

**1720 Morro Street**  
**Historic Resource Evaluation & Application to Remove from the Contributing List**



### **Summary Conclusion**

1720 Morro Street, added to the Contributing List in 1987, was, when built, an example of 1 of 2 closely related subtypes represented by 28 Contributing List Colonial Revival bungalows in the Old Town Historic District. Their character-defining features are (1) a hip roof whose ridge runs perpendicular to the street, giving a pyramidal appearance from the front, and (2) an asymmetric façade with a porch on one side and windowed bay on the other, with (3) a pediment (closed gable) above porch or bay.

In 27 of those 28 listed bungalows, the roof is in its original form, in 23 cases bare and in 4 cases with a small dormer in the form of an attic vent or light. In 27 of those 28 bungalows, the bay is in its original form, with its original window or windows. In 22 of those 28 bungalows, the porch is in its original form, unenclosed, and in a further 4, the primarily glass enclosure continues to communicate that it is a porch rather than an integrated part of the house.

In this high average of integrity for the two subtypes, 1720 Morro Street is the singular exception:

- Oversized, pedimented front- and south-facing dormers have been added to its roof, forming a habitable half story but altering the façade and profile of the character-defining pyramidal roof
- The original window of the character-defining bay was replaced by a huge stained glass window with a structural canopy above. The stained glass window has been returned to the previous owner, but lack of documentation of the original window renders reconstruction to Secretary of the Interior Standards impossible.

- In 2017, the character-defining porch was enclosed with a wall and window, so it is no longer apparent it ever was a porch
- In addition to the loss or major alteration of all three character-defining features of the street façade, the rear and side façades have been altered by various eras of expedient pushouts, enclosures, and added and removed fenestration, such that, among the chronological clutter, only two windows in the entire house—both on the south façade, separated by a stained glass window that was added and later removed—appear to be original.

In short, loss of 4 of the 7 Aspects of Integrity—**design, workmanship, and materials** of the street façade and all secondary façades, and the resultant **feeling** into which these three aspects of integrity aggregate—has been so global and severe that 1720 Morro’s exterior no longer communicates the streamlined and open nature of its original Colonial Revival architecture or its consistency with the other 27 examples of the subtype in the district. It is not eligible for historic resource listing, as it does not “exhibit a high level of historic integrity” (14.01.070 Evaluation Criteria for Historic Resource Listing, San Luis Obispo Historic Preservation Ordinance) and has not “maintained enough of its historic character or appearance to be recognizable as a historic resource and to convey the reason(s) for its significance” (14.01.070.C.1). It should be removed from the Contributing List in order to preserve the integrity of that list.

Fortunately, at least 22, at most 26, of the other 27 Contributing List examples of this subtype of Colonial Revival architecture in the Old Town Historic District do retain the high level of historic integrity to communicate their significance and remain eligible for the list.

*Submitted by James Papp, PhD, historian and architectural historian, SOI Professional Qualification Standards, on behalf of Niels and Bimmer Udsen, Max Udsen and Malina Wiebe*

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## Chronology of 1720 Morro Street

- 1903–1908 The William J. Morris family is documented living at 1720 Morro Street.<sup>1</sup>
- 1906 A photograph from Terrace Hill records the roof of 1720 Morro with roof cresting above the pediment gable but without dormers, consistent with contemporary Colonial Revival bungalows with pyramidal roofs and pedimented bays or pedimented porches in the immediate area.
- 1917 Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kinney move to 1720 Morro from British Columbia.<sup>2</sup>
- 1918 Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Mangless are living at 1720 Morro.<sup>3</sup>
- 1925–1927 Mr. and Mrs. Harry Eker are living at 1720 Morro.<sup>4</sup>
- 1933 Mr. and Mrs. F. D. Silva move to 1720 Morro.<sup>5</sup>
- 1936 Eric Luttropp is living at 1720 Morro.<sup>6</sup>
- 1941 Corp. Rolly C. Platte is living at 1720 Morro.<sup>7</sup>
- 1942 Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Fischer are living at 1720 Morro.<sup>8</sup>
- 1949 The street-facing dormer window appears clearly in an aerial photograph.
- 1954 Mr. and Mrs. Marvin C. Adams are living at 1720 Morro.<sup>9</sup>
- 1956 Mr. and Mrs. Jack Hubbs are living at 1720 Morro.<sup>10</sup>
- 1968 Edward Stanley Salas owns and is living at 1720 Morro and adds a section of back porch.<sup>11</sup>
- 1969 Earl Wayne Stanley, a college student arrested for possession for sale of marijuana, is living at 1720 Morro.<sup>12</sup>
- 1975 W. L. Davidson owns 1720 Morro and receives a permit for a bedroom addition (1720 Morro Address File).

