

24 Dec. 2025

Dear Eva,

I'm responding to your 23 Dec. 2025 queries in a document, in case you consider it useful to attach to the Master List application as an addendum.

Query 1. The residence appears to have had significant changes since the original home was built. The change to the roofline, addition of triplet windows below the roof pitch, and removal of detailing appears to drastically alter the character of the residence. My understanding based on your report is that Eastlake architecture is known for its ornate detailing, much of which appears to have been lost when the roof was altered and the horizontal frieze features were removed. The wide and low roof pitch also seems to conflict with provided examples of Eastlake architecture. Could you provide more details as to how the residence communicates its significance without the Eastlake ornamental elements and with a completely altered roofline.

I address the replacement of the roof and the loss of specific decorative features and their impact on integrity of design, materials, and workmanship on pp. 53–55 of the Master List application, both in terms of the McCabe House itself and in the universe of other Master List/Landmark double-bay-front Eastlake cottages in San Luis Obispo.

Let me reiterate here that what is key in evaluating integrity is to keep one's eyes on the prize: Any losses of integrity are not abstract but are based on the resource's ability to *convey its significance*, in this case the extraordinary significance of a specifically regional form—the double-bay-front Eastlake cottage with interstitial sitting porch—and a more widely distributed but, in contrast, locally rare form—pierced columns.

It is also important to emphasize that this is the first time the Goldtree-McCaffrey Building, Lewin House, Dana-Barneberg House, and McCabe House—four houses of the same form and decorative palette—have been connected to a single architectural style and related to examples and architectural trends outside of San Luis Obispo. The city's current version of the Goldtree-McCaffrey Building is that it is Italianate (probably based on its corbels, though these are the smaller and less elaborate corbels common to Eastlake architecture); Lewin House, that it “has Carpenter Gothic influence” (the common default in the Historic Resources Survey for every gable that approaches an acute angle); Dana-Barneberg House, that it is “Victorian vernacular (“vernacular” being a semi-expert placeholder for “I don't know” and a definitional impossibility where outside influences and materials are present); and McCabe House, that it is, as you point out, Colonial with Queen Anne influences. These can't all be true. In fact, none of them is true. But positing these styles was necessary because of the denial of the existence of Eastlake—their actual style based on empirical data and the dominant late-nineteenth-century California architecture.

Finally, unlike the vast majority of Master List buildings, we have a high-resolution early photograph to facilitate understanding of the property and detailed comparisons of current integrity and to serve as documentation for Restoration to Secretary of the Interior Standards. In the vast majority of cases in San Luis Obispo, buildings have been listed with

limited understanding of their architectures, only speculation as to what they originally looked like, and no documentation to restore them.

With all of that said, had either the double-bay front or the pierced columns been lost, the McCabe House would no longer have been able to communicate its significance. The altered roof, however, is not crucial to understanding either of these rare and important elements. The roof does not, per se, “conflict” with Eastlake examples; 519 Brinckerhoff (p. 29 of the application) has a similar full-width front gable; but that is irrelevant. It is clearly non-original in design, materials, and workmanship. But it does not prevent the double-bay-front Eastlake form and pierced columns from conveying their significance to the scholar or the casual viewer.

If the purpose of the Master List is to preserve and convey important information about unusually significant people, events, and architectures of the past, then the McCabe House is a crucial addition. If the Master List is a beauty contest, maybe not.

The original side-gable-center-gable roof façade is one of the characteristic roof types of the double-bay-front Eastlake form—which includes double-gable on hip (1905 Vine, Paso Robles) and double-gable on full-width front-facing gable (519 Brinckerhoff, Santa Barbara) and possibly others yet undiscovered. But the Cultural Heritage Committee and City Council have concluded over a span of four decades, with each of the city’s other three double-bay-front Eastlake cottages, that significant alteration in the roof—including loss of ridge-cresting (Dana-Barneberg), change in roof configuration (Lewin), and even the addition of a second story (Goldtree-McCaffrey)—does not so undermine the ability of the form to convey its significance as to disqualify it from Master List protection. This was so even before the buildings’ relation as a subtype or their exceeding rarity and regional significance was brought to light.

Many Eastlake houses have highly elaborate decoration, and many do not, as you see from my photographic examples. The elaborate ones, like Samuel and Joseph Cather Newsom’s Carson Mansion (1884–1886), have impressed themselves on the public consciousness, but the less elaborate ones are no less Eastlake. As the Newsoms themselves advertised, “The degree of ornamentation will be governed, more or less, by the size of the builder’s purse” (*Picturesque and Artistic Homes and Buildings of California* [San Francisco: 1890], p. 24). It is the *geometric nature* of their decoration, in combination with Eastlake forms like square bays or in this case the double-bay front, that is character-defining. As you see from the early photograph of the McCabe House, its decoration was originally restrained, as was the decoration on the other examples from the Central Coast.

