MEMORANDUM

DATE January 29, 2019

TO Karen Dreyfus

OF 1450 Hawthorne Terrace, Berkeley

FROM Stacy Kozakavich, Cultural Resources Planner / Architectural Historian, Page & Turnbull

CC Chris Wade, SSL Law Firm LLP

Christina Dikas, Page & Turnbull

Carolyn Kiernat, Page & Turnbull

VIA Email

REGARDING: 1450 Hawthorne Terrace, Berkeley – Landmark Application Peer Review and Character Defining Features Memorandum

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum has been prepared by Page & Turnbull regarding the property at 1450 Hawthorne Terrace, Berkeley (APN 59-2249-28) (Sperry House) at the request of owner Karen Dreyfus via communication with Chris Wade of SSL Law Firm LLP. The subject property is located at the northeast corner of Hawthorne Terrace and Vine Street in Berkeley, California (Figure 1 and Figure 2), and is a two-story single-family home constructed in 1925-26 for owners James C. Sperry and his wife Adelia Osmont Sperry. The home was one of two neighboring residences designed by Henry Higby Gutterson and constructed by builder Axel Cederborg. After their completion, 1450 Hawthorne Terrace was occupied by Sperry’s family while 1440 Hawthorne Terrace was home to Sperry’s widowed sister, Marion Sperry Marsh. Mabel Symmes, trained in landscape architecture at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) designed the rear garden which spanned the lots occupied by the two properties.

A City of Berkeley Landmark Application for the Sperry House and the Marsh-Sperry Garden was submitted on July 30, 2018 to the City of Berkeley Landmarks Preservation Commission by Carolyn F. McNiven, resident owner of 1440 Hawthorne Terrace. A September 23, 2018 report to accompany this application (hereafter referred to as Landmark Application Report) was prepared by McNiven, and reviewed by Richard Brandi of Richard Brandi Historic Preservation Consulting. Karen Dreyfus has requested a peer review of the Landmark Application Report, as well as recommendations for refinements to the “Aspects to be Preserved” listed in the Landmark Application Report. The first section of this memorandum contains Page & Turnbull’s recommendations for strengthening the format and content of the Landmark Application Report. The second section of the memorandum provides a recommended list of exterior character-defining features of the Sperry House and Marsh-Sperry Garden for use within the context of the requirements of the Berkeley Municipal Code, sections 3.24.100 and 3.24.110 for designation of landmarks, historic districts, and structures of merit. A version of McNiven’s report containing Page & Turnbull’s editorial comments is presented as Appendix A.
Figure 1. Aerial view of Marsh-Sperry Homes and Garden. Image source: Google Earth 2018. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

Figure 2. East façade of Sperry House, view west.
Methodology

Page & Turnbull Cultural Resources Planner Stacy Kozakavich, who meets the Secretary of the Interior’s professional qualifications standards in Architectural History and History, reviewed the September 2018 Landmark Application report for the Sperry House and Marsh-Sperry Garden. Following this review, a site visit was conducted on December 3, 2018, during which the subject property and gardens were observed and recorded with photographs and brief field notes. All photos in this memorandum were taken by Page & Turnbull during this site visit, unless otherwise noted. The site visit was supervised by the property owner’s building contractor, Jason Foster, and architect, Gustave Carlson. During the site visit, Page & Turnbull staff spoke briefly with neighbor Carolyn F. McNiven as well as general contractor Paul Cerami.

To augment historic property research presented in the Landmark Application, Page & Turnbull obtained digital versions of permit applications and records for 1440 and 1450 Hawthorne Terrace from the City of Berkeley Permit Service Center. The digitized permit documents are presented in Appendix B. Additional research included review of historic newspapers, city directories, census records, and archival collections available through the University of California Environmental Design Library, Internet Archive, and other online repositories. Page & Turnbull contacted library staff of the Helen Crocker Russell Library of Horticulture at the Strybing Arboretum in San Francisco to inquire if that repository maintains collections regarding the landscape design work of Mabel Symmes. Head librarian Brandy Kuhl responded that the library does not have Symmes’ collections at present. Page & Turnbull contacted curatorial staff of the Environmental Design Archives at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) to inquire about their collections related to Mabel Symmes’ work. Staff from the Environmental Design Archives replied on December 10, 2018 and recommended potential sources previously identified by Page & Turnbull.