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1. "Personal Mention," *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 28 Mar. 1903, p. 4; "Births, Deaths, Marriages: MARTIN," *Daily Telegram*, 20 June 1908, p. 1.

2. "Chooses This City," *Daily Telegram*, 14 Feb. 1917, p. 5.

3. "Local News Notes: To Valley," *Daily Telegram*, 27 Aug. 1918, p. 5.

4. *Daily Telegram*: "Jewell Eker Dies at Fillmore," 27 July 1925, p. 4; "Sunday School Fetes Teacher," 3 Sep. 1927, p. 3.

5. "To Valley," *Daily Telegram*, 27 Aug. 1918, p. 5.

6. "About Town," *San Luis Obispo Daily Telegram*, 1 May 1933, p. 2.

7. "Around the Town," *San Luis Obispo Daily Telegram*, 27 Aug. 1936, p. 8.

8. *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*: "Churches: Zion English Lutheran, 25 Apr. 1942, p. 3; "Honor Fischers on

Golden Anniversary," 26 Oct. 1943, p. 2.

9. "SLO County Men in Service," *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*, 24 June 1954, p. 4.

10. "18 Babies Make Their Debuts, Only Seven of Them Are Boys," *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*, 19 June 1956, p. 4.

11. "Christmas Party Ends with Crash," *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*, 20 Dec. 1968, p. 2; 1720 Morro Address File, Community Development Department.

12. "Marijuana Suspects Arrested," *Arroyo Grande Valley Herald-Recorder*, 29 May 1969, . p. 13.

- 1982 1720 Morro is recorded by Chuck Crotser in the Historic Resources Survey, including both dormers and the stained glass window and canopy on the bay (*ibid.*).
- 1983 The Old Town Historic District is created.
- 1986 1720 Morro Street is assessed by R. Wall (*ibid.*)
- 1987 Added to the Contributing List.<sup>13</sup>
- 2017 Construction of the front porch enclosure is recorded in a Google Map street view.

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13. 1720 Morro, Historic Preservation Program Guidelines.

## Historic Context

The Colonial Revival style in architecture began during the interest and excitement around the first American centennial. The legendary genesis was an 1877 sketching expedition of Colonial architecture in Marblehead, Salem, and Newburyport, MA and Portsmouth, NH by William Bigelow, Charles McKim, William Mead, and Stanford White, but *Harper's* in 1875 had already published illustrated articles on Colonial towns, whose old buildings were part of the attraction of the new oceanside resorts.<sup>14</sup> In January 1875, the journal *New York Sketchbook of Architecture*, in the first mechanical reproduction of a photograph of an American building, had published a view (below) of the shingled rear addition to Bishop Berkeley's clapboard house, White Hall, part of a series of photographs of Colonial Newport, RI buildings that McKim had commissioned from William James Stillman in 1874.



Shortly after the 1877 sketching party, the firm of McKim, Mead, and Bigelow became McKim, Mead, and White. It would dominate experimentation in Colonial Revival architecture, both in the Shingle style and clapboard variant, the latter of which Virginia and Lee McAlester, in their *Field Guide to American Houses*, call “asymmetrical form with superimposed Colonial details” but I will refer to as Streamline Colonial, a term that captures its consistent modernizing aesthetic, including in examples that are quite often symmetric.

McKim, Mead, and White catered to the plutocratic class of New York and New England, but by the 1890s, the patriotic style was being adapted by architects and builders for the nation's developing suburbs. High-Peaked Colonial Revival was a 1½-story San Francisco Bay Area variant, tucked into narrow suburban lots, of which the best San Luis example is the LeRoy Smith House at the corner of Johnson and Mill, designed by Watsonville- and later Palo Alto-based architect William H. Weeks, who also designed the high school, Carnegie Library, first two buildings at Cal Poly, and Crocker and Marshall Houses.

