

DATE: September 22, 2014

AGENDA ITEM # 2

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Historical Commission
FROM: Zachary Dahl, Staff Liaison
SUBJECT: 14-H-03 – 980 Covington Road

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend approval of the Tentative Map and Variance applications to the Planning and Transportation Commission subject to the findings and conditions

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project is a proposed tentative map to subdivide a Historic Resource property into two new lots of 10,015 square feet and 11,298 square feet. As part of the tentative map, the existing historic main house is proposed to be moved toward the exterior side property line (Miramonte Avenue) and would be located on the new corner lot (Parcel B). A new basement is proposed to be constructed under the house and 654 square feet would be added to the first floor. The historic tank house (water tower) will be moved closer to the exterior side property line and a new two-car garage would be constructed next to tank house to provide covered parking for the existing house. The project also includes a variance to allow for the main house to exceed the 27-foot height limit, the tank house to exceed the 12-foot height limit for accessory structures and the main house to encroach into the second story side yard setback and side yard daylight plane. A letter from the applicant that provides additional information about the proposed project is included in Attachment A.

BACKGROUND

The main house on the property was designed with the Shingle Style of architecture and was originally constructed between 1902 and 1905. At the time of construction, the house was located on a 70-acre fruit ranch owned by Edwin and Annie Emerson. The tank house was constructed around the same period as the main house, but the exact date is not known. In the 1970s, the tank house was moved from elsewhere on the ranch to its current location near Miramonte Avenue on the rear of the property. The larger detached garage that is built around the base of the tank house was constructed after the move and is not considered historic or part of the original structure. The property's historic report and updated property evaluation (DPR forms) are included in Attachments B and C.

DISCUSSION

The subject property is designated as Single-Family (four dwelling units per acre) in the General Plan and zoned R1-10 Single-Family. With a lot size of 21,203 square feet, the property meets the Zoning

Code requirements to subdivide into two parcels. However, the main house, which is a historic structure, is located in the middle of the property and will need to be relocated or removed in order to approve the subdivision. As outlined in Policy 6.2 of the Community Design and Historic Resources Element of the General Plan, “the City shall regard demolition of landmark and historic resources, listed in the Historic Resources Inventory, as a last resort...” In order to preserve this historic structure, the project is proposing to move the house into the new lot on the corner of Covington Road and Miramonte Avenue.

The project historian has reviewed the proposed relocation of the main house and tank house and finds that it will not significantly diminish the historic setting or context. The original size of the property (70-acres) has already been significantly reduced and the relationship between the house and the tank house has already been altered. However, by maintaining the house’s position adjacent to the intersection of Miramonte Avenue and Covington Road, it will preserve the original relationship that the structure had to these two streets. Also, by maintaining the placement of the tank house behind the main house, the feeling of an early 20th century rural farm will be preserved.

As part of the relocation of the historic structures, several variances will need to be approved with the subdivision. The historic structures will comply with the floor area and lot coverage requirements for the new corner lot and will meet most of the required setbacks. The variances include: 1) recognizing the main house height of 29 feet, four inches where a maximum of 27 feet is allowed; 2) recognizing the tank house height of 22 feet where a maximum of 12 feet is allowed for accessory structures; 3) allowing a small dormer window on the right elevation to have a second story side yard setback of 16 feet where 17 feet, six inches is required; and 4) allowing a portion of the second floor to encroach into the side yard daylight plane.

Staff supports the proposed variances in order to preserve the property’s historic buildings as part of the subdivision. The building heights already exist and would not change as a result of the subdivision. The second story setback and daylight plane encroachments are relatively minor and are adjacent to the new property line, so they would not negatively impact any of the surrounding properties.

However, additional details should be provided to show how the alterations and addition will preserve the historic character of the main house and tank house. Staff has added a condition that requires additional architectural details and specifications for the proposed exterior modifications to both structures to be reviewed by the Historical Commission prior to issuance of the building permit.

Historic Landmark Consideration

The historic report provides evidence to support the designation of this property as a historic landmark structure. However, the current application does not include a request to designate the property as a Historic Landmark. Staff supports the designation of the property (Parcel B) as a Historic Landmark and encourages the applicant to bring a request back to the Commission for consideration.

Cc: Chapmen Design Associates, Applicant and Designer
John Walker, Owner

Attachments:

- A. Applicant Cover Letter
- B. Historic Property Report
- C. Updated Historic Property Evaluation (DPRs)

FINDINGS

14-H-03 – 980 Covington Road

With regard to the Advisory Review, the Historical Commission finds the following in accordance with Section 12.44.140 of the Municipal Code:

1. The project complies with all provisions of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 12.44);
and
2. The project does not adversely affect the physical integrity or the historic significance of the subject property.

CONDITIONS

14-H-03 – 980 Covington Road

1. The recommendation is based on the plans received on August 28, 2014 and the written application materials provided by the applicant, except as may be modified by these conditions.
2. Prior to issuance of the building permit, the applicant shall provide architectural details and specifications for the proposed exterior modifications to the main house and tank house for review by the Historical Commission.

AUG 28 2014

CITY OF LOS ALTOS
PLANNING

WALKER RESIDENCE - 980 COVINGTON ROAD

This proposal is based on the current property owner's wish to do more than just maintain the historical house he has lived in over the past 36 years. It will provide him the means to restore the house to its former glory while still keeping the home within the family. John Walker and his wife Sherrill first took on the responsibility of ownership of this unique home in 1978, and although Sheryl passed away before her dream of a new kitchen with a family room was accomplished it is still John's desire to finish what they started.

In order to accomplish both of these goals, Mr. Walker has recognized the only way to fund the repair, restoration and improvements the house warrants and deserves is to leverage the land it sits upon. The property at Covington & Miramonte is of sufficient size to be subdivided into two lots. The corner lot would accommodate the existing house, while the newly created interior lot would be sold to fund the restoration project.

As shown in the plans the existing home would be rotated 90 degrees so the front of the house would now face Covington, not Miramonte. The existing water tower would be relocated to accommodate a new two car garage. This relationship of house, water tower and garage would re-establish a proper relationship for these structures into a historical context. The water tower was relocated into the yard in front of the house when the property was subdivided in the 1970's, without thought to its relationship to the primary structure. By relocating both the house and the water tower the architectural integrity will be restored.

