

This house is historically significant and is listed on the City's Historical Resource Inventory. According to Santa Clara's Preservation Ordinance, any proposed alterations of houses on the HRI must be found to be in compliance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* ([Rehabilitation as a Treatment and Standards for Rehabilitation—Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/rehabilitation)) in order to be declared categorically exempt from further environmental review under the requirements of CEQA. But, as a bonus, if this proposal is revised so that it can be found to be compliant, then the Owner may wish to apply for a Mills Act Contract. I will leave it to Staff to explain the tax benefits of obtaining such a contract with the City.

The interior remodel proposed does not cause any concern for this reviewer, but the exterior windows do. The current proposal is to replace like-for-like, but with wood except for a request for two vinyl windows in the master bath.

**THE SECRETARY'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION** As presented, the current proposal does not meet four out of the ten simple rules of the **SIS for Rehab**. These are as follows:

**Standard #2**

The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The **removal of historic materials** or **alteration of features** and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

**Standard #5**

**Distinctive features**, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property **shall be preserved**.

**Standard #6**

**Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired** rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

**Standard #9**

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

An Italianate style house of this age would have had only two styles of windows: a vertically proportioned, wood, double-hung with all the elaborate moldings and thick wood trim as seen in the far left of the photograph below.



For purposes of this discussion, let's call this Window Style No. 1. These important historic moldings and pieces are called out in the photograph on the next page.

The other historic style would have been in common use in small rooms such as the

proposed master bath. It would have been a very small square or slightly rectangular, single-lite, fixed or awning style wood sash with a simplified version of the trim of Window 1. There would likely be a thick, wide board on three sides with a back-banded or bull-nosed trim shape along the outer edge that matches the larger double-hung. This back-banding trim at the sides and top can be seen at the pair of double-hungs in the bay on the right side of the photo on page 1. We'll call this as Window Style No. 2. (Note that the smaller window in the middle of the photograph, just to the right of Window No. 1, is from an early alteration. While it has matching wood sash it does not include the heavy, thick ornate trim of its neighbor. It is Window Style No. 1 that should be copied, not this one.)



**REPLACING WINDOWS DOES NOT NECESSARILY RESULT IN ENERGY SAVINGS**

The proposal is to change all the windows. The proposal does not say why this is needed but the usual idea is to change those ‘old drafty windows’ for energy-efficient ones. Besides it can easily be seen, even from photographs, that overall the wood sash and trim is in good or restorable condition. It is a common misunderstanding, promulgated by the vinyl replacement window industry, that old wood windows equal leaky windows. I debunk this belief in a lecture I give called ‘*Greening Your Historic Home*,’ by quoting studies from the National Parks Service (NPS) which show that one will end up with a much more comfortable home if the historically correct wood windows are restored and their efficiency upgraded, then the money saved over the cost of the all-new replacement windows is used to buy more insulation and other energy upgrades that increase the home’s overall energy efficiency.

**INTEGRITY**

Long ago the NPS recognized that the desire to gain energy efficiency in an old home would naturally focus first on the windows, but they also knew that when viewed as a whole, the entire window assembly – which includes the sash, plus head, jamb, and sill trim shapes – is one of the most important identifiers of style and historic significance of a home. And the quality, or condition of these features is an important determiner of the historical integrity of the design.

Under this category of *Integrity*, the SIS says that all views of the house from the street must display their original parts and assemblies that contribute to the details and effects of the Italianate style. The Standards often refer to these as Character-Defining Features. Since this is a corner lot with the neighbor’s drive in close proximity on the left side, the parts of the home that are visible to the passerby are the front façade, the full right side elevation, most of the left elevation, and most of the rear elevation.

The existing home has several horizontal sliders of various sizes, mostly on the left side and at the back. These are not in any way “historic,” are not part of the original construction of the home, and do not in any way meet the Secretary’s Standards. These should NOT be copied under the guise of “like-for-like” or for any other reason. Instead all of these should be replaced with either window style no. 1 or 2, depending on the opening size.

But it is easy to find where the historic windows were. Look around the modern horizontal sliders and find where the siding has been pieced in to fill the original opening. This will indicate size and placement for the reinstallation of a historic style window. The large double-hung window (style #1) would have

been used where ever these large sliders are, and the small single-lite window (style #2) would have been elsewhere such as at the bathroom in the back.