Page & Turnbull’s comments regarding the format and content of the report should not be understood to question the overall conclusion that the subject property is worthy of local landmark status. Rather, the comments contained in this memorandum aim to provide ways to strengthen the application by adhering to professional standards of documentation and evaluation so that the applicants may provide the City with a useful document for preservation and planning purposes.

PEER REVIEW OF LANDMARK APPLICATION

The properties at 1440 and 1450 Hawthorne Terrace and their associated garden were designed and built simultaneously for occupation by members of the extended Sperry and Marsh family and their resident household staff. Page & Turnbull recommends that any effort toward local landmark designation should recognize this history by incorporating both houses, the full garage/apartment building, and garden into a single landmark application for the Sperry-Marsh Homes and Garden. The boundary of this landmark would encompass both parcels, APN 59-2249-27 (Marsh House, 1440 Hawthorne Terrace) and APN 59-2249-28 (Sperry House, 1450 Hawthorne Terrace).

McNiven’s September 2018 Landmark Application Report for the Sperry House and Marsh-Sperry Garden is generally, though not strictly, structured according to the format of the City of Berkeley Landmark Preservation Commission’s Landmark Application Form. The following comments are structured according to McNiven’s format. Throughout the review comments, several recommendations for reorganizing the report structure are offered. These organizational recommendations are summarized in the concluding section of this memorandum.
Basis for Landmark Designation

This section is structured in direct reference to specific criteria for landmark designation that are listed in the Berkeley Municipal Code. This is an appropriate and efficient approach to presenting the results of the significance evaluation. However, Page & Turnbull recommends that, as reflected in the standard Landmark Application format, this section be moved to the “Significance” chapter following the property description and historical context sections.

Description of Property

This section should be limited to discussion of the current location, setting, and design of the subject property. Reference to the historic parcel subdivisions and effect on the area of the 1923 Berkeley Fire should be presented in the “History” section of the application.

The architectural and landscape description presented in this section should proceed systematically, describing in narrative format the current features of each façade of each building as well as the spatial layout and content of the associated landscaped areas. Reference should be made to numbered, captioned figures that provide visual evidence of the features described.

It is unclear in McNiven's report if discussions of the garage/apartment building and Marsh-Sperry garden refer to the entirety of those elements of the property, or only those portions immediately adjacent to the Sperry House at 1450 Hawthorne Terrace. The boundaries of the historic resource should be clearly defined.

Similarity Between Marsh-Sperry Garden (c. 1923) and the Blake Garden

The Blake Garden, which features commonalities in elements and design with the Marsh-Sperry Garden, should be included as a comparative example of Mabel Symmes' work in the historic context section of this report rather than as a standalone section. Further, adequate context for conventions and broader movements in garden design during this time period is essential for identifying those features which may have been characteristic of Symmes' work, and those which were common features of many residential and institutional gardens designed during the 1920s. Broader patterns in garden design related to the period of the Marsh-Sperry Garden are briefly touched upon in the Landmark Application's discussion of Mabel Symmes, and this context should be expanded to better situate the influences and ideals expressed by Symmes' work.

Historic Integrity and Condition

To be eligible for listing in a national, state, or local register, a property found to be significant under one or more criteria for evaluation must also have sufficient integrity to convey that significance. A property's integrity is addressed in general terms by item number 13 of the City of Berkeley's Landmark Application form, which asks for the applicant to grade the condition of the interior, exterior, and grounds of a property on a scale from "Excellent" to "Poor" and inquires if the property has been altered. Discussion of a property's integrity is generally presented following an evaluation of its significance according to relevant criteria. The National Park Service's guidance for evaluating integrity of historic properties states that "evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment,
but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance.1 McNiven's summary of the seven aspects of integrity (which are widely applied in determining eligibility for listing on national, state, and local registers) should describe and reference how these qualities are demonstrated in relation to the subject property.

