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RE: Request to Revise the 2003 Historical Resources Survey Description for 622 E Street, Davis, California

The purpose of this memo is to document inaccuracies found in the description of the house at 622 E Street in Davis in the City's 2003 Survey of Historical Resources and to request its revision as part of the current process of updating the City's inventory of historical resources.

I. 622 E Street Background

The new homeowners at 622 E Street, Stacey Parker and Steve Penniman, moved into the house in September of 2013. In acquainting themselves with their new residence, they sought to better understand the home's history and construction. In the process, they came across the City's 2003 Historical Survey, which prompted a search for additional information to help explain the apparent discrepancies between the survey and what they were seeing in the house's characteristics. The City's 2003 historical survey covered several of Davis' most historic neighborhoods, including the Old North Davis neighborhood in which 622 E Street is located and described (Figure 1).

They subsequently found documents, photos, and maps, and continued to inspect the house further in the light of these materials. Much was explained, and the Survey's description of the house was shown to be inconsistent with these findings. The aspects of the description that are of concern and/or interest are highlighted and enumerated below:

"This Minimal Traditional house **has a complex plan which stair steps back from the street** in three distinct bays. The L-shape central structure has a cross gable roof. There is a projecting front gable wing, a central side gable wing, and a third bay which attaches to the south wall of the house and has a separate and lower elevation gable roof. **The front porch of the house is oriented toward the south** (side) of the house and is covered by a long extension of the eaves of the front wing roof. Fenestration is varied and includes both double hung and casement windows. **It is clad with composition clapboard siding. The house was constructed in 1932. Despite the change in cladding,** the house retains its integrity of design, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association. **It appears to be unaltered** and it contributes to a district eligible for the California Register.

1. "... has a complex plan that stair steps back from the street..."

2. "The front porch of the house is oriented toward the south..."
3. "It is clad with composition clapboard siding."
4. "The house was constructed in 1932."
5. "Despite the change in cladding, ..."
6. "It appears to be unaltered..."

II. Comparison of Findings with the Survey

1. "... has a complex plan that stair steps back from the street..."

The plan is indisputably complex. In this case it appears as though the complexity may call into question the house being designed as a whole as implied in the last sentence of the description, "It appears to be unaltered..."

2. "The front porch of the house is oriented toward the south..."

The front porch functions as a covering over the front door, which while oriented toward the south, the front door is oriented west. A March 20, 1942 Photo of 618 E Street photo (Figure 2) with 622 E Street on the left, and the 1933 Sanborn Insurance Map (Figure 3), both show the first entry door and small porch on the south side of the main 12' x 20' room.

3. "It is clad with composition clapboard siding."

The house has wood clapboard siding (not composition clapboard) and it occurs only on the 1948 front projecting addition, not the entire house. Removing a bit of paint exposed the wood.

4. "The house was constructed in 1932." (A-E)

The year that the house is recorded as being built is inconsistent in two key documents. An Appraisal of Property, March 18, 1933 (Figure 4) reports it as having been erected in 1932 while page 1 of the 1946-1997 Yolo County Residential Building Record (Figure 5) on file at the Assessor's Office states 1921. Additionally, page 2 of the latter includes a plan view (Figure 6), which illustrates the original floor plan of 1921, and identifies three additions: 1934, 1948 and 1964.

The 1921 Sanborn Insurance Map (Figure 7) does not show 622 E Street, which doesn't substantiate the 1921 build date. However, the map may not have been updated in time to show it. As an example, the 1934 addition does not appear on the 1944 (Figure 8) or 1945 map (Figure 9), nor does the 1948 addition appear on the 1953 map (Figure 10).

The 1933 Sanborn Insurance Map is the first Sanborn Insurance map to show 622 E Street (Figure 3).

In an attempt to better understand the house's history, pertinent construction dates, additions, and other changes have been excerpted and chronologically listed below from the plan view and remarks found on page 2 of the 1946-1997 Yolo County Residential Building Record (Figure 6), and from the 1946-1960 Yolo County Residential Building Record (Figure 11). When thought to be helpful, additional clarifying information is provided.

A. 1921 - A 384 sq. ft. house comprised of a cross gable 12'x 20' main room and an 8'x 18' central rear wing is recorded as existing on Lot 15 (Figure 6).

B. 1930 - A small 6'x 8' addition was added to the east side of the 8'x 18' central rear wing (Figure 11). The addition no longer exists, but it can be seen in the 1942 photo (Figure 2) to the left of 618 E Street.

C. 1934 - A 10'x 15' addition was constructed on the north side of the 12'x 20' main room (Figure 6). As mentioned above, this addition is absent from the 1944 and 1945 Sanborn Insurance maps (Figures 8 & 9) but appears on the 1953 Sanborn Insurance Map (Figure 10).