The single story addition to the back of the house will be subservient to the primary residence and the garage will be subservient to the water tower. This allows for the historical elements of the house and water tower to be prominent and remain relevant. The proposed project meets all city zoning rules with the exception of current height restrictions and a daylight plane encroachment. The relocated historical home would exceed the maximum height of 27' and would require a variance based on its current height of 29'-3". The daylight plane encroachment is to accommodate an existing triple dormer feature on the right elevation.

This decision to move the home was not made lightly. Many years of deliberation went into the analysis of what could be done, and at what cost, to make essential repairs to the home. Based on estimates received to replace the foundation, repair of dry rot to porch and external trim, reroofing and painting of exterior. It was determined that subdividing the lot was the best option that the Walker family had left to them.



PALISADE BUILDERS, INC.

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July 31, 2014

John Walker
980 Covington Road
Los Altos, CA 94024

RE: House restoration project estimate

Dear John,

Per our meeting on site and a follow-up meeting with a house mover I have prepared an initial estimate to provide a current code compliant foundation under your existing house with related work. The work generally includes:

Shore up existing house several feet to provide access to install a new foundation – work includes removal of existing foundation, forming, rebar, foundation bolts and concrete placement.

Existing utilities – Disconnect prior to raising the house all plumbing, water, gas, heating and ventilation, flues, electrical and low voltage systems. Once house is set back in place re-connect all systems. I have provided for the existing water service to be temporarily connected to the existing irrigation sprinklers.

Landscape – There will be some damage to the existing planting around the perimeter of the house. I have assumed that some of the more mature and significant plants will be removed and then re-planted when the house work is complete.

Remove and replace existing cripple walls from existing floor line to top of current foundation walls. I have included placing shear panel back on these walls to improve the seismic strength of the home. The structural engineer can guide us on how best to attach the house to the new foundation. We should explore how to attach some of the existing walls down to the foundation to improve the structure of the existing house.

Chimney removal / reconstruction – Remove existing brick chimneys from top of roof to basement. I have assumed that the chimneys will be reconstructed with a pre-fabricated metal fire place with wood framing to replace the existing masonry. Where chimney is exposed above the roof there will be a brick façade to replicate what you presently have. I have included a \$ 5,000 allowance for the interior fireplace hearth and mantle.

Framing

Rebuild the decorative balcony which was previously removed.

Remove the old plywood deck and replace with new oak planking.

Basement – This area is approximately 550 square feet of laundry, cedar lined closet, workshop, storage area and contains the furnace and hot water heater. I have assumed this area will be reconstructed with the existing materials and that there will be new flooring, drywall and paint.

I have included an allowance to completely tent the structure for termites as well as a repair allowance of \$ 17,500 to replace framing and trim where damaged (above and beyond the decorative balcony work referenced above). Once you get a complete termite report we can adjust this estimate accordingly.

Misc. interior patching – In temporarily raising the house there will be interior damage such as wall cracking. This will also impact the existing wallpaper. I have included an allowance of \$ 15,000 to repair the walls and to paint them. I have not included replacement wall coverings.

Engineering and permit fees - I have included the cost for the new foundation structural plans and a building permit fee.

Exterior repainting – I have included the cost to repair the cracks the in the exterior caused by the new foundation work. I have assumed a two color paint scheme – one body color and one trim color.

Re-roofing – The Fire Free cement roof tiles will require some repair – I have assumed a \$ 3,500 allowance for this work.

General conditions – I have included the costs for power, rental equipment, superintendent, debris boxes, and insurance. I have assumed the total duration of the work to be about 3.5 months assuming no delays caused by weather.

Exclusions

This estimate does not include bringing the structure up to the present codes except for the new foundation. I have included some incidental repairs such as blocking and strapping but have not included any new framing except for the new chimney structure and the decorative balcony.

Any work on the water tower structure.

No cabinet work or plumbing or electrical fixtures.

Costs for your moving out during construction. It would be most efficient if the furniture and your belongings were moved out of the house. We cannot take responsibility for anything that might be damaged or be stolen. I have not included security.

The total costs for the work outlined above is between \$ 350,000 and \$ 375,000. If you wish to proceed I can bring in additional subcontractors to better define the scope and costs. A termite report would also assist in clarifying the scope of work.

Best regards,



Doug Ross
Palisade Builders, Inc.

Historical Background and Historical and Architectural Evaluation
of the Property at
980 Covington Road
Los Altos, Santa Clara County California



