

# **APPENDIX D3**

## *Pylon Sign Historic Resource Evaluation*

May 26, 2016

**CAMBRIAN PARK PLAZA Pylon Sign**  
Historic Resource Evaluation

This correspondence provides historical documentation and evaluation of a pylon sign (hereafter, CPP pylon sign) located at the Cambrian Park Plaza (CPP) shopping center.

This documentation effort is based on a pair of site visits to survey the property, visits to Santa Clara County to review available permit records and for deed research, a visit to local archives (the California Room at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library in the city of San José, and San José State University's Sourisseau Academy, also housed at the King Library) to research subject property related records, and additional on-line searches and research.

Herein, the term "pylon sign" refers to a large sign-like assembly mounted on a pole or mast, whereas "monument sign" refers to a large and low sign seated on the ground.

**Evaluation Summary**

There were three original or early CPP signs: an original pylon sign located at the southern end of the Union Avenue frontage, built c1954; a monument sign located in the middle of the Union Avenue entry drive, added c1956; and a pylon sign located near the corner of Camden and Union avenues, added c1959, and which had a carousel feature above its 3-sided signs. None of those three original and early signs remain.

While the existing CPP pylon sign standing near the corner of Union and Camden has a carousel feature similar to the 1959 pylon sign, based on presently available evidence, the existing sign dates to the 1990s. As detailed herein, the existing CPP pylon sign does not meet any applicable historic resource criteria.

**Setting**

The subject property is developed with the CPP shopping center located at the intersection of Union and Camden Avenues due west of San José in Santa Clara County (figs.1-3). It is situated in the unincorporated Santa Clara County community of Cambrian Park.

In addition to the shopping center buildings, other structures on the site include the above-mentioned roadside CPP pylon sign announcing the CPP near the corner of Union and Camden avenues, another at the southern end of the Union Ave. frontage that announces one of the larger businesses, another along Camden Ave., and several other smaller monument signs for other individual businesses. While the CPP is located at the busy intersection of Camden and Union avenues, that corner of the site is open, with a small planting area and a split rail fence at the back of the sidewalks. Even the CPP pylon sign is placed somewhat at a distance from that corner of the site.

**Summary History and Description**

The original CPP building, constructed from 1953-1954, was set within the site, aligned with and fronted on Union Avenue (to the west), its frontage reserved for open parking and with additional parking to the east, behind the building, where the rear of the shopping center abuts the adjoining residential neighborhood.

In addition to its architecture, as noted, the CPP has a number of roadside signs that are independent features of the property.

A 1956 newspaper section advertising the Cambrian Park neighborhood included an aerial view of the vicinity and the extent of its development. That c1956 image shows the completed western leg of the CPP fronting on Union, but as yet without any construction of the northern leg, with that portion of the site remaining open and segregated by a roadway. The earliest identifiable CPP pylon sign, located at the southern entry to the site from Union Ave, is visible though not discernible in the 1956 image. It stood at the approximate location of the existing pylon sign at the southern end of the Union Ave. frontage.

Another of the photographic images in the 1956 article is of a freestanding Cambrian Park Plaza sign, and which was a low sign in character with the ranch-like architecture of the CPP (fig.4). Based on a c1960 aerial, that sign stood not at the roadside or directly at the entrance to the CPP but in the middle of the central entry drive off Union Avenue. In the 1960 aerial (fig.5), another pylon sign stood at the south entry off Union Avenue, and which was in the approximate though not exact location of the original pylon sign visible in the 1956 aerial. In the 1960 image, the sign's shadow is of a single pole-mounted sign, which may have had a round top and with two signs, a small one below a larger one.

In c1959, a roadside pylon sign, located adjacent to the intersection of Union and Camden avenues, was added to the site (fig.6). There are no definitive attributions for that early sign. Though a current website states that the merry-go-round portion was created by a local baker, the webpage provides no citation or attribution for this statement.<sup>1</sup> This independent search did not identify any documentation supporting the website's undocumented assertion. The existing CPP pylon sign has a carousel element similar to the 1959 sign but, as discussed below, its other elements are different, including portions of the carousel feature (figs.7-9).