### **COPYING HISTORIC WINDOW TRIM AND SASH**

It is also easy to find out how to build new energy efficient, historic-style windows to put into these openings. Although Pacific Lumber in Santa Clara was likely the original source for all the windows and window trim in this home, they are long gone. One now has to look further to find the necessary milled pieces, such as San Francisco which has a larger stock of homes that need historic window parts. Beronio Lumber or others in San Francisco could be consulted.

Note that rather than having full thickness jamb trim with a bull nose edge custom milled, one can build up the proper thickness by gluing two thinner boards together, then adding length of bull nose trim to the outside edge. This is one example of how this heavy historical trim is built by combining smaller modern pieces.

To ensure compliance with these ten Standards of the SIS, follow [Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows \(nps.gov\)](#) and other technical publications available from the NPS. Information on procedures to use that will improve the energy efficiency of existing historic wood windows is also now plentiful on the internet. Even popular magazines such as “*The Old House Journal*” have published many articles on how to restore old wood windows. And there are also excellent books on the subject such as “Working Windows – A Guide to the Repair & Restoration of Wood Windows” by Terence Meany.

But whatever the reason for the replacement request, if the homeowner wants to change all of the windows (as proposed), then the modern windows must be replaced with appropriately sized historically correct wood windows that will meet the Secretary’s Standards. And if after hearing this discussion, the homeowner chooses to not replace the horizontal sliders then they should know that the home will probably not be eligible for a Mills Act Contract.

And a final note about the request for vinyl windows at the bath. If the fixture plan in the bath were to be flipped so that the tub and shower were on the left side of the room, the windows over the tub and shower would then be so far back from the street, as to not be seen well. With that change, the Commission may see fit to allow vinyl sash and frames, but should still require historic style wood trim on the exterior. This approach of loosening the requirements for those windows not easily seen from the street has precedence in previous Commission decisions.

---

### **CONCLUSION**

The proposal, as presented on the drawings I reviewed does not meet 4 of the 10 Standards of the SIS. The historic windows are the only window style that displays the Italianate style of the house, and therefore the only ones that should be copied. But if done according to the recommendations contained herein, it could be found in full compliance with the SIS by the HLC and if all windows are replaced with historically correct ones the house might also become eligible for a Mills Act Contract.

*Volunteer Architectural Advisor to the HLC*

*Craig Mineweaser*

**Craig Mineweaser, AIA | Principal Preservation Architect**

**Mineweaser & Associates**

architecture | preservation | building conservation services

building forensic investigations | historical building evaluations

Historic Structure Reports | Secretary of the Interior’s Standards Reviews

California Historical Building Code consulting

[Craig@Mineweaser.com](mailto:Craig@Mineweaser.com) | [www.mineweaser.com](http://www.mineweaser.com) | M 408.206.2990 | Lic C13,397

Offices in San Jose and Sonoma area

*Every building tells a story and every house holds a mystery!*

File: // HLC\_Mtg\_2021-07/1511Harrison/1511-Comments.docx

Proportion was very important to the Victorians. There was always a hierarchy of sizes depending on the importance of the room. So your choices of size are limited to:

- 2'6"x7" (as in "A")
- 2'6"x5" (as in "B")
- 2'x4" (as in "C")

Where these sizes were used was also important. The sample Window A is 2'6"x7" so the ones on the opposite side of the house would have been the same.

The sill height is also important:

- "A" is used in the front (hall) rooms so sill is 2' off floor
- "B" is used in the porch and back addition where roof is lower, so sill is still 2', but roof comes down, so window shorter.
- "C" is used in utilitarian rooms such as Bath. Head is held at same height, but sill is raised for privacy or to fit a counter under (as in kitchen).

Detail was also extremely important to the Victorians. They couldn't be disgraced by not having the full complement of trims available for the windows of front portion of the house. Measure every piece of window "A" then draw a large scale elevation of this window right here on this sheet. Show the milled blocks below the sill, the horizontal milled strips below the sill, the "back banding" on the jambs (which you can fake by gluing on a piece of bull nose trim), and the heavy molding of the head. Label each piece.

Hint: If you can't find these moldings locally try Boronio Lumber in SF - they serve all those old houses in the city. Draw a section view through the window at same scale and show how the siding butts against the trim. This is a different look than the way we often install it now on top of the siding. So not only is the jamb board wide, it's thick. How do you get a 2'x4" modern board to act this way? Glue two together so board becomes 1 1/2" thick and butt siding against it.

Also, the jamb trim you've drawn in all of your windows on sheet A5 is too narrow. So measure Window "A" and use that. It's usually 6 or 6 1/2" wide. Similarly on the smaller window match jamb width for that style.

