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CITY OF BERKELEY LANDMARK APPLICATION**JOHN HOPKINS SPRING ESTATE**

1. **Street Address:** 1960 San Antonio Road
1984 San Antonio Road
639 The Arlington
County: Alameda **City:** Berkeley **Zip:** 94707
2. **Assessor's Parcel Number:** 062-2916-059-00 Block 2916 Lot 60
Lot size: 19,816 square feet
Cross Street: The Arlington
3. **Is property on any survey?** State of California Historic Resources Inventory
State Inventory: Yes **National Register:** No
4. **Application for Landmark includes:**
 - a. **Building(s):** Yes **Garden(s):** Yes **Other Feature(s):** Yes
 - b. **Landscape or open space:** **Natural:** Yes
Designed: Yes **Other:** Please see Description
 - c. **Historic Site:** Yes
 - d. **District:** Thousand Oaks
 - e. **Other**
5. **Historical Name of Property:** John Hopkins Spring Estate
Commonly Known Name: Spring Mansion
6. **Date of Construction:** 1912 a. **Factual:** Yes
Source of Information: See Bibliography
7. **Architect:** John Hudson Thomas **Builder:** Spring Construction Co.
8. **Style:** Classical, Beaux Arts house
9. **Original Owner:** John Hopkins Spring **Original Use:** Residential
10. **Present Owner:** Larry Leon **Address:** 1960 San Antonio, 1984 San Antonio
Present Occupant: Owner 639 The Arlington
11. **Present Use:** Residential / Single-Family
Current Zoning: ES-R (Single Family)
Adjacent Property Zoning: ES-R (Single Family)

12. Present Condition of Property**Exterior: Good****Interior: Good****Grounds: Good****13. Description:**

The Spring estate is in a scheme of broad terraces on four acres. The land slopes downward to the west at a 15% to 20% grade and has a good selection of ground cover and trees. Redwood, eucalyptus, pine and palm trees are scattered on the upper reaches of the site and a good windbreak of trees are ranged along the prevailing wind property line. The site opens to the sun and provides excellent vistas to the south, west and north, which includes the University of California, the San Francisco Bay with its two majestic bridges and Mount Tamalpais.

The Spring Mansion is a large, awe-inspiring two story grand estate designed in the Beaux Arts fashion. The exterior design features rectilinear ornament and elegant corner volute buttresses. The house, including the roof is built of reinforced concrete. Formal in spirit and classical in style, the building is massively impressive.

The main house (80' x 83') is built around a 39 square foot atrium, which extends to the roof and is covered by a skylight 30 feet above the main floor. In the center of the atrium is a lovely Italian fountain. Tuscan columns support the balconies above and frame the fountain that carries the central theme of this room. The grand staircase, a full 15' wide, leads the eye to the landing with its window seat. The grand living room (24' x 45') has a generous oak fireplace and oak is used extensively throughout for moldings, bookcases and doors. The house contains seven fireplaces, and each bedroom has its own bathroom. The velvet carpeting and the tapestries and silk damask wall coverings in the billiard room, dining room, living room, and study are all original to the house.

14. History

John Hopkins Spring (1862-1933) was a daring capitalist with imaginative vision and business acumen. He had a family background that served his career well. His grandfather and namesake was a New England sea captain who came to California in 1852 on his own ship with two sons and settled in San Francisco. In his youth, Spring was an outstanding athlete, excelling in bike racing and swimming. His father and uncle were partners of a thriving real estate firm, where the youth presumably learned the business. In 1888 he married Celina Dusperry Warfield, a divorcee from a prominent Baltimore family with two children (Frances and Katherine). Out of there union came five more children (Anne, Dorothy, Gertrude, Marjorie, and Francis). After his father died in 1897, Spring moved his

family to Oakland. He built a lovely home along Sausal Creek amidst giant redwoods and big ferns that made his estate a great showplace of the Fruitvale area. It was his residence until 1912.

The Spring family was already involved in East Bay land ventures before John's move to Oakland. Spring inherited from his father a sizable fortune which he used to pay \$35,500. for the land holdings of his uncle, who withdrew from the real estate business. He soon acquired substantial holdings in the East Bay, ranging from farm lands in the Decoto area, real estate in Oakland, and the Galpin ranch in present-day El Cerrito. These land holdings provided the broad base for launching his spectacular real estate ventures.

