



NORTH VENTURA COORDINATED AREA PLAN WORKING GROUP AGENDA

Tuesday, September 24, 2019

Downtown Library – El Camino Room
270 Forest Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301
5:30 PM TO 8:30 PM

Call to Order: 5:30 PM

1. Welcome and Housekeeping
2. Oral Communications

Discussion Items: 6:05 PM*

1. Selection of NVCAP Working Group Cochairs
2. Next steps in designing project alternatives

Oral Communications: 8:15 PM

Wrap Up & Adjournment: 8:30 PM

Future Meeting/Workshops:

*Listed times are estimates.



**NORTH VENTURA COORDINATED AREA PLAN
NVCAP WORKING GROUP MEETING
Tuesday, September 24, 2019**

Future NVCAP Working Group Meeting Dates (Revised)

Working Group Meeting	Meeting Dates	Location
WG Meeting #7	September 24, 2019	Downtown Public Library
WG Meeting #8	October 29, 2019	CMR, City Hall
WG Meeting #9a	November 26, 2019	CMR, City Hall
WG Meeting #9b	December 10, 2019	Downtown Public Library
WG Meeting # 10	March 31, 2020	CMR, City Hall
WG Meeting # 11	May 26, 2020	CMR, City Hall

MEMORANDUM

DATE	August 19, 2019	PROJECT NO.	16252
TO	Elena Lee	PROJECT	340 Portage Avenue/NVCAP
	City of Palo Alto		
	Planning and Community		
OF	Environment Department	FROM	Christina Dikas, Senior Architectural Historian
	250 Hamilton Avenue		
	Palo Alto, CA 94301		
CC	Amy French	VIA	Email

REGARDING: 340 Portage/NVCAP – Response to Terry Holzemer Comments

This memorandum responds to Terry Holzemer's public comments regarding Page & Turnbull's Draft Historic Resource Evaluation for 340 Portage Avenue (April 11, 2019). Mr. Holzemer's comments were first sent to the City of Palo Alto's Planning and Community Environment Department on May 13, 2019. They are included below in italic font with Page & Turnbull's responses following.

First, I believe both report evaluations of Criterion 2 and Criterion 3 of the California Register of Historical Resources are in error and should be properly re-examined.

Criterion 2 states that a proposed state registered historic building or site must be "associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history". In studying the life of Thomas Foon Chew, it should be quickly evident how significant this Chinese-American was to not only not Palo Alto/Mayfield's early commercial development, but also is likely the first Chinese-American entrepreneur in California history. Largely out of his own intelligence, grit, determination, and personal drive to be successful, he created the third largest cannery business in the world, with one of his major plants in Mayfield/Palo Alto. Considering the time period -- the early 20th century, when Chinese discrimination in America was likely at its height - his success was not simply unusual, it was nearly impossible. Instead, he didn't let any obstacles get in his way to build a cannery business that was unlike any other in Santa Clara Valley.

In the effort to learn more about Thomas Foon, I have met several times with his granddaughter, Gloria Hom, and attended several educational events related to Thomas Foon's life and the cannery business in Santa Clara Valley and California. In addition, I have read several books and newsletter articles about Thomas Foon's life including Chinese Argonauts", "Historic Bay Area Visionaries", and "The Story of Our Local Bayside-Sutter Cannery". In addition, to obtain a

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better understanding and a different perspective on Thomas' life, I have also visited his original cannery site in Alviso.

After reviewing all the provided report data, information that I collected on my own, and interviewing those who were familiar with Thomas' life, it's clear that Criterion 2 of the California Register of Historic Resources has been met.

For a property to be found eligible under California Register Criterion 2, it must be associated with a person who has contributed significantly to local, state, or national history, and the property must be the best representation of the reason for which the person is significant. The building at 340 Portage Avenue was originally built by Thomas Foon Chew in 1918, as the second canning plant for his Bayside Canning Company, and continued under his ownership until his death in 1931. Although Chew's father had founded the cannery in Alviso (and an earlier cannery in San Francisco), Thomas Foon Chew is regarded as the primary driving force behind the Bayside Canning Company's growth into the third largest fruit and vegetable cannery in the world by 1920. In spite of his association with 340 Portage Avenue, the building was not the first canning plant constructed by Chew, nor was it the site of his pioneering asparagus canning innovations that were described in the Historic Resource Evaluation; thus there may be other locations in California that better represent his significance.

