133 Pismo as her address.<sup>15</sup>
- 1911 Jan. Mrs. Ridle, as president of the Woman's Civic Club, hosts an at home for club members at 1133 Pismo in early 1911.<sup>16</sup>

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9. "New House in La Vina Tract," advertisement, daily *Tribune*, 19 July 1907, p. 1.

10. "Fine Property Changes Hands," p. 8.

11. "Prof. Brecheen Takes Bride," *Daily Telegram*, 29 July 1908, p. 1.

12. "Brecheen Gets Place in Alameda Schools," weekly *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 15 Dec. 1908, p. 4.

13. "Important Announcement," advertisement, *Daily Telegram*, 28 Dec. 1909, p. 4; "Parthenon Club Tonight," *Daily Telegram*, 27 Sep. 1909, p. 4.

14. "Newest in Ladies Dress Goods," advertisement, *Daily Telegram*, 8–28 Jan. 1910.

15. "Oil Land to Lease," advertisement, *Santa Maria Times*, 23 Apr. 1910, p. 2.

16. "Mrs. Ridle's Reception," *Daily Telegram*, 3 Jan. 1911, p. 1.

- 1914 J. C. Driscoll, of the Wholesale Company, and Mrs. Driscoll are at 1133.<sup>17</sup>
- 1917–1919 Fred L. Garrett, a conductor with the Southern Pacific, and Mrs. Garrett rent 1133 Pismo, still owned by the J. C. Driscolls.<sup>18</sup> In 1918 Harold Lee, office boy at the Producers’ Transportation Company at Orcutt, and Miss Ellen Lee, the sister of Mrs. Garrett, are also there.<sup>19</sup>
- 1919 Mar. W. V. Fisk buys 1133 Pismo to occupy with his family (*ibid.*).
- 1920 Mar. W. V. Fisk sells 1133 Pismo to W. M. Fisk, a railroad man from Lompoc.<sup>20</sup>
- 1921 Sep. The Quality Bakery buys 1133 Pismo for its head baker, Mr. R. Heidorn.<sup>21</sup>
- 1922 Oct. The Heidorns leave 1133 Pismo.<sup>22</sup>
- 1923 Feb. James Renetzky moves into 1133 Pismo, which he has purchased, after the death and distribution of the estate of Joseph Renetzky. James had been working as a salesman in the family shoe store.<sup>23</sup>
- 1938 1938 City Directory lists Emory L. McConnell as owner of 1133 Pismo
- 1942 1942 directory lists music teacher Andrew Onstad and wife Olga as owners.
- 1950–1968 Dalie Wetzel owns and lives in 1133 Pismo through the 1950s and 1960s, according to the City Directory.
- 1971 The City Directory shows that Harry and Josephine Delaney purchase the house at the beginning of the 1970s.

### **T. L. Brecheen Timeline**

- 1877 July 10 Thomas Levin Brecheen is born in Texas to farmer Lemuel Lafayette Brecheen and Martha Ann Moore Brecheen.<sup>24</sup>
- 1903–1905 Brecheen is principal of the Simi school and then Montalvo school in Ventura County. At Simi, whose school district has nine voters, he is one of two teachers, the other being a woman.<sup>25</sup> At Montalvo he is the sole teacher. The previous year’s teacher has left for Los Angeles after marrying a sixteen-year-old student. Brecheen starts boys’ and girls’ basketball

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17. “Episcopal Parlor Services,” *Daily Telegram*, 24 Feb. 1914, p. 5.

18. “Home from South,” *Daily Telegram*, 12 May 1917, p. 5; “Fisk Buys Home,” *Daily Telegram*, 28 Mar. 1919, p. 5.

19. “Promoted,” *Daily Telegram*, 17 June 1918, p.5; “Home from Vacation,” *Daily Telegram*, 30 Aug. 1918, p. 5.

20. “Fisk Place Sold,” *Daily Telegram*, 15 Mar. 1920, p. 5.

21. “Around the Town,” weekly *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 27 Sep. 1921, p. 4.

22. “Local News Notes,” *Daily Telegram*, 16 Oct. 1922, p. 5.

23. “Local News Notes: Buys Pismo Street House,” *Daily Telegram*, 6 Feb. 1923, p. 5; “Superior Court: Probate,” weekly *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 17 Feb. 1922, p. 3.

24. 1949 Los Angeles County death certificate and 1880 US Census.

25. “Teapot Hiss for Simi School,” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 Apr. 1909, p. 25; “Ventura Notes,” *Los Angeles Times*, 13 Oct. 1903, p. 11; “Interesting News from Camarillo,” *Oxnard Courier*, 12 Feb. 1905, p. 5.

teams and coaches the former to a county championship, then challenges any school in Southern California to the region's championship.<sup>26</sup>

1905-1907 Brecheen is principal of the Cambria school, one of three teachers, the other two being women.<sup>27</sup>



*Thomas L. Brecheen with his faculty as principal of the Cambria School. San Luis Obispo Daily Telegram, 24 June 1907, p. 1.*

1906 June 5 The County Board of Supervisors appoints T. L. Brecheen to the County Board of Education.<sup>28</sup>

1907 June 22 The Mission school district trustees appoint Brecheen principal of San Luis Obispo's grammar schools, Nipomo Street (first through eighth grades) and Court (second through sixth grades), one of fourteen teachers, the other thirteen being women.<sup>29</sup>

July 2 The County Board of Education elects Brecheen its president.<sup>30</sup>

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26. "Ventura: Teacher Marries Pupil," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 May 1904, p. 11; "Basketball Challenges to All Southern California," *Los Angeles Times*, 19 Feb. 1905, p. 23.

27. "Brief Mention," *Oxnard Courier*, 14 July 1905, p. 2.

28. "Supervisors," daily *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 6 June 1906, p. 4.

29. "New Principal for City Schools," *Daily Telegram*, 24 June 1907, p. 1; "School Notes of Interest," *Daily Telegram*, 18 Sep. 1907, p. 5.

30. "School Notes of Interest," *Daily Telegram*, 2 July 1907, p. 5.

- July 22 Brecheen buys the just-completed bungalow at 1133 Pismo “Fine Property Changes Hands”).
- Oct. 14 Brecheen is arrested and arraigned for assault after flogging sons of some of the leading citizens of San Luis Obispo for disobedience. He pleads not guilty, and the charges are dropped as unsustainable.<sup>31</sup>
- Dec. 25 The eighth grade students present Brecheen with a gold-mounted Waterman fountain pen for his “unceasing efforts in their behalf” and “many kind words of encouragement, counsel, and advice.”<sup>32</sup>
- 1908 July 23 Brecheen marries May Miller of Berkeley (“Prof. Brecheen Takes Bride”).
- Aug. 12 In a dispute with the district trustees over whether he will take all or part of the eighth grade class, Brecheen resigns as principal of the Nipomo Street and Court Schools.<sup>33</sup>
- Dec. 14 Brecheen is reported departing, supposedly for a principalship in Alameda, after the Board of Supervisors removes him from the County Board of Education, in his absence, for being absent without leave.<sup>34</sup>
- 1910–1911 Brecheen is reported as a teacher in Oakland, at Fremont High School.<sup>35</sup>
- 1912–1919 After clashing with the Oakland school trustees over the unauthorized purchase of forty-four typewriters at Fremont, Brecheen becomes principal of the new high school in Calistoga (1912–1916), superintendent of the high school and grammar school in Ceres (1916–1917), principal of Clovis high school (1917–1918), and Livermore (1918–1919).<sup>36</sup> He eventually loses a lawsuit over the unpaid bill for high school yearbooks at Ceres, possibly flees arrest over Spanish flu infections at Clovis, and is fired by the Livermore school trustees for interfering in a trustee election and investigated by the Alameda County deputy district attorney for falsely reporting University of California and University of Texas degrees qualifications.<sup>37</sup> The County Board of Education moves to revoke his teaching credential, but it has lapsed three years earlier.
- 1920 Apr. 10 Brecheen, having turned to real estate, is arrested for assaulting his former employer, Berkeley real estate man D. L. Jungck. He sues Jungck—twice.<sup>38</sup>

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31. “Warrant Is Served,” *Daily Telegram*, 15 Oct. 1907, p. 1.

32. “Remember Prof. Brecheen,” *Daily Telegram*, 28 Dec. 1907, p. 1.

33. “Brecheen Quits His Principalship,” 13 Aug. 1908, p. 1.

34. weekly *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 15 Dec. 1908: “School Affairs: Brecheen Gets Place in Alameda Schools,” p. 2; “County Matters: Brecheen Is Dropped from Board of Education,” p. 4.

35. “Teachers Ask Legislative Aid,” *San Francisco Call*, 15 Nov. 1910, p. 8.

36. “Berkeley Bars Oakland Pupils,” *San Francisco Call*, 27 July 1912, p. 17; “The High School Teachers Chosen,” *Weekly Calistogian*, 6 Sep. 1912, p. 3; “Ceres Board of Education Is Economical,” *Modesto Evening News*, 1 May 1916, p. 8;

37. “Ceres School Prepares for Military Class,” *Modesto Morning Herald*, 30 Aug 1918, p. 5; “Former Teacher in Local Schools Leaves Fresno County and Wild Rumors Are Afloat,” 27 Sep. 1918, p. 1; “County Sifts School Fight at Livermore,” *Oakland Tribune*, 13 Dec. 1919, p. 3.

38. “Realty Broker Under Arrest,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 Apr. 1920, p. 10; “Realty Operator Sued Second Time,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 20 May, 1920, p. 20.

- Aug. 3 After Brecheen goes into the real estate business on his own, police inspector breaks up an altercation in the lobby of the First National Bank of Berkeley between Brecheen and a client who claims he has been duped.<sup>39</sup>
- Aug. 9 Brecheen is arrested at his in-laws house, where he is living, for felony embezzlement, after a client accuses him of keeping the 25 percent down payment on a sale whose commission was to be 4 percent. He is arraigned Aug. 9, with bail fixed at \$10,000.<sup>40</sup> There is no record of the resolution of the charges, but he appears to stay out of jail.
- 1920 Nov. 19 The State Real Estate Commissioner, under California's pioneering 1919 Real Estate Act establishing licensure, revokes Brecheen's 1920 broker's license on grounds of "embezzlement, false representations, and gross moral turpitude." Brecheen sues him for unconstitutionally exercising judicial powers.<sup>41</sup>
- 1921 Sep. 19 The California Supreme Court rules against Brecheen, upholding the commissioner's quasi-judicial right to revoke licenses ("SF No. 9782").
- 1921 Nov. 18 The State Supreme Court rules against Brecheen for a second time, in his appeal against the State Real Estate Commissioner for having had his application for a 1921 broker's license denied. The Oakland Real Estate Board calls these "two very important decisions by the State Supreme Court" ("Oakland").
- 1922 Mar. 29 Brecheen pleads guilty to petty larceny in the theft of two glass doors from a Berkeley construction site.<sup>42</sup>
- 1924 Sep. 18 Brecheen is caught red-handed leaving a house in Albany with items belonging to the owner and is charged with burglary.<sup>43</sup>
- 1925 Apr. 10 After two hung juries on the burglary charge—Brecheen had been given keys by a tenant—he pleads guilty to petty larceny, and the burglary charge is dropped (*ibid.*).
- 1930 Apr. 3 May Miller Brecheen, living with her parents and nineteen-year-old daughter in Berkeley and working as a child's nursemaid, declares herself on the US Census as widowed.
- 1933 Feb. 20 Brecheen—now "Tom Brecheen"—who has become a real estate agent in Ashland, OR and an organizer of the local Good Government Congress, helps organize the theft from a vault at the Jackson County Courthouse of 10,000 ballots and the burning of some and dumping in the Rogue River of others in the midst of an election recount. This is the culmination of the Jackson County Rebellion, a Depression-era populist takeover of

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39. "Realty Row Is Near Riot," *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 Aug. 1920, p. 20.

40. "Fraud Charge in Realty Deal," *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 Aug. 1920, p. 10.

41. "Oakland Real Estate Board: Official Bulletin," *Oakland Tribune*, Development Section, 15 Jan. 1922, p. 1; "SF No. 9782. In Bank. September 19, 1921," *San Francisco Recorder*, 27 Sep. 1921, p. 8.

42. "Theft of Windows Charged to Broker," *Oakland Tribune*, 29 Mar. 1922, p. 24.

43. "Former Principal Admits Larceny," *Oakland Tribune*, 10 Apr. 1925, p. 20.

government via the Good Government Congress, local Democratic Party, and paramilitaries known as the Green Springs Mountain Boys.<sup>44</sup>

- Feb. 25 State and city authorities arrest the county sheriff, county jailer, a deputy, Brecheen, and two unnamed youths described as “courthouse boarders.” Brecheen is held in neighboring Josephine County as a precaution.<sup>45</sup> He is unable to make his \$7,500 bail. Meanwhile, his daughter is pledging her sorority in Oakland.<sup>46</sup>
- 1933 Aug. 5 Brecheen, imprisoned since February, pleads guilty to ballot theft. His attorney seeks leniency, claiming, “Brecheen is not a chronic lawbreaker.”<sup>47</sup> Circuit Judge George Skipworth sentences him to eighteen months in state prison, of which he serves a year.<sup>48</sup> The recently-elected Jackson County sheriff, county judge, and Rogue River mayor are among others imprisoned for the theft. Llewellyn Banks, editor and publisher of the *Medford Daily News* and the quasi-fascistic and anti-Semitic prophet of the movement, is sentenced to life for murder after he shoots the constable serving a warrant on him in the case and dies in prison.
- 1934 May 7 For its coverage of the Jackson County Rebellion, the *Medford Mail Tribune* receives a Pulitzer Prize for “the most disinterested and meritorious public service rendered by an American newspaper during 1933,” the first small town newspaper so honored.<sup>49</sup>
- 1937 Nov. 25 Brecheen’s daughter Natalie marries Norvin A. Reed of Los Angeles, residing near McArthur Park. The Reeds rise in the world, living in Hollywood by 1941, Montebello by 1942 (possibly with Natalie’s divorced mother and widowed grandmother), and Toluca Lake by 1949.<sup>50</sup> In 1949 Norvin Reed is described as a packing executive.<sup>51</sup>
- 1940 According to the US Census, Thomas Brecheen is divorced, working as a research assistant for the school district, and living in a rooming house on the edge of LA’s Japantown with seventy-three other male lodgers, mostly white, with a few Japanese, Filipinos, and Mexicans, ranging from laborers to street peddlers to night watchmen.

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44. Jeff LaLande, “Good Government Congress (Jackson County Rebellion),” Oregon Encyclopedia, Oregon Historical Society, oregonencyclopedia.org, accessed 20 Feb. 2022.

45. “Sheriff and Jailer Nabbed as Ballot Theft Suspects,” *Medford Mail Tribune*, 26 Feb. 1933, p. 1; .

46. “State Will Call Many Witnesses in Trying Banks,” *Medford Mail Tribune*, 4 May 1933, p. 7; “Activities of Eastbay Society,” *Oakland Tribune*, 7 Apr. 1933, p. 12.

47. “Ashland Resident Admits Complicity in Ballot Thefts,” *Sacramento Bee*, 7 Aug. 1933, p. 9; “Fehl’s Tenure As County Judge Is Ended by Court,” *Medford Mail Tribune*, 8 Aug. 1933, p. 8.

48. “Schermerhorn’s Commitment Is Filed In Court,” *Medford Mail Tribune*, 3 July 1934, p. 3.

49. “Some State Comments on Award of Pulitzer Medal,” *Medford Mail-Tribune*, 10 May 1934, p. 8.

50. County of Los Angeles marriage license; “Baby Shower,” *Highland Park News Herald*, 14 Feb. 1941, p. 10;

“Bride-Elect Feted in Hollywood,” *Ventura County Star-Free Press*, 31 Mar. 1942, p. 5; “Indian Student Addresses Troop at International Meet,” *North Hollywood Valley Times*, 21 May 1951, p. 11; “Baskets of Flowers,” photo caption, *Los Angeles Times*, 26 May 1952, part ii, p. 23;

51. Austin Conover, “Roaming Around,” *Hollywood Citizen-News*, 15 Nov. 1949, p. 9.

1949 Feb. 9 At the end, suffering from cerebral thrombosis and senility, Thomas L. Brecheen is living with his daughter's family in Toluca Lake and dies at LA County General Hospital, age seventy-one.<sup>52</sup>

1950s The Norvin Reeds become San Fernando Valley social fixtures in the Los Angeles press, fundraising for the LA Philharmonic, Florence Crittenton Home, and Toluca Lake Garden Club. Natalie joins the social-philanthropic National Charity League with her daughters Mayla Ann and Melinda Natalie.<sup>53</sup>

1958 Nov. 29 Brecheen's elder granddaughter Mayla Ann Reed debuts at National Charity League Coronet Debutante Ball at the Beverly Hilton. Graduating from UCLA she becomes, like her grandfather, an elementary school teacher.<sup>54</sup>

May Miller Brecheen dies in 1965; Natalie Brecheen Reed, after divorce from her husband, in 1972.

Thomas Brecheen, May Miller Brecheen, and Natalie Brecheen Reed are interred together at Forest Lawn, Glendale.<sup>55</sup>



*Natalie Brecheen Reed (third from left) raising money for the LA Philharmonic, Valley Times, 16 Sep. 1954, p. 4*



*AMONG CORONET DEBUTANTES wearing coronet pendants and carrying muffs of carnations and tulle were Misses Mayla Ann Reed, Cynthia Patricia Flower.*

*Mayla Ann Reed debuts, Los Angeles Times, 1 Dec. 1958*

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52. Los Angeles County death certificate.

53. Peggy McCall, "Valley Ticktockers To Receive Awards," Valley Times, 9 June 1960, p. 11.

54. "Coronet Debutantes Bow at Charity League Ball," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 Dec. 1958, part ii, p. 1; "Spinsters Take in 22 New Members," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 Nov. 1966, part I, p. 11.

55. Thomas Levin Brecheen, findagrave.com, accessed 20 Feb. 2022.



## Definitions

**Distinguishing Neoclassical and Colonial Revival** There is a good deal of confusion between Colonial Revival and Neoclassical of the late nineteenth through twentieth centuries, given their roots in the same English Enlightenment representations of Italian Renaissance interpretations of Roman architecture. There are, in fact, many Neoclassicisms; Colonial Revival is only one; and *Neoclassical* is best used as a catch-all.

