



DATE: April 27, 2015

AGENDA ITEM # 3

## AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Historical Commission  
**FROM:** Sean K. Gallegos, Staff Liaison  
**SUBJECT:** 482 University Avenue

### RECOMMENDATION:

None

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### BACKGROUND

The City Council designated the subject property as a historical landmark (Ordinance 78-16) on May 12, 1981. Following the completion of a historical evaluation by the City's Historic Consultant (CIRCA: Historic Property Development) in 2009, an updated DPR was provided for the subject building and site. Following an update to the City's Historic Resource Evaluation Methodology in 2011, the City's Historic Consultant completed an updated historical evaluation of 482 University Avenue (attachment 1).

The residence was constructed in the early 1920s (c.1923-1924) for Theodore Vail and Emma Wright Halsey. The property is significant for its association with a notable early Los Altos family and as a good example of the Spanish Eclectic style of architecture popular in California during the early 20th century. The house exhibits a high degree of integrity and appears to be in good to fair condition. The architect and builder are unknown.

It is also significant as a potential contributor to the potential University/Orange Historic District. The residence, surrounded by the Redwoods planted by Emma Wright Halsey over 80 years ago, retains to a large extent its historic character as well as a high degree of integrity of setting, location, materials, design, feeling and workmanship. Therefore, it is listed on the Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory as a Historic Resource and is assigned the California Register Status Code 5B: "Locally significant both individually (listed, eligible, or appears eligible) and as a contributor to a district that is locally listed, designated, determined eligible or appears eligible through survey evaluation."

On March 23, 2015, the Historical Commission reviewed the CIP program. The Commission approved a motion to recommend that the City Council include a new item within the CIP program. The Commission is requesting that the City Council allocate \$10,000.00 for 482 University Avenue, the Halsey House, to fund a historical evaluation update of the structure, people and events that took place at the property.

## **DISCUSSION**

Due to the completion of the previous historical evaluation and DPR, staff recommends that no further action be required regarding the Halsey House.

### *Attachments:*

- A. Historic Property Evaluation (DPR 523A), 482 University Avenue
- B. Resolution No. 81-24

# ATTACHMENT A

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

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_  
 HRI # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_  
 NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_  
 Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 3 \*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Halsey House

P1. Other Identifier: 482 University Avenue; HRI #74

\*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 \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_; R \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ of Sec \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_ B.M.

c. Address \_\_\_\_\_ City Los Altos Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)  
 APN: 175-13-38

\*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

Set in the center of Los Altos' Redwood Grove Park, this one-story, wood frame, stucco-clad house has a U-shaped plan and sits on a concrete foundation. Its converging hipped roofs are clad in Spanish clay tile and the concrete front entry porch, at the north corner of the house, is sheltered by a wood frame trellis covered with a translucent corrugated plastic. Some of the window and door openings are covered with plywood boards but the majority of the original wood sash windows and doors appear to be intact. The front entrance consists of two multi-paned doors, each with multi-pane sidelights. Three sets of french doors open onto the concrete patio that stretches along the north elevation. A tripartite window toward the rear of this elevation appears to have been replaced with two fixed-pane and one jalousie window through the remaining multi-pane casements and three-over-one double hungs with ogee lugs are original. A stucco wall with arched, inset wood panel doors encloses the open interior courtyard along the (rear) south elevation. Three-over-one windows with ogee lugs also line the east elevation and a pair of multi-pane doors are set into a recessed entry near the south end of this elevation. (See continuation sheet)

\*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP2. Single family property HP13. Community Center

\*P4. Resources Present:  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5b. Description of Photo:  
Primary Entrance (north corner)  
March 2009

\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:  Historic  Prehistoric  
 Both  
c.1923  
(Eugenia Hasley Buss, Sanborn Map)

\*P7. Owner and Address:  
City of Los Altos  
1 N. San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022

\*P8. Recorded by:  
Circa: Historic Property Development  
1 Sutter St., Ste. 910  
San Francisco, CA 94104

\*P9. Date Recorded: \_\_\_\_\_  
March 2009

\*P10. Survey Type:  
Intensive



\*P11. Report Citation:  
Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory Update Report (Circa: Historic Property Development, March 2012).