While San Francisco was smoldering in ruins after the 1906 earthquake and fire, Spring bought a lot with a steel structure in Union Square for \$400,000. He formed a company, erected a building that was leased to the City of Paris and sold the property in 1915 for \$1,250,000. In 1906-07 he purchased a 142-acre tract in the sparsely settled area around El Cerrito Hill and laid out the subdivisions that formed the basis of Albany. Over the years he acquired tidelands along the Oakland-Berkeley-Richmond waterfront and sold them in 1925 to the Santa Fe Railroad for \$700,000.

Spring apparently developed a special spot in his heart for Berkeley. During the decade after 1900, Berkeley experienced a dramatic population increase that completed the community's transition from a rural village to a suburban city. Spring was part of an enterprising Berkeley group that included real estate developer Duncan McDuffie and local capitalists Louis Titus and W. E. Creed (late PG&E president). All were partners and/or officers of the Berkeley Development Company and the North Berkeley Land Company. Spring was also a business associate of Francis "Borax" Smith and Frank Havens, especially in the East Bay real estate ventures of their Realty Syndicate.

Spring's first venture into Berkeley real estate was in the Claremont District. In 1903, he bought from the Glasscock Estate for \$63,000 the land between Panoramic Way and Fish Ranch Road, including University Terrace and the Claremont Tract. Before long, Spring had two other partners in the Claremont Tract, Frank Havens and W. P. Mortimer, a Berkeley capitalist. The partners financed the grand Hotel Claremont but construction was slowed down due to financial stringency resulting from the 1907 Panic.

In 1910, Spring approached his partners with a proposal to play a game of dominoes with the hotel property as the stake. Spring first played Mortimer and beat him. Later he played Havens and lost. It was Spring who planned the lovely garden terraces around the hotel that became known as the "Jewel of the East Bay."

Spring next turned his attention to the north Berkeley area. In 1904-05, he acquired for \$100,000 the Dunn Estate in the Hopkins Terrace subdivision, including the quarry Dunn had operated from 1879 to around the time of his death in 1900. He formed Spring Construction Company, with Creed and Titus as partners, in building streets and other projects in the north Berkeley area. The

company quarried rock at its Spruce Street facility (La Loma Park and Codornices Park area) and later at The Arlington facility (Cerrito Canyon). Construction vehicles and equipment were maintained at a depot on the old Boswell Ranch site (Solano and Peralta junction).

Spring's best known venture was the Thousand Oaks subdivision in the northeast corner of present-day Berkeley. In developing this huge tract after 1909, Spring may have been inspired by McDuffie, who began four years earlier in laying out the adjacent Northbrae subdivisions, marked by winding streets with attractive homes with prominent boulders and green landscape to enhance the scenic view. His lasting monument was the magnificent estate off The Arlington, which he completed for his family in 1914. His estate was considered among Berkeley's most beautiful landmarks.

Within two years the public life of John Spring fell apart. Christmas, 1915, he left his wife for another woman. The lovers divorced their respective spouses and were married a "year and a day" after his marriage dissolution. Celina Spring married the brother of her first husband and sold the family estate to a private academy, the Cora Williams Institute of Creative Development. (Miss Williams maintained a highly cultural and refined environment for her students, who came from University and neighborhood families. Her school, which featured small classes and employed faculty wives as part-time teachers, had its heyday in the 1920's and 30's.)

Spring spent his remaining years in relative obscurity. He lived in San Francisco, then in Los Gatos, where he died in 1933, shortly after divorcing his second wife. By that time he had gambled away his wealth after the 1929 stock market crash.

A journalist reported in those later years that Spring still had his old spunk and spirit. As he had said of himself in a earlier and happier time, he was just a "plaything of the winds of fortune." Fate may have dealt the man an unkind blow, but his contributions to Berkeley's historical development in these middle years will not be forgotten. (Edward Staniford, "Spring's Time in Berkeley: A Gambler's Legacy," Berkeley Historical Society, 1980.)

In 1975 the estate was purchased by Larry Leon and is his residence.

15. Significance:

Cultural Significance

The Southampton area is unique in Berkeley. The grand development scheme of John Spring, hillside landscape, vistas of the bay, and 1920s work of noted Berkeley architects combine to create a streetscape unlike anything else in the city. Here imposing houses reminiscent of Italian villas, Spanish Farmhouses, and Tudor manors stand side by side along curving, treelined streets, evoking an aura of the past. To design their grand houses local architects were chosen, such

as Bernard Maybeck, Walter Ratcliff and John Hudson Thomas. Others were John Galen Howard, Warren Perry, Henry Gutterson, Roland Stringham and William Wurster.