The finding that the early CPP pylon sign dates to 1959 is based on historic photos, including one of the sign dated 1959, along with the evidence of the earlier pylon and monument signage associated with the original construction.

Based on the historic photos, the existing CPP pylon sign is not the same as the 1959 sign, nor does it include neon, and the diversified carousel figures are clearly of a later generation. At this juncture, based on a review of numerous sign permits for the property owner, Schaeffer, the existing sign appears to date to 1994, as there is a sign replacement permit dated June of 1994 that is not assignable to any specific store. That 1994 sign replacement permit identifies the owner as the Schaeffer Land Trust and the sign contractor as Superior Sign Systems. The only individual name on that permit application is Earle W. Gibbings, who via internet research appears to have been the electrical contractor (fig.10).

### Historic Context

The historic context of the CPP is post-World War II suburban commercial development and architecture. This context is documented in historic context statements prepared for the City of San José and which are directly applicable to the greater Santa Clara Valley.<sup>2</sup>

### Evaluation

The CPP pylon sign stands independently and has design character that is unlike as well as independent of the design of the CPP shopping center. For these reasons, it is being independently

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<sup>1</sup> See Cambrian Community Council, "History of the Cambrian Area" @ <http://cambriancommunitycouncil.com/10212.html>.

<sup>2</sup> See Laffey, *Historical Overview and Context for the City of San José, 1992*; Past Consultants, *San José Modernism Context Statement, 2009*.

evaluated for historic resource eligibility. The current effort follows with the provision of an historic resource evaluation as per the California Register of Historical Resources (CR) evaluation criteria<sup>3</sup> and the County of Santa Clara (SC) landmark designation criteria<sup>4</sup> (these two sets of criteria are in fact equal so the evaluation is conjoined rather than separate).

To be eligible for listing on the CR and/or as a Santa Clara County landmark, a resource must be historically significant at the local, state, or national level, under one or more of the following four criteria.

1. *[It is] 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;*

In its historic context, the CPP is associated with the development of the Cambrian Park suburb.

As outlined in historic context statements for the City of San Jose, and which are directly applicable to the greater Santa Clara Valley, the pattern of suburban development associated with the CPP and the related Cambrian Park suburb is not an identifiable event or pattern of historic importance. The post-WWII pattern of suburban development was not particular or unique to a given place. Rather, post-war suburban development, with its explosion of residential and commercial growth, affected not only the Santa Clara Valley but the region, state and nation, where post-war demographic and economic expansion resulted in the settlement and development of lands outside the city limits.<sup>5</sup>

The existing CPP pylon sign is therefore not associated with any historically important events so does not meet CR/SC criterion 1.

2. *[It is] associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history;*

One individual directly associated with the CPP was Mr. Paul Schaeffer (1900-1982). In the early 1950s, Schaeffer developed his former agricultural property into this commercial center, which he subsequently managed. He is commemorated by a plaque on the property that recognizes his stewardship. Otherwise, limited information is available about Schaeffer. His brief obituary simply states "Paul, 81, of San Jose, construction."<sup>6</sup>

Schaeffer's importance is limited to the CPP itself. He has no other identity of historical importance. Itself lacking significance on any other basis, the CPP does not lend Schaeffer historic importance.

In addition to Schaeffer, the 1994 sign replacement permit that appears to identify the origins of the existing CPP pylon sign listed the sign contractor as Superior Sign Systems and the electrical contractor as Earle W. Gibbings. Neither contracting entity appear to have any potential historic importance.

The CPP pylon sign is therefore not associated with any historically important persons so does not meet CR/SC criterion 2.

3. *[It] 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;*

A historic photo from 1959 shows an early roadside pylon sign for the CPP (fig.6). However, that sign was not the original CPP signage. The CPP was constructed in phases, and the 1954 and 1956 signs correspond with the original phases of the CPP's construction. The 1959 sign was

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<sup>3</sup> California Office of Historic Preservation. *Technical Assistant Series No. 7, How to Nominate a Resource to the California Register of Historic Resources*. Sacramento: California Office of State Publishing, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Santa Clara County Code of Ordinances, Title C, Division C17, Historic Preservation, §C17.5 – Designation Criteria.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*; Chap.IX, Markets in the Meadows.