Report requested by: John Walker
980 Covington Road
Los Altos CA

Prepared by: Urban Programmers
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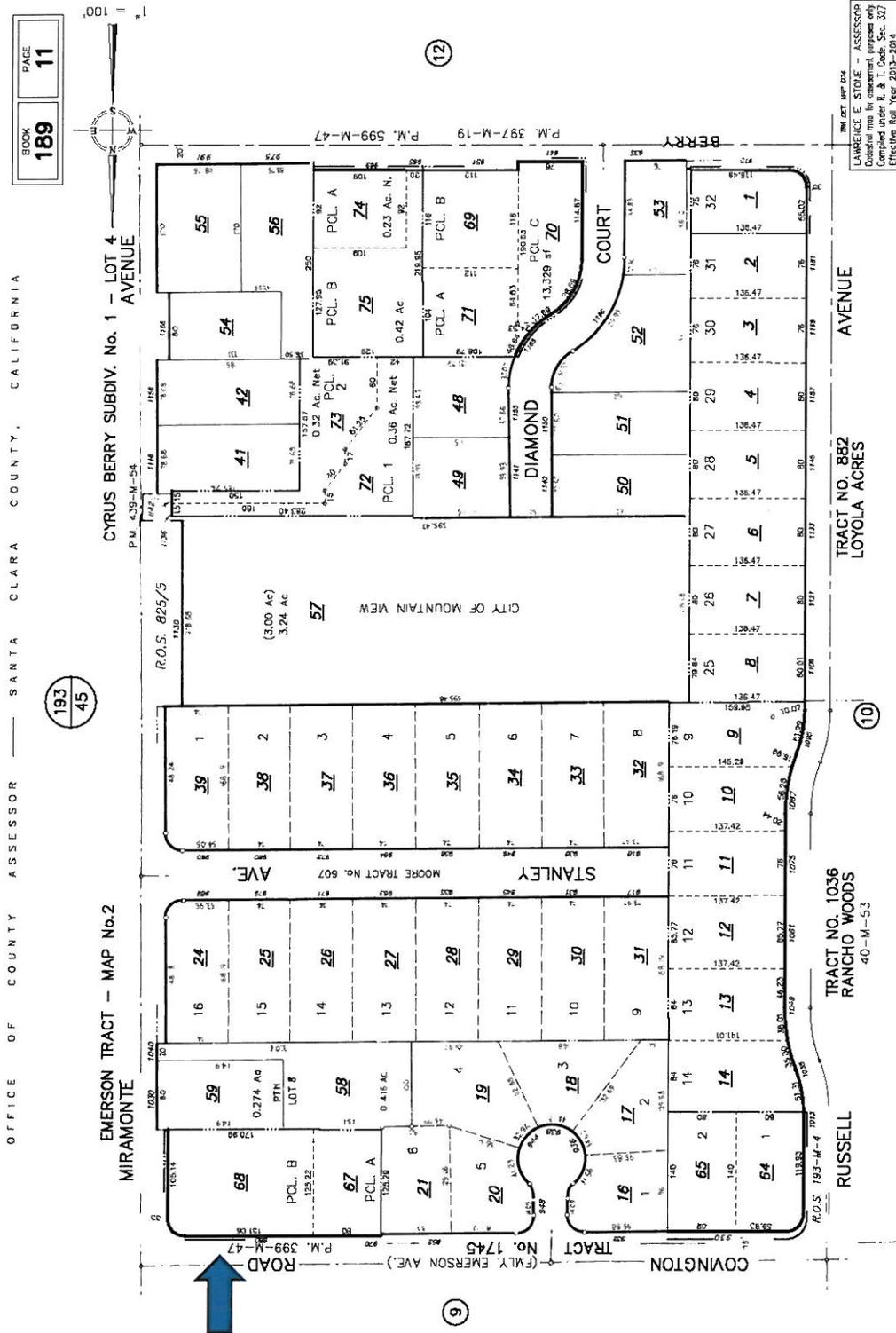
Date: October 15, 2013
Revised December 8, 2013



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DPR 523 Forms A & B (continuation sheets)

Figure 1 Santa Clara County Assessors Map 980 Covington Road, Los Altos
 APN: 189-11-068



1. Introduction:

John Walker, the owner of the property located at 980 Covington Road, Los Altos (APN 189-11-068) may apply to the City of Los Altos for Historical Landmark designation and a Mills Act Contract for his residence. In 2008 the City contracted with Circa Historic Property Development to provide an updated survey of historically important properties within the City. The property at 980 Covington Road was determined to be eligible for the Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory based upon the Shingle style architecture which is rare in Los Altos. However the note was made that the finding was based upon the architecture and the designation could benefit from additional historical research and information. This report provides additional information about the history of the property and its owners. This report considers the Edwin L Emerson House, its history, historical and architectural value as defined by the California Register of Historic Resources and the Historic Preservation Element in the General Plan adopted by the City of Los Altos. It concludes with a description that includes proposed repairs and remodeling, including relocating the tank house and the potential to split the double wide lot into two residential parcels.

2. Executive Summary:

The history of the property describes the early settlement agricultural period, prior to the establishment of the City and the family that bought the land and constructed the existing house. The property was originally owned by Silas Emerson who came from Main and constructed a farm house on the property that unfortunately was destroyed by fire in 1902. The existing house was developed by his nephew Edwin Emerson who came from Boston and completed early in 1906. Originally the address was at the corner of Emerson and Mira Monte Roads (Emerson Road was changed to Covington Road, Mira Monte is now spelled Miramonte Road) it was the farm house for a 70 acre fruit ranch. The Edwin Emerson immediate family was part of an extended family that typified the western migration of established families who came from the east and brought their energy, wealth and experience in farming, social and civic life to the area. The family history in Los Altos is that of an agricultural (fruit ranch) family, The house represents a lasting tie to the turn-of-the-century era and provides the information that the family was aware of architectural trends on the east coast selecting the Shingle style that is now a rare example in Santa Clara Valley. This is a glimpse into the early lifestyle in Los Altos. The similarity to the country homes of architect William Ralph Emerson is striking and research attempted to find a connection but could not in the time allotted for this work. Letters of inquiry sent to scholars of William Ralph Emerson may yet identify and return information about a link to this noted architect.

Although reduced in size and surrounded by residential subdivisions the architectural style of the house, Vernacular Shingle, is very unusual in the area and rare for the period when it was constructed. The enclosing of a utility porch as an addition in the rear the house does not significantly reduce the integrity of the design and the house retains a high degree of original design, materials, craftsmanship and association. The tank house, once moved and again proposed to be moved adds to the visual importance of the property.

For the reasons stated above the property and Edwin Emerson House meets the criteria for designation to the Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory and should be elevated to City Landmark status.

3. Report Preparation:

The report was prepared by Urban Programmers and compiled by Bonnie Bamberg. Ms Bamberg has over 35 years experience in preparing historic surveys and evaluation reports for cities, counties and the federal government. She has prepared numerous National Register Nominations for individual sites and historic districts. In addition, she has advised owners and architects on compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings and has prepared Certifications for historic properties in several states. She is a former instructor in Historic Preservation at SJSU, a lecturer in historic preservation and former San Jose Historical Landmark Commissioner (1974-1980). Ms. Bamberg is an advisor to Preservation Action Council San Jose, and is a board member of the Western Region of Preservation Technology.

Associates working with the firm include; William Zavlaris, B.A, MUP, received his education in art and architectural history at UCB and received his Masters Degree in Urban Planning, City Design, from San Jose State University. Mr. Zavlaris has 25 years' experience in evaluating architecture for local historical surveys and National Register Nominations for private clients and government agencies. Douglas Aaron Bright, B.A. CSU-East Bay, M.A. Historic Preservation, Savannah College of Art and Design. Rachel Sims, B.A. English/History Lewis & Clark College. Walt Nagle, Legal and Title Documents specialist, MBA Architects, reviews existing conditions. Rachelle Sims provides verification and editing of the report. Ms. Sims is a graduate of Lewis & Clark College with a degree in English and History. Marvin Bamberg, AIA has over 40 years of experience in historic preservation architecture for residential and commercial properties and is listed with the Office of Historic Preservation as expert in historic preservation architecture. Mr. Bamberg visited the property as part of the site investigation. His comments are included in the architectural descriptions and condition of the building.