More importantly for the purposes of the evaluation in the Historic Resource Evaluation, however, the building was extensively expanded after Chew's death, primarily when it was owned and operated by the Sutter Packing Company. The building, therefore, does not retain enough integrity to Chew's period of association to be eligible under Criterion 2. Nevertheless, Chew's contribution to the industry is reflected in the Criterion 1 statement of significance, as his contribution is certainly related to the property's operation as a successful cannery during the first half of the Criterion 1 period of significance from 1918-1949.

In the same vein, Criterion 3 also should be re-examined due to a special interior structural feature(s) that is/are apparently located in both the original cannery site in Alviso as well as inside the Palo Alto/Mayfield building. Reviewing the data/information from the Bayside Cannery site in Alviso (not given to us in the Page & Turnbull report), there is a special interior characteristic known as a Howe Truss System. This structure is historically unique for these types of buildings and helps to not only support the building, but also assist in preventing earthquake structural failures. The interior structure of the Mayfield building should be thoroughly inspected to see if it has a similar or the same type of Howe Truss System, built in 1918, when the original structure was constructed.

Without a complete inspection and survey of the interior of the Mayfield Cannery building, no assumption should be made of whether the building meets Criterion 3 or not. Clearly more interior information is needed.

Page & Turnbull took a photos of trusses in portions of the building that we were provided access to during our January 2019 site visit. We were provided access to the interior spaces of 340 Portage Avenue (the Fry's Electronics portion of the building, featuring the tall monitor roofs) and 380

Portage Avenue (occupied by Playground Global). Neither of these spaces used a Howe truss. Since we did not access all interior spaces, our inspection was not fully representative. Based on a comparison of Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and aerial photographs, the portions of the building northeast of the monitor-roofed space, including the storefront addresses of 220, 230, and 336 Portage Avenue, comprise the earliest portions of the building that date to the Bayside Canning Company era. It is currently unknown if these spaces contain Howe trusses.

The Historic American Building Survey (HABS) documentation for the Bayside Cannery in Alviso, prepared in 1997, mentions the Howe truss system that was used in the ca. 1929 cannery building.¹ The report reads,

[...] the Howe truss system supporting the roof is of special note. The trusses have been reinforced with diagonal and lateral cross bracing built to withstand earthquakes. [...] The roof system and cupolas are supported by posts and trusses. The main volume of the building is divided into three, east-west bays. The northern most bay measures 42 ft. wide, the center bay 44 ft. wide, and the southern bay 28 ft wide. Five evenly spaced 8" by 8" posts on concrete bases define the bays and support the main north-south truss system. A metal plate separates the top of the post and lower chord of the truss. The truss system was constructed for protection against earthquakes. The triangular Howe trusses are cross braced to one another laterally and diagonally (sometime referred to as an octopus truss). The vertical iron components of the Howe truss act as tension members and the wood members act as compression members.²

The HABS report does not cite a source for the assessment that the truss type was used for protection against earthquakes. Upon cursory research, the Howe truss was invented in 1840.³

Even if the Howe truss was used in the original portions of the building at 340 Portage Avenue, it is not likely that the entirety of the complex Page & Turnbull has identified as a historic resource would rise to a level of significance to be eligible under California Register Criterion 3 for a truss used in one portion of the large building. Nevertheless, the trusses throughout the building are included in the list of identified character-defining features on page 49 of the Historic Resource Evaluation.

¹ A related note: the National Register nomination for the Alviso Historic District, prepared in 1973, does not include the Bayside Cannery, but the complex was found eligible for listing as a thematic district inclusive of seven buildings by Basin Research Associates in a Cultural Resources Assessment to inform the Alviso Master Plan Area in 1995.¹ This information clarifies a misstatement on page 41 of the Historic Resource Evaluation, which says that the Bayside Cannery contributes to the designated Alviso Historic District.

² Sally Donovan, Donovan Associates, Bayside Cannery, 1290 Hope Street, Alviso, Santa Clara County, California: HABS Photographs, Written Historical and Descriptive Data (HABS CA 43-ALVI, 1-), pgs. 1; 19.

³ "William Howe (architect)" Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Howe_\(architect\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Howe_(architect))

Conclusion

While Page & Turnbull could undertake further research on these topics to address the public comments, the eligibility of the property will not change for purposes of review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The California Register evaluation was conducted for the purposes of CEQA, in order to identify whether the property is a qualified historic resource for the purposes of environmental review of the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan, and not with the intention to nominate the property for listing in the California Register. The Historic Resource Evaluation has already found the property to be a historically significant and eligible resource for a period that covers Thomas Foon Chew's involvement. It identifies the character-defining physical features of the property that represent Chew's Bayside Canning Company period, as well as the wood truss systems throughout the building. Therefore, identification of additional California Register criteria for significance will not change the environmental review process, nor the ability of the building's important history to be interpreted in the future.