Virginia and Lee McAlester in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, the Bible of American house types, dangle a red herring by defining Neoclassical as having stylistic roots in the two-story porticos of state pavilions of the 1893 Columbian Exposition. They snippily add that Mount Vernon's two-story portico—the basis for the exposition's Virginia Pavilion—was completed only in 1784 so is not Colonial, which overlooks (1) it was planned in 1774, and Washington had an excellent excuse in not getting it done immediately; (2) other surviving houses—e.g., the Morris Jumel Mansion in Washington Heights, New York City and Whitehall in Annapolis, MD—had Colonial-era two-story porticos; and (3) revivalists were not interested in parsing architectural agglomerations.<sup>56</sup> Even the McAlesters, in their examples, don't stick to their narrow definition, which would allow the only Neoclassical dwelling in San Luis Obispo to be the apartment house at 1248 Palm, a post-1941 Greek Revival more likely inspired by *Gone With The Wind* than the Chicago World's Fair.



*Tara* in *Gone With the Wind*, 1939, and 1248 Palm Street, after 1941, both with square-columned Greek Revival portico and anachronistic Federal fanlight. (Greek Revival fanlights are rectangular, as the ancient Greeks didn't have arches.)

The post-Centennial revival of early American architectures cast a broad net for its references, drawing on everything from seventeenth-century Post-Medieval English to Dutch Colonial, Georgian, and early nineteenth century Federal and Greek Revival. Colonial Revivalists were taken with eccentricities, and they freely mixed elements from different periods in the same structure. Perhaps the *San Luis Obispo Tribune's* 1904 comment on the E. B. Stanton House at Buchon and Garden—"The style may be best expressed as American"—is the most apt.

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56 (New York: Knopf, 1996), p. 346.

Since at least 1856—when Henry Miller depicted a two-story Greek Revival adobe next to the Mission, at the foot of the former Indian slave cabins of Chorro street (detail right)—Neoclassical buildings have aggrandized real San Luis Obispo with a connection to the ideal Greek and Roman past.



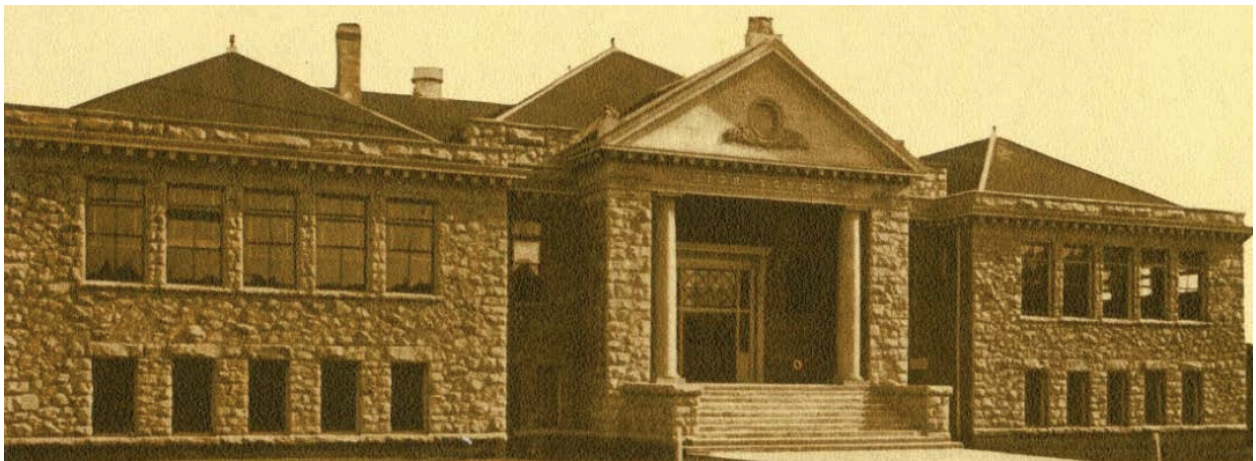
These include the Sauer-Adams Adobe (extant), a ca 1860 Greek Revival expansion of two ca 1801-1810 single-story Indian slave cabins, with its square-columned, full-width balcony, pedimented windows and doors, and rectangular fanlight; Thomas J. Johnson's 1872-1873 County Courthouse (demolished); William H. Weeks's 1905-1906 Mission High School (demolished), its walls entirely of rusticated stone; Julia Morgan's 1934 Monday Club (extant), based on Andrea Palladio's Villa Poiana in its façade, La Rotonda in its (faux) cruciform organization; Walker and Eisen's PWA Moderne 1935-1941 County Courthouse, with its Roman aquilae, laurel wreaths, lattice, and fasces; the opposing 1942 Greek Revival Fremont Theater; and the recent Court Street Shopping Plaza, with a gallimaufry of segmental arches and pediments and a Diocletian window topping its cookie store.



*Left: The Sauer-Adams Adobe before being obscured by a street tree; the Gothic Revival festoon trim is a later addition over Greek Revival square columns. Right: The Sauer-Adams front door with pediment, rectangular fanlight, and Alex Gough, occupant since 1939, when his grandmother, novelist Helen Adams, purchased and restored the adobe.*



*Thomas J. Johnson's San Luis Obispo County Courthouse, 1872–1873. Johnson designed a number of substantial Neoclassical buildings in San Francisco, including Maguire's Opera House, the Russ House, and the Occidental Hotel's second phase. He died in 1875; none of his work appears to have survived. Photo by Frank Aston, 1915, Cal Poly Special Collections.*



*William H. Weeks's 1905–1906 Mission High. The few formal stone-built Neoclassical buildings of the Colonial era used rustication only on the basement floor—"the rustic." Henry Hobson Richardson borrowed and popularized full rustication from Renaissance Florence, using it on his iconic 1885–1887 Marshall Field Wholesale Store (demolished) in Chicago. Here the huge Roman lattice entry light is also non-Colonial. The pediment with oculus hints, however, Weeks may have had Mount Vernon or Monticello back of mind.*



*Above: Villa Poiana, late 1540s, from George Loukomski's L'Oeuvre d'Andrea Palladio: Les Villas des Doges de Venise, 1927. Below: Julia Morgan's 1934 Monday Club, with Poiana's second story for grain storage removed but repeating the horizontal proportions of the central bay and wings and details like the arch's slight intersection with Palladio's rare open pediment, while deconstructing the arched and flanked Palladian opening of the entry.*





*Below: Diocletian windows with faux keystones crowning Court Street Shopping Plaza*



*Above: PWA Moderne, an outgrowth of twentieth century Stripped Classicism, in 1935 section of the County Courthouse, Monterey Street. Bas relief aquilae (spread eagles) top and laurel wreaths flank center windows. Roman woman in tunic and soldier in cingulum militare, backed by fasces (Roman symbol of the magistrate's power, also adopted by Mussolini in 1914) support tablet with Lord Clarendon's quotation on the law. Roman lattice flanks the glass door topped oddly by a Colonial swan neck pediment, out of place in size and reference.*



*Above: 1942 Greek Revival neon of architect S. Charles Lee (Simeon Levi). From top: a Greek key in purple; multi-colored palmettes flanked by gold acanthus leaves and red lotus blossoms form the Greek anthemion; Vitruvian waves line the marquee. Acanthus leaves painted on the ceiling and woven into the carpet glowed in ultraviolet light, and the tower is in the form of a Greek psalterion. Scholarship had established by then that Greek temple friezes were painted in blue, red, gold, a contrast to Walker and Eisen's just-completed staid Romanism.*

**Colonial Revival and Streamline Colonial** In defining a revival, it's essential to look at contemporary phenomena rather than focus solely on the source of inspiration. Tudor, for instance, was revived in five different ways—Stick, Shingle, Queen Anne, Prairie, and Minimal Traditional—during only fifty years of American architecture. Meanwhile, American Queen Anne never referenced the actual architecture of Queen Anne's reign; neither did its progenitor, the Queen Anne Revival in England, innovated by Norman Shaw as a counterweight to Gothic for secular use but essentially Jacobethan in its inspiration.



*McKim, Mead, and White's Appleton (1883–1884) and Taylor Houses (1885–1886), both asymmetric (to accommodate service wings) and streamlined (the Taylor House's wraparound terrace invisible because balustraded only at left and covered periodically). Most significant for the birth of Streamline Colonial: both used clapboard instead of shingle siding.*



Hence what the McAlesters very practically did in 1984 in the *Field Guide to American Houses* was try to divide Colonial Revival into (1) “asymmetrical form with superimposed Colonial details” and (2) “the more authentic symmetrical” (326), using McKim, Mead, and White’s Alice and Julia Appleton House (Lenox, MA, 1883–1884; destroyed by fire) as an exemplar for the former and the H. A. C. Taylor House (Newport, RI, 1885–1886; demolished) for the latter. This defined separate and oppositional modernizing and traditionalizing trends. They based this taxonomy on Vincent Scully in 1955, who based it on Henry-Russell Hitchcock in 1944. Yet its practicality is undermined by its inaccuracy.

Both Appleton and Taylor Houses are asymmetrical. Both superimpose Colonial details, and neither is “authentic” (i.e., could be mistaken for an actual Colonial house—even though McKim arranged the Taylor House’s shingles to look like it had buckled over time).

The two houses’ contemporary commonalities seem more important: these would be passed down to America’s suburbs. Compared to actual Colonial structures, both houses have substantial elements of streamlining, including clustering of windows (particularly in the Taylor House), the expansion of wall space (particularly in the Appleton House), linear friezes (above the clustered windows in the Taylor and along the whole façade in the Appleton), continuity of horizontal outdoor space (the Appleton’s integrated porch and the Taylor’s wraparound terrace with porches supporting balconies), and decorative details like the stringcourses on the Taylor’s chimneys. The outdoor structural spaces introduce the lines of classical columns that so characterize the revival and are uncommon in actual Colonial houses (though less uncommon in Federal).

Compared to McKim, Mead, and White’s rambling Shingle structures, the Appleton and Taylor Houses both organize horizontal space more compactly, which will be a favored characteristic in suburban evolution. They replace the continuous skin of Shingle with horizontal streamlines of clapboard.



*A Loring and Phipps Shingle Colonial Revival gambrel house in Newton, MA and an Alfred Messel clapboard gambrel house in the suburbs of Berlin, both from Karl Scheffler’s Moderne Baukunst, 1908.*

More practical than creating a false (and needlessly prolix) dichotomy between “asymmetrical form with superimposed Colonial details” and “the more authentic symmetrical” is to apply **Streamline Colonial** as the term for the American suburban style circa 1890–1910. “Streamline” expresses the character-defining features of decorative

minimalism, planar emphasis, linearity, and curvature that made Streamline Colonial the American counterpart and counterweight to Art Nouveau, Jugendstil, and Secession, including various European folk revival styles (Heimatstil, Transylvanian, Nordic National Romantic) within those latter trends. While those styles to a large extent battled Neoclassicism in the transition to modernism, Streamline Colonial (and Shingle Colonial before it) harnessed Neoclassicism and its attendant rationalism as the only available American folk style.

The word *streamline* came into use by the 1890s as a noun in nautical engineering and would soon develop into an adjective for land-based design; consequently it fits the *Zeitgeist*. But *modern* was the common contemporary descriptor for Streamline Colonial and Shingle Colonial, from San Luis Obispo newspapers to Karl Scheffler's *Moderne Baukunst* (Leipzig: Julius Zeitler, 1908), which illustrated a Loring and Phipps gambrel-roofed Shingle Colonial Revival among structures by the great Secession, Jugendstil, and Art Nouveau architects Josef Hoffmann, Peter Behrens, and Henry van de Velde and the more Classicizing Alfred Messel. Indeed the Colonial Revival gambrel roof was a significant American export to the European proto-modernist movement.



## Architectural Historic Context

**The Shingle style and Streamline Colonial** For the roots of Streamline Colonial, and its sense of differentiation, one can go farther back than the Appleton House, to McKim, Mead & Bigelow's 1877–1878 Samuel Gray Ward House in Lenox (Oakwood; destroyed by fire 1903), which was perhaps the earliest Colonial Revival of which we have documentation and one of the earliest Shingle style houses.

In organization, Oakwood (right, photographed in 1886) resembled another McKim, Mead, and Bigelow Shingle house from 1879, Fort Hill (Lloyd Neck, NY; extant but altered beyond recognition): a rambling structure with numerous pushouts, gables, and chimneys. As Vincent Scully points out in *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style*, once Norman Shaw's floorplans became available to American architects, they adopted the English revival of the central great hall around which other rooms agglomerated (14–16).



This created a new interior sense of space and exterior sense of disorganization. It was also hard to carry into the restricted space of the suburbs, though San Luis Obispo's 1906 Shingle style Victor and Alice Page House at 1344 Mill Street has a somewhat diminutive great hall with fireplace squeezed into a the middle of a rectangular house.

One thing that distinguished Oakwood from Fort Hill (below, 1879 elevation) was Colonial reference in the former (pediment gables; windows with wood muntins and shutters; bay-centered entry façade window topped with a panel and swan neck pediment; and short, plain chimneys with pyramidal crowns) and Tudor reference in the latter (overhanging gables; octagonal towers; oriel windows; leaded panes; and tall, compound chimneys).



Neither set of references was overwhelming nor constricting; in form and fabric they both present as East Coast Shingle. The exterior intent of Oakwood was emphasized by interior Colonial style paneling and furnishings, but quite often interior styles were distinct.

The William Stillman photograph (below) commissioned by Charles McKim and used to launch Henry Hobson Richardson's *New York Sketchbook of Architecture* in 1874—the first photomechanical reproduction of a building in print—was of the rambling shingled rear accretions to the clapboard Bishop Berkeley House, Whitehall, not the neat and rational front. Both Shaw and the American Shinglists tried to reproduce in new architecture the sense of the organic development of a country house over extended time and space.



Henry Hobson Richardson had innovated the Shingle style on the East Coast in 1874–1876 with the Watts Sherman House in Newport, RI (extant). Its ground floor is stone, with a shingle second floor and shingle-faced third-floor gables. Overhangs, leaded glass, and compound chimneys are joined by a smattering of half-timber to make the Tudor reference clear, but the more direct inspiration was Norman Shaw's country houses of the late 1860s and early 1870s in England, perspective drawings of which had become available to an American audience in the British *Building News* and *American Architect and Building News*.

Shaw's Tudor designs—which “presently became known as ‘Queen Anne,’ for no good reason,” as one of his American obituarists wrote<sup>57</sup>—used hung tiles on the second floor and third-floor dormers. In Shaw's elegant drawings, and in the absence of color photography showing their orange clay, these were easily reimagined as wood shingles, and the East Coast Shingle style adopted them in natural wood and eventually spread them to all surfaces as the dominant theme. In contrast, the American Queen Anne painted them and tended to use them for accents—on gables, towers, or dormers, for string courses, and only occasionally for upper floors. Of course, some Shingle style buildings were

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57. “Norman Shaw,” *New York Sun*, 3 Dec. 1912, p. 8.

subsequently painted and may even have been painted at the time, but in general the more relaxed aesthetic of Shingle style remained consistent with a natural wood finish.

**Shingle minimalism and planarity** American architects and builders experimented with shingles in ways unimagined by their English counterparts, influencing form. Shingles could bend around curves and add texture to otherwise blank spaces. This led in two opposite directions: in the Shingle style, to minimalism; in Queen Anne, to additional decorative exuberance. The two great experiments in Shingle minimalism are McKim's William G. Low House (Bristol, RI, 1885–1887; demolished 1962) and A. C. Schweinfurth's First Unitarian Church (Berkeley, CA, 1898; extant). Each is essentially one vast gable, the latter in the form of an open pediment with a single oculus.



*William G. Low House, McKim, Mead and White, 1885–1887: in the form of a single encompassing gable. HABS photograph before demolition.*



*First Unitarian Church, A. C. Schweinfurth, 1908: the encompassing gable becomes an open pediment with oculus*

In contrast is Samuel and Joseph Newsom's 1889 house commissioned by Eureka lumber baron William Carson for his son Milton (below left), a purer form of Queen Anne than the

Newsoms' more iconic but heavily Stick Carson Mansion (below right), built for the father in 1884–1886 (photographs by Clinton Steeds and Cory Maylett).



**Shingle curvilinearity** Curvature in Shingle style was often expressed in such touches as the walls of a tower, porch, or dormer, but it extended to roof shingles, as well, with eyebrow windows and bellcast eaves.

Probably the greatest tour de force of Shingle style roof and wall curvature was Ernest Coxhead's 1890–1891 Church of St. John the Evangelist in San Francisco (right, dynamited to provide a firebreak during the San Francisco Fire of 1906. Its minimalism and planar emphasis also stands out in comparison to the contemporary Queen Anne and Stick buildings above.



**Shingle historicist reference and deconstruction**

The tendency for Shingle style buildings to rely for fabric interest on the shingles themselves—sometimes homogenous, sometimes cut in different patterns or arranged in different patterns—rather than large numbers of windows or decorative trim shows in the dramatic superimposition of Colonial details on planes of shingling. Bruce Price’s influential Travis Van Buren House (Tuxedo Park, NY, 1884–1885; no longer extant) placed a dark-painted Palladian window above the faux keystone of a curving shingle entry arch that looks more organic than structural and below four tiny arch windows topped by shingles as faux voussoirs (right, ca 1885).



Price may have borrowed this idea of the central Palladian window from Henry Hobson Richardson, who placed one in the east façade of his last country house, the Shingle style Stonehurst (Robert Treat Paine House, Waltham, MA, 1883–1886), or it may have been a simultaneous inspiration. A façade-centering Palladian window was rare but high-profile feature of Colonial architecture, including in the tower façade of Andrew Hamilton’s 1733–1756 Independence Hall and the north façade of George Washington’s Mount Vernon, a renovation planned in 1774 but completed in 1787.



A likely to Price was Ernest Coxhead’s magnificently minimalist and deconstructionist 1901 Wayburn House in San Francisco (extant, right, photo by David Duncan Livingston). It insets and separates the elements of the Palladian window within a recess and flanks it with similarly deconstructed flush versions of its descendant, the San Francisco variant of the Chicago window (a large fixed panel flanked by two narrow sashes, but in mild but foggy San Francisco the central panel is replaced by a

sash and the whole assemblage is thrust out in a part-octagon oriel). In the Wayburn House, the elements that protrude from the shingle façade are an asymmetric faux staircase balustrade below the Palladian window and a segmental pediment with a fanlight unusually, perhaps uniquely, set within it above an asymmetric entrance.

**Bay Area Shingle style** The Shingle style was innovated in California at the same time as the East Coast, when the architecturally influential Rev. Joseph Worcester built a cabin retreat in Piedmont (1876–1877). This had no reference to the tile-hung Tudors of Norman Shaw but instead melded into a natural landscape with its low profile and bellcast roof.