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14. Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style*, revised edition [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971], p. 30, note 36.



Smith, who would later become director of Cal Poly, had money of his own. Others needed more modest accommodation.

One-story Colonial Revival bungalows would proliferate in Fremont Heights (later the Mill Street Historic District) and particularly in the Vineyard, La Vina, and surrounding tracts that would in 1983 be designated the Old Town Historic District.



*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.*



These one-story Streamline Colonial bungalows were built in San Luis Obispo in a half dozen common subtypes, with a few outlying subtypes of one or two examples. Some are clearly

Colonial clones from plans or pattern books, but others seem to be on-the-spot adaptations of a common vocabulary of expected features. The previously mentioned 27 Old Town Historic District Colonial Revival bungalows similar to 1720 Morro are only those of two closely-related subtypes on the Contributing List, with more examples on the Master List. The heyday of Streamline Colonial bungalows in San Luis was 1900–1913, which overlaps with the Prairie style and California Bungalow (aka, American Craftsman). But the Colonial Revival bungalow projects an East Coast rather than Midwest or West Coast aesthetic—except where it subsumed a *japoniste* aesthetic in a subtype with *irimoya* roofs. The extent to which that subtype exists outside of San Luis Obispo will require more research.

Streamline Colonial, Prairie style, and the California Bungalow—which all spread throughout the United States—were destined to be swept away immediately after World War I by Minimal Traditional revival styles, whose characteristic (and often impractical) shallow eaves, emphasized roofs, and limited windows appear to have been inspired by the work of English architect Sir Edwin Lutyens. Modernism and Mid-Century Modernism would hearken back to many of the precepts of the California Bungalow, Prairie, and Streamline Colonial in their treatment of linearity, horizontality, and shadow.



Left: W. H. Weeks' 1905–1906 Smith House. In the Bay Area, High-Peaked Colonial had its narrow end facing the street; here a corner lot allows a broad street façade. Above: Colonial portico and Japanese *irimoya* roof in the ca. 1906–1907 Strickland House, 1152 Buchon, one of two surviving *irimoya*-roofed Streamline Colonial bungalows built by contractor Charles Strickland.



# Contributing List Asymmetric Pedimented Colonial Revival Bungalows in the Old Town Historic District

## I. Asymmetric with pyramidal roof and pediment-topped porch



1. 641 Buchon



2. 1132 Buchon



3. 1137 Buchon



4. 985 Pismo



5. 663 Pismo|Chapek 1913



6. 657 Pismo|Chapek ca 1913



7. 1045 Islay

*Original pyramidal dormer*



8. 572 Islay

*Original pyramidal dormer*



9. 1035 Islay

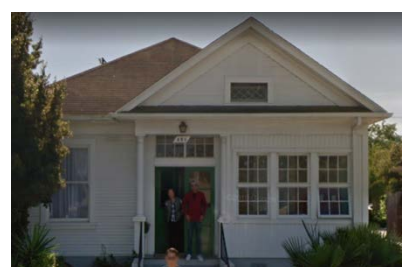
*Later porch enclosure*



10. 1512 Santa Rosa



11. 1160 Buchon



12. 481 Islay



## II. Asymmetric with pyramidal roof and pediment-topped window bay



13. 578 Buchon|Esplin 1910



14. 1051 Buchon



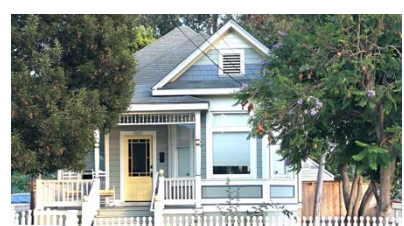
15. 1165 Buchon



16. 1190 Buchon



17. 683 Pismo



18. 1005 Islay



19. 1627 Santa Rosa



20. 1606 Santa Rosa



21. 1504 Santa Rosa|1900



22. 1428 Morro|Storz 1908



23. 1543 Morro

Later pedimented dormers

Altered bay fenestration

Later porch enclosure

Later porch enclosure



24. 1035 Leff



25. 1520 Morro



26. 1720 Morro

*Original pyramidal dormer*

*Later porch enclosure*



*27. 1624 Santa Rosa*

*Original pyramidal dormer*

*Later porch enclosure*



*28. 972 Church*

**Absence of Association with Historic Events or Persons**

No historic event at 1720 Morro Street is recorded in the contemporary press.