<sup>6</sup> "Santa Clara County Deaths," *San Jose Mercury News*; May 30, 1982; p78.

constructed at approximately the same time as the northern wing of the CPP.

The 1959 sign appears to have the same umbrella element as the currently existing sign but had none of the other elements that now exist. For example, the current merry-go-round figures are not original, nor are the sign panels, the signage, or the design of the supporting post or its brick basin (figs.6-9). Originally, the signage was neon backed on panels larger in size and differently configured than what now exists. The original script font was changed to a stylized block font. In fact, the overall feeling of the sign was greatly altered. The original sign's rustic wood elements have been minimized and the original cartoon-like figures in the merry-go-round have been replaced with more refined characters. At this juncture, the date at which the sign was replaced has been identified as 1994.

Given the extent to which the original sign materials and design have been altered, the CPP pylon sign does not embody design, material or construction distinction relative to the historic context or period in which the CPP was developed. Given the identified recent age of the CPP pylon sign, it does not have any potential to embody the distinctive characteristics of a historic type, period, region, or method of construction; is not the work of a historic designer, architect etc.; nor does the sign potentially possess high artistic merit relative to history. Therefore, the CPP pylon sign does not meet CR/SC criterion 3.

4. *[It] has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation;*

The CPP signage has not yielded any important prehistoric or historic information. Relative to the subject of this evaluation, potential historic resources, the existing CPP sign also does not have the potential to yield information important to the history of the local area, California, or the nation, as they were all constructed after the original and early development of the CPP, the CPP pylon sign included. Thus, the CPP pylon sign does not meet CR/SC criterion 4.

#### Conclusion

As detailed herein, the original 1954 and 1956 CPP pylon and monument signs no longer exist. Although the existing CPP pylon sign has a carousel feature similar to the 1959 pylon sign, evidence indicates that the existing sign dates to the 1990s. As detailed above, the CPP pylon sign does not meet any criteria for eligibility to the CR. As also noted, the four CR criteria are equal to the four SC landmark designation criteria. Thus, the existing CPP pylon sign does not meet any Santa Clara County criterion. In addition to the four SC criterion, the Santa Clara County criteria require that a landmark be fifty years or older.<sup>7</sup> As detailed herein, the existing CPP pylon sign is less than fifty years of age, so the sign does not meet the first and foremost criteria for designation as a Santa Clara County landmark.

Signed:



Mark Hulbert  
Preservation Architect

attached: Figs.1-10 (pp.5-8); Professional Qualifications (p9).

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<sup>7</sup> Santa Clara County Code of Ordinances, §C17.5.A.



Fig.1 – Cambrian Park Plaza – Aerial view, 2015 (north is up)

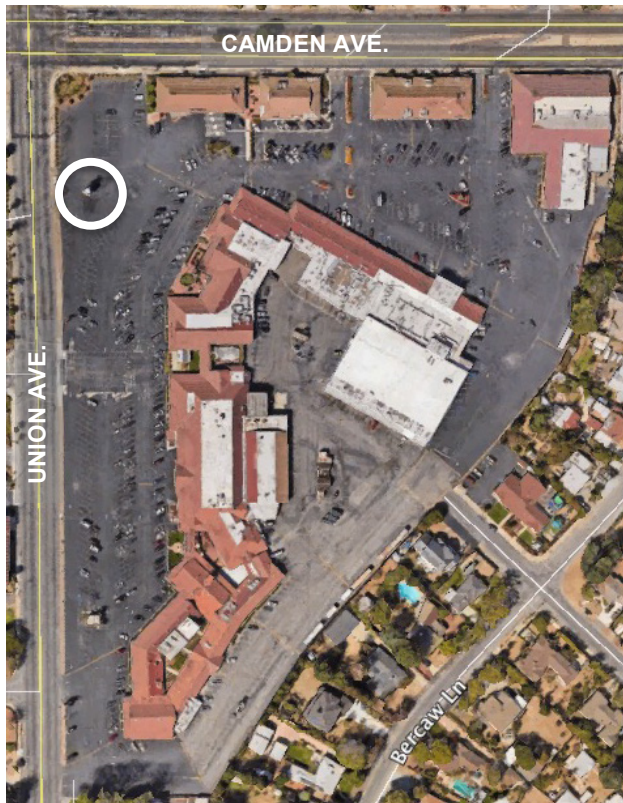


Fig.2 – Cambrian Park Plaza Pylon Sign (circled)  
Aerial view, 2015 (north is up)