*The Worcester House from a painting by William Keith and detail from another Keith view*

A number of subsequent leading architects of Bay Area Shingle had worked for East Coast firms: A. Page Brown and Willis Polk for McKim, Mead, and White; A. C. Schweinfurth for Page Brown in New York and Peabody and Stearns in Boston; John Galen Howard for Henry Hobson Richardson and Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge; and Bernard Maybeck for Carrère and Hastings, who had in turn worked for McKim, Mead, and White. But the substantial influence of East Coast Shingle in the Bay Area in the 1890s combined with local cabin sensibilities; European influences from the Ecole des Beaux Arts-trained Maybeck and Julia Morgan and English-born and -trained Ernest Coxhead; Japanese influence; and a California spirit of anything goes to produce spectacularly different structures.

**East Coast and Bay Area Shingle styles in San Luis Obispo** Oakland architect Walter J. Mathews' Ramona Hotel (1888, following page), which employed 460,000 shingles, was a clear example of early East Coast Shingle. Like Richardson's Watts Sherman House, it was Tudor Revival on the outside and Aesthetic in, with streamline touches chiefly in the curving walls of its fourth-floor dormer windows and its (still angular) wraparound porch. In contrast, the LeRoy Smith House (1905–1906) at Mill and Johnson, designed by William H. Weeks, is an asymmetric Shingle house that appears to refer to early nineteenth-century Massachusetts Bay Greek Revival and is an outpost of a Bay Area suburban subtype now referred to as High-Peaked Colonial Revival but described by contemporaries as "Dutch" (it is not at all Dutch).<sup>58</sup> The earliest known East Bay example, from 1894, was designed by

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58. Daniella Thompson, "High-Peaked Colonial Revival, a Bay Area Phenomenon," *Berkeley Daily Planet*, 24 March 2006, retrieved from [berkeleyheritage.com](http://berkeleyheritage.com) 17 Feb. 2022.



Edgar Mathews, Walter's younger brother. High-Peaked Colonials are usually perpendicular to the street on the Bay Area's narrow lots, with a front-facing gable; the Smith House is unusual for an entrance on the long side under the shed dormer. The Smith House's near neighbor of the same year, 1344 Mill, the Page House, by architect L. H. Lane, is really only imaginable in California, with Japanese irimoya roof and polygonal entry and porch arches—not to mention an innovative asbestos substrate below the wall shingles, as Shingle buildings were prone to destruction by fire (the Ramona burnt to the ground in 1905).



*William H. Weeks' LeRoy and Sara Smith House and L. H. Lane's Dr. Victor and Alice Page House, both 1906, 1306 and 1344 Mill Street. The Page House, despite its West Coast origins and Japanese look, has a (small) English style great hall in the center.*

**Linearity: clapboard and drop siding Streamline Colonial** Streamline Colonial—in painted clapboard, shiplap, or novelty siding—starts appearing in American suburbs around 1890, though early examples get lumped in with Queen Anne. It comes into its own

as a bungalow style around the turn of the century. Streamline Colonial inherits Shingle's minimalism, planar emphasis, and sometimes curvature (in wraparound porches and bellcast roofs), adding linearity by replacing shingles with boards, generally lowering its profile for bungalowoid horizontality, and compacting its organization to fit a suburban lot.

*Illustration of a \$600 Streamline Colonial "country house" printed across the country in a syndicated column by Foster Thorpe in March 1892. Note the pedimented porch (with spindle columns), pediment front gable, swan neck pediments over the flush windows, dormer, and novelty siding. More opulent versions than this two-up, two-down model would spread porch and interior quarters more broadly. ("A Plain Country House," San Diego Union, 20 Mar. 1892, p. 7.)*



**Streamline Colonial references** These include both Colonial and post-Colonial features, often quite rare ones that caught the revivalist eye:

**pediments** above entries or select windows

**pediment gables**, i.e., gables that are closed or partially closed at the base, whether with molding or the edge of a hip roof

**bellcast roofs**

**columns**, generally round, unfluted, and Tuscan or Ionic but sometimes (inauthentically) spindle or elephant leg

**Porches**, often wraparound and curved

**dormers**

**Palladian windows** or variations thereof

**oeil-de-boeuf windows**

**fanlights**

**diamond-paned windows with wood muntins** from seventeenth-century examples, though the examples were often victims of back-restoration, householders having adopted square-paned windows by the eighteenth century

Common elements that are not Colonial or Federal in origin include

**Grouped windows**

**octagon bay windows**

**oriel windows**

**Window borders**, of square or diamond panes, with wood muntins or leading

**Leaded windows, including stained glass**



## The Universe of Master List Streamline and Shingle Colonials, San Luis Obispo

To assess the Brecheen House's appropriateness for the Master List, it's important to understand the nature of the Streamline Colonial and related Shingle Colonial houses already on the list. They number over thirty, or about 8 percent of the list, and include a number of overlapping subtypes.

**Streamline and Shingle Colonial Revival subtypes** First comes the **transitional subtype**, of which the prime examples are the 1889 Righetti House at Palm and Johnson and 1894–1895 Erickson House at Broad and Islay. They have entrance pediments, pediment gables, curved wraparound porches, and other Colonial Revival elements. But they were also built with random elements like jerkinhead gables, non-classical columns, and ridge cresting (Righetti), sunbursts and a horseshoe arch (Erickson). The Righetti's designer—"Major" S. B. Abbott, serially an Oregon millwright, Kansas lawman, Central Coast architect, and LA oilman—called it Romanesque, presumably for the prominent arch.

In less prominent examples, mixed forms persisted. The pre-1905 Fumigalli House, post-1905 Oliver House, and 1910 Bushnell House all have front-facing pediment gables, asymmetric porches, and drop siding consistent with Streamline Colonial, but their porch columns are spindle with column brackets, a persistent **spindle column cottage subtype** that never acceded to the classical orders or the notion that less is more. The Fumigalli House, in addition, has bracketed cants on its bay window, a Queen Anne characteristic.



*The experimental possibilities of Colonial Revival: Left, the entry façade of Frank Lloyd Wright's 1889 house in Oak Park, IL substitutes a curved brick wall and elephant leg posts for a curved portico, places a disassembled Colonial Palladian window in the center of a Federal open pediment supported by mid-nineteenth semi-octagon bays rather than columns, and combines them with leaded diamond panes, shingle siding, and acute gable angle of seventeenth century New England houses. Yet it appears Modernist in its minimalism and Postmodernist in its deconstruction. Wright borrowed the façade from Bruce Price's Chandler House at Tuxedo Park but simplified. Right, a San Luis Obispo house built and possibly designed by contractor C. E. Strickland evolves its entry pediment into the gable of an irimoya roof supported by squared Tuscan columns. It forms its façade from two semi-octagon bays with rare blank fronts and columned rather than bracket cants at the house corners. The East Coast and Far East are melded with unique elegance.*

San Luis Obispo's Master List also has four quite diverse houses in a **square-column subtype**, including the 1902–1903 J. L. Anderson House on Dana Street with elephant leg columns and the ca 1906 Mazza House in Bishop Peak granite. Elephant leg columns are strongly associated with American Craftsman but occasionally occur in Shingle Colonial (e.g., the 1885–1887 Low House) and Streamline Colonial. The ca 1904–1905 C. E. Strickland House, built at the same time as the Shingle style Page House, both with irimoya roof, should be interpreted as a rare (unique?) Japonesque Streamline Colonial. Its cutaway corners are usually a Queen Anne characteristic, but in that style always bracketed and here supported by squared Tuscan columns. The Mazza House may also be unique: though Shingle Colonials sometimes have square columns of rusticated stone, these don't have capitals as the Mazza does, and I know of no other Streamline Colonial cottage built wholly of rusticated stone—or of stone at all. (Frank Furness did large rusticated stone Colonial Revivals but sensibly with wood rather than stone columns.)

The Master List includes four Shingle Colonials. The Unangst (1904) and Bullard (ca 1908–1913) Houses employ gambrel roofs referencing the seventeenth century, with the Unangst House combining high-peaked, acute angled gables, also a seventeenth-century Colonial reference. Another house with a gambrel and high-peaked gables is carpenter R. S. Aston's house at Chorro and Church, finished just as he was beginning work on Judge Unangst's house. It emphasizes the seventeenth-century with a second-story overhang. The Aston House is Streamline Colonial, begun in dark, probably stained clapboard that was later covered with shingle and has now been restored, demonstrating that Streamline Colonial was often equally plausible in the Shingle style from which it sprang. The 1906 Dutton House—clapboard downstairs and shingle up—plays more freely with seventeenth-century forms but had, like the Unangst, Bullard, and Aston Houses, anachronistic classical columns (it's missing one) to emphasize the Colonial reference. The 1905–1906 LeRoy Smith House is, as mentioned before, a High-Peaked Colonial Revival, which occurs in the Bay Area in both shingle and horizontal siding and (like the Dutton House) combinations of both. Its square columns refer to early nineteenth century Massachusetts Greek Revival.

Another Streamline Colonial subtype comprises five houses in every respect of streamlining and Colonial reference like asymmetric Colonial Revivals except for being a **symmetrical**: the matching Albert (1904) and Baker (1904–1905) Houses at Morro and Leff; the previously mentioned Strickland House, both symmetrical and Japonesque; the so-called Dr. George B. Nichols House, at Monterey and Broad, built by B. Morganti in 1907 after Nichols' death to replace the latter's demolished house; and the Heritage Inn or Rufina Gallego de Herrera House (1910).

Which leaves about half of Master List Colonials of the era as more mainstream in materials and asymmetric form though nonetheless highly diverse, some even eccentric, of which the earliest was built by 1901 and the last circa 1910, comprising one-, one-and-a-half-, and two-story structures. In chronological order, the houses are the Brew (by 1901), Crocker and Marshall (1902), Upham (1903), Hourihan and Stanton (1904–1905), Hill (1905), Renetzky and Chapek (1906), Kaufman (ca 1906–1907); Ramage (ca 1907–1910), Kaiser (1908); Bradbury and Jackson (1910), Sandercock (1910–1911) and Frank Anderson (ca 1910).

**Dates of Master List Streamline and Shingle Colonial Revivals** Accurate chronology is important in plotting the development of these styles in San Luis Obispo. The dates of the thirty-three houses below, sourced from contemporary documentation, either narrow or replace many of the accepted dates for these buildings. In addition, currently attributed house names are often not those of original or even significant owners and sometimes obscure female or minority ownership: examples include the house commissioned by Mrs. Mary L. Elliott from Hilamon Spencer Laird, called for mysterious reasons the Upham House, although no Upham is documented as associated with it, and the Heritage Inn, where a current business name inappropriately substitutes for that of the original builder, Rufina Gallego de Herrera, of a prominent Californio family.



**1889** On 17 May the daily *Tribune* reports having been shown plans for the **Righetti House** (1314 Palm) by Major S. B. Abbott, who has drawn them for attorney Ernest Graves (“A Fine Residence,” p. 3). The “Romanesque cottage” is “receiving the finishing touches,” reported on 27 Oct. 1889, and painted in “warm, rich tints,” predominately terracotta (“A Notable Building,” p. 4).



**1894–1895** Charles Erickson’s purchase of the corner lot at Islay and Broad was announced 18 Nov. 1894 (“San Luis is to have another magnificent building,” *Tribune*, p. 3), the commencement of construction Nov. 22 (“Charles Erickson will in a few days,” *Tribune*, p. 1), completion expected 1895 (“Erickson-Mehlmann,” *Tribune*, 8 Jan. 1895, p. 3).



**By 1901** The *Tribune*’s first mention of the **Brew House** (771 Buchon) “on the corner of Buchon and Garden streets” appears on 23 Aug. 1901 (“David Andrews Wedded,” p. 4). (The owner is variously referred to as N. C. Brew, C. N. Brew, and Charles N. Brew.) It does not appear in panoramic photographs of the early to mid 1890s so is likely constructed about the turn of the century.



**Circa 1901–1905** In 1901 Andrew M. Erickson and wife sell the lot on which the **Fumigalli House** (463 Islay) sits to Anton Fumigalli for \$300, reported in the *Tribune* (“Recorder’s Office,” 15 Sep., p. 3). The house appears in the 1905 Sanborn map.



**1902** Design of the **Crocker** (793 Buchon) and **Marshall Houses** (785 Buchon) by William H. Weeks is announced in the *Tribune* on 27 Apr. 1902 (“Plans Received,” p. 2). The Crockers are “comfortably located in their new residence” on 7 Dec. 1902 (“Personal Mention,” p. 3); the houses are both listed by the *Tribune* on 1 Jan. 1903 as having been built in 1902 (“A Year of Building,” p. 1).



## Marshall House



**1902–1903** The *Tribune* reports on 14 Sep. 1902 that J. L. Anderson is to build the **Anderson House** (532 Dana) on his new Dana Street lots (“Several New Homes,” p. 1), and the first record of a finished house is a 19 May 1903 surprise party for the Andersons by the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs, the latter of which did housewarmings for their members (“Surprise Party,” *Tribune*, p. 1).



**1903** The *Tribune* credits “Architect [Hilamon Spencer] Laird” for its description of Mrs. Mary L. Elliott’s house (the **Upham House** [779 Buchon]) on 8 March 1903 (“Building Still Continues,” p. 2); it is pictured under her name in the 1904 Fire Department *Souvenir of San Luis Obispo*.



**1903** Newly arrived carpenter R. S. Aston’s near commencement of the **Aston House** (1746 Chorro) is mentioned by the *Tribune* 17 July 1903 (“Aston Gets Contract,” p. 4) and its near completion—plus his commencement of Judge Unangst’s house—23 August the same year (“Fine Stone Mantels,” p. 3).



**1903–1904** The *Tribune* reports on 3 Apr. 1904 that Judge Unangst has moved into **The Judge’s House** (1720 Johnson), begun the previous year (“Personal Mention,” p. 4).



**1904** The *Tribune* announces on 8 Apr. 1904 that builder and house mover William Thompson has moved into his own new house, the **Albert House** (1642 Morro), at the corner of Morro and Leff, with lumber on the ground for the adjoining house (“Personal Mention,” p. 4). The *Tribune* describes Thompson’s as “quite a novel house,” featuring in the sub-head the automatic window screens that lower as the sash is raised (Grading Building Site,” 1 Mar. 1904, p. 1).



**1904–1905** In “Building Commenced,” the *Tribune* announced the Thomas and Kathleen **Hourihan House** (860 Buchon) designed by Hilamon Spencer Laird and built by John Chapek (6 Oct. 1904, p. 3). The following June the house was finished and retaining wall being built (“Thos. Hourihan,” *Tribune*, 21 June 1905, p.1).



**1904–1905** The commencement of Thompson’s adjoining **Baker House** (1636 Morro) is noted in “New Residence Commenced” as a duplex “almost identical to the first house built, which is a very artistic, modern cottage” (*Tribune*, 19 Nov. 1904, p. 1).



**1904–1905** The *Tribune* reports W. C. Phillips as architect of the **Stanton House** (752 Buchon), with completion of the foundation and ongoing carpenter work, on 16 Dec. 1904 (“E. B. Stanton’s House,” p. 1) and on 10 June 1905 describes it as “just completed” (“Serious Embezzlement,” p. 1).



**1905** Construction of the **Leonard W. Hill House** (1144 Buchon) by John Chapek is announced by the *Tribune* 27 Jan. 1905 (“Work has been commenced,” p. 1).



**1905–1906** Watsonville architect William H. Weeks and Merced contractor Charles M. Kuck are named for the **LeRoy B. Smith House** (1306 Mill) on 1 Nov. 1905 (daily *Tribune*, “Home For L. B. Smith,” p. 4), and the Smiths’ first houseguests are reported the following summer (“Personal Mention,” *Tribune*, 14 July 1906, p. 4).



**1906** The *Tribune* notes on 11 Feb. 1906 that Supervisor E. M. Payne and his wife will move out of the Falkenstein House and into the **Dutton House** (1426 Broad) being constructed by Arthur L. Dutton adjoining the Myron Angel home on Broad Street (“Personal Mention,” p. 4); on 8 Apr. 1906 it is announced they have so moved. (“Personal Mention,” p. 4).



**1906** The **Renetzky House** (1516 Broad), not on the 1905 Sanborn, is clearly under construction in the left-hand of three panoramic photographs taken from Terrace Hill in early 1906 (Cal Poly Special Collections 168-1-b-01-35-02, incorrectly dated on the back 1907). Mrs. Otto James Kruell, who and whose new husband have moved to San Luis Obispo from the Bay Area in 1906, is referred to as entertaining at that address in 1907 (“Here From Los Angeles,” *Telegram*, 27 Sep., p. 8).



**1906** The **Chapek House** (843 Upham) is also shown under construction in the left-hand Terrace Hill panoramic photo.



**Circa 1906** The **Mazza House** (1318 Chorro) is not shown on the 1905 Sanborn, but its hip roof appears to be just visible in the center of the three early 1906 panoramic photographs taken from Terrace Hill (168-1-b-01-35-05, incorrectly dated on the back 1907). It is occupied by Mrs. Emma Brumley on 26 May 1910 (“Lost,” *Telegram*, p. 1), and veterinary surgeon D. B. Mazza announces on 1 June 1910 that his office will be there henceforward (*Telegram* “Notice Of New Office,” p. 1).



**Circa 1906–1907** The early 1906 right-hand Terrace Hill photo does not show the **Charles E. Strickland House** (1152 Buchon), but a panoramic photo (Cal Poly Special Collections 168-1-b-01-36-01) that can be dated to the first months of 1907 does. 1150 (now 1152) Buchon was listed as Strickland’s address in the advertisement for a patent kidney medication by 17 May 1907 (“In San Luis Obispo,” *Tribune*, p. 2).



**Circa 1906–1907** The **Kaufman House** (1052 Islay) is not in the 1906 center panoramic photograph from Terrace Hill (168-1-b-01-35-05), but it is in the early 1907 photograph and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. James A. Leavitt by 1908 (*Telegram*: “Young People’s Social,” 4 May, p. 8; “Baptist Social Occurs Tonight,” 8 May, p. 1).



**After 1906** The **Oliver House** (1953 Chorro) is not in the 1905 Sanborn or left-hand of the early 1906 Terrace Hill panoramic photos, and the contemporary press mentions neither the address nor lot.



**1907** The one-story so-called **Nichols House** (664 Monterey) replaced the actual two-story home of the late mayor, Dr. George B. Nichols, recorded in the 1905 Sanborn map, two doors to the west of the Carnegie Library. On 17 May 1907, B. Morganti applied for a permit to build the one-story house on the site. The old Nichols House is visible in the 1907 Terrace Hill panoramic photo.