The discussion of the subject property's integrity should also acknowledge any visible alterations to character-defining features. For example, the garage doors within the southern, Sperry House portion of the garage are not original (Figure 3). Replacement posts and beams have been installed within both the garage trellis and main arbor, and it appears that the southwestern stucco half wall of the wisteria arbor connecting the two houses has been either replaced or partially restored to accommodate a replacement post (Figure 4). The northwestern portion of the garden does not currently reflect the rectilinear pathways depicted in Symmes' original plan. The oval shape of the formal, central garden has deteriorated with decades of lawn management such that there is little feeling of the ordered formality indicated on the plan drawing (Figure 5). Rectangular planting beds currently occupy a once-curvilinear segment at the northwest corner of the oval. A stone path not depicted in the original garden design is present along the western extent of the south lawn. If these alterations have achieved significance due to their direct association with the Sperrys' or McLaughlins' occupation of the property, this must be stated and supported in the report, and the garden recognized as the product of different phases of effort.

Figure 3. Non-original garage doors, view southwest.

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Figure 4. Replacement pressure-treated wood post in southwest half wall supporting arbor.

Figure 5. View of formal portion of garden showing amorphous lawn shape, rectilinear beds at northwest corner. View northwest.
Aspects to be Preserved

The Landmark Application for the Sperry House and Marsh-Sperry Garden lists four categories of features, based on location within the property, that are considered to be “Aspects to be Preserved:” the exterior of the Sperry house at 1450 Hawthorne Terrace; the exterior of the attached garage and arbor; all exterior hardscape features at 1450 Hawthorne Terrace; and the Marsh-Sperry Garden.2 Each of the category titles within this section includes the statement “including but not limited to” prior to listing particular features. As listings of significant and character-defining features for historic resources benefit from specificity, these qualifying statements should be removed from the Landmark Application Report.

Within the lists of features there are several redundancies in listing, inclusion of features that are not original to the house or garden plan, and inclusion of specific plant species that have not yet been substantiated as original to the garden plan. Page & Turnbull’s recommended approach to character-defining features for the property is elaborated later in the following section.

History

The historical overview should include a summary of permitted and visible alterations to the property.

McNiven presents extensive information in this section regarding the subject property’s architect, builder, and landscape designer. Examples of Gutterson’s contemporaneous designs are most important to include here, as well as an overview of the span of his career and most significant works. As not every building designed by a well-known master architect may be eligible for local, state, or national listing based on that association, this report section should clearly support the argument for why a subject property may be a particularly significant example of that architect’s work.

As Mabel Symmes’ personal history and landscape design work are not well documented, the basic biographical information regarding her is appropriate to include in the Landmark Application Report. Mabel Symmes was among the earliest women to study landscape architecture at the University of California Berkeley, enrolling in 1914 for courses in a program that had been established the previous year. She had valuable connections through her affiliation with the University, her sister, Anita’s family, and the California Horticultural Society. She practiced landscape design at a time when architects and building professionals were predominantly male. However, the influence and breadth of Symmes’ work in landscape design may be somewhat overstated in McNiven’s writing. An oral history interview with landscape architect Mai Arbegast, which McNiven quotes on page 66 of the Landmark Application Report, does not unequivocally support the author’s conclusion of Symmes’ significance. The full context of Arbegast’s quote is as follows:

Reiss: Do you think Miss Symmes made money as a landscape architect?

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2 McNiven’s report is unclear regarding whether portions of the garage/apartment building, exterior hardscape, and Marsh-Sperry Garden associated with the Marsh House at 1440 Hawthorne Terrace, are also included in this list. A resource boundary is not defined.
Arbegast: No. I think she may have designed some gardens for friends. There was a garden -- it doesn't exist any longer -- that I know she had designed, which was very nice, very small, about the size of our backyard. It was quite formal. There's an apartment building there now. It's close to the campus.

Reiss: So you don't think she was out and around as an independent practitioner?