\*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 CA Reg. 5B

Page 2 of 3 \*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Halsey House

B1. Historic Name: Halsey House (Redwood Grove Park)

B2. Common Name: 482 University Avenue

B3. Original Use: Residence B4. Present Use: Vacant/City Owned

\*B5. Architectural Style: Spanish Eclectic

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

Constructed in 1923-24 (according to 2001 interview with Eugenia Halsey Buss). Residence shown on the 1926 Sanborn Map. Minor interior alterations c.1980.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features:  
Adobe Creek, Redwood Grove Park

B9a. Architect: Unknown b. Builder: Unknown

\*B10. Significance: Theme Association: People; Design Area Los Altos

Period of Significance \_\_\_\_\_ Property Type Residence Applicable Criteria CR/Los Altos

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

The subject property was constructed in the early 1920s (c.1923-1924) for Theodore Vail and Emma Wright Halsey. The architect and builder are unknown. The property is shown in its current configuration on the 1926 Sanborn map (see above) and the U.S. Federal Census indicates that the couple were residing at the subject property with two of their children, Myra E. and Theodore Vail Jr. in 1930. Theodore V. Halsey was the President of a Telegraph Company in 1930 (Census records) and an executive with the Pacific Telephone Company in San Francisco (Laffey, 1997). According to a 2001 oral history conducted with Eugenia Halsey Buss, another of the Halsey children who grew up in the house, her mother (Emma Wright Halsey) found the location at the request of her father (William Hanford Wright) who desired a summer estate to escape the foggy San Francisco weather. Once there, Emma, with the help of their Japanese gardener, planted dozens of Redwoods transplanted from a relative's property on Summit Road. These redwoods exist today, comprising Los Altos' Redwood Grove Park. Originally, the property consisted of six acres and bordered the Paul Shoup estate to the northeast. After Theodore V. Halsey Sr. died in World War II, Emma Halsey sold the property (c.1945) to the Bessey family for \$25,000. This family built a number of smaller cottages on the property, only one of which exists today. In 1974, the City of Los Altos purchased the property and has used it as a park ever since. (See Continuation Sheet.)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) \_\_\_\_\_

\*B12. References:

Los Altos Historical Commission: Los Altos HRI (9.28.1997); McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002; Redwood Grove Nature Preserve Master Plan, Los Altos (1980); Ch.of Comm.(www.losaltoschamber.org/history\_two\_cities.html); DPR series forms by G. Laffey (1997); Memo: Halsey House Report, Carpenter (17 Feb 2009); Eugenia H. Buss Interview, Carpenter (26 Aug 2001).

B13. Remarks:

Sketch map created by Circa using Google aerial base map.

\*B14. Evaluator: Circa: Historic Property Development

\*Date of Evaluation: July 2011

(This space reserved for official comments.)



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\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Halsey House (482 University Ave)

\*Recorded by: Circa: Historic Property Development

\*Date July 2011

Continuation  Update

P3a. Description (cont.):

Though access to the interior was not provided, views through exterior windows indicate that most of the original interior elements, including the oak floors, are intact as well. Multi-pane french doors, some with sidelights, and original wood sash windows open to the interior courtyard, which likely still retains its original fountain and decorative tile work. The house is one room wide on each wing and had some interior alterations to the western portion of the building in the late 1970s when it was used as a nature center and community meeting place. A septic system was installed c.1980 and a nearby cottage that had been used as a pottery studio was recently demolished. Some deterioration of the stucco cladding, and likely the framing system, is evident due the grading of the site, which is at foundation level on three sides of the building. Though some windows and doors are covered, most appear to be intact and in fair condition. Overall, the building exhibits a high degree of integrity and appears to be in good to fair condition.

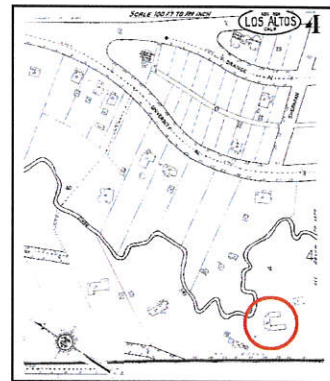
P5a. Photograph or Drawing (cont.):



East elevation



North elevation



1926 Sanborn Map, property circled in red

B10. Significance (cont.)

The residence was once occupied by a caretaker and has been used as a community meeting center and a nature center, but is now vacant. The house was designated as a historical landmark by the Los Altos Council (Res. 81-24) in May 1981. In a 1994 survey, the subject property was noted as being a contributor to the proposed University/Orange Historic District. (Note: This district was considered, but never formally designated as a historic district by the City of Los Altos.)