**Circa 1907–1910** The **Ramage House** (1129 Marsh) does not appear on the 1905 Sanborn map or in the right-hand photo of the 1906 panorama (168-1-b-01-35-03) or in a panorama that can be dated to later 1907. The lot occupied by the Ramage House was sold by J. L. Faulkner to G. C. Lewis and Claude C. Stalnaker on 19 Mar. 1907, by Lewis *et al* to Charles C. Brumbaugh on 11 Feb. 1908, and by Brumbaugh to Hans P. Wybrandt on 7 Feb. 1910. Faulkner was in the business of building and renting cottages, and neither Lewis, Stalnaker, nor Brumbaugh was a resident of San Luis.

Wybrandt toured Europe from June to October 1910, returning to the Ramage House address (“Mr. Wyburn Back From Long Trip,” *Telegram*, 5 Oct. 1910, p. 1). It would seem most plausible for Faulkner to have built the house by March 1907, photographic evidence confirms he did not, proving the folly of plausible assumptions.



**1908** Lee Parsons of contractors Rasmussen and Parsons applied for a permit to build William H. Schulze the **Kaiser House** (751 Buchon) on 19 Oct. 1908.



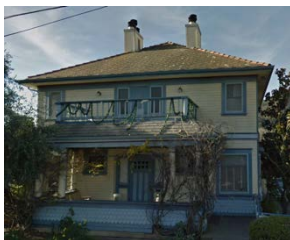
**Circa 1908–1913** The **Bullard House** (1624 Moro) is not in the 1907 panoramic photograph from Terrace Hill, and the address does not appear in the press till a *Telegram* ad for a Buff Orpington cockerel in 1914 (3 Feb., p. 1).



**1910** Harry Lyman applied for a permit to build the **Bradbury House** (745 Buchon) for Dr. R. M. Bradbury on 12 Jan. 1910.



**1910** Joseph Maino for a permit to build the **Jackson House** (790 Islay) for Dr. Jackson on 3 May 1910.



**1910** Rufina Gallego de Herrera, widow of Antonio Jose Herrera, of a pioneer Californio family, purchased part lot 6, block 24 from Laura White and Daniel Wolf on 3 Oct. 1909. The first ad for furnished rooms at 1066 Monterey appeared in the daily *Tribune* on 30 October 1910 (p. 4), and a Dec. 28 article on a break-in attempt confirms Herrera’s ownership. The absence of earlier press mention of the lot or address suggests that what today is the **Heritage Inn** (978 Olive), subsequently moved twice, was built soon after the purchase.



**1910** A “modern five-room cottage” at 1105 George Street—presumably the **Bushnell House** (1105 George), as this was the address listed when Bushnell sold his house to Mr. and Mrs. G. C. Gale in 1919—was offered for sale with bath, stationary tubs, and electric light in 1910 (“For Sale,” *Telegram*, 29 Sep., p. 4). The fact that this section of George Street was only sewered in late 1909 confirms the house was not only modern but brand new.



**1910–1911** James J. Maino applied for a permit to build the **Sandercock House** (535 Islay) for William Sandercock on 24 Oct. 1910, completed the following March (“Two New Homes In San Luis Obispo,” *Telegram*, 11 Mar. 1911, p. 3).



**Circa 1910** The **Frank Anderson House** (1345 Broad) had not been built by the 1905 Sanborn map and does not appear in the left-hand photo of the early 1906 Terrace Hill panorama. In July Anna Foreman Schilling, a former resident of San Luis with frequent mention in the social press, and her husband Frank were staying at the Ramona (“Personal Mention,” *Tribune*, 19 July 1905, p. 4), and on 7 Aug. 1905 C. T. Greenfield sold her the empty lot (“News in Brief,” daily *Tribune*, 9 Aug. 1905, p. 1). On 26 June 1909, Schilling sold the property to Mrs. Lila M. Andrews. Schilling and her husband lived in Arizona, and her presence in town is not mentioned by local newspapers between 1905 and 1913 (“Hotel Arrivals,” *Daily Telegram*, 13 Sep. 1913, p. 3), and in her 24 Jan. 1920 obituary (“To Be Buried Here,” *Daily Telegram*, p. 5) and that of her husband the following December, it is never suggested they lived in San Luis or had a house here. A 23 Aug. 1911 ad in the *Telegram* (“For Sale Or Exchange,” p. 4) is the earliest documentary evidence of a house on the property.

**Historic and Architectural Evaluation** All of the thirty-three following Master List resources would qualify for the California Register of Historical Resources and National Register of Historic Places for embodying an architectural type, though the Heritage Inn and Bushnell House would probably not qualify based on integrity. Only about two-thirds would seem to qualify for the Master List’s current uniqueness standard, however.

**Righetti House, 1314 Palm, 1889** The Righetti House, so-called because by the 1904 Fire Department *Souvenir of San Luis Obispo* it was owned by Michael Righetti, was built in 1889 by attorney Ernest Graves, who died in 1900. Graves was a prominent San Luis Obispo pioneer, having been born next to the Mission in 1852 and served as city attorney 1874–1877 and district attorney 1880–1886 (“Death Claims E. Graves,” daily *Tribune*, 14 July 1900, p. 1). Graves continued to be a prominent attorney and political operative during his occupation of the house up to the time of his death, serving as chair of the county delegation to the state Democratic Convention in 1896 and being granted certiorari by the State Supreme Court for a twenty-day jail sentence for contempt of a local superior court judge in 1899 (“After Thirteen Ballots It Is a Deadlock,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 18 Aug. 1896, p. 6; “The Contempt Matter,” *Tribune*, 10 Sep. 1899, p. 3). Michael Righetti was a Cayucos dairy rancher and occupied the house till 1912 (“Righetti Home Sold,” *Daily Telegram*, 1 Nov. 1912, p. 5). Advertisements show by 1915 it was renting furnished rooms, and an apartment house, originally on the Contributing List and since demolished, was built in front of it by 1937.





From its construction by Graves, the house was considered a prominent landmark, and its architect, **S. B. Abbott**, though having no apparent professional background, showed facility with Colonial reference and skill at using massing as a decorative element consonant with the era and emphasizing the hillside site. The admixture of styles (jerkinhead gables, etc.) is not overwhelming and was also a contemporary characteristic. The building embodies the transitional style from Queen Anne to Streamline, which occurs in tandem with the transition from Shingle.

Abbott arrived in the county as a developer exaggerating his accomplishments in that department, which were and would continue to be none, so it is possible he borrowed the design from a pattern book and passed it off as his own. However, in 1890 he designed a “Romanesque” Baptist Auditorium in Santa Cruz that appears to have been built, a harder design to find in a pattern book (“Baptist Auditorium,” *Santa Cruz Daily Sentinel*, 9 Nov. 1890, p. 3). I can find no other evidence of his apparently short-lived career as an architect.

The Righetti House, which should be renamed the Graves House to reflect its historically significant builder, is one of two complex transitional types, but each has a sufficiently oddball combination of features to claim uniqueness, and this is the only documented extant work by architect Abbott.

### **Erickson House, 461 Islay, 1894–1895**

In contrast to the Ernest Graves’ house, Charles Erickson’s house uses Ionic columns, as well as rather abstract fluted pilasters. It also has pediment gables, a segmental pediment above the entrance, soffit dentilation, bellcast tower roof, and other Streamline Colonial characteristics. As with Graves’ house, the addition of exotic extraneous elements, like a horseshoe arch and Juliet balcony on a rather bulbous outcropping, brackets, and sunbursts. Streamline Colonial is interesting in going through a purification process in the 1890s rather than starting pure and going centrifugally eclectic.



Unfortunately, no contemporary sources list an architect for the Erickson House. The craftsmen were employees of Erickson who may have used pattern books for the whole or elements of the whole.<sup>59</sup>

### **N. C. Brew House, 771 Buchon, by 1901**

There appears to be no record of who were the architect and builder of the Brew House or when—before the first newspaper reference to it in August 1901—it was built. By the 1905 Sanborn map it had its current footprint with curved porch so was most likely built as such.

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59. "A New Residence," *Tribune*, 5 Jan. 1896, p. 1.

The Brew House represents the Streamline Colonial with open pediment gables intersected by windows, curved wraparound porch with Tuscan columns, semi-octagon bay, and shiplap siding. Fishscale shingling in the entry pediment gable is a common Queen Anne holdover, but the overall appearance is more rational and linear, even severe.



It would be hard to claim uniqueness for the Brew House, but its Master Listing is doubtless based on its being one of a quartet of surviving houses on the south side of Buchon between Chorro and Garden of the same era and style—though the city’s current Master List Historic Properties website attributes them to four different styles (“Carpenter Gothic–Neo-Colonial,” “Queen Anne with Colonial Revival influence,” “Neo-Colonial–Neoclassical with Queen Anne detailing,” “Gothic Revival with Neoclassical overtones”). It is San Luis’s version of Alamo Square in an area referred from the late 1880s to the early 1910s as Nob Hill.

**Fumigalli House, 463 Islay, ca 1901–1905**



The McAlesters identify “about 35 percent” of Queen Anne houses as the “Free Classic” subtype, using “classical columns rather than delicate turned posts with spindlework detailing.” Most of those “Free Classic” houses are actually Streamline Colonial or transitional Streamline Colonial, making their referents clear with pediments, pediment gables, Palladian windows, etc., as well as an absence of spindlework, brackets, half-timbering, and other Queen Anne decorative exuberance.

The Fumigalli, Oliver, and Bushnell Houses are the opposite: cottages in other respects Colonial Revival except for spindle columns and column brackets (and corner brackets on the bay window cutaways, in the case of the Fumigalli House). It is a subtype of Colonial revival that might be described as transitional (spindle columns and corner brackets are shown as the “plain” country house in Forster Thorpe’s 1892 article) except for its persistence in modest cottages. All three have a pediment above the usually semi-octagon front window, with the portico supporting a hip roof, as do similar examples in San Luis. The porch railing here appears to be a go at Colonial Chinese Chippendale.

As the embodiment of a type of architecture, the Fumigalli House would qualify for National Register status. The three examples on the Master List and the many off suggest it does not have the uniqueness to qualify for Master Listing.

#### **Crocker House, 793 Buchon, 1902**



Having commissioned San Luis Obispo architect Hilamon Spencer Laird in 1887 to design his Crocker Building, a forceful exercise in Eastlake, at Higuera and Garden, merchant Jacob Crocker fifteen years later chose Canadian-born, Watsonville-based architect **William H. Weeks** to design his house. This is the first documented building in San Luis Obispo by Weeks, who for the next decade would become a dominant force in San Luis Obispo for both public and domestic structures. He was chosen in 1902 to design the house next door (also Streamline Colonial) and Cal Poly's first two buildings (Mission Revival); in 1903, Dr. W. M. Stover's House (Shingle style); in 1904, the Carnegie Library (Richardsonian Romanesque); in 1905, the new public high school (Neoclassical) and LeRoy Smith House (Bay Area Shingle style); in 1906, a third Cal Poly building (Mission Revival); and in 1911, the Stover Sanitarium (Neoclassical). In 1911 Weeks moved from Watsonville to Palo Alto, and his work in San Luis Obispo apparently ceased.

In the octagonal lantern above the porch, which forms a tiny accessible room, Weeks refers to Mount Vernon, America's first historic house museum. Art Nouveau acanthus leaves in the entrance pediment make both classical and contemporary reference. The use of wave-form shingles at the tops of the pediment gables is Shingle style holdover that Weeks repeats in the adjoining house and Hilamon Spencer Laird in the house next to that.

Weeks, at age thirty-eight, was a more awkward architect than he would subsequently become, and the entry façade's faux balcony with a sort of reverse-Palladian window (a rectangle in the middle and arches on the side) is crammed into the half-story pediment gable for an effect that Frank Lloyd Wright achieved infinitely more elegantly on his own house in 1889.

The Crocker House, though not a particularly streamlined Streamline Colonial, nonetheless is a stylistically engaging and unified house by someone who would become a master architect, and the patriotic Washingtonian octagonalism of the porch and cupola makes it unique in San Luis Obispo, giving it two justifications for Master Listing. It has the high level of integrity to communicate its significance.

### **Marshall House (Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Naylor House), 785 Buchon, 1902**

This house is wholly understood only as a pairing with the Crocker House next door, and though Marshall had a longer tenure, it should be renamed after the Naylor, who commissioned it from architect **William H. Weeks** at the same time Jacob Crocker, for whom J. C. Naylor worked as head clerk, commissioned his. It was an audacious move for the two to simultaneously commission designs by Weeks on neighboring lots. Too audacious, for shortly after its completion Naylor absconded with funds from the Woodmen of the World, St. Stephen's Church, and various friends and relations he had borrowed from. The one person he does not seem to have embezzled from was his employer Jacob Crocker. After Naylor was spotted in San Francisco, his wife went there to remonstrate with him and returned to sell the house, to rising Azorean jeweler Manuel Marshall (who had also just bought a car). Mrs. Naylor restored the embezzled funds, and the J. C. Naylor moved to Bakersfield.

The Crocker House was started first, but both houses were finished by the end of 1902. The Naylor's house was a more modest structure in size as well as design. The result is a less

awkward structure but also a less interesting one. The street façade is dominated by a semi-octagon bay window topped by a pediment gable, with an entry portico to the side.



The broad frieze between the window and pediment is, perhaps uniquely in San Luis Obispo, decorated with a floral bas relief, although it doesn't have the Art Nouveau flair of the bas relief in the Crocker House entry pediment. The tiny semi-octagon window in the front-facing gable is inset within an elegant curve, a Shingle style touch. Ionic columns, wave shingles, anachronistic diamond panes, and rusticated chimney medallions echo the Crocker House next door, and both employ novelty siding, but there is no sense that they are paired in design.

As one of three documented Weeks houses in San Luis Obispo, all Colonial Revival, the house is rare though not unique and on that basis should qualify for the Master List.

### **J. L. Anderson House, 532 Dana, 1902–1903**

With pediment gables centered by oculus vents, horizontal soffit brackets resembling dentilation, and Tuscan columns supporting a wraparound porch, the Anderson House makes clear reference to Colonial and Federal architecture with minimal twee, and its semi-octagon bays, clustered windows, and shiplap siding are characteristic of Streamline Colonial Revival. One interesting touch of intentionality is that in its cruciform arrangement, the front and one side gable are boxed into pediments, one side gable is hipped (also a common Streamline Colonial arrangement, and the rear gable is plain, as it doesn't need to impress anyone, being along the creek.



The house is unusual for local Streamline Colonial for being two stories, not one or one-and-a-half: on the Master List, only the Stanton House (1904-05), Kaiser House (1908), and Heritage Inn/Herrera House (1910) also have two stories. It is unique in the city for being surrounded on four sides by portico, and though a small portion has been enclosed on the front with unmatching columns, this does not undermine its ability to communicate its significance. It is also unique here for combining Streamline Colonial with elephant leg columns, rare in other parts of the country. Its uniqueness would appear to qualify it for the Master List.

### **Upham House (Mary L. Elliott House), 779 Buchon, 1903**

This house was designed by **Hilamon Spencer Laird**, the first person in San Luis Obispo documented to have practiced solely as an architect—rather than builder-architect—for any length of time and with any record of buildings, his known projects dating from 1874 to 1911 and including some of the most prominent buildings in the city, almost all of them on the Master List, though the provenance of most of them was not known when they were so placed.

The house was commissioned by Mrs. Mary L. Elliott, born 1864 to prominent San Luis Obispo banker (and farmer) J. P. Andrews. She lived in it for a short time, married William A. Rideout in 1905, and appears to have rented it and then returned to it with her husband by 1913, J. P. Andrews dying there in 1914.

The asymmetric porch with Ionic columns and dentilation/horizontal brackets above immediately suggest Streamline Colonial. Though the front gable is not transformed into a pediment with a physical box, the wide frieze creates a similar effect, and Frank Furness used this method on the Alexander J. Cassatt Stable (Berwyn, PA, 1898). Besides, the



dentilled boxing at the top creates a mini-pediment above the semi-Palladian window (tripartite with a heightened center but no arch). Molding creates two further mini-pediments flanking the window, filled with wave shingling, echoing the deconstruction



common to creative architects like Coxhead and Wright with Shingle Colonial. A front addition has caused severe damage to integrity.

The festoon over the gable window and the scroll below it and the ground floor front window denote Federal reference (e.g., The Athenaeum, Portsmouth, NH, 1803, previous page, detail). The stepped gable edges were also employed by Frank Furness, and Laird's 1894 Shipsey and 1903 Kimball Houses show Furnessian influence.

The number of Laird-designed buildings in San Luis Obispo would not raise the Upham House to the uniqueness standard, but it is the only one commissioned by a woman. Furness influence makes it unusual, which raises the question of whether the Kimball House should be considered Furnessian Streamline Colonial, but its use of ridge cresting, Egyptian columns, and multiple arches seems to take it to a different realm. The significance of Mary Elliott's commissioning of the house from a major architect should not be obscured by the meaningless Upham name.

### **R. S. Aston House, 1746 Chorro, 1903**



Contractor **R. S. Aston**, brother of noted San Luis Obispo photographer Frank Aston, had just arrived here from Bakersfield when he built this house for himself (and to advertise his work) in what seems to have been about a month. A gambrel roof intersects a high-peaked roof; rare octagonal columns supported on stone form the corner entrance characteristic of High-Peaked Colonial Revivals of the Bay Area, though the corner lot gives two façades and warrants four gables. The house has novelty siding, which was a common alternative to shingle in Bay Area High-Peaked Colonials. Aston likely brought his own crew from

Bakersfield to get started so quickly; it was reported by Judge Unangst's daughter Dorothy Bilodeau that of the two stonemasons on the Judge's House, one was Irish and one Black.<sup>60</sup>

As Aston's own house, the first house by him in the area, and both the earliest surviving High-Peaked and Gambrel Colonial in the city, it achieves Master List uniqueness.

### **The Judge's House, 1720 Johnson, 1903–1904**



Dorothy Bilodeau claimed that her father was not satisfied by the original design of the house, presumably by Aston, so designed it “on his own ideas, in cooperation with a minister in the area whose church was made of similar materials” (Winslow). It is certainly less rational on the outside and perhaps more accommodating inside. Aston's house, completed immediately before he started Unangst's, is true cruciform in its roofs. Unangst's entry gambrel gable runs a straight ridge back to—peculiarly, perhaps uniquely—a high-peaked gable in back, while a gambrel gable on the west side and high-peaked gable on the east are offset.



In another way of looking at it, the entry and Johnson Avenue façades are both dominated by a roof slope with a gambrel gable at the left. Unlike the Aston House, all novelty siding, here the ground floor is shiplap and gables shingled, somewhat unusual in a Shingle Colonial for being scalloped.

Unangst presided over many of the most important cases in the county, though, since there have been scores of judges in San Luis, and only one Unangst, the Judge Unangst House would seem to be a more transparent and less twee name. Architecturally, the house is unique for being the oldest surviving Shingle Colonial in the city.

