

DOCUMENTATION OF THE
LEWIS/O'BRIEN HOUSE
BASED ON THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY (HABS) FORMAT

Location: 86 North Sixth Street, San José, Santa Clara County, California
APN 467-19-053

USGS San José West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
10s 4133174mE 4133174mN

Present Owner: San José Unified School District

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: N/A

Significance: The report prepared by LSA Associated, Inc. stated that the Lewis/O'Brien house, located at 86 North Sixth Street would qualify for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criteria 1, 2, and 3 and also eligible for listing as a City of San Jose Landmark meeting all seven criteria for designation. The importance of this building comes from many aspects. It is associated with Augustus B. Hunter, a California pioneer of 1849 and an important early farmer in Santa Clara County. He was also a member of the State Legislature and the San Jose City Council. The house is one of the few remaining residences built in San Jose in the 1870's and retains its historical design integrity. The report also stated that it would be a contributor to a potential historic district.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: 1876
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners:
 - 1876 James B. Lewis, a druggist, constructed this house
 - 1883 Lewis sold the property to George McCauley
 - Mid 1880's McCauley sold the property to George Graves
 - Late 1880's G. Graves is noted as selling the property to Augustus B. Hunter
 - By 1909 Property was owned by E.W. Jack
 - By 1922 H.S. and Anastasia Cunningham and Frank J. O'Brien owned the property.
 - 1926 Owned by Anastasia Cunningham and Frank J. O'Brien
 - 2001 Acquired by San José Unified School District
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown
5. Original plans and construction: Unknown
6. Alterations and additions: The 1915 Sanborn map shows the footprint of the building as it stands today; therefore, the addition(s) on the rear of the building, east façade, was (were) made prior to that. Also a screened in porch on the south elevation is evident on the Sanborn Map. Dates of all additions are unknown.

B. Historical Context:

The most prominent person associated with the house is Augustus B. Hunter who resided there from the late 1880's until his death in 1902. Hunter was elected to the state legislature in 1882 and maintained this position for two terms. He also served on the San José City Council.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This single-story, wood-framed building is Italianate in style.
2. Condition of fabric: Some of the details, along with the porch stairs, are very deteriorated and would need replacing if a restoration effort was undertaken; however much of the structure itself is in moderate to good condition. The majority of the doors are original to the structure, complete with hardware, and the faux wood graining is in excellent condition in most cases. The plaster ceilings, along with portions of the walls, have been severely damaged by water.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Excluding porches, the bulk of the house measures approximately 36' wide by 49' deep.
2. Foundations: The building has no foundation. The supporting members rest on earth.
3. Walls: Channel rustic siding, with 8 ¾" to 9" reveals, covers the entire façade with 11 ½" quoins at each corner. The quoins were made of 7/8" thick boards. The water table projects 2 ¼" and is built-up 2 ¼" with a 1x6 apron. The siding is fastened with square 2 ½" long nails.
4. Structural system, framing: This wood framed structure is supported by redwood, 2x10 joists @ 18" o.c. The cross bracing is also redwood. The joists sit on a 4x4 ledger. Posts are located on every other joist and the 3x4's sit directly on the earth. There is no mudsill. Two 2x6 cantilevers support the bay window, one at each corner. A curved base is attached onto curved struts at the wall corners.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The front entry is accessed from a small covered, wooden stoop. The roof of the stoop is pedimented and supported by two chamfered, square columns and two pilasters. The posts are wrapped with 1x7 ½" at the base. The flooring used for the porch is 1x4 tongue-and-groove trimmed with bullnose molding. A porch on the south side of the house is partially screened-in. A third porch, which is also screened, is located on the east elevation on the north end.
6. Chimneys: The chimney appears to no longer be extant.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The paneled front entry, located on the west façade, is recessed with a four-panel, faux-grained wood door. The bottom two door panels are square. The top two panels are approximately three times longer than the bottom panel and are arched at the top. A segmented arch is located in this recessed entry and a transom is located above the door. Two exterior doors are located on the south façade, both off of the side porch. Two additional entries are located on the east (rear) façade. The east façade is overgrown making the doors inaccessible from the outside. The wood steps at these two entries are also deteriorated beyond use.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The majority of the windows are one-over-one double-hung with wood sash. The windows on the bay are unique in that the top of the upper sash has arched glazing within the rectangular sash. No shutters are present.