The chronology of 1720 Morro shows that it was primarily used as a rental property before 1972 (the fifty-year cut-off before which historic association would normally be considered), and no tenants occupied it for long enough to establish association. William J. Morris, the first known and probable original owner-occupant of the house, was, during his residence, a Southern Pacific engineer or boilermaker and did not have the leadership in his profession or the community that a historic figure requires under National Register Criteria.

**Period of Significance**

Given the absence of historic association, the significance of the primary dwelling at 1720 Morro Street is presumptively its embodiment of Colonial Revival bungalow architecture and thus the period of significance its date of construction, circa 1903.



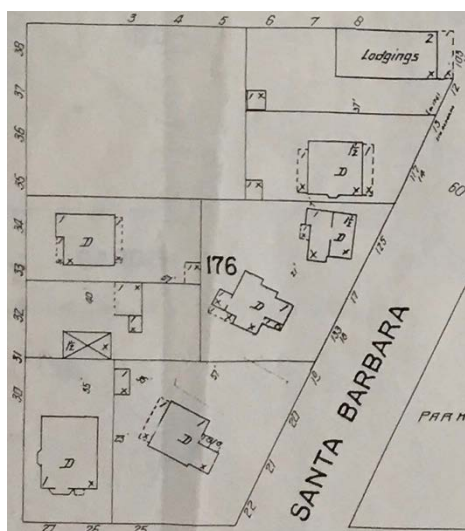
## Documentation of 1720 Morro Street, 1905–present

William J. Morris of Seattle, referred to as a new railroad engineer, subsequently boilermaker, for the Southern Pacific arrived in San Luis in early 1903. By late 1903 the Wm. J. Morris his residence was said to be on “southerly Morro Street.”<sup>15</sup> In 1908 the residence of Mrs. W. J. Morris was referred to as 1720 Morro, confirming the house as the same, i.e., on lot 5, block 176, in Cocke’s—later Graham’s—Addition.<sup>16</sup>

In a 1906 panoramic photograph of San Luis Obispo from Terrace Hill, 1720 Morro is visible beyond the Graham House and old Tribune Building (1789 and Santa Barbara Avenue), with the stable building of 1730 Morro to the south, south of that the Jones House facing Church Street (972), and nothing to the north.<sup>17</sup> The 1905 Sanborn Map confirms the placement.



Above: 1720 Morro’s roof appears behind trees at center rear of this 1906 detail from Terrace Hill. Center front are the 1885 Lozelle and Katie Graham House and the Tribune-Republic Building, moved to the site in 1905. The 1885 William and Lydia Graham House is at right. At left is the 1903 James and Alice Herron Jones House, with the stable at 1730 Morro behind it. 1720’s roof (below right) shows ridge cresting on its front gable but no dormers on the hip roof.



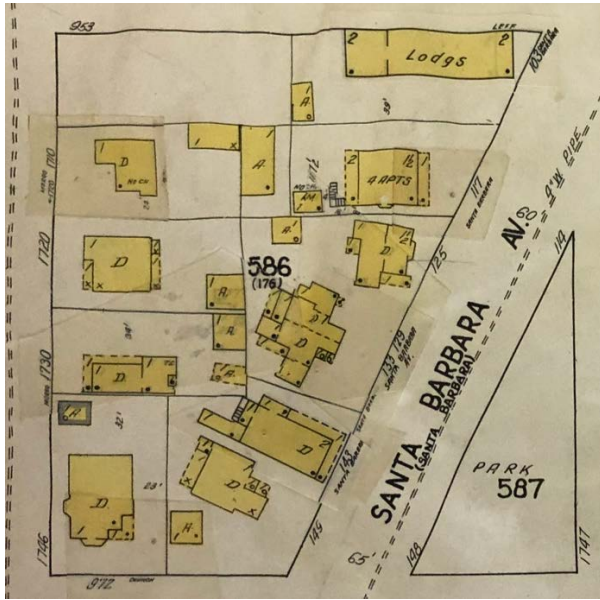
At left: 1905 Sanborn Map, with a faint outline where the Tribune-Republic Building will go, between the two Graham Houses at bottom right. 1720 Morro is the left topmost building. 1730 has a non-dwelling, possibly an open shed, and stable. The Jones House is at bottom left, the Chicago Hotel, now The Establishment, at top right.