Fig.3 – Cambrian Park Plaza Pylon Sign, 2015



Fig.4 – Cambrian Park Plaza – Original monument sign, c1956 (from Cambrian Weekly News, June 14, 1956)



Fig.5 – Cambrian Park Plaza, c1960, looking northeast with Union Ave. at bottom and Camden Ave. at upper left – Original c1954 pylon sign (circled at bottom right) and c1956 sign (circled at middle left)  
[courtesy Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History, Arnold Del Carlo Collection]



Fig.6 – Cambrian Park Plaza – View of pylon sign, 1959  
 (courtesy Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History, Arnold Del Carlo Collection)



Fig.7 – Cambrian Park Plaza – View of pylon sign, 2016



Fig.8 – Cambrian Park Plaza – View of pylon sign, 1959  
 (courtesy Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History, Arnold Del Carlo Collection)



Fig.9 – Cambrian Park Plaza – View of pylon sign, 2016



PERMIT NUMBER: 42676 ISSUED BY: WINSTON CHEW DATE: 6-13-94

MECHANICAL / PLUMBING / ELECTRICAL / PERMIT FOR BUILDING INSPECTION CALL 299-3161 MINIMUM 24 HOURS NOTICE

JOB ADDRESS: 14420 Union Ave San Jose

NEAREST CROSS STREET: CAMDEN

POST OFFICE (CITY): SAN JOSE

OWNER: SCHOFFER LAND INVEST (408) 377-0003

MAILING ADDRESS: 14420 Union Ave San Jose

ARCHITECT: Sanyose

CONTRACTOR: Superior Sign Svc INC. NO. 49876 CLASS. C4J 6200 Gibbons Ct. No. 21449-B111 Vacaville CA ZIP 94988

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MECHANICAL PERMIT FEE TABLE:

ITEM	NO	FEES
ISSUANCE FEE		10.00
PERMIT FEE		
MECHANICAL PERMIT FEE		
PLUMBING PERMIT FEE		
ELECTRICAL PERMIT FEE		

PLUMBING PERMIT FEE TABLE:

ITEM	NO	FEES
ISSUANCE FEE		10.00
PERMIT FEE		
PLUMBING PERMIT FEE		
ELECTRICAL PERMIT FEE		

ELECTRICAL PERMIT FEE TABLE:

ITEM	NO	FEES
ISSUANCE FEE		10.00
PERMIT FEE		
ELECTRICAL PERMIT FEE		

FORM NO. 79 REV. 10/93

OK for sign replacement SR 6-13-94

260

70

PERMIT EXPIRES IF WORK IS NOT STARTED WITHIN 180 DAYS OF PERMIT ISSUANCE OR 180 DAYS FROM LAST SIGNED INSPECTION.

THIS PERMIT SHALL EXPIRE BY LIMITATION AND BECOME NULL AND VOID IF WORK IS NOT COMMENCED WITHIN 180 DAYS.  
 \*REFUND: WHERE NO PORTION OF THE WORK OR CONSTRUCTION COVERED BY THIS PERMIT HAS BEEN COMMENCED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION DATE HEREOF, REQUESTS FOR REFUNDS MUST BE MADE IN WRITING TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUILDING INSPECTION OFFICE ON OR BEFORE ONE HUNDRED-EIGHTY (180) DAYS FROM THE DATE OF ISSUANCE OF THIS PERMIT.\*

LICENSED CONTRACTORS DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that I am licensed under provisions of Chapter 9 (Commencing with Section 7000) of Division 3 of the Business and Professions Code, and my license is in full force and effect.