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60. Carleton M. Winslow, Jr., ed., “The Judge's House,” *Discovering San Luis Obispo County* (San Luis Obispo: 1971).

**Albert House, 1642 Morro, 1904; Baker House, 1636 Morro, 1904–1905**



The uniqueness of these two houses comes from their being paired symmetrical Streamline Colonials by the same builder (and presumably designer) **William Thompson** at roughly the same time. Tiny speculative developments were a characteristic of small town San Luis Obispo, but this is the only Streamline Colonial one I know of. It is a pity that neither are named after Thompson, as Albert and Baker seem to have no significance and Thompson was actually built 1642 for himself (though local spec builders and developers—including organic architect Warren Leopold, according to Henry Miller in *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*<sup>61</sup>—often occupied their new houses and moved as soon as sold).

These houses are unusual for streamlining their Colonialness with a square footprint, hip roof, and central hip dormer, a dropping of the pediment that would become more common. There are almost unnoticeable asymmetries. Neither entry portico is quite centered, and the Albert had an inset semi-octagon bay window (now partially walled in) on only one side. The Baker retains them on both sides, but one cutaway corner has a

61. (New York: New Directions, 1957), p. 257.

window and no support, the other a door and a support column. Despite the alteration to the Albert House, it retains enough of its integrity to communicate its significance.

### **Hourihan House, 860 Buchon, 1904–1905**



In a four-decade architectural career (after initially having worked as a dairy farmer) **Hilamon Spencer Laird** designed in many different styles and was disinclined to limit himself in any. His house for Mary Elliott experimented with decorative techniques that went well beyond common or garden Streamline Colonial; his Kimball House (actually commissioned by John Ingram) is so Furnessian as to depart its genre. (Curiously, Frank Furness’s own Colonial Revival buildings are among his most whitebread designs; perhaps he didn’t feel he had enough abstract decorative scope in them.)

Laird’s design for Thomas and Kathleen Hourihan’s house emphasizes its Streamline Colonial nature in two ways: through its asymmetric wraparound ground floor porch and porch-topping balcony supported by Tuscan columns, and by the great hood of a hip roof enclosing the balcony, with the echoing porch roof. It is an audacious design most reminiscent of McKim, Mead, and White’s double-decker piazzas at the Newport Casino. They tie to a front-gabled bay that is unusual but not unique for being neither high-peaked nor pedimented, but some late seventeenth-century Colonial buildings (like Boston’s Bridgham House at right) took this form and were copied by revivalists. It is unique to the city and so Master List qualified.



The Hourihan House is one of sixteen houses the city’s Master List properties website erroneously and anachronistically calls Gothic: the Biddle (Stick), Brew (Colonial Revival), Brooks (Romanesque), Buckley (box frame vernacular), Falkenstein (Stick and Queen Anne), Finney (Queen Anne), Greenfield (Cottage), Kaetzel (Queen Anne), Lewin (Eastlake), McKennon (Queen Anne), McManus (Stick), Rogers (Italianate), Tucker (Colonial Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne), Upham (Colonial Revival), and Jessie Wright

(Queen Anne). The text for the Hourihan House adds insult to injury by explaining that its supposed Gothicism is "reflective of the tendency for architectural styles to reach SLO decades after peaking in larger Metropolitan areas," when San Luis was in fact on the cutting edge of architecture and Laird at the apex of that edge.

**Stanton House, 752 Buchon, 1904–1905**



Like J. C. Naylor's house, this structure demonstrates how people dealt with the housing crisis at the turn of the century: they embezzled. There is a poignancy to the patriotic nostalgia and smooth modernity of the Streamline Colonial and the criminal undercurrent used to pay for it.

E. B. Stanton had been the Pacific Coast Railway's agent, dispatcher, and lumber yard agent since the late 1890s and was a prominent enough figure to be married to a Dana: Irene Josephine, daughter of the longtime county clerk. Edward and Irene had built a 1½-story asymmetric Colonial Revival cottage at Marsh and Toro in 1902 for their brood of children (pictured in the Fire Department *Souvenir of San Luis Obispo* with that brood but no longer extant). Stanton paid off its mortgage in September 1904 and commenced the two-story house at Buchon and Garden.

The house was described in superlatives during both its building and sale soon after—for in late May 1905, before it was quite finished and certainly before it was paid for, the PCR demoted Stanton from railroad agent and hired a new bookkeeper, and in early June Stanton was arrested, ultimately charged with embezzling \$14,433.74 from his employers. He was additionally sued by contractors for various unpaid bills on his \$6,000 house, for which he had also taken out a \$2,400 mortgage.

In November Stanton was tried, convicted, and sentenced to five years at San Quentin. Coverage of the trial does not explain why he did it, but Stanton's character witnesses included some of the leading men of the town: Louis Sinsheimer, Dr. W. M. Stover, William Sandercock, and the merchant Jacob Crocker. M. Lewin, agent for the mortgagee, seems to have had difficulty in either selling or renting the house and occupied it himself into the 1920s.

The *Tribune* named the architect as **W. C. Phillips**, who was based in Arroyo Grande when he became, in 1896, the architect of the Neoclassical (with Eastlake interior) H. M. Warden Building on Higuera at the foot of Garden Street (extant). Phillips relocated to San Luis Obispo and practiced here for about ten years before graduating to the big city of San Jose.

The Stanton House has a sophisticated play of symmetry and asymmetry, depending on whether one sees the tower as one side of a façade or the center of two façades. Curvatures abound: in tower walls and glass, porch balustrade, oculi, the art nouveau soffits of the pediment gables, and the bellcast roofs. Eaves are horizontally exaggerated, including the deeply inset gable pediments. This suggests the influence of Bay Area architects like A. W. Smith, whose 1900 Siegriest House in Oakland (extant) uses a similar wide-eaved, columned corner tower between gabled façades. (Octagonal and round towers were a not uncommon feature of Streamline Colonial, despite the absence of such appendages or appurtenances on actual Colonial houses.)

In 1904 the *Tribune* wrote, "The style may be best expressed as American," adding: "There will be colonial windows." It is hard to interpret the second statement, as there is a huge variety of windows—sash, oculus, arched, oriel, leaded, diamond-pane, stained glass—probably too many for a unified effect. The first statement is interesting in its recognition that asymmetric Colonial had moved beyond a revival into its own expression of modern Americanness, as Shingle had done and the California Bungalow was to do.

The Stanton House is certainly unique as the most exaggerated expression of Streamline Colonial in San Luis Obispo; I believe it is also the only documented house by W. C. Phillips here, though others may come to light: two reasons to qualify for the Master List.

### **Leonard W. Hill House, 1144 Buchon, 1905**

The Hill House in the Old Town Historic District is the most recent Streamline Colonial addition to the Master List and was added by ignoring the uniqueness criterion. Hill was a local businessman but did not rise to any leadership position that would define him as historically significant. The carpentry was done by local builder John Chapek as a subcontractor, one of his early projects but by no means earliest, and despite the application's assertion that he was the building's architect, there is no evidence that he designed the house and considerable that he did not.

First, given the somewhat awkward contemporary Streamline Colonials in which Chapek was listed as architect (the George A. Brown House at 1241 Beach [1907–1908]) or can be plausibly posited as architect (his spec-built 1946 Chorro [John T. Anderson House, 1902–1903] and 1045 Leff [1903]; 865 Buchon [the William Alberts House, 1904], on which he was the primary contractor; and 843 Upham [1905–1906], where he settled himself), the sophisticated planes and curves of the Hill House were beyond his architectural ability.



*Triplets: Master List Leonard Hill House and Frank Anderson House and Contributing List Patrick and Catherine McHenry House*

Second, the Hill House is virtually identical—except in reverse—to the Frank Anderson House at 1345 Broadway, at the other end of the Old Town Historic District, one of the earliest additions to the Master List; also to the James M. Akin–built Patrick and Catherine McHenry House at 1264 Palm (1910), in the middle of the Mill Street Historic District but inexplicably relegated to the Contributing List. In short, all three houses were clearly from a marketed set of plans: embodying Streamline Colonial by NRHP standards but the opposite of unique by the standards of the Master List.

**LeRoy and Sara Smith House, 1306 Mill, 1906**



LeRoy Smith arrived at Cal Poly in his late twenties to teach English and history but was so impressed with the school's mission that he retrained at Berkeley as an agriculturist—after he had become Cal Poly's director. He also seems to have arrived with money, immediately buying three adjoining lots at the corner of Mill and Johnson (then Essex). He sold one lot to Leroy Anderson, his boss as the first director of Cal Poly, and hired **William H. Weeks**, the architect of Cal Poly's buildings—all in Mission Revival—to design a house.

It took the form of a redwood shingle Bay Area High-Peak Colonial with characteristic shed dormers. As the dormers run the length of the house, it is functionally a two-story, retaining the dormer look with deep overhangs. Another way it differs from most Bay Area models is occupying a corner lot with an entry centered in its long façade. The entry uses, appropriately, square columns, for the side gables have the open pediments of circa 1830s Massachusetts Bay Greek Revival, not a reference seen in other High-Peak Colonials and unique to this city. The building shows Weeks coming into his own as an architect, at the same time he was designing the rationalized and simplified high school of rusticated stone.

Some months after the Smith House was finished, Leroy and Isabel Anderson took out a \$4,000 loan to build their own house next door: a Prairie School in dark stained wood (extant). Sara Smith was from Wisconsin; LeRoy Smith had worked there and in San Francisco before coming to Cal Poly. In 1902 Leroy Anderson visited the Midwest to examine other agricultural schools before opening Cal Poly. Any of these might have been the Wright connection. The Anderson House's architect is unknown (not inconceivably Weeks), but it is the first Prairie School building in San Luis Obispo, of the style Wright was producing in the early 1900s, demonstrating San Luis was indeed on the cutting edge. Shortly after its completion, Benjamin Ide Wheeler hired Anderson to run the University of California's ag station, now UC Davis, and Smith replaced his colleague as director.

**Dutton House, 1426 Broad, 1906**



The first occupant of the Dutton House—built by Dutton for him—was plumber, tinsmith, and County Supervisor E. M. Payne, who was arrested two years after he occupied the



house for illegally selling a consignment of pipes to the county through a third party. But the grand jury, some of whose members were intent on punishing Payne for voting to rescind prohibition of alcohol sales in county jurisdictions, had broken the rules by conducting interviews in the field. The judge threw out the case, which was never revived.

With cruciform footprint and roof arrangement, seemingly a San Luis characteristic for Shingle style, the Dutton House has a pedimentless seventeenth-century reference and unusual roof and portico flaring that are unique in San Luis. The perpendicularity to the street and columned corner entry is reminiscent of suburban High-Peak—though at least one and probably two columns are missing.

### **Renetzky House, 1516 Broad, 1906**



A surprising number of Streamline Colonials have polygonal or round towers; this was an enthusiasm of the early Shingle architects that the absence of towers on Colonial buildings was not able to shake, e.g., McKim, Mead, and White's dodecagonal tower on the Newport Casino (1879–1881; see p. 8). The Renetzky House's closed pediment gable on the street façade and open pediment gables on the side façades make its Colonial intentions clear, as does its asymmetric portico with Tuscan columns.

Some lathework in the middle of the columns, a small sunburst at the top of the front pediment gable, and a diamond window rather than oeil de boeuf in the front are eccentric

details but not enough to detract from the genre. As the only Streamline Colonial with an octagonal tower in San Luis, it attains the uniqueness standard.

The Renetzky House's minor inconsistencies draw attention to the major ones of the next door Master List Tucker House, which the city website oxymoronically describes as "Carpenter Gothic Revival/Neoclassical." The Tucker House has open pediments with oculus windows, referencing Federal architecture; corner boards and deep eaves with baroque corbels, which are Italianate; and a spindlework and bracketed entry from the Queen Anne. It does not succeed in embodying any of those three styles and so does not attain significance, though it is certainly unique as a mishmash.

### **Chapek House, 843 Upham, 1906**



The Chapek House looks like John Chapek may, indeed, have designed it or aspects of it, as it is ambitious and not everything fits. A later shed dormer and porch enclosure have added slightly to the confusion. Chapek hailed from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, so Colonial was not his milieu, but he was clearly an enthusiast for Colonial Revival, as that is the style of his early surviving spec houses. Like other spec builders, he was in the habit of living in his new buildings until sold, but he settled at 843 Upham for a relatively long time.

The pushout in the street façade's gable apex is a not uncommon feature of Colonial Revival (and Queen Anne), though its integration into a square balcony topping a semi-octagon bay is unusual, intersecting an open pediment gable. Also unusual is the use of pilasters as well as columns. The side entry portico as a component of a more obtuse roof slope is also an elegant touch, reminiscent of the New England saltbox, though the clutter of dormers detracts somewhat from the effect. Prominent builders' own houses are always of interest; in San Luis, this one is unique.

### **Mazza House, 1318 Chorro, circa 1906**

This would be a Colonial Revival cottage of little distinction apart from its construction of rusticated Bishop Peak granite (which also confirms an origin of around 1906). The monolithic columns are a tour-de-force, and the provision of stone capitals extremely unusual. The pediment gable is, necessarily, faux stone, and the arched vent would subsequently show up in other Streamline Colonials, becoming a bit clichéd. Yet there is nothing clichéd about the muscularity of the material, which seems completely antithetical to streamlining or to actual Colonial buildings.



**Strickland House, 1152 Buchon, circa 1906–1907**



One might accuse this house as being as much of a mishmash as the Tucker House except for its clear—and successful—intentionality. The bungaloid profile and Tuscan portico say Streamline Colonial, but the irimoya roof is a wholly successful Japonesque imposition that echoes a front-facing Streamline Colonial pediment gable. Corner cutaways, usually a Queen Anne characteristic, replace Queen Anne corner brackets with additional Tuscan columns, re-emphasizing the Colonial. The retention of the street façade’s flanking semi-octagons embodies the Streamline Colonial, but the removal of their central front-facing panels streamlines it further. The Strickland House recalls William Randolph Hearst’s apt characterization of the Greene and Greene style (which he originally asked Julia Morgan to

do for what instead became Hearst Castle) as a “Jappo-Swisso bungalow.” It is the seamless melding of two styles for a result greater than the sum of its parts.

Strickland did the construction for Laird’s design of Mary Elliott’s house, and in 1904 he built a pair of remarkably minimalist and elegant flared-roof Streamline Colonials—a third has been lost—at 2127 and 2135 Price Street.<sup>62</sup> These seem to presage 1152 Buchon and should be on the Master List. Was Strickland capable of designing this extraordinary house? Is it too extraordinary to have come from a pattern book? It is unique in San Luis.

**Kaufman House, 1052 Islay, circa 1906–1907**



This is a perfectly characteristic Streamline Colonial cottage with hip roof and asymmetric pediment gable supported by Tuscan columns. The absence of bay or clustered windows and any flair to its rectangular vent makes it plainer than most. As there is nothing unique about the Kaufman House, it is a mystery why it is the only Master List house on the 800, 900, 1000, and 1100 blocks of Islay. It was added much later than the original survey.

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62. “Locates Kansas Colony,” *Tribune*, 11 Dec. 1903, p. 4

### **Oliver House, 1953 Chorro, after 1906**



The Oliver House is likewise unremarkable, though slightly less unremarkable than the Kaufman House. The Master List website describes it as “significant as ‘a workingman’s farmhouse,’” but it was not a farmhouse, and that would not have made it significant, historic significance of a person requires they be a leader or otherwise exceptionally notable in their field. Rather this is a suburban bungalow that may have been owned by a farmer. It embodies, like a number of other spindle column Streamline Colonial cottages in San Luis Obispo, a type of architecture and should be on the National Register, but it is by no means unique and does not qualify for the Master List.

### **Nichols House, 664 Monterey, 1907**

This is the earliest house in the Morganti compound and was built two years after Nichols’ death, replacing his two-story house shown on the 1905 Sanborn map and visible in contemporary photos. Its fluted ionic columns are unusual, as are its square oriels, and this might attain to uniqueness, but its integrity has been compromised by the glazing of its front porch and blocking (or removal) of its pediment’s oeil de boeuf and the loss of the capital on its side entrance column. If it was Master Listed for its association with Mayor Nichols, that was erroneous; if for its architecture, it is probably unique here. Its integrity would unlikely pass the NRHP. It should certainly be renamed.



**Ramage House, 1129 Marsh, circa 1907–1910**



The Ramage House is a similar type of three-columned, pediment-gabled Streamline Colonial cottage to the Kaufman House, though it is somewhat more interesting and characteristic for its semi-octagon bay, decorative hexagonal panes, and arched gable vent. Not unique on its own, and though outside any historic districts, it is one of five adjoining cottages on 1100 block of Marsh added to the Master List at the time of the original Historic Resources Survey: a more modest version of the 700 block of Buchon, and a good save. The Ramage House is the only Streamline Colonial among them.

**Kaiser House, 751 Buchon, 1908**



Unusual as one of the few two-story Streamline Colonial houses in San Luis Obispo, the Kaiser House also follows the one-story Brecheen House (1907) in eschewing gables, pediments, *and* dormers, with a low-pitched bellcast and deep eaves. Unlike the bayless Brecheen House, however, it employs four semi-octagons on first and second floors. It also has a curved wraparound porch with somewhat bulbous Tuscan columns and courses of diamond and fishscale shingles. No architect is known, but Rasmussen and Parsons built it.

**Bullard House, 1624 Morro, circa 1908–1913 (next page)**



The Bullard House, unlike the Aston and Unangst Houses, is a cruciform of all gambrels, two dominant and two essentially exaggerated side dormers. Neither architect nor builder is known for this deceptively elegant structure, whose integrity has been somewhat compromised by the glazing of its entry portico, though its columns are visible through the glass. It embodies the gambrel form, but it is not unique in the city, a nearly identical though not as long gambrel house being situated at 3470 Broad Street, also with novelty

siding below and shingles above, also perpendicular to the street, with surviving stained glass bay in front though missing its columns.

### **Bradbury House, 745 Buchon, 1910**

Harry Lyman, more famous for his Craftsman, is the documented builder here. Like the Kaufman and Ramage Houses, the Bradbury is a Streamline Colonial with pediment gable over an asymmetric porch supported by three Tuscan columns. It has a flush rather than bay triplet of identical sashes, plus fishscale wainscoting borrowed from curved porches. It embodies the Streamline Colonial cottage but is not unique.