8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The roof is gabled in front and otherwise hipped. A flat roof covers the open porch on the south elevation. The roof is covered with composition shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The moderate, boxed eaves are supported by scrolled double-brackets. The eaves extend approximately 18" from the face of the wall. The reveal has the same scrollwork profile as the brackets. The brackets are beveled under the gable. The fascia is approximately 14" wide.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: N/A

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The main entry is approximately centered on the west façade and leads through a central hall to the parlor on the right side. The bay window is located in the parlor. Through double pocket doors on the east wall of the parlor is the dining room. Beyond the dining room is the kitchen, which has a small pantry, and beyond the kitchen is a bedroom addition. To the left of the hall, at the front of the house, is a small room with an interior window on the east wall, next to a closet. Behind this room, adjacent to the dining room and at the end of the entry hall, is a room with two interior windows; a high one on the west wall, as noted, and one on the east wall. The high window, located in a closet, is a casement that leads into the front room. Another, smaller, room is found to the east. A walk-in closet and a laundry porch are located to the rear (east) of this room. The bathroom is located between the laundry porch and the southeast bedroom.
2. Stairways: N/A
3. Flooring: The flooring is primarily tongue and groove softwood. Much of the floors are covered with carpet or various patterns of historical linoleum.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: The majority of the walls and ceilings remain plaster over wood lath. The lath is fastened to the framing with square, 1" long nails. Many of the walls are wallpapered, and some ceilings are papered as well. The two northwestern rooms have wood wainscoting. The boards are about 5 5/8" wide with an asymmetrical beading.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: All of the doors appear to be original to the structure. The majority of the doors are 7'-6" in height and four-paneled, with the lower two panels being square and the upper two panels being rectangular and approximately 3x taller than the bottom panels. The majority of the doors are faux grained or appear to have been at an earlier date. The original hardware also appears to all be intact. The hinges are 11" long with recessed screws and are also faux grained. All of the doorways have wooden thresholds that have been worn and rounded over time.
 - b. Windows: The majority of the windows are one-over-one double-hung with wood sash and aprons. The rear internal window appears to have slid up into the wall and has a distinctive pattern, a frosted diamond grid with alternating stylized flowers
6. Decorative features and trim: The baseboards that are located throughout the house are have an overall height of 10 3/4".
7. Hardware: The majority of the door and window hardware appears to be original to the building. The doorknob plates are faux-grain matching the door.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: A gas space heater is located in the dining room. The heater vents into the wall at what appears to have been a former decorative fireplace.
 - b. Lighting: Electrical service has been added to the house. Some porcelain fixtures are extant.

- c. Plumbing: Indoor plumbing is only located at the rear of the house in the kitchen, laundry, and the one bathroom where early fixture remain extant.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The building is located on the east side of North Sixth Street on an interior lot. The lot is approximately 70' wide and 138' deep. The building faces west and fronts North Sixth Street. A garage is sited at the rear.
- 2. Historic landscape design: No historic landscape plantings appear to be extant except for a possibly old row of rose bushes located along the north fence line in the east corner. The front walk is scored concrete in a symmetrical curved design.
- 3. Outbuildings: The garage is located on the southeast corner of the lot with the east façade built on the property line and three sliding doors facing west. The building is rectangular in shape, and its exterior dimensions are approximately 50' wide by 20' deep. It has horizontal siding and a shed roof.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: No architectural drawings were found.
- B. Early Views: None
- C. Interviews: None
- D. Bibliography:
 - 1. Primary and unpublished sources:
Historic Report for the Lewis/O'Brien House, Prepared by LSA Associates, Inc., January 2001.
 - 2. Secondary and published sources: None

Prepared by: Dill Design Group
June 2001

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by Dill Design Group for the San José Unified School District as a part of the mitigation measures required by the City of San José as part of the Horace Mann School expansion plan. This report follows the requirements for HABS-level documentation according to the Outline Format described in the Historic American Buildings Survey Guidelines for Preparing Written Historical Descriptive Data as recommended in the report prepared by LSA Associates, Inc. HABS level, large format photographs accompany this report as also recommended in the report prepared by LSA Associated, Inc.