License Class: C4J  
 Date: 6/13/94  
 Contractor: Charles King

OWNER-BUILDER DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that I am exempt from the Contractor's License Law for the following reason (Sec. 7031.5, Business and Professions Code): Any city or county which requires a permit to construct, alter, improve, demolish, or repair any structure, prior to its issuance, also requires the applicant for such permit to file a signed statement that he is licensed pursuant to the provisions of the Contractor's License Law (Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 7000) of Division 3 of the Business and Professions Code) or that he is exempt therefrom and the basis for the alleged exemption. Any violation of Section 7031.5 by any applicant for a permit subjects the applicant to a civil penalty of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500):

I, as owner of the property, or my employees with wages as their sole compensation, will do the work, and the structure is not intended or offered for sale (Sec. 7044, Business and Professions Code). The Contractor's License Law does not apply to an owner of property who builds or improves thereon, and who does such work himself or through his own employees, provided that such improvements are not intended or offered for sale. If, however, the building or improvement is sold within one year of completion, the owner-builder will have the burden of proving that he did not build or improve for the purpose of sale.

I, as owner of this property, am exclusively contracting with licensed contractors to construct the project (Sec. 7044, Business and Professions Code). The Contractor's License Law does not apply to an owner of property who builds or improves thereon, and who contracts for such projects with contractor(s) licensed pursuant to the Contractor's License Law.

I am exempt under Sec. \_\_\_\_\_ B. & P.C. for this reason \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

WORKERS' COMPENSATION DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that I have a certificate of consent to self-insure, or a certificate of Worker's Compensation Insurance, or a certified copy thereof (Sec. 3800, Lab. C.).

Policy No. R944199 Company Republic Indemnity  
 Certified copy is hereby furnished.  
 Certified copy is filed with the county building inspection department or county department.

Date: 6/13/94 Applicant: Charles King

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION FROM WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE

(This section need not be completed if the permit is for one hundred dollars (\$100) or less.)

I certify that in the performance of the work for which this permit is issued, I shall not employ any person in any manner so as to become subject to the Worker's Compensation Laws of California.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTICE TO APPLICANT: If, after making this Certificate of Exemption, you should become subject to the Worker's Compensation provisions of the Labor Code, you must forthwith comply with such provisions or this permit shall be deemed revoked.

CONSTRUCTION LENDING AGENCY

I hereby affirm that there is a construction lending agency for the performance of the work for which this permit is issued (Sec. 3097, Civ. C.).

Lender's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Lender's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have read this application and state that the above information is correct. I agree to comply with all city and county ordinances and state laws relating to building construction, and hereby authorize representatives of this county to enter upon the above mentioned property for inspection purposes.

Signature of Applicant or Agent: EARLE W. GIBBINGS Date: 6/13/94

Fig.10 - Cambrian Park Plaza - Sign replacement permit, 1994

### **Professional Qualifications**

With more than thirty years as a professional historical consultant, preservation planner, historical architect and architect, the author's experience includes numerous historic architectural, historic resource and project evaluations, along with extensive preservation and rehabilitation consultation work throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

Historic resource evaluation experience on Modern and Mid-20th century commercial and institutional properties includes:

**Memorial Civic Center, Richmond**

**Saint Mary's College, Moraga**

**Clark Kerr Campus, U.C. Berkeley**

**The Pelican Building, UC Berkeley**

**Camp Wilmot Sweeney, Alameda County**

**Fire Station 2, San Mateo Fire District**

**Wheeler Plaza, San Carlos**

**Saratoga Bowl, Saratoga**

**Fire Station 6, Richmond**

**706-716 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park**

**2600 El Camino Real, Palo Alto**

**480 Lytton Ave., Palo Alto**

The author exceeds the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Professional Qualifications* for historical architecture and architecture; is listed by the State of California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) as a qualified historical architect and historic preservation consultant; holds a Certificate in Architectural Conservation from UNESCO's *International Centre for the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)* in Rome, Italy; and has held a license to practice architecture in California since 1989.