482 University Avenue, Character Defining Features: one-story form; stucco cladding; hipped roofs clad in Spanish clay tile; concrete front entry porch sheltered by wood frame trellis; original wood sash windows and doors including two multi-paned doors, each with multi-pane sidelights at front entrance, three sets of french doors on north elevation, multi-pane casements, and three-over-one double hungs with ogee lugs; stucco wall with arched, inset wood panel doors enclosing open interior courtyard.

Evaluation:

The property is significant for its association with a notable early Los Altos family and as a good example of the Spanish Eclectic style of architecture popular in California during the early 20th century. It is also significant as a potential contributor to the potential University/Orange Historic District. The residence, surrounded by the Redwoods planted by Emma Wright Halsey over 80 years ago, retains to a large extent its historic character as well as a high degree of integrity of setting, location, materials, design, feeling and workmanship. Therefore, it is listed on the Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory as a Historic Resource and is assigned the California Register Status Code 5B: "Locally significant both individually (listed, eligible, or appears eligible) and as a contributor to a district that is locally listed, designated, determined eligible or appears eligible through survey evaluation."



# ATTACHMENT B

RESOLUTION NO. 81-24

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LOS ALTOS  
DESIGNATING A HISTORICAL LANDMARK

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WHEREAS, by virtue of its adoption of Ordinance No. 78-16, the City Council of the City of Los Altos did establish a procedure for the designation and preservation of historical landmarks within the City of Los Altos; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with that Ordinance, the Historical Commission has made positive findings under Section 2-8.104(c) with regard to the property at 482 University Avenue known as the Redwood Grove (APN 175-13-38), as described in Exhibit "A", attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference; and

WHEREAS, the City Council concurs with the decision of the Historical Commission in this regard;


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Los Altos does hereby determine that the subject property is designated as a historical landmark and is subject to the terms and conditions outlined in Ordinance No. 78-16;

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true copy of a Resolution duly passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Los Altos on the 12th day of May, 1981, by the following roll call vote:

AYES: Mayor pro tem Reed, Councilmen Kallshian and Lave

NOES: None

ABSENT: Mayor Eng and Councilman Lave

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

EXHIBIT "A"

RESOLUTION NO. 81-24

Historical designation to include one (1) structure referred to as Main Building occupied by the City of Los Altos, land and natural features on the land. All other structures are specifically excluded.



The real property referred to is described as:

Those parcels of land partly within and partly without the City of Los Altos, County of Santa Clara, State of California, described as follows:

PARCEL ONE

Portions of Lots 12 and 13, Block 16, Map No. 2 of the Town of Los Altos, filed July 6, 1908, Book "M" of Maps, page 23, Santa Clara County Records, and portions of Lots 8 and 9 of the M. & M. Taaffe Subdivision of Lot 4 of the Taaffe Partition the Map of which was filed July 15, 1897 in Book "I" of Maps, pages 72 and 73, Santa Clara County Records, described as follows:

BEGINNING in the South line of said Lot 13, distant S. 82° 03' W., 310 feet from the Westerly line of University Avenue, as shown on Map No. 2 of the Town of Los Altos above referred to; thence from said point of beginning S. 7° 57' E., 97.35 feet to the center of Adobe Creek, as it existed in 1945; thence up said center of said Creek and along the boundary of Lot 13 1/2 in said Block 16, S. 45° 02' E., 54.12 feet; and N. 52° 35' E., 37.62 feet; thence leaving said creek; S. 53° 20' E., 132 feet; thence S. 14° 45' E., 36.30 feet; thence S. 3° E., 109.56 feet; thence S. 86° 45' W., 54.12 feet; thence S. 5° 55' W., 45.54 feet to said center of said Creek; thence leaving said Creek, S. 49° 34' W., 250.08 feet along the Northwest line of Lot 11 of Lenox Park, Map of which was filed June 9, 1917, Book P of Maps, page 25, Santa Clara County Records, to the center line of Fremont Avenue, as shown on the Map of M. & M. Taaffe Subdivision above referred to; thence following the center line of said Fremont Avenue, N. 36° W., 66.88 feet; N. 58° 32' W., 188.10 feet; N. 32° 45' W., 139.26 feet; and N. 11° W., 210.37 feet; thence leaving said center line, N. 34° 23' E., 178.65 feet to the Southwest line of the 1.411 acre tract described in the Deed to J. F. Howe, recorded in Book 310 of Deeds, page 368; distant thereon S. 70° 36' E., 100 feet from the most Westerly corner of said 1.411 acre tract; thence along the Southwest line of the 1.411 acre tract, S. 70° 36' E., 121.76 feet to the center line of Adobe Creek; thence following the center of said Creek, N. 15° 29' E., 57.77 feet; N. 87° 51' E., 68.13 feet; and N. 26° 27' E., 53.72 feet; thence leaving said Creek, N. 82° 03' E., 302.55 feet to the Westerly line of University Avenue as shown on Map No. 2 of the Town of Los Altos; thence along said Westerly line, Southerly along the arc of a curve of 716.40 feet radius curving to the left for a distance of 35.10 feet to the Southerly line of the property described in the Deed to Emma Wright Halsey, recorded in Book 536 of Deeds, page 458; thence along said Southerly line, S. 82° 03' W., 260.06 feet; thence on a curve to the left with a radius of 19 feet through an arc of 90° a distance of 29.85