The Swiss Revival decoration associated with the gablet (gable bracket, finial, lobed bargeboard, vertical plank decoration—which are fairly common Swiss features borrowed for Eastlake gablets) is gone, but their loss does not prevent the house from conveying its significance as a rare double-bay-front Eastlake form or the pierced columns from conveying their significance.

The Swiss Revival decoration, with its associated side gables and gablet, is technically reproducible to Secretary of the Interior Standards, though it seems unlikely to be so reproduced any time soon—if more likely than the removal of the top floor of the Goldtree-

McCaffrey Building and the restoration of its original roof. (A surprising number of buildings in town, however, have had their top floors removed).

Some characteristically Eastlake decorative features, like the 2 porch rails and 18 window crown and base panels, remain intact. Others, like the frieze screen, 10 corbels, and associated molding can be reproduced to SOI Standards.

The key (though non-Eastlake) decorative elements are the two pierced columns, most of whose interior fretwork remains and the remainder of which can be reproduced to SOI Standards, as can the porch balusters and their fretwork faux corbels.

It is the intent of my clients to undertake extensive restoration of decorative features and the intent of the Mills Act to facilitate such restoration, and Master Listing is necessary for Mills Act.

Query 2. The City's Historic file indicates the predominant architectural style of the residence at 571 Pismo is Colonial with Queen Anne influences. Can you please identify the discrepancy between the two evaluations? What features of the residence, besides the pierced columns and sitting porch make the residence stand out as Eastlake Architecture? Additionally, why would it have previously been considered Colonial style with Queen Anne features?

My HRE on the McCabe House is chiefly devoted to the discrepancy you mention, which arises from Vincent Scully's erasure of Eastlake architecture—the dominant late-nineteenth-century style of the West—from the American architectural canon.

Remember that San Luis Obispo's Historic Resources Survey was done in 1982—1983 when American preservation scholarship was still in its nascence. Serious architectural histories (like Henry-Russell Hitchcock's 1958 *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* and Burchard and Bush-Brown's 1961 *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History*) had hitherto focused on large public buildings rather than small private houses, large cities rather than small towns, major architects rather than popular movements, academic rather than popular styles, and the East Coast rather than the West. Even such an apogee of wood design as the Carson Mansion in Eureka, an Eastlake masterpiece by Newsom and Newsom, who simultaneously advertised their expertise in the Eastlake form, was referenced only to point out that masonry buildings by East Coast architects were "by any absolute standard ... superior" (Burchard and Bush-Brown, p. 267), ignoring any explication of what absolute standard that might be. That there was a widely popular and sophisticated form of architecture called Eastlake goes unmentioned in both these massive studies.

The growing academic exploration of long-ignored popular and domestic architecture, for which Yale architectural historian Vincent Scully deserves some credit, had the unfortunate side effect of the invention of "styles" that nineteenth-century architects and builders never recognized in their own era ("Shingle" and "Stick") and denial of styles that those architects and builders knew themselves to be practicing (Swiss Revival and Eastlake). This was entirely Scully's doing, but such was the paucity of knowledge and his academic prestige that this rewriting of architectural history was swallowed by most of the authors of taxonomic guides on which community surveyors, city planners, journalists, and even subsequent generations of architectural historians would come to depend.

By the time of San Luis Obispo's survey (the photographs were taken in 1982, the analysis done in 1983), some general taxonomic books—like Poppeliers, Chambers, and Schwartz's *What Style Is It? A Guide to American Architecture* (Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1977), Blumenson's *Identifying American Architecture* (New York: Norton, 1977), Foley's *The American House* (New York: Harper, 1980), and Rifkind's *A Field Guide to American Architecture* (New York: Times Mirror, 1980)—had already been published; others—like Virginia McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1984) and Woodbridge's *California Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle, 1988)—were yet to come. Blumenson includes Eastlake; Poppeliers *et al.*, not; Foley has a brief but good discussion of Eastlake in her chapter "Mansardic and Stick Styles"; Rifkind acknowledges it only as a commercial style, though including an elevation of a clearly Eastlake house for which he invents the term "Carpenter Queen Anne."