The preparation of the report followed standard methodology for research and site investigation. The information contained in the report was derived from a combination of interviews with people knowledgeable about certain aspects of the property or associations in history, city directories, historic maps, public records, and special collection materials at local repositories. When applicable the internet was used as a repository for research.

4. Historical Background

4.1 Historical Context: The Historical Context Statement¹ adopted by the City of Los Altos designates the era at the turn of the century as the Age of Subdivision and Mass Transit reflecting the train service and Los Altos train station of 1913. However, it is important to note that in the early 1900s the area was still very rural and producing crops such as hay, apricots, strawberries, and prunes. Like much of the Lower Peninsula, the good weather and pleasant surrounding encouraged population growth and development. Beginning in 1907, commercial development expanded along Main Street with the help of Paul Shoup and the Altos Land Company. By 1913 the Los Altos train station was constructed providing local access to San Francisco and San Jose. The improved transportation access and infrastructure provided by the Southern Pacific Railroad predictably encouraged the sale of the lots offered by the Altos Land Company. Both of these mutually benefitting companies, the Southern Pacific and Altos Land Company, were led by Paul Shoup. He is the man is credited as "The Father of Los Altos" for the development of the 100 acre Winchester tract that became the heart of the City. With the sale of lots, the area took on the appearance of other residential communities expanding during the first decades of the Twentieth Century. Homes are known to have been designed by leading architects from the Bay Area including Charles McKenzie and Ernest Coxhead as well as landscape architect Emerson Knight. Unfortunately, the exact locations of these works are not always known. The designs included Late Victorian, Spanish Colonial, Neoclassical, Craftsman Bungalows of all sizes and the rare Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival and Shingle styles which were brought from the east.

Prior to 1907, the predominate land use in the Los Altos area (Mt. View or Fremont District) was agricultural. Vast orchards and farms for row crops filled the area. The early families were a mix of California families (second or third generation), European immigrants and those that came west seeking to gain or enhance their fortunes. Often the hospitable climate and ease of finding fine agricultural land were the drawing factors for experienced farmers to relocate. To these factors was the financial opportunity that drew a number of investors who saw the potential of the area first in agriculture and then land speculation through subdivisions followed by commercial and residential development that occurred after the turn of the century.

4.2 History of the owners and occupants of 980 Covington Road, Los Altos

Just as Los Altos was began resembling a city, the Eastern Shingle style house (c.1906) at 980 Covington Road (formerly Emerson Road) was constructed amid 70 acres of orchards and farm crops.

The subject property was part of several hundred acres owned by Silas Blake Emerson in the 1880s. Silas came to California in 1849 when he was 29 years old and worked as a carpenter in San Francisco before settling in the Mountain View District in 1852. He acquired approximately 800 acres in the district and tracts of land elsewhere in California.² Silas Emerson died October 29, 1889 and is buried in Santa Clara Memorial Cemetery.³ After his death the house he built on Permanete Creek was lived in by his brother

¹ City of Los Altos [Historic Resources Inventory](#)

² Letter from Edith Emerson to the Los Altos Times, 1955 (copy)

³ cemetery records

and burned in 1902. Also about the turn-of-the-century the acreage was subdivided into lots of approximately 80 acres (1/8 Section). The parcel that is the subject of this study was transferred to Silas B. Emerson's nephew Edwin Emerson for his family home.

Edwin and Annie Emerson; the original owners of the house at 980 Covington Road.

After fire destroyed the existing house, Edwin began building the house on Mira Monte Road (Covington Road) late in 1902.⁴ It took a while to construct. During this time Annie and their children Edith and Ralph were living with Annie's parents the Thomas Murphys in Knightsen outside Brentwood except for the summer when they lived in the tank house on the property. It appears that Edwin had architectural plans for the house and had trouble finding a carpenter who could read them.^{5 6} In spring of 1903, David Morey a ships carpenter, was hired to work on the house which was completed early in 1906, before the April 18th earthquake. It seems the construction was solid and the earthquake damaged the house very little. It was inspected by an engineer and approved on May 4, 1906.⁷ The family tended the vegetables, flowers and orchards and lived in the house as it was originally constructed until 1918 when the upstairs was remodeled. In this remodeling, dormers were added to bring light and ventilation into the upper bedrooms where there was not good circulation and the spaces were rearranged to provide closets and the potential for a bathroom.

Accounts tell of a very active social life with guests coming and staying overnight (no mention of who or from where they came). Edwin was managing a ranch in Oakley for his mother as well as the Mt. View property when he died in 1921. At the time his father died Ralph was attending the College of the Pacific in San Jose. The death of his father forced Ralph to balance the ranch work and studies until he graduated in 1924. It appears that the effort to manage two ranches was too much and the Los Altos ranch was sold in 1930. After the sale or likely foreclosure by Bank of America, the land was sold to California Lands Inc. and recorded April 11, 1930. After losing the land, Ethel and her mother moved to Palo Alto where Ethel was employed in the Hoover War Library (Hoover Institute for War and Peace). Ralph, it appears, continued to manage the ranch in Oakley and later went to work for P.G. & E. in San Francisco.

Subsequent owners of the house and property

California Lands Inc., sold the property to John Duzanica and his wife Katherine who were both natives of Dalmatia (Yugoslavia). John was born in 1894 and his wife about the same year. They immigrated in 1910 and spent some time in the Sacramento area before settling in the Santa Clara Valley in 1920, where they had an extended family. They had three children, Nicholas T. (1916), Anne K. (1918) and John P. (1929). It does not appear the Duzanicas lived on the subject property, their residence was on Portola Road in Woodside. Anthony Nicholas and his wife Stephanie appear to move onto the property and care for the orchards. Anthony was born in Yugoslavia in 1882 and immigrated to the United States in 1899. Stephanie was also from Yugoslavia born in 1893 and emigrated in 1912. The Nicholas family lived close by the Emerson's property in the Fremont District where Anthony worked on farms and owned a small farm

⁴ Emerson, Ethel, The Emerson Home on Mira Monte, presented to the California History Section of the Los Altos-Mt. View AAUS, March 12, 1979

⁵ Ibid page 2

⁶ There is unconfirmed indication that the plans may have come from William Ralph Emerson, Bostonian architect. The house is very similar to his designs and the Edwin Emerson were from Boston. Further research would be warranted.