The back portion of the house was considered more utilitarian, so you don't need all the trim of window "A". Plain trim without all the milled shapes, like trim "D" is fine as long as its full thickness so siding butts into it.

It is these details that make the windows fit the look of the house. Drive around town, look at your neighbors. Similar shape houses are probably from the same era as yours, so examine their windows.

We used to require every applicant to draw the window details. Now we only do it when the trims are complicated and we want to be sure that the drawing communicates all the detail needed for a successful result that meets the Secretary's Standards. We cannot guess on the design of these windows. The Standards require that we base these designs on evidence, which they are.

I'm sending along an article on how to restore sash inexpensively. Also please refer to the National Park Service's technical publications, such as <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-restore.htm> (How to Preserve)

We'll call this new window: Size "C" (keep head hgt same as others on this side of hs, but raise sill.) But trim style should be style "D" as it is of lesser importance.

The rear elevation is about as important visually speaking as the side porch is, so generally windows on the rear elevation would have matched window style/size "B"

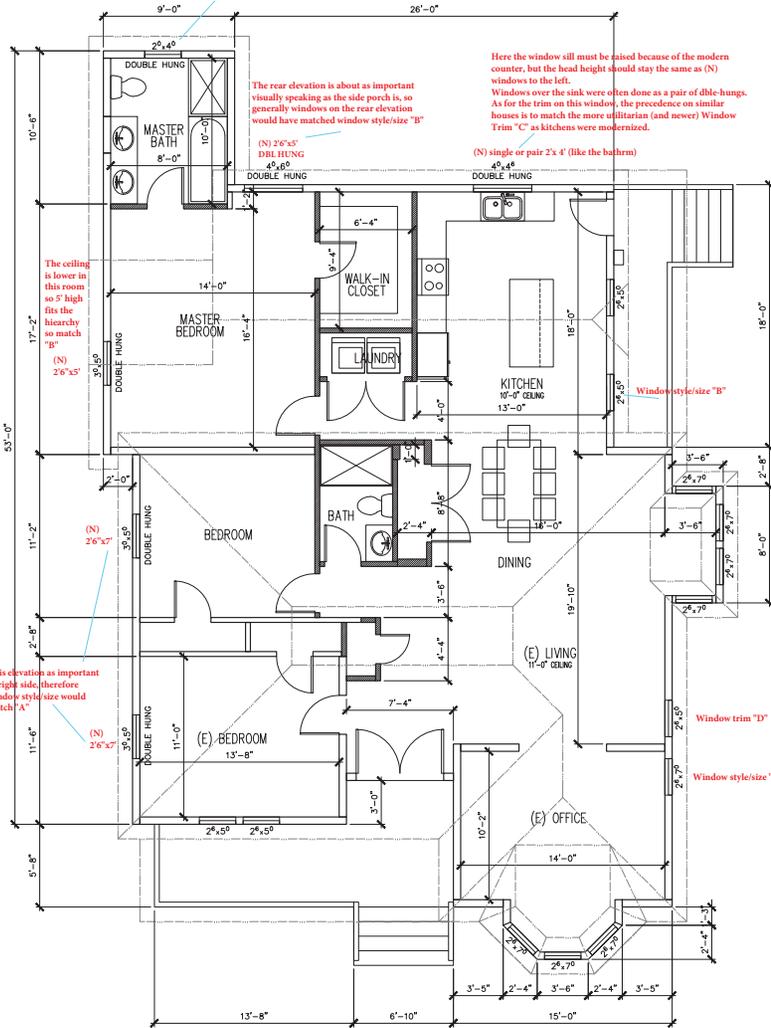
Here the window sill must be raised because of the modern counter, but the head height should stay the same as (N) windows to the left. Windows over the sink were often done as a pair of double hung. As for the trim on this window, the precedence on similar houses is to match the more utilitarian (and newer) Window Trim "C" as kitchens were modernized.

(N) single or pair 2'x4" (like the bathrm)

The ceiling is lower in this room so 5' high fits the hierarchy so match "B"

(N) 2'6"x5"

This elevation as important as right side, therefore window style/size would match "A"



**WALL LEGEND :**

- DENOTES (E) WALL
- DENOTES (N) WALL

**NEW FLOOR PLAN**

1/4" = 1'-0"

REVISIONS	BY

Interior Remodel for  
 Nguyen Residence  
 1511 Harrison Street  
 Santa Clara, CA 95050  
**NEW FLOOR PLAN**

DRAWN
CHECKED
DATE
SCALE
JOB NO.
SHEET

**A4**

OF SHEETS