But it is unclear which of these books San Luis Obispo's surveyors had access to, if any. They were offered two three-day seminars on local and California architecture (sixteen classroom hours and two field sessions) and two two-day classes on historical research (eight classroom hours), with five hours of weekly assignments during the subsequent two months (Cindy Lambert, "Saving San Luis Obispo County's Identity with Preservation Efforts," *La Vista*, 2015, p. 59; S. E. Seager, "Architecture Class Offered," *Telegram-Tribune*, 12 Jan. 1983, p. B-1). There appears to have been no professional architectural historians involved in the survey itself or in its vetting.

Some of the attributions of architectural style and form in the survey are reliable, but most show completely understandable gaps in knowledge that make the majority of attributions—attributions that have persisted in the city's records and online material—inaccurate, such as the tendency to attribute no architectural style to adobes; refer to Colonial Bungalows as Neoclassic rowhouses; confuse Mission Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Mediterranean; conflate Art Deco and Streamline Moderne; consistently overlook Prairie School (though attribute our one Usonian building to Prairie School because it's by Frank Lloyd Wright, despite its dating from a full half century after he finished designing Prairie buildings); call any wood building with a near-acute gable Carpenter Gothic, regardless of date, while missing actual Gothic Revival; call any building with deep eaves Craftsman, also regardless of date or design; claim buildings mix multiple styles; and so on. (The surveyors were rarely aware of dates of construction and almost never of architects.)

Notably, as far as I can tell, no building in the survey is described as Eastlake, despite Eastlake's dominance as a California architectural style in the late nineteenth century (e.g., the 1,687 mentions of the term "Eastlake cottage" during 1881–1900 in California newspapers compared to 245 in the rest of the United States in the Newspapers.com database [see following page]), and despite the large number of Eastlake houses in San Luis, consistent with the period of the city's expansion.

Newspapers.com database search (search performed on 18 Oct. 2024)

	1881–1900	1901–1905	1906–1910
“Eastlake cottage,” California	1,687	507	139
“Eastlake cottage,” rest of US	245	2	3
“Queen Anne cottage,” California	458	202	705
“Queen Anne cottage,” rest of US	12,086	3,016	3,827



The McCabe House’s specific attribution of “Colonial with Queen Anne influences” appears to be inspired by the replacement of its roof with a California Bungalow full-width chalet-style gable, which the surveyors must have thought original. The survey describes the Contributing List 1914 George Andrews House at 1307 Mill (above center), a California Bungalow with just such a gable (as well as other California Bungalow characteristics like knee brackets), as a “Colonial Revival residence.” The Master List Weill House at 2132 Harris (above left, date unknown)—a full-width-front porch Italianate cottage (with Italianate columns and Italianate door, etc.), whose roof, like the McCabe House (above right), has been replaced in chalet style, presumably also during the California Bungalow period—is described as “single-story wood frame with Colonial Revival overtone.” Apparently, someone confused full-width chalet roofs with open gables for the asymmetric closed gables characteristic of Colonial Bungalows

The pierced columns, as I point out in the HRE, are *not* characteristically Eastlake, which adds to the building’s rarity.

The double-bay-front form with square bays is the stand-out Eastlake feature in form and massing (Italianate and Colonial Revival normally have canted bays, Queen Anne round or canted bays; Greek Revival and Italianate cottages normally have full-width porches and no bays; and Renaissance Revival cottages normally have entry rather than sitting porches). Other characteristic features include the previously mentioned surviving porch rails (Greek Revival and Italianate cottages tend to have columns without balustrades) and 18 crown and base panels (these can be found in earlier Italianate architecture but are not characteristic of contemporary Queen Anne or Swiss, Colonial, Renaissance, or Elizabethan Revivals) and absent but SOI Standards–reproducible frieze screen and 10 corbels (Italianate corbels are larger and more elaborate, while frieze screens are virtually never employed in any but Eastlake houses). The original gablet was Eastlake but its gable bracket and finial, lobed bargeboard, and vertical gable planking were Swiss Revival, though this was a fairly common Eastlake borrowing.

I hope this clarifies the significant formal and decorative features of the McCabe House, the specific nature of integrity in relation to conveying their significance, the nature of Eastlake decorative features and their extant and restorable extent on the McCabe House, and the discrepancies of architectural styles as attributed in the 1982–1983 Historic Resources Survey and subsequent documents. Let me know if you have any other questions.

If you can get an hour or two off work, it might be helpful—and save time in the future—to accompany me and Coco on a walk-through of the major historic districts to identify styles in situ and in comparison, with observations on what has been changed. Others would be welcome to join us—though I wouldn't want it to become a scheduling nightmare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J Papp".

James Papp, PhD
Historian and Architectural Historian
City and County of San Luis Obispo