⁷ Chimney and house inspection report, 1906

prior to taking on the Duzamica property. The Nicholas family included daughter Pearl and son John Nicholas. In 1940, Stephanie's older brother, Andrew Mareovich also lived with them and worked on the ranch.⁸

After his death in 1965 the property was distributed to Katherine Duzanica, (individual property) and Trustee Nick T. Duzanica and John N. Duzanica. In 1970 the property was sold by the Duzanica's to James Edward Pease, his wife Ruby Lee Pease and Georgia Ann Nelson. During the time the Pease/Nelson ownership the tank house was moved to the side of the house. The next owner, David Torres Jr. purchased the property on February 16, 1977 and sold it a year and a half later on July 13, 1978 to John Charles and Sherrill K. Walker. After her passing, the current owner is John C. Walker. It is the desire of Mr. Walker to return the tank house to a location at the rear of the property and to repair the deterioration to the house that has occurred over time, including a new foundation. The house and tank house will be moved on the property to align them as they would have been and to tank house's relocation on the property and to create an additional residential parcel.

5. Description of the Property and Buildings at 980 Covington Rd.

Located in a residential area where most buildings are much newer and landscaping is tailored, the 1.5 story house was constructed between 1902-1905 and sits on a double lot accessed from Covington Road by a straight in style driveway. The site is relatively flat and was at one time the farm house surrounded by orchards.

5.1 Edwin and Annie Emerson House

The house was designed in a variation of the Shingle style with the character defining front facing gable (steep pitched roof) with hipped gables on each side. The roof extends a broad eave overhanging the lower level. Boxed eaves and the base of each gable has a slight flare that is clad in diamond shaped shingles. Dentils decorate the cornice and triangular vents are set in each gable peak. The roof is clad with slate shingles. Giving the style its name the dominate gable and dormer surfaces are clad in wood shingles that are square cut on the larger fields and diamond pointed on the front bellowed extension (square cut on the sides). The lower level, recessed below the gable, is clad with horizontal lapped siding. The porch is set below and behind the upper overhang which is supported by square posts and open on the sides. Accessed by non-original concrete stairs with used brick low walls, the porch has a wood floor. Fenestration includes a Palladian window and had a decorative wood balconette in the center front gable (this is severely deteriorated and has been removed awaiting repair and reinstallation). Other windows include one-over-one double-hung wood frame windows and several square fixed bay windows with fixed rectangular transoms. Windows have a molded lung sill and dentil-trimmed meeting rail. The south façade has been remodeled to include side stairs and a landing at the porch. Like the rear addition the stair element is constructed with used brick and concrete stairs. A cross-member western style railing, part of the remodeling provides the fencing for the porch. The design is more appropriate to a Ranch style house than this Shingle style and should be replaced with a style more appropriate to the building. Historic photographs show the porch enclosed with screen, this would not be necessary to replicate. The rear of the house exhibits an addition that encloses the former utility porch. This addition uses contemporary materials, casement windows and brick veneer on the lower wall, stair-walls and porch. The foundation is damaged, cracked and settling at irregular elevations putting stress on different parts of the building. This is seen in interior where the floors rise and slope and plaster has cracked.

Even with the alterations, the house retains a high degree of original integrity, with only the rear addition a strong deviation, and this appears to follow the original foundation line. The porch railing and brick and concrete stairs on the front and side along with the need for general repair can be corrected as part of the planned rehabilitation work proposed by the Walkers.

⁸ U.S. Census 1940

The condition of the house is basically good, however it needs immediate foundation replacement. In addition to the items described above, the building needs substantial maintenance to repair and care for the windows and siding. There remain extensive repair issues to bring all windows to operable condition and repair the deteriorated wood pieces that have been painted but not properly filled or replaced in-kind. Water diversion systems have allowed water to collect in some areas that should drain away from the building. These should be repaired/repositioned and maintained to protect the building. There is also repair and refinishing that should be done to maintain interior features, staircases and other wood systems.

5.2. Other improvements on the subject site:

The second building on the property is a tank house that has been relocated from the rear of the house to the front - south side of the house, on the same parcel. The building has been enlarged to create a garage. The basic structure of the tank house appears to be present and in good condition inside the additions to create the garage and additional enclosed space. It may be that the wood used for the additions came from a barn on the property although this is discounted by Ethel Emerson in her interview. However, the construction is rather crude and much of the material is deteriorating. Although altered, the tank house is considered a defining feature of the property and should be preserved. The proposed plan is to move it closer to the original location, off the rear facade and behind the house. This relocation will provide a more accurate interpretation of how a turn-of-the -century farm house and tank house would have been sited.

The third building on the property is called a "carriage house" and is not considered a historic resource. This building is proposed to be removed.

Swimming pool, pool house and pool terrace. The swimming pool, pool house and concrete terrace around the pool are not historic structures and do not contribute to the character of the house. They are proposed to be removed.

5.3. Photographs of the property and house and tank house at 980 Covington Road, Los Altos



Photograph 1 980 Covington Road, Los Altos – Main house

View: Historic photograph Front façade showing porch and screen enclosure (note the side dormer has not been added)

Date: c. 1912 Source: John Walker



Photograph 2 980 Covington Road, Los Altos – Main house

View: Historic photograph Front façade showing porch stair wall and screen enclosure

Date: c. 1912 Source: John Walker



Photograph 3 980 Covington Road, Los Altos – Main house

View: front facade of the main house.

Date: August 2013

Camera facing: west



Photograph 4

View: Rear facade showing the addition enclosing the former utility porch.

Date August, 2013

Camera facing: East



Photograph 5
View: North facade – enlarged dormer c.1918, new dormer in rear.
Date August, 2013
Camera Facing: SE



Photograph 6

View: North façade; Looking from the rear of the house toward the front

Date: January 4, 2013

Camera facing: SW



Photograph 7

View: South facade showing the additional stair and western cross brace porch railings. Swimming pool is in the foreground.