15. *San Luis Obispo Tribune*: “Personal Mention,” 28 Mar. 1903, p. 4; “Native Missourian Dies,” 24 Nov. 1903, p. 4.

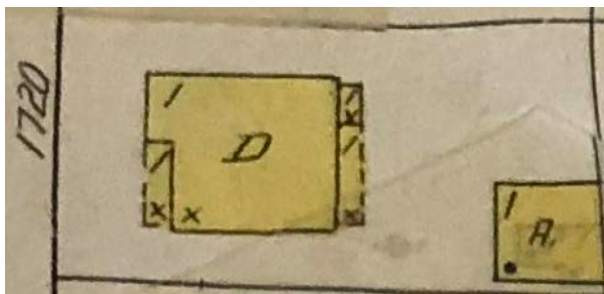
16. “Births, Deaths, Marriages: MARTIN,” *Daily Telegram*, 20 June 1908, p. 1.

17. “San Luis Obispo, panoramic view from Terrace Hill, 1907,” 168-1-b-01-35-01, San Luis Obispo County Regional Photograph Collection, Cal Poly Special Collections and Archives.





Above: 1926–1956 Sanborn Map, block 176 and Triangle Park, backlit to show alterations. 1720 Morro appears as it did on the 1905 map, with an asymmetric porch in front and full-width porch in back. Top right: 3 May 1965 aerial photo of block 176. Second from top right: 1720 from the 1 Jan. 1949 aerial photo, with a shadow showing the presence of the front dormer. Second from bottom right: 1720 from the 1965 aerial photo. Bottom right: Current Google Satellite view showing the front, south, and rear dormers. Below: 1720 from the 1926–1956 Sanborn Map.





*Above: 1720 Morro at the time of the 1982 Historic Resources Survey, when it was recorded with great detail and accuracy by Chuck Crotser, who did not make judgments on what was and was not original. The original window or windows on the bay had already been replaced with stained glass, the canopy above the window added, and the two dormers added, at different times, to the roof. Thirty-five years later, the porch would be enclosed and the mullioned porch window, noted by Crotser, would be destroyed or obscured from view, with one and a half of the elephant leg columns disappearing and the remainder being fluted on their street side. Below: the 2017 Google Map street view shows construction in progress on the enclosure of the front porch to the right, with a modern window added.*







*Above: enclosed front porch, revealing no clue as to the original function. Below left: likely original door with later glazing. Below right: Later falsely historicist French door leading to deck, north façade.*





*Above: later pushout, in part possibly dating before 1965, with modern bay window, north façade.  
Below: The north façade pediment gable, with original diamond and scalloped wall shingle, altered by the insertion of a later window to make the attic habitable. The chimney is also a later addition.*







*Above: the rear of the house, with a Postmodern dormer looming over a full-width ground-floor addition that is probably an enclosure of the original porch, extended on both sides, on the right before 1965 and the left in 1968, the latter according to one of the few extant permits connected to the house in the city's address file. Enclosure to the right may have included a 1936 permitted bathroom (City of San Luis Obispo Historic Building Permit Collection, Cal Poly Special Collections and Archives). Below: South façade, showing the house's only two surviving original windows, plus the boarding up of an added but subsequently removed stained glass window between.*







*Street view of the street and south façades shows how the two added dormers and enclosure of the porch have completely changed the profile and fabric of the house for the public. The half-columns on either side of the front door and the window and shiplap at lower center are the only original design, materials, or workmanship visible.*

1720 Morro was first described by Chuck Crotser in the 1982 Historic Resources Survey, where he was scrupulous in detail but did not speculate on the age or originality of the various elements of the house. In 1986 a one-page report signed by R. Wall noted that the stained glass window and canopy on the bay were not original but “add to the beauty of this home” and opined, incorrectly, that “their addition does not constitute an irreversible change to the façade” (1720 Morro Address File, Community Development Department). The loss of the original windows and the lack of documentation to reconstruct them to Secretary of the Interior Standards do constitute an irreversible change.