D. 1948 - A 16'x 18' addition was constructed on the west side of the house (Figures 6 & 11). However, it is not reflected on the 1953 Sanborn (Figure 10). This addition has a porch roof oriented toward the south extending from its eaves. The original entry was located on the south gable end of the main room (Figure 2), which was replaced with a window. The newer entry door was installed in place of the middle window of the west facing façade (Figure 13). A ca. 1956 photo shows 622 E's 1948 addition on the left, far in the background, with 618 E Street on the right (Figure 12). An additional photo and color slide show the house in the early 1940's before the addition of the front wing and porch (Figures 13 & 14).

E. 1964 - An 8'x 12' addition was built onto the rear wing (Figure 6), replacing the 1930 6' x 8' addition (Figure 11). This addition is the first building permit on record issued for 622 E Street in the City of Davis Planning Department files (Figure 15).

5. "Despite the change in cladding, ..."

There is only one actual occurrence of replacement siding, and it is installed on the south side of the main 12'x 20' room to patch the first entry door opening. The siding used to patch the entry matches the original installed on that wall.

There are two different types of cladding on the house. Six-inch shiplap siding is on the majority of the house. It is on the main room, the rear projecting wing, and 1934 and 1964 additions. Eight-inch clapboard siding covers the 1948 addition.

6. "It appears to be unaltered..."

As outlined in #4, the house has been altered extensively.

The alterations listed above do not include a particularly significant discovery made during a floor re-finishing project. In removing the baseboards, a serious insect infestation in the wall cavity prompted the removal of a panel of sheetrock. The portion opened up was in an interior wall between the 12'x 20' main room and 8'x 18' rear wing and contained the remains of framing for a window (Figure 16). Partial double sill plates, a trimmer, and the full 3' header were visible. Framing for a passageway on the left now bisects this old covered over window framing. Additionally, remains of exterior siding could be seen on the rear wing addition side of the top plates.

This window frame indicates that the house was not just altered with the three additions. The main room had to have existed independently, with the central rear-projecting wing being added at some point.

Other construction features support the assertion that the 12'x 20' main room was constructed before the 8'x 18' rear projecting wing. They include inconsistencies in the roof skip sheeting, sheet rock, floor joist depths, a 3" difference in ceiling heights, and the 2x3 vs. 2x4 wall studs in the main room and rear wing, respectively.

This may explain why the house received the lowest possible marks for “functional plan” and “architectural attractiveness” in an early assessment (Figure 17). In light of the poor evaluation and the above facts, the idea of a house-move can be very useful in explaining how such a house developed into its present configuration. However, no documentation of a house-move has been found. A search for scuffing on the underside of the floor beams could possibly provide conclusive evidence, but the beams were replaced in the 1980’s (Figure 6: See Assessor’s remarks “replacing 4x6’s in basement”).

618 E Street, the house next door, was a house-move. It began as a vernacular cottage in Central Park, and is shown being moved onto its lot in a photo from 1936 (Figure 18) with 622 E Street already in place to the north. Another photo shows the rear view of 618 E Street being moved (Figure 19).

The Rowe Family was the first to live at 618 E Street. J. G. Rowe is shown as the owner of both 622 and 618 E Street lots on “The Official Map of the City of Davis of March 5th 1928” (Figure 20), on display at the Hattie Weber Museum. ES McBride’s Little Black Book (also found at the Hattie Weber) lists houses built in the district from the era by the name of the owner or building contractor. Unfortunately, it does not include addresses, and so is unhelpful in more securely establishing a construction date for 622 E Street, as it does not mention Mr. Rowe.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the information outlined above, the 2003 Historical Resources Survey description of the house at 622 E Street is shown to be in error, and its revision is requested to reflect the recently uncovered information, which is summarized below.

1. 622 E started as a very simple vernacular building, with a rectangular plan of 240 sq. ft.
2. It has undergone four significant additions, the last in 1964.
3. The original entrance and porch were removed.
4. The rear-projecting wing was an addition to the main room, forming a composite structure as the earliest recorded footprint of the house.
5. It has two kinds of siding, clapboard and shiplap, not because any original siding was replacing, but because the front wing was built at a later date with different materials.
6. The prominent front projecting wing was added near the end of the period of significance as was the attached porch with its ground level concrete slab patio.

The following is a suggested revision for the description of 622 E Street:

This Minimal Traditional house has a complex plan resulting primarily from its being constructed in stages, over a span of more than four decades. It reached its present configuration in 1964. Originally constructed and used as a 240 sq. ft. “economy” building, it was either moved to its present location already altered very significantly, or added to soon after moving. The prominent front projecting wing clad with contrasting siding was constructed near the end of the period of significance, as were the attached porch roof and ground level concrete slab patio. Given the house’s numerous early and late alterations, and its origin as a composite structure, it has never possessed architectural integrity on its present site, and does not contribute to a historic district eligible for listing on the California Register.