Date: August, 2013

Camera facing: north



Photograph 8
View: Tank house with additions creating a garage
Date: August 2013
Camera Facing: East



Photograph 9
View: Tank house with additions creating a garage
Date: August 2013
Camera Facing: South

6. Evaluation and Conclusion of Significance:

The building at 980 Covington Road is a rare turn-of-the-century Shingle style farm house. It was constructed in 1902-1905 for Edwin and Annie Emerson and their two children Ethel and Ralph. The family were fruit orchardists in Los Altos and part of an extended family from Boston that settled in what became Los Altos. Fruit orchards and fruit products were the economic backbone of Santa Clara Valley from the 1870s through the start of WWII. The house, though altered and enlarged in the rear, retains the appearance of an early 1900 home and is an uncommon style for the Los Altos area. Constructed prior to the development of a downtown, the area was known as Santa Clara County's Fremont, or Mountain View District, and was part of the "Valley of Heart's Delight", the period when orchards covered the Valley in spring blossoms and the aroma of ripe or drying fruit filled the Valley in the late summer. This house represents a significant architectural element in the history of residential architecture and habitation in Los Altos. Although their story is not unique in Santa Clara Valley, the Emerson family were pre-1900 settlers in Los Altos and their home is an important living monument to the evolving story of the families that came to the area and made it their home as well as their business and in doing so creating the physical history of Los Altos.

The house retains a high degree of integrity as measured by the seven aspects defined by the National Register of Historic Places. The aspects are:

Location-the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.

Design- the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure and style of a property (building)

Setting- the physical environment of a historic property

Materials- the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern of configuration to form a historic property

Workmanship- the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture of people during any given period in history or prehistory

Feeling- a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

Association-the direct link between and important historic event or person and a historic property.

The Emerson House retains a high degree of integrity from six of the seven aspects. Those are location, design, materials, workmanship and feeling. The aspect of setting is diminished by the subdivision and development of houses instead of the rural orchard setting. While this is unfortunate, the house with a tank house communicates a strong message of its era and artistic design.

The California Register of Historic Resources:

The State Historical Resources Commission has designed this program for use by state and local agencies, private groups and citizens to identify, evaluate, register and protect California's historical resources. The Register is the authoritative guide to the state's significant historical and archeological resources.

The California Register program encourages public recognition and protection of resources of architectural, historical, archeological and cultural significance, identifies historical resources for state and local planning purposes, determines eligibility for state historic preservation grant funding and affords certain protections under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Criteria for Designation

Criterion 1 Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.

Criterion 2 Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history.

Criterion 3 Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values.

Criterion 4 Has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation.

The Emerson House qualifies for the California Register of Historic Resources under Criterion 3.

The property retains a high degree of integrity and embodies the distinctive characteristics of the “Shingle” architectural style, one that is rare in the City of Los Altos and reflects the home design of a sophisticated fruit rancher at the turn of the century. The building shows a type, period and method of construction that represents a work with high artistic values

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places has established standards for evaluating the significance of resources that are important in the heritage of the Nation. Historic resources may be considered important at the local level, state level or national level. To apply the standards the resource must be considered within significant historical contexts.

Requiring a slightly higher degree of integrity and significant associations the National Register of Historic Places criteria is as follows;

1. A property must generally be fifty years old or meet additional criteria.
2. The resource must retain architectural and historical integrity from the period of significance.
3. The resources must meet at least one of the following four criteria:
 - a. are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
 - b. are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
 - c. embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method that possess high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
 - d. have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

Criteria of age: The main house and tank house are over 50 years old

Evaluation of Integrity: It appears that the main house retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Although alterations to the building and setting have occurred over time, the house retains sufficient architectural integrity to be further evaluated using the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places. The criteria for integrity require that a property retain most if not all of the seven attributes of integrity.

Criterion “a” – The era of development and agricultural expansion within Santa Clara County in the area of Los Altos that occurred in the very early 1900s is represented in the development of this property with a house, tank house barn and ancillary buildings set amid 80 acres of fruit orchards.. However the National

Register further clarifies the broad events with the word significant “*with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history*”. The subdivision and subsequent development of this individual property as the farm house for a fruit ranch, without other events associated with the property is not considered significant at the level required by the National Register of Historic Places.

Criteria “b” Research indicates the original and recent past owners of the property, did not have significant associations with historical events or were people important in the history of Los Altos. To be considered significant, the National Register requires property to be “...*associated with the lives of persons significant in our past*. Although agriculture was the leading industry and fruit ranches were very important, without additional information that Edwin Emerson contribute to the agricultural industry in a significant way the property does not appear to meet criterion b.

Criteria “c” The house represents a Shingle style that gained popularity along the east coast at the turn-of-the-century but is rare in Los Altos. The design is not an exceptional example of the early version of this style and it has been altered with an addition to the rear of the building and elements that are not appropriate to the style. A review of data bases maintained at local universities did not uncover the name of the architect. The Register requires “*buildings embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method that possess high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction*”. The main house embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Shingle style and is artistic in the design, however the remodeling and use of inappropriate design elements diminishes the integrity of the building. After rehabilitation the buildings may meet the criteria of criterion C

Criteria “d” The surface of the property has been extensively disturbed during farming and then with the excavation of the foundations for the house, swimming pool and tank house. This activity has dislocated the native soil to a depth of several feet. Therefore it is unlikely that the site will yield additional information about history or prehistory. The criteria for eligibility requires properties that have *yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history*.

Considering the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places, the property is potentially eligible for listing under criterion C. because the house exhibits an architectural style that is well defined and rare in Los Altos.

7. Evaluation of the proposed changes to the property and how they address the guidelines found in the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Property.⁹

1. Relocation and New Foundation: The Emerson house requires a new foundation. The usual process is to lift the building move it to the side and replace basement and the foundation then return the building to the new foundation and tie it down. In this case it is proposed to construct the new foundation to the side of the building and then move the building to the new foundation rotating it 90 degrees so the entrance is onto Covington Road.

Generally it is not advised to relocate historic buildings, however in this proposal the relocation is on the same property so the association with the Emerson family is not lost. Rotating the axis of the house to face Covington Road will not alter the character defining features of the house. When it was constructed, Mira Monte was a rural road and Emerson

⁹ The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and guidelines are included in the Appendix.