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feet; thence S.  $7^{\circ} 57'$  E., 45.04 feet; thence N.  $82^{\circ} 03'$  E., 2.17 feet; thence S.  $7^{\circ} 57'$  E., 48.52 feet; thence S.  $82^{\circ} 03'$  W., 10.5 feet to the place of beginning.

EXCEPTING FROM PARCEL ONE:

The two 10 foot wide strips of land described in parcels 1 and 2, in the Deed from City of Los Altos to Margaret M. Livingston, et al, recorded January 30, 1969, Recorder's File No. 3561021.

PARCEL TWO

Lot 11 of Lenox Park, the Map of which was filed June 9, 1917, Book "P" of Maps, page 25, Santa Clara County Records.

PARCEL THREE

A strip of land 10 feet wide lying 4 feet Westerly of and 6 feet Easterly of the following described line:

Beginning at a point on the Northerly line of Lot 12, Block 16, as said Lot and Block are shown on that certain Map entitled "Map No. 2 of the Town of Los Altos", recorded July 6, 1908 in Book "M" of Maps, pages 23, 24 and 25, in the office of the County Recorder of Santa Clara County, distant thereon South  $82^{\circ} 03'$  West 263.86 feet from the Northeast corner of said Lot 12; thence running South  $10^{\circ} 24' 38''$  West 56.84 feet to a point which is 6 feet Westerly of, measured at right angles to, the Northerly terminus of that certain course set forth as South  $7^{\circ} 57'$  East 45.04 feet in the Deed conveyed by Nellie T. Felt to James Braden and Alice M. Braden, his wife, dated April 28, 1954 and recorded May 4, 1954 in Book 2866 of Official Records, page 156, said County Records; thence running 6 feet Westerly of and parallel to the last course referred to, South  $7^{\circ} 57'$  East 12.67 feet to a point; thence leaving said course and making the Easterly 6 feet a variable distance to include all the area between the following described line and the Easterly property line of said Braden parcel, running along a tangent curve to the right on a radius of 250 feet, through a central angle of  $10^{\circ} 28' 24''$  an arc distance of 45.70 feet to a point of reverse curvature; thence along a curve to the left on a radius of 250 feet, through a central angle of  $10^{\circ} 28' 24''$  an arc distance of 45.70 feet to a point which is 6 feet Westerly of, measured at right angles to, that certain course set forth as South  $7^{\circ} 57'$  East 97.35 feet in said Deed conveyed by Felt to Braden; thence running 6 feet Westerly of and parallel to the last course referred to; South  $7^{\circ} 57'$  East 62.00 feet; thence leaving said parallel course and running South  $58^{\circ} 38' 09''$  East 7.75 feet to a point on said last course referred to from which the Southerly terminus of said course bears South  $7^{\circ} 57'$  East 20.44 feet.

## PARCEL FOUR

A strip of land 10 feet wide lying Southwesterly of and contiguous to that certain Northeasterly line, the bearing and distance of which is set forth as South 53° 20' East 132.00 feet in Deed to James Braden, et ux, recorded May 4, 1954, Book 2866 Official Records, page 156, said 10 foot strip being bounded on its Northwesterly terminus by that certain course set forth as North 52° 35' East 37.62 feet and bounded on its Southeasterly terminus by that certain course set forth as South 14° 45' East 36.30 feet in said Deed.