The neighboring Bradbury Sanitarium is a Prairie Box that, like other Prairie Boxes and Kansas City Shirtwaists, is essentially a Colonial Revival offshoot but enough of a distinct type that I have not included it among the Streamline Colonials. Kate Goodrich, a local teacher, purchased the lot from the Vetterlines and took out a \$1,100 building loan in 1902 and built a one-and-a-half-story Stick house that the Bradbury's sanitarium replaced a mere nine years later.<sup>63</sup>

### **Jackson House, 790 Islay, 1910**

The house of Dr. P. K. Jackson and later blind Judge Jackson—in whose attic apartment Assistant DA and later State Appellate Court Judge Donald Gates shot his wife's divorce attorney, Lloyd Somogyi, in 1954<sup>64</sup>—was built by Joseph Maino with ambitious Streamline Colonial aesthetics. Its main block runs parallel to Islay, with pediment gables at each end. Its front façade dormer and rear extension also terminate in pediment gables, and all four

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63. "Recorder's Office," *Tribune*, 30 Sep. 1902, p. 2.

64. Bill Morem, "Lawyer's Rib May Have Saved Two Lives," *Tribune*, 10 Feb. 2010.





are centered by Palladian windows, providing an effective use of the triangular space and a Neoclassical reference both inside and out. Simplifying elsewhere, the design eschews bay windows for flush windows. The porch is unusually long but not a curved wraparound; its columns are rather thick, and they bulge and taper minimally; and the eaves do not have the exaggerated depth or creative treatment of the Stanton or Kaiser Houses. Yet the Jackson House makes a forceful statement, and in 1910 the *Tribune* called it “elegant.”<sup>65</sup> No separate architect is documented, and it seems likely to have been designed by Maino, as it does not have quite the professional feel of pattern house. It both embodies the Streamline Revival and is unique in the city.

### **Heritage Inn, 978 Olive, 1910**

Rufina Gallego was born in California of New Mexican parents—probably in San Luis Obispo County, the daughter of ranchero Francisco Gallego—in 1853. She married Antonio Jose Herrera, nineteen years her senior, in 1867; bore eleven children; and died in San Luis Obispo in 1943.<sup>66</sup> Antonio was the son of Maria and Tomas Herrera, the latter one of the chief rancheros of the county, who was appointed superintendent of water (juez de agua) in the new American county administration in 1850.<sup>67</sup> Don Tomas subscribed \$50 to the 1858 Vigilance Committee, and Antonio appears to have been one of its members (p. 303). In 1890 Antonio made news for offering free right of way through his property to the Southern Pacific for the hoped for railroad extension to San Luis, which the SP had agreed to build only if the local committee obtained right of way.<sup>68</sup> Antonio Herrera died at his house on East Monterey Street in 1905, and Rufina appears to have built her new Streamline Colonial on Monterey at the corner of Santa Rosa, where the new, spectacularly banal court building is, in 1910.

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65. “In New Home,” 1 Sept. 1910, p. 1.

66. US Census, 1880 and 1900; “A Pioneer Passed Away,” *Tribune*, 7 July 1905, p. 1.

67. Myron Angel, *History of San Luis Obispo County, California* (Berkeley: Howell-North, 1966), p. 131.

68. “Railroad,” *Tribune*, 2 Sep. 1890, p. 2.



Based on early advertisements, it appears to have been designed to function as a rooming house (“neatly furnished rooms; gentlemen preferred”) and office building, as well as a family home. It was also the headquarters of the chief local baseball operation. The San Luis Juniors, fielding Osbaldo Herrera, sent out an all-comers challenge from there in 1911: “Tell ’em to address 1066 Monterey Street” (“Kids Play Ball,” *Telegram*, 30 Sep., p. 8). In the aughts and teens, Osbaldo’s elder brother Manuel Herrera managed various San Luis teams (the Outlaws, the Stars, the 23 Club, etc.), to the extent that his name became synonymous with baseball (“Herrerias Will Meet Regulars: Baseball Supremacy Of City Will Be Decided Tomorrow,” 14 Oct. 1911, p. 1).

The house was moved to a different position on its lot and then to its current location on the motel strip of Olive Street, ironically requiring the demolition of a house owned by a different Herrera family—the Andres Herrerias from Michoacan—in what was San Luis Obispo’s barrio before the freeway displaced it. Losing its integrity of location, setting, and feeling, the Rufina Gallego de Herrera House should not also be forced to lose its integrity of rich historical association by suppressing her name. The two-story size and symmetrical design appears unique in San Luis Streamline Colonials and qualified for the Master List.

### **Bushnell House, 1105 George, 1910**

The Bushnell House retains its location, setting, and feeling but has lost much of its design, workmanship, and materials with new fenestration and garage level. It also has no claim to uniqueness. It is of the common spindle column cottage subtype.



**Sandercock House, 535 Islay, 1910–1911**



Possibly the youngest of the Master List Streamline Colonials, the Sandercock House, built by James J. Maino, went all in on pediment gables, including closed and (where windows intervene) open. It falls just short of being Hawthorne's House of the Seven Gables. As with Weeks's 1902 Marshall House (and the more modest Fumigalli cottage), an extension thrusts forward with a semi-octagon bay in front and a pediment gable above. But in the Sandercock house the hip roof is considerably broadened and given a central pediment above the entrance, farther up the roof. Another bay window topped by a pediment gable anchors the center of the other street façade on Beach. A curved wraparound porch balances the front façade bay, but the eaves are not so exaggerated as on the Kaiser House and without the aileron flair. Still, if not a masterpiece, it is a worthy late effort of streamlining the Streamline Colonial, compared to the first cluttered, angular, and vertical essays of William H. Weeks a mere eight years before. It appears to have a design, not just size, unique in the city.

**Frank Anderson House, 1345 Broad, circa 1910**



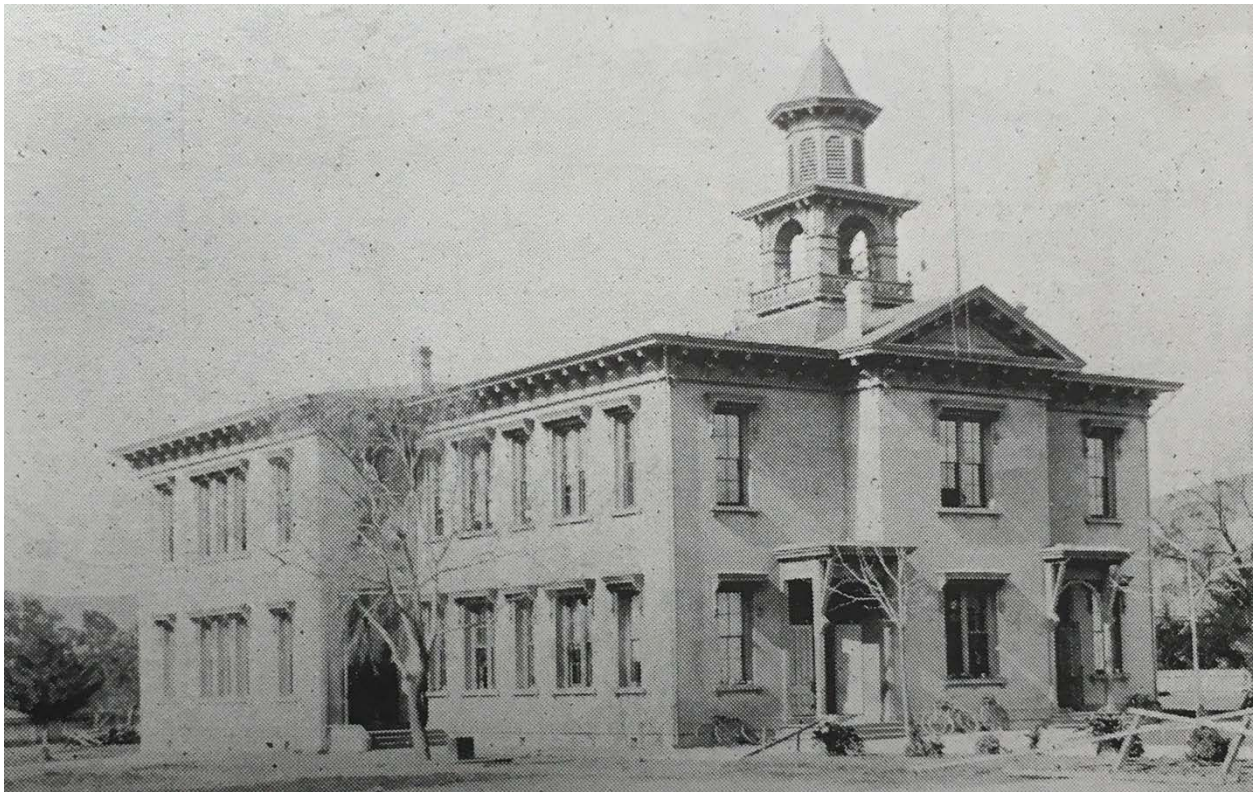
As pointed out earlier, this house, one of the first wave of additions to the Master List, is virtually identical to the Leonard Hill House, which was added almost four decades later (after a two-decade effort) at the other end of the Old Town Historic District. The Frank Anderson House has much better integrity than the Hill House, which added a second story, which may explain why it was put on the Master List in the first round. On the other hand, the virtually identical McHenry House at 1264 Palm, with equal integrity and in the middle of the Mill Street Historic District, was relegated to the Contributing List at the same time the Frank Anderson House was put on the Master List. None of them can claim to be unique, although the McHenry House is at least unique to its district.

## **Thomas Levin Brecheen and May Miller Brecheen**

Thomas Brecheen might have been a historically significant educator but became instead a historically significant rogue. Alas, his initial ownership of 1133 Pismo, though providing a name for the house, is too brief to qualify for historic association. His and May Miller Brecheen's story reminds us, however, that architecture is worked in and lived in, designed or chosen by people. It entwines its iconography—aspirationally if sometimes inappropriately—with their lives. Colonial Revival architecture combined knowledge, reason, and patriotism. Poignant, then, that of San Luis Obispo's Master List Streamline Colonial houses, two should have been built with the profits of embezzlement, a member of the County Board of Supervisors should have been arrested for malfeasance in a third, and the assistant district attorney should have shot a lawyer in a fourth, owned by a personification of blind justice.

Thomas Brecheen's connection to two of San Luis Obispo's Colonial Revival buildings—the brick Nipomo Street School and his wood frame house six blocks to the east—is, like these, a classical tragedy played against the backdrop of Palladio's Teatro Olimpico.

The Nipomo Street School, where Brecheen taught, was an imposing Colonial Revival brick building with a pediment and bell tower. Built in the late 1880s and expanded in 1897, it looked like a New England church or courthouse, except for somewhat ill-conceived dual entries with wood porches.



Brecheen's Colonial Revival bungalow looked across Pierre Dallidet's remaining unbuilt vineyards of at the city's brand new Mission High School, an even more imposing Neoclassical edifice in rusticated granite. Yet the principal of the high school was in charge

of only four teachers in one school and Brecheen of fifteen in two. As president of the County Board of Education, he doubtless also thought himself in charge of everything.

The moment of Brecheen's purchase of the house—newly presiding over the County Board of Education; new principal of San Luis Obispo's grammar schools after previously supervising two other teachers in Cambria, one other in Simi, or in Montalvo only himself—was an iconic but ephemeral one. One year later, in August 1908, Brecheen, only just married to May Miller, abruptly resigned his principalship over a minor matter of class division. In December the Board of Supervisors removed him from the County School Board.

Over the next ten years he moved through five school districts, beset by legal and administrative troubles. He went into real estate, in short order was twice arrested, and fought the revocation of his real estate license all the way to the California Supreme Court, then fought the refusal of a new license all the way to the Supreme Court again. Shortly after losing both cases, he pleaded guilty to petty larceny, then was arrested for burglary. Eight years after that, he was sent to prison for participating—as a representative of the Good Government Congress—in the theft of 10,000 ballots before a recount in Jackson County, Oregon. In unsuccessfully pleading mercy, his lawyer asserted he was not a habitual criminal.

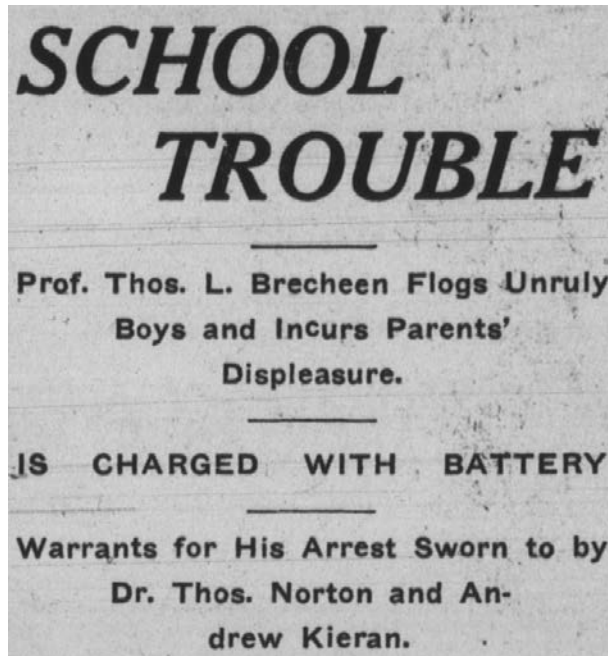
According to census and death records, Thomas Brecheen was born in Hunt County, Texas in 1877, the fifth son and seventh child of a farmer. When he was hired as principal of San Luis Obispo's high school, he had been principal of the Cambria schools for two years and of Montalvo School and Simi School in Ventura County for one year each, confirmed by contemporary newspaper reports.



San Francisco Examiner, 20 Sep. 1921, p. 11

He was supposed before then to have graduated from the Sam Houston Normal Institute in Huntsville—or, in a later version, the University of Texas—and to have taught at the Llano Estacado Institute in Plainview for three years, led the Lockney public schools in Floyd County for two, and been principal of the Dalhart public schools in Dallam and Hartley

Counties.<sup>69</sup> This would have made him 19 or 20 when he started his teaching career and in his early twenties when given administrative responsibility. This might have been possible, given his ambition and energy and the fact he was a man in a woman's field, but in 1919 the district attorney of Alameda County concluded he had falsified his Texas educational record and a subsequent claim of qualifications from the University of California.



Thomas Brecheen appears to have been idealistic, generous with his time, hard-charging, opinionated, and unwilling to compromise but quite willing to cut legal and administrative corners. He had what tragedians would have called hubris, though he met his nemesis not among the gods but in boards of trustees and courts of law. We would probably now describe him as dark triad: narcissistic, manipulative, and psychopathic.

*Front page above the fold: San Luis Obispo Daily Telegram, 12 Oct. 1907, p. 1*

In October 1907, barely two months after he purchased 1133 Pismo on the instalment plan (broker A. F. Fitzgerald's specialty), Brecheen was charged with battery after whipping the sons of four prominent citizens with a leather strap—according to Brecheen's version for refusing his instructions to leave school grounds.<sup>70</sup> Newspapers in San Luis Obispo and Ventura Counties came out in his favor. Though he was arrested by Deputy Taylor and arraigned by Justice Smith, the battery charge was thought unsustainable for someone in loco parentis, and there is no evidence of a trial.

Two months later Brecheen was presented with a Christmas present of a gold-mounted Waterman fountain pen by the eighth graders of the Nipomo Street School, "as a testimony of their high appreciation of his unceasing efforts in their behalf and their deep obligation to him for his many kind words of encouragement, counsel, and advice," again making front-page news.<sup>71</sup>

Professor Brecheen would appear to have been sitting pretty in the district, with a reputation for being dedicated but not to be trifled with. On 26 July 1908 he married May

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69. "New Principal for City Schools," *Daily Telegram*, 24 June 1907, p. 1.

70. *Daily Telegram*: "School Trouble," 12 Oct. 1907, p. 1; "Warrant Is Served," 15 Oct. 1907, p. 1.

71 "Remember Prof. Brecheen," *Daily Telegram*, 28 Dec. 1907, p. 1.

Miller of Berkeley, brought her to her new home at 1133 Pismo on July 29, and on August 12—making front-page news again, above the fold—resigned his principalship.<sup>72</sup>

The district trustees had decided against him, immediate past president of the County Board of Education, in what would seem a minor matter: the division of an unusually large eighth grade class of more than fifty students between Brecheen at Nipomo Street School and the district's vice-principal, Miss Sarah Wayland, at Court School, when he would normally have taken them all. He turned in his school keys after the trustees' meeting and submitted his resignation letter the next day. One can only imagine the scene in his neat but not-paid-for home.

*Front page but below the fold: Daily Telegram, 28 Dec. 1907*

**REMEMBER PROF. BRECHEEN**  
Prof. Thomas L. Brecheen, principal of the city schools, was the recipient Christmas of a beautifully gold-mounted Waterman fountain pen, presented to him by the eighth-grade pupils of the Nipomo-street school, as a testimony of their high appreciation of his unceasing efforts in their behalf and their deep obligation to him for his many kind words of encouragement, counsel and advice. Prof. Brecheen seems to be the right man in the right place, and his efforts have awakened the deepest interest of the pupils and

Whether he thought the trustees would back down or he was too obstinate to back down himself is unknown. He immediately hinted to the press at business opportunities in San Diego or San Luis.<sup>73</sup> These seem to have been illusory. He was reported to have taken charge of Martinez High School, also apparently false.<sup>74</sup>

Exactly four months after his resignation, he returned from Nevada for a County School Board meeting to discover the Board of Supervisors had removed him two days before for being absent without leave. There was presumably some underlying issue, but after having hung about San Luis Obispo since his resignation, with occasional trips on "business interests" out, Brecheen took the opportunity to announce that he had been offered a principalship in Alameda County for \$2,100 a year and was leaving immediately.<sup>75</sup>

It seems doubtful there was any truth to this; he disappeared from the news until listed among a group of Oakland teachers in 1910.<sup>76</sup> In 1911 he was mentioned as a teacher at Fremont High School in Oakland and in 1912 as secretary of the department of business education in the National Education Association.<sup>77</sup> Attending a national conference of

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72. "Prof. Brecheen Takes Bride," *Daily Telegram*, 29 July 1908, p. 1; "Brecheen Quits His Principalship," *Daily Telegram*, 13 Aug. 1908, p. 1.

73. "Brecheen's Resignation," *Daily Telegram*, 15 Aug. 1908, p. 1.

74. "News From Afar," *Daily Telegram*, 25 Sep. 1908, p. .

75. "Brecheen Gets Place In Alameda Schools," *San Luis Obispo Daily Telegram*, 15 Dec. 1908, p. 2.

76. "Teachers Ask Legislative Aid," *San Francisco Call*, 15 Nov. 1910, p. 8.