Road, now Covington Road an even smaller road. Today Mira Monte is a major thoroughfare street in Los Altos and Covington less trafficked. The change in orientation does not significantly alter the architectural features of the building or dramatically alter the way the building represents the early twentieth-century farm house.

The parcel is proposed to be divided creating a new residential parcel. The result of this action will reduce the size of the parcel with the Emerson House and tank house. While it is nice to have a large parcel-70 acres or so to display a farm house in its original setting, this is not feasible. The farm house has been without its original orchard setting for many years. Yet it continues to exhibit the architecture and relationship to a tank house that immediately tell a viewer this is an early twentieth-century house and with the tank house also visible, that it was a rural farm house. Continuing the location on the corner retains a connection with the original location on Emerson and Mira Monte Roads. The reduction in parcel size does not appear to significantly diminish the current setting of the house and tank house.

Relocation of the Tank House. The tank house was moved to its current location along the side of the house in the 1970s. In most rural settings the tank house is to the rear of the farm house, as was true for the Emerson property. There are several reasons for this on an active farm, one that carries to the present is the view. Tank houses are ancillary buildings and were not placed in locations that they become the primary view from the "public" rooms of the house. Spaces between the farm house and the orchard were usually devoted to gardens (flower and vegetable) and a driveway to the rear behind the house where barns, tank houses, stables, and other supporting buildings were found. When possible, prevailing wind or breeze was also a factor in locating the buildings away from the house to reduce the incident of strong odors into the house. Relocating the tank house to a site behind the house will return the original relationship to the site. Rehabilitating the original tank house structure in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Property will preserve this historic building. At present the plans for the rehabilitation of this building are in the conceptual phase and appear to be appropriate with a shed style garage on one side. If the concept is approved the final plans will need to be reviewed for conformance with the "Standards."

Addition to the rear of the house. It is proposed to remodel the rear of the house and to add a 675 square foot, single-story room. When it is necessary or desirable to add space to a historic building the preferred location is always away from the prime facades. With houses the prime facades are usually those seen from the public way, front and side. Thus the rear becomes the preferred location for an addition. In very schematic form, the plan for the additions appears to be an appropriate size that does not diminish the significant architectural features of the house. However, the design appears to copy elements and features of the historic building, something that is discouraged by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

If approved in concept, the new addition should not copy or attempt to be seen as the historic building, but should differentiate the two eras of construction. Plans for the remodeling should be reviewed for conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the rehabilitation of Historic Buildings.

General maintenance and repair: The building requires substantial repair work, including the windows which do not operate and wood siding that has been damaged by insects or other causes and inappropriate materials such as concrete steps in the front. The brick currently around the foundation should not be used again. IT is inappropriate to the architectural style and was not part of the house during the time the Emersons owned the property.¹⁰

This work remains in concept and has not been thoroughly defined. All work should follow the guidance in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings.

8 APPENDIX

8.1 Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Rehabilitating Historic Buildings

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

¹⁰ Emerson, Ethel, The Emerson Home on Mira Monte, presented to the California History Section of the Los Altos-Mt. View AAUS, March 12, 1979 pg 16

7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

8.2. References Consulted:

Periodicals and Official Records are noted in the footnotes.

Circa Historic Property Development, DPR 523 A& B for the property at 1448 Fowler Lane, Los Altos, 2008

Circa Historical Property Development. City of Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory, 2011

Emerson, Ethel E., *The Emerson Home on Mira Monte*, March 12, 1979 (unpublished paper delivered to the California History Section, Los Altos-Mountain View AAUW)

Laffey, Glory Anne, DPR file for 980 Covington Road, 1997 (courtesy of Charlene Detlefs)

McAlester, Virginia & Lee; A Field Guide to American Houses, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2002

McDonald, Don & Los Altos History Museum, Images of America-Early Los Altos and Los Altos Hills, Arcadia Publishing, Charleston South Carolina, 2010

State of California, Office of Historic Preservation, Instructions for Nominating Historical Resources to the California Register of Historical Resources, 1997

United States Department of the Interior, National Register Bulletin – How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, 1997

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Buildings. U.S. Government Printing Office 1992

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitating and Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings. U.S. Government Printing Office 1995

Woodworth, Edwin B., The Birth of a Town-A Historic Resource Manuscript, History House Books, Los Altos History House Publication, 1988

The Los Altos History Museum, Lisa Robinson assisted with the research.

Interview: Charlene Detlefs, provided information from the files of Glory Anne Laffey's 1997 survey

Email and Interview; John Walker, owner of the property

State of California The Resources Agency
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
 HRI # _____
 Trinomial _____
 NRHP Status Code NA

Other Listings _____
 Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

AUG 28 2014

CITY OF LOS ALTOS
PLANNING

Page 1 of 3 *Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 980 Covington Rd., Los Altos CA

P1. Other Identifier: Edward L. Emerson House (HRI #17)

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

*a. County Santa Clara and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad _____ Date 1980 T ; R ; 3 of 3 of Sec ; B.M.

c. Address 980 Covington Road City Los Altos Zip 94024

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 10, 580804 mE/ 4135725 mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)
APN 189-11-068

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)
 Located in a residential area where most buildings are much newer, the 1.5 story house was constructed between 1902-1905 and sits on a double lot accessed from the street by a driveway. The site is relatively flat and was at one time surrounded by orchards.

The house was designed in the Shingle Style with the character defining front facing gable (steep pitched roof) with hipped gables on each side. The roof extends a broad eave overhanging the lower level. Boxed eaves and the base of each gable has a slight flare that is clad in diamond shaped shingles. Dentils decorate the cornice and triangular vents are set in each gable peak. The roof is clad with slate shingles. Typical of the style the gable and dormer surfaces are clad in wood shingles while the lower level is clad with lapped siding. The porch is set below and behind the upper overhang which is supported by square posts and open on the sides.