Arbegast: Not at all. If she was, it was on a very limited basis, and it was probably for friends of the family. I have only been able to dig up one garden of hers over the years. But there were quite a number of other women practicing in the area at the time which I didn't realize. Women don't practice in a way that they're noticed, you know, they're working quietly behind the scenes. There was an Adeline Frederick up here on La Loma who practiced until she was in her nineties, and there was a Cicely Christie who came from England and who practiced as a landscape gardener and did a number of nice gardens.\(^3\)

The Marsh-Sperry Garden is one of only a small number of East Bay garden designs which are known to be attributed to Mabel Symmes. These are the Marsh-Sperry Garden (extant, Berkeley); the Blake Garden (extant, Kensington); the Charles Merrill House garden (status unknown, Orinda); the Olney house on Claremont Blvd. (status unknown, Berkeley);\(^4\) and a location near the UC Berkeley campus, noted by Mai Arbegast (no longer extant, Berkeley).\(^5\) Symmes does not have a broad body of documented work and did not, as an independent practitioner, demonstrably influence the work of others in her field. McNiven's\(^6\) report provides a worthwhile contribution to knowledge about women in the building and design professions in the early decades of the 20th century. With additional research, knowledge regarding Symmes' contribution to Bay Area landscape architecture may be better understood. However, at present she cannot be considered a prominent figure in the field.

**Significance of Property**

The discussions in this portion of the report regarding James C. Sperry's family and Sylvia and Donald McLaughlin should be moved to the "history" section of the Landmark Application Report, and should be accompanied by clearly presented chronology of the property owners and residents. The Significance section of the report should present an evaluation of the subject property's historical significance, informed by the preceding description and historic context. It should consist of the following: significance evaluation (the content of the "Basis for Landmark Designation" section);

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\(^{4}\) Berkeley city directories list Edward and Frances Olney's address as 2711 Claremont Blvd between 1913 and 1949.

identification of the property's period of significance (not defined in the Landmark Application Report); the property's character-defining features (see the following section of this memorandum); and assessment of the property's integrity (the revised content of the "Historic Integrity and Condition" section).

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

For the purposes of City of Berkeley Landmark Designation, under Berkeley Municipal Code Section 3.24.100.A, "Each designation of a landmark, historic districts [sic] or structure of merit by the commission shall include a description of the characteristics which justify its designation and a description of the particular features to be preserved."6 Permitted construction, repair, or alterations at landmark properties in Berkeley must not "adversely affect the exterior architectural features of the landmark...nor shall the proposed work adversely affect the special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value of the landmark and its site, as viewed both in themselves and in their setting."7

Page & Turnbull recommends that the following list of character-defining features for the Sperry House and Marsh-Sperry Garden be considered as an alternative to the "Aspects to be Preserved" listed in McNiven's 2018 Landmark Application Report. For a property to be eligible for national, state, or local designation under one or more of the significance criteria, the essential physical features, also known as character-defining features, that enable the property to convey its historic identity must be evident. To be eligible, a property must clearly retain enough of those characteristics, and these features must also retain a sufficient degree of integrity.

Though eligibility of the Sperry House and Marsh-Sperry Garden for local landmark status is evaluated according to local criteria for architectural merit, cultural value, and historic value as outlined in the Berkeley Municipal Code, this code does not provide specific guidance for understanding the role of "features to be preserved," as individual features or in concert, in communicating the historical significance of a landmark property. Some guidance in this regard may be drawn from published guidelines for National Register of Historic Properties (National Register) evaluation, which state that

A property important for illustrating a particular architectural style or construction technique must retain most of the physical features that constitute that style or technique. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation.8

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8 National Park Service, “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” 46.
As is made clear in this excerpt, it is not necessary for a property to retain all physical features and materials from its period of significance to be eligible for National Register listing. Alterations to specific historical features or materials may not necessarily adversely affect a property's eligibility, as long as its essential overall historical character and architectural style are retained. Further, character-defining features do not all contribute equally to conveying the particular architectural style or historical significance of a property. The relative contribution of a particular feature must be viewed in the context of its place in the overall style or design.