77. "Pedagogues Mix Up In Baseball Battle," *San Francisco Call*, 3 Sep. 1911; "Commercial Teachers May Come," *San Francisco Call*, 8 June 1912, p. 5.



commercial teachers in June, in July he was called on the carpet by the Oakland Board of Education for ordering forty-four typewriters without authorization.<sup>78</sup>

Possibly he was forced out, for in September 1912 Brecheen found an appointment as principal of the new Calistoga High School in Napa County.<sup>79</sup> Calistoga High would be his longest appointment, and the local newspaper had consistent praise for his strenuous efforts at school improvement. In fall 1914 he was unanimously reappointed at a salary of \$1,600 per year, but in spring 1915 was writing the state superintendent of schools for information on recalling school trustees, later denying he had anyone particular in mind.<sup>80</sup> In 1916 he became principal of Ceres High School in Stanislaus County. The *Weekly Calistogian* eulogized Brecheen as having “boosted the school and the town for all he was worth” during his tenure.<sup>81</sup> After a year at Ceres he became principal at Clovis High School in Fresno County.

After a year at Clovis, in July of 1918 it was announced that Brecheen had left to become principal of Livermore High School. In August he was back in Ceres being successfully sued by the editor of the *Ceres Courier* for the unpaid printing bill of the school yearbook. In September the *Daily Telegram* in San Luis printed a sensational article, based on a letter from the Clovis relative of a local person, that Brecheen had fled from justice and another teacher had been arrested, “suspected of having spread tuberculosis germs among the pupils of the school” after a pneumonia outbreak (this was during the Spanish Flu pandemic).<sup>82</sup> The story seems dubious; the other teacher mentioned had also been hired by Livermore, and no other paper picked up this extraordinary story; but with Brecheen’s history, there’s no knowing.

T. L. Brecheen was principal of Livermore High from 1918 till the following April, when he was terminated by the board of trustees, having been investigated after alleged involvement in the school trustees’ election and found to be unknown at either of the institutions—the University of California and the University of Texas—from which he claimed graduation.<sup>83</sup> He was also accused of having closed his school without authorization of the trustees. The attempt to revoke his Alameda County teaching certificate was found unnecessary when it turned out it had expired three years earlier. In November 1919 Brecheen sued for the remaining two months of his year’s salary and reinstatement in his job, gaining the first but not the second.

Shortly after this, Brecheen went into the real estate business in Berkeley, his wife’s home town, and appears to have been living with his in-laws. He was arrested after his employer swore out a complaint that Brecheen had attacked him in the street. Brecheen filed two

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78. “Berkeley Bars Oakland Pupils,” *San Francisco Call*, 27 July 1912, p. 17.

79. “The High School Teachers Chosen,” *Weekly Calistogian*, 6 Sep. 1912, p. 3.

80. “High School Trustees Meet,” *Weekly Calistogian*, 24 April 1914, p. 2; “Some Misunderstanding: Principal Brecheen Is Not After Anyone’s Scalp,” *Weekly Calistogian*, 7 May 1915, p. 1.

81. “Renewals for Calistogian Are Very Complimentary,” 28 Sep. 1917, p. 4.

82. “Calistoga News,” *Napa Daily Journal*, 28 July 1918, p. 8; “Ceres School Prepares for Military Class,” *Modesto Morning Herald*, 30 Aug. 1918, p. 5; “Former Teacher In Local Schools Leaves Fresno County And Wild Rumors Are Afloat,” *San Luis Obispo Daily Telegram*, 27 Sep. 1918, p. 1.

83. “County Sifts School Fight At Livermore,” *Oakland Tribune*, 13 Dec. 1919, p. 3.

lawsuits against the employer, then went into business for himself.<sup>84</sup> In business for himself, he embezzled from a client and was arrested from his in-laws house shortly after the police broke up a fracas in Berkeley's First National Bank lobby with another injured client. This was all in his first year of practice, which was unfortunately the year after California had passed first-of-its-kind legislation to regulate the real estate industry. The state commissioner revoked Brecheen's license for "embezzlement, false representations, and gross moral turpitude." Brecheen sued. Twice. And lost twice. But his suits established the precedents that the state commissioner's quasi-judicial power to revoke and refuse real estate licenses was Constitutional.

After pleas for petty larceny and trials for burglary, Brecheen dropped out of the news between 1925 and 1930, when he was practicing real estate in Ashland, Jackson County, Oregon. In the 1940 census he listed himself as divorced, but in the 1930 census May Brecheen—living with their nineteen-year-old daughter at her parents home and working as a private children's nursemaid—claimed he was dead.



In Ashland he involved himself (it was imputed as its paid representative) in the Good Government Congress, one of the local populist movements of the Great Depression. The group, taking over the local Democratic Party, managed to elect their candidates for county sheriff and judge, but when a recount was ordered, they stole and burned and drowned the ballots. This became known as the Jackson County Rebellion, and the state swooped in and arrested the ringleaders, including Brecheen, who served a year in prison. The movement's overall leader, a local newspaper publisher named Llewellyn Banks, died in prison, having shot dead the constable who came to arrest him. A female leader of the congress horsewhipped the editor of another local paper in the street. A third local paper won the Pulitzer Prize for its coverage, the first small-town newspaper to do so.

*Right: Front page above the fold, Klamath News, 6 August 1933*

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84. "Realty Operator Sued Second Time," *San Francisco Examiner*, 20 May 1920, p. 2. In 1920, Brecheen ran seven real estate ads in the *San Francisco Examiner* but was featured in ten articles about his legal and criminal problems.

Brecheen disappeared from coverage after his release from prison and in 1940 was living in a large workingmen's rooming house at the edge of Japantown in Los Angeles, working as a research assistant for the school district, so he claimed to the US Census. Before he died, suffering from senility, his daughter Natalie, who had moved to Los Angeles and married a successful businessman, Norvin Reed, took him in. As she also appears to have taken in her mother, this must have been awkward. After Thomas Brecheen's death, the Reeds rose to social prominence in Los Angeles, though Nathalie's marriage also ended in divorce. Norvin and Nathalie's elder daughter Mayla Ann became a debutante, earned an actual University of California degree, and worked—like her grandfather—as an elementary school teacher.

## Architectural Significance of the Brecheen House

Thirty-three Master List Streamline Colonial houses are a limited comparative sampling of the evolution of the style in the city, and rather than being a random selection, they skew toward large houses in prominent locations. But they help us to understand the significance of the Thomas and May Miller Brecheen House.

The bellcast roof of the Brecheen House resembles that of other houses: the 1904–1905 Albert and Baker Houses, the circa 1906–1907 Strickland House, and the 1908 Kaiser House. The Albert and Baker Houses, which removed looming pediment gables in favor of more diminutive hip dormers pushed back to the very center of a square hip roof (not very practical for interior use but audacious for exterior appearance), show that the next step of streamlining was to lower the roof profile and even further integrate the dormers or remove them altogether yet still retain Colonial iconography. The Strickland House did this spectacularly, integrating dormers into the ancient irimoya form, simultaneously demonstrating that Orientalism was not absent from the mind of Colonial Revival architects and builders in creating bellcast roofs. (This interest was not limited to the West Coast; “Chinese Chippendale” had re-entered the lexicon, and Chinese Chippendale furniture was being manufactured in Michigan, the center of the American trade.)



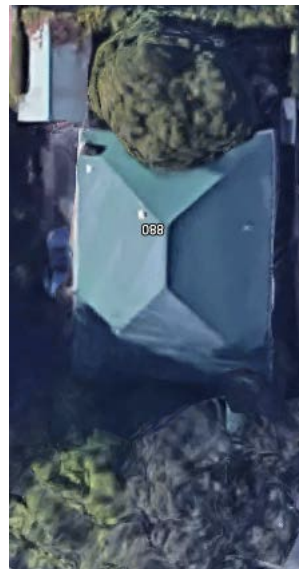
*Baker and Albert Houses (above), dormers facing to the left (Chorro Street) and bay windows top and bottom*



*Strickland and Kaiser Houses, front at bottom; both have been added to at back*



*Cowdery House (below) and Brecheen House (right), full lot, oriented to front of lot at bottom*



The Kaiser House, built the years after the Brecheen house, eschews dormers. Its rectangular roof is disturbed only by a slight pushout on the back of its wider side.



*The 1904 Cowdery House, 1907 Brecheen House, and top floor of the 1908 Kaiser House*

But a Contributing List structure now hidden behind extensive shrubbery at 880 Buchon street had anticipated this trend. The Cowdery House was built for *Tribune* news editor P. B. Cowdery in early 1904—slightly earlier even than the Albert House—by an unknown architect and builder. Like the Brecheen House, it is perpendicular to the street, a pure rectangle in shape, with a low bellcast roof entirely free of dormers and pushouts, though bay windows are accommodated under its wide eaves.

Compared to the Cowdery House, the architect of the Brecheen House narrowed and extended the rectangle for its roof, brought the roof pitch is even lower, and moved the house forward on the lot. He or she also was able to lower the street profile of the entire house, since it was not built on a slope, and substituted smooth concrete for rusticate stone in its foundation. Where the Cowdery, Strickland, Albert and Baker, and Kaiser Houses used semi-octagon bay windows, the Brecheen House used flush windows exclusively, limiting curvature to the roof and making the walls of the house uninterrupted planes.

In decorative detail, the Brecheen House architect skillfully pursued minimalism. Where the Cowdery House has a plain frieze and wainscot encircling the house, the Brecheen House makes do with the frieze. Where the standard Streamline Colonial bungalow uses three columns for its asymmetric porch, the Cowdery House reduces that to two, integrated with the siding rather than displaying classical orders, and the Brecheen gets it down to a single contrapuntal column balanced by a cornerboard.

Simultaneously with pursuing minimalism, the Brecheen House architect expanded visual interest. The Cowdery House has two identical plain sash windows on its façade, one on the porch and one on the bay. The Brecheen house repeats this pattern, but the window on the bay is flanked by two half-width windows to create the minimalist and linear version of a Palladian window (no central arch, which also allows the whole window grouping to be taller and admit more light). Each upper sash is divided into two rows of vertical rectangular lights, six wide for the two larger and three wide for the two smaller windows, echoing the three-sash-wide window and avoiding the distraction of diamond and hexagonal panes.

In a sense, that column is the sole explicit vertical reference, the bellcast roof the sole explicit horizontal reference, to the actual Colonial, bracketing the more implicit Palladianism of the front window.

Another Zen-like detail: Where the Cowdery House front door faces the street, pushing the window to the side, the Brecheen House puts the door on the side of the porch, so the single porch window and triple window on the bay can be both exactly centered.



The Brecheen House's side windows are also more intentionally employed for exterior effect from the street and rhythms within the house. Two identical single sashes flank the fireplace, followed by two paired sashes, whose pairing overcomes the internally necessary dissonance of different sizes at slightly different heights. This does not seem so remarkable until compared to the cluttered, seemingly random side-wall window placements of other suburban houses.

The last detail to remark upon is the remarkable chimney. Like McKim, Mead, and White with the H. A. C. Taylor House chimneys in Newport, the architect has employed stringcourses. But the columnar shaft braced on the wide base with quarter-pyramids of brick is a particularly engaging touch that combines streamlining with visual interest. This is not a design from the Colonial Era, where chimneys were generally interior and, if exterior, were braced with a simple slope from sides or front.

The genius of the Thomas and May Miller Brecheen House is apparent only when we put it in the context of (1) the Streamline Colonial ideals of planarity, linearity, curvilinearity, and minimalism and (2) the inventiveness with which some designers pursued these ideals and others did not. Interestingly, the architects of the era—Hilamon Spencer Laird, W. C. Phillips, William H. Weeks, and even the dubious S. B. Abbott—tended to produce busy house designs, as if their clients were paying for extra details. Two of the most innovative designs, both with bellcast roofs, are associated with professional builders in their own houses: William Thompson and C. E. Strickland. Of the two most minimalist, the Cowdery and Brecheen Houses, we know neither architect nor builder. It is certainly possible that all of these came from a pattern book, like the Hill, McHenry, and Frank Anderson Houses, but they seem to unusual to have done so.



## Period of Significance

Because of its short association with the somewhat disastrously historically significant Thomas Brecheen, the Brecheen House's period of significance is not based on his 1907–1908 tenure. It is significant as embodying suburban Streamline Colonial architecture, so its period of significance would be from its construction to the filling in of the Pismo Street section of La Vina tract (contemporarily spelled without the tilde) of which it is the oldest surviving occupant: 1907 to circa 1925.



*Above right: The back of 1133 Pismo, the front looking northwest across the Dallidet Vineyard, 1132 Buchon in foreground, in a later 1907 photograph when Brecheen was living at his new house, a detail of a panoramic photograph from Terrace Hill (Cal Poly Special Collections (168-1-b-01-36-05)). In a nice touch, the back has an asymmetric exit cater-corner to the asymmetric entrance. Below, a wider detail showing the Brecheen House at left facing Pismo, the Hill House at center facing Buchon, and the Strickland House at right facing Buchon.*



## Character-Defining Features

The character-defining features of the Brecheen House are its low-pitched bellcast roof, asymmetric porch, single Tuscan column on a solid railing, echoing single and tripartite sash windows on its street façade with their muntined upper sashes and plate glass lower sashes, rhythmic fenestration on the southwest façade, plain frieze, novelty siding, stringcoursed chimney with pyramidal base, and end-period Bishop Peak granite curb.

## Integrity

The Brecheen House retains excellent integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**Location** It is in the same place as built, seen in the 1907 Terrace Hill photo at Cal Poly.

**Design** An addition has been constructed in back, part of which is visible in an L on the southwest side, but in design and materials the L is reasonably compatible with and definitely distinguishable from the original house, being considerably lower and in a modern interpretation of Craftsman. A hip-roof pushout has been added extending



between 2 and 3 feet from the northeast wall and about ten feet long, behind the fence and under the eaves in a largely non-visible area on the lot line. It is distinguishable to an expert but probably, from its singularity, to a non-expert.

The 1926–1956 Sanborn shows no alterations. Oddly, it shows the house as having a full-width porch, but all the physical evidence—including structural fabric and hardware and a full-width porch’s incompatibility with the placement of the chimney, which the 1907 photo 168-1-b-01-36-05 shows to be original—confirms the asymmetric porch to be the original design. Sanborn maps periodically had erroneous drawings, as contemporary photography shows, and their errors would not be corrected unless other changes were made to the structure.

All the structural and decorative work on the front and southwest façades appears to be original, including fenestration.

**Setting** Although it initially looked across to William Weeks’s high school (now demolished) across Pierre Dallidet’s vineyards (now developed), the bungalow surroundings that had been designed to spring up all over La Vina tract soon did. The Brecheen House is surrounded by one- and one-and-a-half-story Colonial Revival and Craftsman houses (whose vogue overlapped by roughly five years) in largely original condition from the 1910s and 1920s. It is next door to the Master List 1913 Thorne/Nuss House and across the street from the 1912 Vollmer House, both Craftsman. Other surrounding houses include the Contributing List 1109 Pismo (post-Craftsman), 1145 (Craftsman), 1147 (Craftsman motifs on a Colonial Revival form), 1155 (Romanesque Streamline Colonial), 1163 (post-Streamline Colonial), 1171 (Streamline Colonial), 1179 (Craftsman), 1185 (Craftsman), and 1195 (Craftsman) on the same side of the street and 1126 (post-Streamline Colonial), 1152 (Craftsman), 1160 (post-Streamline Colonial), 1166 (Craftsman), 1176 (post-Streamline Colonial), and 1190 (Minimal Traditional) on the opposing side. Somewhat older structures (including the Strickland and Hill Houses) line the neighboring Buchon Street and Pismobuchon Alley.



*North side of 1100 block of Pismo Street circa 1925 taken by Pasadena photographer Bob Plunkett (detail; courtesy Huntington Library). With the exception of the gas lamp, all the structures visible—1152, 1160, 1166, 1175, 1190, 1202, and 1208 and their concrete curbing, as well as 1206’s brick gatepost in foreground—survive with good to excellent integrity.*

**Materials** The house's visible materials on the street and southwest façades appear to be all original. The roof shingling and flush ridge cresting has been replaced.

**Workmanship** The house's visible workmanship appears to be original.

**Feeling** The feeling of the house and surroundings are as they were in the early suburban period.

**Association** Were he to return from prison and the dead, Thomas Brecheen would instantly recognize his house, though it no longer faces the Dallidet vineyards.

## **Conclusion**

The Thomas and May Miller Brecheen House is the purest distillation of the planar, linear, curvilinear, and minimalist ideals of the Streamline Colonial architectural type in San Luis Obispo. It is significant in embodying a type of architecture and possessing high artistic values; its excellent integrity communicates this significance; and it is important and unique in San Luis Obispo. Its addition to the Master List would help to redress the paucity of Master Listings among the more modest but no less significant bungalows at the east end of the Old Town Historic District.

## Addendum to Brecheen House Master List Application Uniqueness and Importance

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### Summary Conclusion

At its May 2022 hearing, the CHC asked applicant for clarification of how 1133 Pismo in the Old Town Historic District meets the “most unique and important” standard of the Master List. The clarification required analysis of the house in comparison with its class. I used a data set of the 57 Contributing List one-story Colonial Revival bungalows in the district, focusing on where the Brecheen House was restrained by physical and stylistic considerations, and where its designer took it in unique directions to embody its genre.

The data shows the house to be a rare subtype of the Colonial Revival bungalow stripped of structural but nonfunctional roof decoration. Within this minimalist form, the anonymous designer lowered the roof pitch to the greatest extent of any of these bungalows; extended the eaves further than any other; accentuated both with a *japoniste* bellcast; created the district’s most sophisticated geometric pattern of fenestration; successfully experimented

with minimizing columns and doors; and framed the whole with a unique pattern of frieze, architrave, corner boards, and baseboard. These are details, but as the great Modernist Ludwig Mies van der Rohe said, “God is in the details.”

The result is minimalist, linear, curvilinear, and unified: empirically the district’s most streamlined bungalow in our National Revival style at the cusp of America’s suburban bungalowization. Embodiment of core stylistic goals, juxtaposed to revolutionary ability to stretch the envelope and to find complexity in simplicity, simplicity in complexity, are what make the Brecheen House not just unique but important—San Luis Obispo’s bungaloid forerunner to Purcell and Elmslie’s 1912 “Airplane House” at Woods Hole and equally worthy of distinction, despite—or because of—its modest size and anonymous designer.

*James Papp, PhD, on behalf of Christopher Frago and Heidi Howland-Frago | 2 August 2022*

## Methodology and Statistical Results

**Data set** To address the CHC's question in a statistically unbiased way, I selected as a data set all one-story Colonial Revival bungalows on the Contributing List in the Old Town Historic District. This is a large list—57 properties—because almost no one-story Colonials were originally placed on the Master List, and almost no one-and-a-half or two-story Colonials were originally placed on the Contributing List. In the Old Town Historic District, the Master and Contributing Lists were essentially distinguished by size.