(Continued on page 3)

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP 2 Single family detached house



P5b. Description of Photo: (view, date, accession #) View W

Front Facade. 9/09/ 2007

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:

Historic Prehistoric Both

Constructed: 1905 family records

*P7. Owner and Address:

John Walker

980 Covington Rd. Los Altos

*P8. Recorded by: (Name, affiliation, and address)

Bonnie Bamburg

Urban Programmers

10710 Ridgeview Avenue

San Jose CA 95127

*P9. Date Recorded: 9/20/2013

*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)

Intensive

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.") Los Altos Historic Resource Inventory

*Attachments: NONE Location Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (List):

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*NRHP Status Code 5S1/3CS

Page 2 of 3

*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 980 Covington Road, Los Altos

B1. **Historic Name:** Edwin Emerson House

B2. **Common Name:** Emerson House

B3. **Original Use:** residence

B4. **Present Use:** residence

*B5. **Architectural Style:** Shingle Style

*B6. **Construction History:** (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

*B7. **Moved?** No **Yes** **Unknown** **x** **Date:** _____ **Original Location:**

*B8. **Related Features:**

Tank house and mature trees

B9a. **Architect:** _____ Unknown **b. Builder:** David Morey

*B10. **Significance: Theme** residential architecture **Area** City of Los Alto

Period of Significance 1906-1963 **Property Type** house **Applicable Criteria** NA

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

The Emerson House is important in the architectural heritage of Los Altos because it is a very good example of the Shingle style interpreted for a rural fruit ranch setting. It retains a high degree of original design and materials from 1906, and appears to be the only Shingle style and one of the few remaining Los Altos fruit ranch houses from the early 1900s, that retains integrity. The house is eligible for Los Altos Landmark designation and for the California Register of Historic Resources based upon its architecture and association with the Edwin Emerson Family.

The style is very similar to the houses on the east coast designed by William Ralph Emerson (1833-1917) "The Father of the Shingle Style", an architect who practiced in the Boston area. Originally from Illinois, his first house in the true shingle style was constructed in Bar Harbor Main as were several country homes along the eastern coast, for which is best known. If not designed by William Ralph Emerson, it can be assumed that the designer of the house was familiar with Emerson's work.

Although not as individually unique as the architecture, the Emerson family history tells of an east coast family that settled in the Santa Clara Valley and became successful raising fruit. Through the adversity of their house burning they stayed in the area, rebuilt, and continued the hard work of operating a fruit ranch. (Continued on Page 3)

B11. **Additional Resource Attributes:** (List attributes and codes) HP

*B12. **References:** City & County public documents, Emerson, Ethel, The Emerson Home on Mira Monte, a paper written March 12, 1979

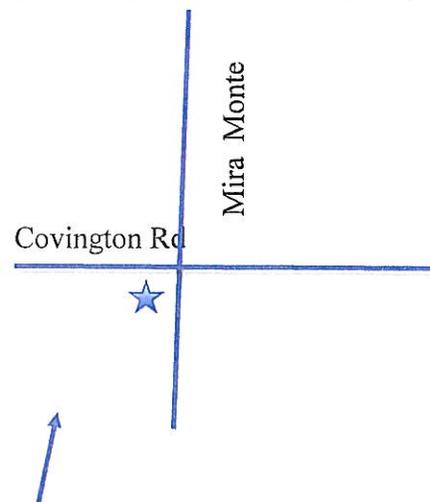
B13. **Remarks:**

*B14. **Evaluator:** Bonnie Bamburg

***Date of Evaluation:** 9/10/2013

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch Map with north arrow required.)



Page 3 of 3 *Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 980 Covington Rd, Los Altos

*Recorded by: Urban Programmers *Date _____ x Continuation Update

P3.Description continued

Fenestration includes a Palladian windows with decorative wood balconette in the center front gable (this is severely deteriorated and has been removed awaiting repair and reinstallation). Other windows include one-over-one double-hung wood frame windows and several square fixed bay windows with fixed rectangular transoms. Windows have a molded lung sill and dentil-trimmed meeting rail. The rear of the house exhibits an addition that encloses a former utility porch using contemporary materials, casement windows and brick. The house retains a high degree of original integrity, with only the rear addition a deviation, and this appears to follow the original foundation line.

The second building on the property is a tank house that has been relocated from the rear of the house to the front side- on the same parcel and altered. The basic structure of the tank house appears to be present within additions that created additional enclosed space for storage and a garage. Although altered and relocated, the tank house is considered a defining feature of the property.

The house is a good example of turn of the century Shingle style in residential architecture which is uncommon in Santa Clara County. The selection of an eastern style demonstrates that the family was aware of trends and brought Eastern architectural styles to the west coast and their ranch in Santa Clara Valley. Unconfirmed is the connection to William Ralph Emerson, "Father of the Shingle Style" residential architecture. If ever confirmed it would make the building even more significant as likely the only west coast example of his work.

This conclusion supports that made by Circa Historic Property Development in July 2011

B13. Significance Continued:

The history of Los Altos begins with the Ohlone, Native Americans who lived on the land for centuries. They were decimated by the illness and lifestyles of the Europeans (Spanish) brought in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Archeological sites in Los Altos give clues to this early population. With Independence from Spain, the Mexican government allowed large Ranchos to be granted to private people, usually in recognition of service. The area which is now Los Altos was part of the 4,438 acre Rancho San Antonio, a land grant given in 1843 to Juan Prado Mesa, a soldier. The area grew with the recognition that it was a fertile plain the large tracts used for grazing were divided and turned into fruit ranches initially by Americans and by 1880 European immigrants experienced in farming and fruit ranching. By the turn of the century the area was recognized for its mild climate and with access to the Southern Pacific Railroad between San Francisco and San Jose a town was promoted by Paul Shoup, President of the Altos Land Company. Although fruit ranching continued unto the 1960s, Los Altos was defined as a residential community by 1909 and has continued to grow with primarily residential development.

The first home of the Edwin Emerson family in Santa Clara County was a farm house constructed by Edwin's uncle Silas Blake Emerson. After the house burned in 1902 Edwin took on the task of building a new home, which took three years to complete. His journal and letters to his wife describe the difficulties getting experienced construction workers to fulfill his plans.¹ The family continued to operate fruit their fruit ranch until 1930 when it was sold. The Emerson family home is associated with the fruit ranching era in the area that became Los Altos.

¹ Ethel Emerson, *The Emerson Home on Mira Monte*, A paper presented to the California History Section of the Los Altos-Mountain View AAUW, March 12, 1979