As recommended above, the Landmark Application Report for the adjacent properties at 1440 Hawthorne Terrace (the Marsh House) and 1450 Hawthorne Terrace (the Sperry House) should be combined into a single application for the Marsh-Sperry Homes and Garden. A site visit for inspection of the garage portion, house, and adjacent garden features of 1440 Hawthorne Terrace was outside of the scope of Page & Turnbull’s research for this project. A comprehensive list of character-defining features for the Gutterson- and Symmes-designed property would need to incorporate these portions of the property’s historic extent. Once completed for the full resource, a character-defining features list may be used to evaluate the potential of specific proposed alterations to adversely affect the property. As noted above, each of the character-defining features may not contribute equally to conveying the historical significance of the Sperry House and Marsh-Sperry Gardens. Identifying those features that are not character-defining is also useful for planning purposes. Brief lists of features of the garden and the portion of the garage/apartment building adjacent to the Sperry House are included following the list of character-defining features.

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9 Requirements for integrity of historic properties for National Register eligibility tend, overall, to be stricter than those for eligibility of historical resources for the California Register of Historical Resources or for local historic resource inventories and landmark designations.
Character-Defining Features: Sperry House and Marsh-Sperry Garden

Overall Features:
- Complex, one- and two-story massing with partially exposed basement designed to accommodate sloping lot.
- Side-gabled tile-clad roof with multiple perpendicular paired cross gables extending from main volume and double-ridged roof line of north volume.
- Rectangular, multi-light wood-frame fixed and casement windows at first and second story of all façades.
- Stucco cladding.
- Copper rain gutters, downspouts, and conductor heads.

East Façade:
- Tile-clad pent roof over projecting first-story bay at northern end of east façade.
- Arched dormer in east-facing roof slope centered over main entry, with arched multi-light wood-frame window.
- Elaborate main entry portico at east façade with wood posts with shaped capitals, lintels, spindles, and panels.
- Original copper light fixture within entry portico.
- Brick and stucco-clad chimney at east façade of south, one-story volume.
- Slightly recessed Dutch door at east façade of south, one-story volume with multi-light amber glazing and low-profile canopy.
- Stucco half walls extending from entry portico and partially enclosing patio east of south façade.

South Façade:
- Second-story window bay with decorative wood brackets.

West Façade:
- Decorative half-timbering at second story.
- Second-story central paneled bay with multi-light glazing supported on rectangular bay with tile-clad hipped roof.
- Stucco-clad chimney to south of bay.
- Recessed south volumes.
- Glazed wood French doors with decorative header and surround at first-story raised patio.
- First-story raised patio supported on stucco-clad arcade with three arches over exposed basement wall.
- Second-story window bay at south end of west façade.
- Curved staircase with stucco half-wall at south end of west façade.

North Façade:
- Second-story projecting bay with wood panels, multi-light wood-frame casement windows, and decorative brackets.
- Recessed entry portico with glazed French doors, spindled balustrades and stucco half-walls integrated with wood arbor.
Original copper light fixture within entry portico.
Abutment with garage/apartment building at northeast corner.

**Garage and Apartment:**
- Wood pergola spanning the east, Hawthorn Terrace-facing garage façade.
- Stucco cladding.
- Rectangular multi-light wood-sash windows at east, south, and west facades.
- Tile-clad hipped roof with paired perpendicular cross gables.
- Symmetrical placement of second-story windows at west façade.
- South-facing second-story entry bay with multi-light wood-sash window.
- Abutment to Sperry and Marsh houses at north and south corners of west façade.