**Period** A quick check of permits and newspapers shows 1900–1913 construction dates for 15 of the 57 bungalows. The 1907 Brecheen House falls in the middle of the range.

**Contemporary commonalities in Colonial Revival, with departures from American Colonial architecture** What is remarkable about the 57 bungalows is their consistency. Each one has (or originally had) a columned front porch. Each one has a hip roof that appears pyramidal on the street façade, with roof ridge running front to back.

53 (93%) of the porches are asymmetrically placed, a departure from actual American Colonial architecture, as Neoclassical entry porticoes were centered, quite often under a pediment. 31 (54%) of these bungalows also have a front-facing pediment, though a majority (55%) of these pediments are placed over the window bay rather than the porch: another departure from Colonial architecture. Only one of the pediments is centered, with the other 30 (97%) asymmetric.

A hip roof with a pyramidal front façade is also an extreme outlier among American Colonial structures, particularly the New England ones on which McKim, Mead, and White originally based the Colonial Revival style. Most New England Colonial houses are side-gabled; the few hip roofs have the ridge running parallel to the street.

McKim, Mead, and White revived these broad-façade Colonials for the landed plutocracy, but a broad façade is impractical on a narrow suburban lot. Some ur-suburban architect may have borrowed the form from Southern Colonial houses, whose H-form wings more often have pyramidal façades; these were being published around the turn of the century.



*Rear of Thomas Pinckney's 1797 Eldorado, South Carolina, sketched before burning in 1897. Wings present a pyramidal roof to the garden, like the Colonial Revival bungalow to the street (C. R. S. Horton, Savannah and Parts of the Far South, 1902, The Georgian Period, vol. iii). At right, one of Emil John's three adjoining Eastlake cottages, Santa Cruz, 1884. Two survive.*

But asymmetric pyramid-and-gable Eastlake cottages—unpedimented—were in Santa Cruz by 1884 (Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey [San Francisco: Page, 1976], p. 70; see photograph above).

In short: Colonial Revival suburban bungalows are likely to be inconsistent with actual American Colonial architecture but overwhelmingly consistent with one another.

**Seven subtypes** These 57 porched and pyramidal bungalows fall into 7 subtypes (percentages add to 102% due to rounding):

1. asymmetric pedimented porch (23%)
2. asymmetric pedimented window bay (30%)
3. symmetric pedimented porch (2%)
4. unpedimented full-width porch (5%)
5. asymmetric and unpedimented with centered pyramidal dormer (20%)
6. asymmetric and unpedimented without dormer (11%)
7. Japanese *irimoya* roof, hipped with gablet (11%) (This is the only subtype covered in *A Field Guide to American Houses* [under Queen Anne], but all can be found across the US.)

The Brecheen House is subtype 6, a bungalow with neither pediment nor dormer. Photographs of all 57 bungalows appear under their subtype on pages 4–8 following, in order to make the similarities and differences visually clear.

**I. Asymmetric pedimented porch (13, or 23%)**



*1. 641 Buchon*



*2. 1132 Buchon*



*3. 1137 Buchon*



*4. 985 Pismo*



*5. 663 Pismo/Chapek 1913*



*6. 657 Pismo/Chapek ca 1913*



*7. 481 Islay (later porch enclosure)*



*8. 572 Islay*

*With pyramidal dormer*



*9. 1035 Islay*



*10. 1045 Islay*

*With torii-inspired entry*



*11. 1160 Buchon*



*12. 1512 Santa Rosa*



*13. 1053 Islay/Akin 1909*



**II. Asymmetric pedimented window bay (17, or 30%)**



14. 578 Buchon/Esplin 1910



15. 1051 Buchon



16. 1165 Buchon



17. 1190 Buchon



18. 683 Pismo



19. 1005 Islay



20. 1035 Leff



21. 1606 Santa Rosa



22. 1504 Santa Rosa|1900



23. 1627 Santa Rosa



24. 1543 Morro



25. 1520 Morro (later porch enclosure)



26. 1428 Morro/Storz 1908



27. 1720 Morro (later second pediment and porch enclosure)

With pyramidal dormer



28. 1624 Santa Rosa (later enclosure)

*With pyramidal dormer*



*29. 972 Church*

*With second pediment*



*30. 1029 Islay*

**III. Symmetric pedimented porch (1, or 2%)**



*31. 533 Buchon/Lyman 1909*

**IV. Unpedimented full-width porch (3, or 5%)**

*With dormer*



*32. 1145 Buchon*



*33. 1151 Buchon*

*Without dormer*



*34. 1157 Buchon*

**V. Asymmetric and unpedimented with centered pyramidal dormer (11, or 20%)**



*35. 1171 Pismo*



*36. 1176 Buchon*



*37. 1011 Islay*



38. 1040 Islay



39. 1044 Islay



40. 1059 Leff/Wallis 1909



41. 1045 Leff



42. 1027 Leff



43. 1705 Santa Rosa (later porch enclosure)



44. 1512 Morro



45. 1535 Morro

**VI. Asymmetric and unpedimented without dormer (6, or 11%)**



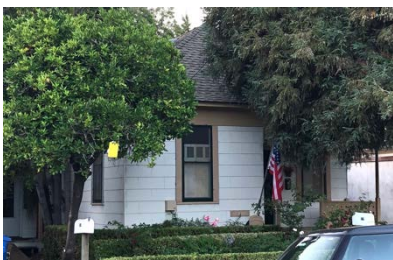
46. 880 Buchon/1904



47. 1042 Pismo (later porch enclosure)



48. 1527 Nipomo



49. 878 Islay



50. 1017 Islay/Truesdale '08



51. 1133 Pismo/1907

**VII. Asymmetric with *irimoya* roof (6, or 11%)**



*52a. 770 Islay (west façade)|  
Strickland 1904*



*52b. 770 Islay (south façade)*



*53. 870 Islay*



*54. 1542 Osos*



*55. 1533 Osos*



*56. 1529 Osos*



*57. 1535 Nipomo*

## The Brecheen House: Uniqueness and Importance



**Stripping of decorative, nonfunctional roof structures** The Brecheen House is one of only 6, or 11%, of Colonial Revival bungalows in the Old Town Historic District with neither pediment, dormer, nor *irimoya* gablet topping the roof. These decorative structures on the other 89% of bungalows normally exhibit even more interior complexity: e.g., 74% of the pediments in the data set have decorative wall shingling and 61%, attic windows or vents.

**Low roof pitch** The 57 Colonial Revival bungalows have roof pitches up to 40%. The absence of pediments and dormers allows the roofs of subtype 6 to be lower-pitched. Of their 6 roofs, 3 (figs. 46, 49, and 50) are within the normal range of pitch for the complete data set of 57, at 25–30%, but the other 3 (figs. 47, 48, and 51 [the Brecheen House]) are the lowest pitched for the complete data set, at only 12% pitch. This minimal-pitch subset represents 5% of the complete data set.

**Bellcast** Only 12, or 21%, of the the complete data set's roofs are bellcast. Of sybtype 6, all three of the high-pitch roofs are bellcast, but the Brecheen House has the only low-pitch bellcast roof, creating a unique effect, with the vanishing pitch at the eaves accentuating horizontality.

The pyramidal bellcast roof is clearly a Japanese aesthetic reference—a *hogyo* roof—in the context of increasing visual knowledge of Japanese architecture through Japanese entries in American World's Fairs. San Luis Obispo's *irimoya* roofs, a number of which are bellcast, also emphasize this origin (see the Hazzard and Minnie Root House at 770 Islay, figs. 52a and b; the Master List Strickland House at 1152 Buchon in the main application, the Contributing List Page House at 1344 Mill, and the Master List Payne House at 1144 Palm).

**Deep, soffited eaves** All but 5 of the 57 bungalows in the complete data set appear to have soffits or closed eaves, the exceptions including the overtly *japoniste* 1705 Santa Rosa (fig. 42, bellcast roof), 1535 Nipomo (fig. 56, *irimoya* roof), 770 Islay (figs. 51a. and b, *irimoya* and bellcast roof), and 1054 Islay (fig. 13, *torii*-inspired entry arch), all of which have exposed rafter tails, whether faux or not. In addition, 5 of the soffited houses have faux rafter tails attached to the soffits for decorative effect. Thus the Brecheen House is not particularly rare for the clean lines of its soffited eaves.

The Brecheen House is unique, however, for having the furthest extending eaves—in comparison to its clad wall height—among all 57 bungalows, accentuating its linear horizontality. The Brecheen house's eave-to-wall ratio is 1 to 4, compared to 1 to 4.5 for the data set's *irimoya* roofs, to as low as 1 to 7 for the more traditional Colonial Revival bungalows.



**Complex window geometry** One of the most unusual and skillfully designed features of the Brecheen House is its street façade windows, comprising a single window in the porch and triple window on the bay, the latter consisting of a central window identical in size and configuration to the porch window, flanked by windows of half the width and half the number of rectangular muntined lights. This achieves the balance of a semi-octagonal bay window but flush to the wall rather than protruding, to emphasize planarity. The muntined upper sashes are half the height of the lower plate-glass sashes, and all sashes are functioning, with meeting rails of the same height, emphasizing horizontal lines. Head and sill extend slightly to the side, a further subtle accentuation of horizontality.

This flush, triple-window arrangement is rare, its details unique. In the 57 bungalows, 22 (39%) of the windows on asymmetric bays are protruding semi-octagons, a common feature of Colonial Revival (though not of actual Colonial) houses. Another 17 (30%) are single sash windows, 9 (16%) double windows, and only 5 (9%) triple windows flush to the wall, as in the Brecheen House. The 4 symmetrical bungalows all have flush single or double windows.

The other 4 houses with—like the Brecheen House—flush triple windows treat them with dramatically less precision and creativity. 1042 Pismo (fig. 47) has no clear proportional relation between its central and side windows, the upper and lower sashes are the same height, and the porch window is obscured by subsequent enclosure, so any relationship is unclear. The triple window at 1051 Buchon (fig. 15) also lacks a clear proportion between center and sides, the bar across its nonfunctioning center window doesn't match the height of the meeting bars of the side sash windows, its double porch window doesn't echo elements of the triple window on the bay, and all the panes are plain plate glass.

The triple windows at 663 and 657 Pismo (figs. 5 and 6) do have side sashes half the width of the central sash, as with the Brecheen House, but in each case triple windows are merely duplicated in bay and porch, rather than the Brecheen House's creative echo of its single window on the porch in the center of its triple window on the bay. Decorative muntins at 663 Pismo and leading at 657 Pismo are reserved for the upper part of the nonfunctioning center windows, and the bars separating the decorative from the plate-glass sections (two-thirds up the window) are a different height than the meeting rails of the sashes (halfway up). Muntined diamond panes at 663 and leaded diamond-topped panes at 657 don't contribute horizontal linearity. They are not bad design, but they are—compared to the precise geometry of the Brecheen House fenestration—careless.



*The flush triple windows of 1051 Buchon (top left), 1042 Pismo (bottom left), and 657 Pismo (above) do not match the attention to proportion, rhythm, and continuity of the Brecheen House triple window (below).*



The Brecheen House's rectangular muntined lights are rare. 32 (56%) of the 57 bungalows have plain plate glass sash windows, 12 (21%) have diamond-topped vertical lights, and only 4 (7%) have rectangular lights. But the Brecheen lights are not random: they have an aesthetic function directly related to their form and proportions: nearly double in height to width, they almost exactly echo the proportions of the porch and central bay windows themselves, providing a subliminal geometric harmony.



Stacked double, twelve across, and repeated on the porch at six across, their effect is rhythmic horizontality. Compare the off-square lights in only the center window of 1042 Pismo, a perfunctory attempt at decoration with no thought to greater structural effect.

Taken together, the geometry of the windows on the Brecheen façade is varied but unified, aesthetically subtle but forceful, and entirely unique in its relentless attention to geometric

detail among the 57 Contributing List Colonial Revival bungalows—or for that matter the Master List Colonial Revival houses—in the Old Town Historic District.

**Invisible door** The Brecheen House hides its door by turning it to the side, one of only 7 (12%) in the complete data set that do so, leaving the singular window to center and dominate the porch wall, just as its twin centers and dominates the bay.

**Single column** All 57 bungalows have (or had) porch columns, ranging from a maximum of 8 to a minimum of 1. There are 43% with 2 columns, 23% with 3, and 14% with 4 columns. Only 9% have a single-column design, and in the 4 cases apart from the Brecheen House, the single-columned porch is a minimal entry porch rather than, as with the Brecheen House, a wide porch for sitting.



*Brecheen porch*



*1044 Islay, one of two single-column duplex entries*



*1533 Osos entry porch*

The Brecheen porch's single, slightly bulging Tuscan column has a triple function: to express (1) minimalism and (2) counterpoint and (3) not block the view of the aesthetically crucial porch window and its relationship to the center window on the bay.

59% of the data set use Tuscan columns, but it's nonetheless an intentional choice of the Brecheen designer: projecting, like the bellcast roof, a combined linearity and curvilinearity, along with Neoclassical reference that was considered compatible with *Japonisme* (e.g., 1053 Islay [fig. 13] uses square columns with Tuscan base and capital to form a Japanese *torii*-inspired entry arch). Of the 6 bungalows of the Brecheen subtype 6, 3 use Tuscan columns; 2, busier spindle columns; and 1, plain 4x4 posts. 12 (21%) of the bungalows in the overall data set use spindle columns, and 12 use the square columns better known on contemporary Craftsman houses, some of them in elephant leg form. Of these, the Tuscan column is clearly the apposite choice for the Brecheen House.

**Solid parapet** Like 38 (67%) of examples of the data set, the Brecheen House has a solid porch parapet rather than an open balustrade (15, or 26%) (others, altered, are unknown). So the solid parapet is not rare but is still an architectural choice that enhances linearity, horizontality, and streamlining.





**Frieze, architrave, corner boards, and baseboard** Key to the house’s streamlined effect is the linearity and unity of its wide accent boards against the narrow novelty siding.

A blank frieze below the eaves occurs in 43 (75%) of the data set. 37 (68%) have defined corner boards, and 39% have defined boards for the base of the wood wall. Very rare, however, is a façade-wide architrave below the frieze: the Brecheen House is one of only 6 (11%) that have them, 3 of these from subtype 6.



As well, the Brecheen House is 1 of only 2 bungalows employing frieze, architrave, base, *and* corner board. The other is Charles Strickland’s 1904 *japoniste* Colonial Revival Hazzard and Minnie Root House at 770 Islay (figs. 52a and b), a forerunner to Strickland’s own 1906–1907 *japoniste* Colonial Revival Master List house at 1152 Buchon. The Root House, like the Brecheen House, is a strong candidate for Master Listing, though with less integrity than the Brecheen House because of new fenestration.

The Brecheen House’s unique innovation is to use the same width of board for architrave, corner boards, and base to create a unifying and streamlining frame for street and side façades. The window casings also use the same width, further accentuating the unity.

**Integrity** No example of the Brecheen House’s subtype 6—the pedimentless and dormerless bungalow—is on the Old Town Historic District’s Master List. Of the 6 possible Contributing List candidates, 1042 Pismo had its porch enclosed in the 1930s or ’40s, 880 Buchon has had a deck added to the front, 1527 Pismo has new fenestration on its façade, and 1017 Islay has an overtopping stucco addition that has subsumed part of the original house. There is evidence that 878 Islay was moved from a different location, and has an addition on the side. Of the 6 of subtype 6, the Brecheen House is not only the best-

designed example, in its original location and with an addition conforming to the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation—at the rear, differentiated, and compatible in materials; features; size, scale, and proportion; and massing—it retains the best integrity to communicate its significance.

**Conclusion**

Analyzing the complete data set of 57 Old Town Historic District Contributing List Colonial Revival bungalows allows us to define what is unique and important in the Brecheen House. As Mies said, “God is in the details.” The anonymous designer of the Brecheen House had a keen sense of the streamlined aesthetic goal of the Colonial Revival and the potential of the small suburban bungalow within that genre. But the designer also had the extraordinary command of rare and unique structural and decorative detail—from roof pitch to corner board width—to make sure the result would demonstrate, as Mies also said, “Less is more.”

The Contributing List and Master List data sets, in juxtaposition, also demonstrate that admission to the Old Town Historic District’s Master List was largely a matter of size, abundance of decorative features, and proximity to Nob Hill. The Brecheen House—as the distillation of streamline Colonial bungalow architecture at the opposite end of the district—was destined to be excluded. It may be the finest but is not the only bungalow that merits Master List protection for embodying a character-defining style of San Luis architecture. After forty years, we need to take a more systematic look.



*The 1907 Brecheen House may have been influenced by Prairie style aesthetics (as displayed in the 1912 Airplane House below), but Purcell and Elmslie may equally have borrowed from the bellcast roof, deep eaves, and clustered windows of japoniste Streamline Colonial*





April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Dear San Luis Obispo City Council Members, Cultural Heritage Committee Members, and Community Development Staff,

**RE: Mills Act application for 1133 Pismo Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 (Also known as Brecheen House)**

Our names are Christopher and Heidi Frago. We are the owners of 1133 Pismo Street (also known as the Brecheen House). This home is located in the Old Town Historic District and was built in or around 1905. This is our primary residence which we are applying the Mills Act for. This property is on the Master List Historic Resources (recently added to the Master List, see attachment). We are making every effort to preserve the historical character of this house. This involves renovation and maintenance while bringing it up to modern standards of construction and safety.

This application for the Mills Act is for the maintenance and improvement of his historical dwelling.

Here are projects anticipated to complete over the course of the ten year contract in rough order of priority.

1. Replace roof, which are nearing the end of its useful life.
2. Fix/Replace dryrot issues.
3. Repaint exteriors and interiors and maintain.
4. Maintain the historical look including the existing windows
5. Improve foundation as needed.

Landscaping will need improvement and need maintenance.

The items above are what we propose to work on within the next 10 years. They will not all occur at the same time as they need to be performed in a methodical order which makes sense (construction speaking).

This history of this beautiful 120-year-old home was thoroughly researched by Mr. James Papp. Please refer to the attached Master-List Application documents as well as the addendum to this.

In addition to the exterior, we will maintain interior characteristics such as the crown moldings, doors of the era, light fixtures, wainscotings, etc. It is our goal to maintain the integrity of the house as much as possible.



We are asking you to consider the fact that it is more costly to maintain/restore than to replace with modern style material. These items are not easy to find and often times it must be made by a skilled craftsman which tends to have a significant higher cost due to the time and detailed work it requires.

We are more than happy to meet with any of the officials and walk through the property to point out the areas needing work and also to discuss the historical aspects as well.

We thank you for your time and are hopeful we can have an amicable agreement.

Respectfully,

Christopher and Heidi Frago

x  4-21-2024  
x  4-21-2024