The report inaccurately accepted the dormers as original with stick elements. It emphasized the transitional significance of the ten-over-one porch window and the elephant leg columns, which have both subsequently been lost. The “beauty and unusual features” that the report concluded would “assure its position as an important part of the Old Town Historic District” were either not original or transitory.

The property was added to the Contributing List in 1987.

## Loss of Integrity for 1720 Morro to Communicate Its Significance

1720 Morro Street is in the same **location** as when it was built. The suburban **setting** is adequately consistent: The house was the first on the 1700 block of Morro, and apart from the Jones House at 972 Church Street, the buildings that flank and face it all postdate 1720 Morro's construction. But the area had been subdivided for suburban development, and a number of pre-existing buildings on block 176, facing Santa Barbara Avenue (The Establishment [Chicago Hotel], the Tribune-Republic Building, the two Graham Houses, and the Jones House) still survive. **Association** is not relevant here, as no link between the property and a historic person or event can be found.



*Street façade: only the shingle-faced pediment above the bay, the small amount of remaining shiplap on the bay, and the flanking door columns and door (apart from its glass) are original; the rest is falsely historicist alteration and addition*

The loss of integrity is found in **design, materials, workmanship**, and the **feeling** that is the aggregate of these qualities and setting.

The changes include, on the street façade:

- addition of an oversize front-facing dormer by 1949 and south-facing pedimented dormer between 1965 and 1982
- enclosure of the front porch in 2017, so that it no longer communicates having been a porch, loss of one and a half porch columns, and addition of falsely historicist fluting on the one and a half columns remaining

- replacement of the fenestration in the pedimented bay with a large stained glass window, which itself was removed in 2022, with no documentation to allow reconstruction to Secretary of the Interior Standards
- structural canopy over the bay's windows
- non-period glass in the original door

on the north façade:

- pushout with modern bay window, attached to the enclosure of the back porch
- falsely historicist French door leading to a late-twentieth-century deck
- insertion of an ahistoric sash window into the pediment

on the south façade:

- installation of a stained glass window (now removed and the space boarded up) between the only two original windows of the house
- installation of the previously mentioned oversize south-facing dormer

on the rear façade:

- apparent enclosure and extension of the full-width back porch with variable wall and windows, topped by a monumental Postmodern dormer

It is possible—with expert knowledge of the Colonial Revival bungalow subtype that 1720 Morro originally embodied, along with early photographic documentation—to imagine what the house looked like in its period of significance. But it no longer communicates what it looked like to the ordinary observer on the street, for whom historic preservation is intended. The false historicism of its dormers, French and bay windows, fluted columns, and modern shiplap siding violate Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and may mislead both amateur and expert. It certainly misled those who placed the house on the Contributing List in 1987.

## **Conclusion**

1720 Morro having been redesigned for interior accommodation, the exterior effect is cluttered and jarring, the opposite of the streamlining that made clapboard Colonial Revival bungalows historically significant. There is no façade, least of all the street façade, that predominately communicates the original design, materials, workmanship, or feeling of the house. The house's lack of integrity to communicate its significance makes it ineligible for listing under the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance, which requires a historic resource to "exhibit a high level of historic integrity" and to have "maintained enough of its historic character or appearance to be recognizable as a historic resource and to convey the reason(s) for its significance." There is insufficient documentation for reconstruction to Secretary of the Interior Standards, even if the city had the power to require such reconstruction. Removal from the Contributing List is the only reasonable solution.

Fortunately, the vast majority of the 28 examples of the two subtypes of asymmetric, pedimented Colonial Revival bungalows on the Contributing List in the Old Town Historic District exhibit a high level of integrity. The removal of 1720 Morro Street from the Contributing List will give the list as a whole more validity.