**Garden:**
- Spatial relationships of northern, formal garden, eastern arbor and “laundry yards,” shrubbery-bordered south-central lawn, and southern informal slope plantings with redwood grove.
- Peaked, painted wood arbor spanning walkway between north façade of Sperry House and south façade of Marsh House, supported by wood posts with shaped capitals set on patio and in stucco half-walls. Includes tripartite fountain with figural ceramic spout cover on west side of east half-wall.
- Wisteria vine planted at northwest corner of house, adjacent to west-facing entrance.
- Enclosed square “laundry yards’ between west garage façade and arbor.
- Location and configuration of linear hedge extending westward from northwest corner of Sperry House, including two path openings.
- Location and alignment of path extending from south side of formal garden to first-story west-façade entrance of Sperry House.
- Location and extent of central and southern lawns (border configurations have been altered).
- Location and configuration of paths radiating north, west, and south from central feature of formal garden.
- Location and shape of original pond (currently filled).
- Location and configuration of planting beds bordering west and east ends of shared oval formal garden.
- Location and general configuration of shrubbery beds bordering west property boundary south of shared formal garden; north property boundary, and southern portion of east property boundary.
- Circular planting bed at southwest side of southern lawn.
- Southern grove area of garden bordering Vine Street.
- Dawn redwood tree located in the southern portion of the garden.
- Location and alignments of path network within southern grove portion of property, including two western paths, southern staircase accessing Vine Street gate, and southern path to redwood at corner of Hawthorne Terrace and Vine Street.
- Location of a birdbath to south of house, adjacent to path.
- Location of a patio adjacent to southern portion of west façade of house.
- Location, configuration, and material of stone retaining walls bordering Vine Street.
Garage/Apartment features that are not character-defining (Sperry House half):

- Garage doors.
- Second-floor south entry door.
- South façade wood stair railing.

Garden features that are not character-defining:

- Lawn area at northwest corner of property (Planned as a rectilinear formal garden, not extant.)
- Rectangular beds between perpendicular walkways in the northwest quadrant of the shared formal garden (Not original to garden plan).
- Arbor at west side of formal garden (Not original to garden plan).
- Stone pathway bordering west side of southern lawn (Not original to garden plan).
- Flower bed west of southern lawn, south of hedge (Not original to garden plan).
- The location of the frieze of three children attributed to Sylvia McLaughlin’s birth family’s Denver home. (Not original to garden plan).  
- Trellis on north volume of east façade.

CONCLUSION

Page & Turnbull recommends that, to be most effective in presenting the historical significance of the subject properties, the Landmark Application Report should include the Marsh House at 1440 Hawthorne Terrace, and the format should be reorganized to better adhere to the structure of the City of Berkeley Landmark Application Form and to conform to general professional conventions for historic resource evaluation reports. The list of character-defining features should include those physical characteristics which are demonstrably linked to the historic design of the homes and garden, and which contribute to its significance.

To summarize the recommendations for restructuring presented throughout the peer review portion of this memorandum, the structure of information and discussion should consist of the following:

Property Description

- Clear definition of the boundaries of the historic resource.
- Systematic description of overall building characteristics, the existing architectural features of each building facade, and the existing spatial organization and features of associated landscaped areas.
- Photographs clearly depicting the described characteristics, with captions including the location and direction of each.

While not original to the property, this piece provides a tangible connection with significant resident Sylvia McLaughlin. As it is a movable art piece, however, its location adjacent to the north-facing garden entrance is not character-defining and the frieze may be relocated within the property without loss of significance.
Historical Context
- Context of the city and neighborhood, scaled as appropriate to support understanding of the subject property's historical associations.
- Owner and occupant history for the subject property, with clearly stated years of occupation and biographical sketches of notable owners and residents.
- Construction and alteration history of the subject property, including reference to permitted and unpermitted work.
- Identification of building professionals associated with the subject property, with biographical sketches and relevant comparative examples from notable architects, builders, and landscape architects.

Significance
- Evaluation of the subject property's eligibility for local landmark status according to the criteria presented in Berkeley Municipal Code.
- Identification of the period of significance for eligibility.
- List of character-defining features.
- Assessment of the subject property's integrity, relative to the standards for local landmark designation.

With reorganization and general editing, McNiven's Landmark Application Report for the Sperry House and Marsh-Sperry Garden will constitute a useful portion of a landmark application for the full Marsh-Sperry Homes and Gardens.
APPENDIX A: LANDMARK APPLICATION REPORT, 1450 HAWTHORNE TERRACE  
(CAROLYN F. MCNIVEN, 2018)
APPENDIX B: BUILDING PERMIT RECORDS, 1440 & 1450 HAWTHORNE TERRACE
(CITY OF BERKELEY PERMIT SERVICE CENTER)