Architectural Significance

In 1912 John Hopkins Spring commissioned John Hudson Thomas to design a grand residence for his family and which would promote his development of the Thousand Oaks area. According to the Daily Pacific Builder, February 1912:

"...the virgin whiteness of the mansion will be admired from great distances on and around the bay and it will stand for decades as one of the magnificent showplaces of Berkeley."

John Hudson Thomas (1878-1945) was one of Berkeley's most innovative and prolific architects. Born in Nevada, Thomas spent his boyhood in the Bay Area, until he left for Yale University. After graduation, he returned to Berkeley to enter the Department of Architecture at the University of California, where he studied under such masters as Bernard Maybeck and John Galen Howard. Thomas completed the three year architecture course and went to work as a draftsman in Howard's office. Two years later he formed a business partnership with Howard's office supervisor, George T. Plowman; and in 1910 he established his own independent practice.

During the four year period in which Plowman and Thomas were partners, they were associated primarily with the Craftsman movement of architecture. Their small scaled buildings were made of wood and were rustic in nature.

When Plowman left Berkeley for Los Angeles, Thomas shifted his design approach from the unpretentious Craftsman to a more assertive style. His residences became dominant in relation to their landscapes, and wood gave way to stucco for their facades. The stucco acquired the appearance of more solid masonry and Thomas created a feeling of massiveness for his structures by incorporating such techniques as overscaled elements. Many times he designed separate windows to appear from the exterior as one grand unit. His interiors became more dramatic with such features as prominent stairways. In his designs Thomas selected motifs from many different sources and attempted to combine them into a unified statement. In fact, this tendency to combine seemingly unrelated imagery into a cohesive design certainly became one of Thomas' trademarks.

John Hudson Thomas developed his idiosyncratic approach to architecture during one of the most expansive periods of residential development in Oakland and Berkeley. From 1910 to 1920, Thomas' practice consisted of residential commissions for middle and upper class residents in new East Bay subdivisions.

The forms which his building took were influenced by the enterprising values of his clients and by the hilly topography on which his buildings stood. The buildings are dominant in relation to their sites and they convey the impression that their owners hold an esteemed place in the community.

Thomas did not hold an exclusive set of criteria which governed his decisions in design. His imagery is drawn from the published work of the Glasgow School, the Viennese Secession and the Prairie School, in addition to the work which he knew first-hand of Irving Gill, Green and Green, Bernard Maybeck, and the Mission and Pueblo Revivals.

Thomas' method of design was similar to the approach of two Bay Area eclectic designers of an earlier generation, Ernest Coxhead and Bernard Maybeck. Their work is a rich blend of motifs from diverse periods and cultures. Although Thomas confined himself to early twentieth century imagery, his process of design lends a vitality to his buildings which is in line with the work of Coxhead and Maybeck.

Thomas' buildings dominate their sites. A quality of indisputable presence provides a common ground for the diverse forms of his houses. Thomas seems to have satisfied a large number of clients who held two basic aspirations for the emotional impact of their houses. His clients were businessmen and professionals who wanted the ideals of "home sweet home" and "house as castle" combined. The house had to be individual in design and it had to look substantial in order to provide roots for families of recently established social status. Thomas was unwilling to respond to these needs by applying historical elements to his facades. Fortunately, his clients held a strong priority on individuality and allowed him to execute the inventive forms which make his buildings distinctive.

Thomas over-scaled certain parts of his buildings to give them a quality of solid mass. Parapet gables and arch soffits are thickened in wood frame and stucco to simulate masonry construction. The excess material is concentrated in places which can be observed from the street; this scenographic technique gives an air of grandeur to the entire building.

As early as 1890, architects in the Bay area had developed hybrid architectural forms. These buildings were the basis for a regional style which was free from the limitations of a strict ideology. Between 1910 and 1915, John Hudson Thomas helped to establish the Bay Area Tradition in architecture.

"John Hudson Thomas' buildings frequently hold an aggressive relation to their sites and their stucco composition enhances their boldness. His ability to make a simple material suggest a grand one and a small space suggest a large one provides valuable lessons for today's architects." (Thomas Gordon Smith, The Work of John Hudson Thomas, 1910-1915, Berkeley, Calif. 1975.)

16. Is the property endangered? Yes X No

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Explain if yes: It is considered endangered until it is preserved.

17. Photographs: BAHA Archives

18. Bibliography

Cerny, Susan Dinkelspiel, Berkeley Landmarks: An Illustrated Guide to Berkeley, California's Architectural Heritage, Berkeley, Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, 1994

Emmington, Leslie. Notes on the Spring Family BAHA Archives

Gebhard, David. Montgomery, Roger. Winter, Robert. Woodbridge, John. Woodbridge, Sally. A Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California, Second Edition, Peregrine Smith, Inc., Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City, 1976.

Hawthorne, Trish, Historic Resources Inventory, (BAHA), prepared January 25, 1978.

Hawthorne, Trish, "Southampton's Villas," BAHA Tour Brochure, 1991.

Hayes, Linda and Meyer, Christina, "A Tour of Seven Classic Berkeley Homes designed by John Hudson Thomas" Ecole Bilingue Tour Brochure May, 1979.

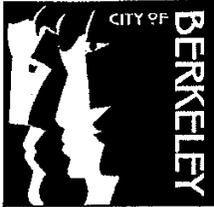
Preliminary Architects Report of the Spring Estate drawn up for Cora Williams, Williams College. BAHA Archives.

Smith, Thomas Gordon, The Work of John Hudson Thomas, 1910-1915, Berkeley, California, 1975.

Staniford, Edward, "Spring's Time in Berkeley: A Gambler's Legacy," for the Berkeley Historical Society, 1980.

19. Recorder (s):

**Cindi Clymer
Barbara Dornfeld
Frances Townes**



Planning and Development Department
Current Planning Division
Landmarks Preservation Commission

ORIGINAL

NOTICE OF DECISION FOR MEETING OF: JULY 10, 2000

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 1960 San Antonio Road, 1984 San Antonio Road and 639 The Arlington
ALSO KNOWN AS: John Hopkins Spring Estate or the Cora Williams Institute
OWNER OF PROPERTY: Larry Leon
ACTION: Approval of the City of Berkeley Landmark Designation
APPLICANT: Cindi Clymer

WHEREAS, the properties located at 1960 San Antonio Road, 1984 San Antonio Rd, and 639 The Arlington, collectively known as the John Hopkins Spring Estate, also known as the Cora Williams Institute, have special historical, cultural and architectural value to the City of Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, the Spring Mansion at 1960 San Antonio Road, its original exterior concrete and iron architectural features, its porticos and balconies, its windows, its front, rear and side terraces and balustrades, its west fountain, its stairs and walkway to The Arlington, its original statues, urns and remaining walls are all outstanding examples of the Beaux Art style and an outstanding example of the work of architect John Hudson Thomas, one of Berkeley's most innovative and prolific architects; and

WHEREAS, the gymnasium building located at 639 The Arlington, the Carriage House at 1984 San Antonio Road, the designed landscape and hardscape features original to the estate, and natural rock outcroppings all contribute to the historical, cultural and architectural value of the site; and

WHEREAS, the site is an architectural example worth preserving for the exceptional value it adds to the Southampton and Thousand Oaks neighborhood fabric; and

WHEREAS, the site has historical and cultural value to the City of Berkeley for its association with the Cora Williams Institute and for its association with John Hopkins Spring and his role in the development of residential subdivisions in the Claremont and North Berkeley areas of the city;

THEREFORE, it is moved that the property be designate a City of Berkeley Landmark, specifically excluding:

- The roof and walls of the recreation addition that cover the mansion's original southwest terrace, balustrades and stairs.
- The small gardener's sheds on the property.
- The tennis courts which are in poor condition.
- The new fountain at the San Antonio Road side of the mansion.

1960, 1984 San Antonio Road . 639 The Arlington
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- The two-car garage.
- The house at 645 The Arlington.

VOTE: 7-0-0

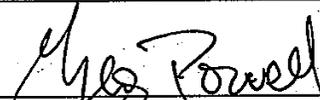
Aye: Dishnica, Eichenfield, Kehlmann, Korte, Morse, Olson, O'Malley
Nay: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Edwards, Emmington

DATE NOTICE MAILED: **August 7, 2000.**
THE APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRES (15 DAYS) AT 5 PM: **August 22, 2000**
Appeal must be filed with City Clerk by this date.

Pursuant to Section 3.24.300 of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance:

'An appeal may be taken to the City Council by the City Council on its own motion, by motion of the Planning Commission, by motion of the Civic Art Commission, by the verified application of the owners of the property or their authorized agents, or by the verified application of at least fifty residents of the City aggrieved or affected by any determination of the commission made under the provisions of this chapter.'

ATTEST:



Greg Powell

Secretary, Landmarks Preservation Commission

cc: City Clerk

Larry Leon
1960 San Antonio Ave
Berkeley, CA 94704

Cindi Clymer
1950 San Antonio Ave
Berkeley, CA 94704

LEGAL LIMITATIONS:

If you object to this project or any city action or procedure relating to this project application, any lawsuit which you may later file may be limited to those issues raised by you or someone else in the Public Hearing on this project or in written communications presented at or prior to the Public Hearing. The time limit within which to commence any lawsuit or legal challenge related to this (these) application(s) is governed by Section 1094.6, any lawsuit or legal challenge to any quasi-administrative decision made by the City must be filed no later than the 90th day following the date on which such decision becomes final. Any lawsuit or legal challenge which is not filed within that 90-day period will be barred.

RESOLUTION NO. 60,798-N.S.

DESIGNATING 1960 SAN ANTONIO AVENUE (THE SPRING MANSION AND ESTATE)
AS A CITY OF BERKELEY LANDMARK AND DISMISSING THE APPEAL

WHEREAS, on June 7, 1999 the Landmarks Preservation Commission, in response to a neighborhood petition, initiated 1960 San Antonio Avenue (The Spring Mansion and Estate); and

WHEREAS, on August 2, 1999 the Landmarks Preservation Commission conducted a public hearing to consider 1960 San Antonio Avenue (The Spring Mansion and Estate) as either a Landmark or Structure of Merit and continued the discussion to October 4, 1999; and

WHEREAS, on July 10, 2000 the Landmarks Preservation Commission, in light of all the evidence presented, designated 1960 San Antonio Avenue (The Spring Mansion and Estate) as a City of Berkeley Landmark, based on findings included in the proposal for designation and in the Notice of Decision; and

WHEREAS, on August 21, 2000 Larry Leon, owner of the subject property, filed an appeal of the decision of the Landmarks Preservation Commission; and

WHEREAS, on October 10, 2000 the City Council considered the record of proceedings before the Landmarks Preservation Commission, as well as the information presented at the October 10, 2000 Council public hearing, and, in the opinion of the City Council, the facts stated in or ascertainable from such records and testimony support affirmation of the decision of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to designate 1960 San Antonio Avenue (The Spring Mansion and Estate) as a City of Berkeley Landmark and dismissal of the appeal; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the properties located at 1960 San Antonio Road, 1984 San Antonio Rd, and 639 Arlington Avenue, collectively known as the John Hopkins Spring Estate, also known as the Cora Williams Institute, have special historical, cultural and architectural value to the City of Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, the Spring Mansion at 1960 San Antonio Road, its original exterior concrete and iron architectural features, its porticos and balconies, its windows, its front, rear and side terraces and balustrades, its west fountain, its stairs and walkway to Arlington Avenue, and its original statues, urns and retaining walls are all outstanding examples of the Beaux Art style and an outstanding example of the work of architect John Hudson Thomas, one of Berkeley's most innovative and prolific architects; and

WHEREAS, the gymnasium building located at 639 Arlington Avenue, the carriage house at 1984 San Antonio Road, the designed landscape and hardscape features original to the estate, and natural rock outcroppings all contribute to the historical, cultural and architectural value of the site; and

WHEREAS, the site is an architectural example worth preserving for the exceptional value it adds to the Southampton and Thousand Oaks neighborhood fabric; and

WHEREAS, the site has historical and cultural value to the City of Berkeley for its association with the Cora Williams Institute and for its association with John Hopkins Spring and his role in the development of residential subdivisions in the Claremont and North Berkeley areas of the City; and

WHEREAS, the designation specifically excludes:

1. The roof and walls of the recreation room addition that cover the mansion's original southwest terrace, balustrades and stairs.
2. The small gardener's sheds on the property.
3. The tennis courts which are in poor condition.
4. The new fountain at the San Antonio Road side of the mansion.
5. The two-car garage.
6. The house at 645 Arlington Avenue.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that 1960 San Antonio Avenue, collectively known as The Spring Mansion and Estate, is designated as a City of Berkeley Landmark and the appeal is dismissed.

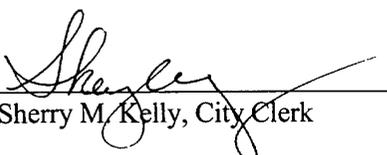
The foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Berkeley City Council on October 10, 2000 by the following vote:

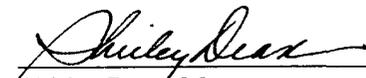
Ayes: Councilmembers Armstrong, Breland, Maio, Olds, Shirek, Spring, Worthington and Mayor Dean

Noes: None

Abstain: Councilmember Woolley

Absent: None

Attest: 
Sherry M. Kelly, City Clerk


Shirley Dean, Mayor