



1200-1300 Q Street

Historic District Plan

Physical Description & Boundaries

The 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District is located within Sacramento's original 1848 street grid and consists of approximately one-and-a-half city blocks bounded by the tracks of the Regional Transit light rail to the south on Whitney and Quill alleys, a parking lot to the east of 13th Street, and recent apartment building infill to the north along Q Street and to the east on 14th Street. The district primarily consists of a grouping of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century single-family houses arranged along the south side of Q Street, as well as three houses of a similar age and style that were relocated from Alkali Flat to 14th Street.



Figure 1. Row of houses on the 1300 block of Q Street.



Figure 2. Row of houses relocated from Alkali Flat to 14th Street.



Figure 3. An Italianate style house at 1326 Q Street.



Figure 4. Decorative wood detailing and stained glass transom at a historic house in the district.

Brief Historic Context

The 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District contains a grouping of high basement houses that offers a glimpse of what many of Sacramento's streets looked like in the late nineteenth century. Although Sacramento's 1848 city grid officially extended as far south as Y Street (present-day Broadway) in the nineteenth century, R Street represented the de facto southern city limit.¹ The Sacramento Valley Railroad (SVRR) ran along the top of a levee at R Street, which had been constructed in 1854 as part of efforts to protect Sacramento from the floods that periodically devastated the city.² With the R Street levee in place, Q Street became the southernmost street upon which Sacramentans might build their family houses. The levee, however, did not have the effect city planners intended. During particularly severe floods in the winter of 1861-1862, it trapped floodwaters within the city, worsening the effects of the floods.³

Throughout the rest of the 1860s, the city carried out several projects to address the issue of flooding, including strengthening levees and completing a redirection of the American River through a new channel to the north by the end of 1868.⁴ At the same time, increasing railroad activity downtown and the city's growing population caused the city's downtown, where many Sacramentans lived, to

become increasingly overcrowded, polluted, and crime-ridden. Sacramentans began to build their houses in previously uninhabitable or outlying areas in search of cleaner, quieter, and safer in which to build their family homes.⁵

By 1871, painters, carpenters, laborers, and other working-class men and women had settled on the 1200-1300 block of Q Street, just one block north of the R Street levee.⁶ The beginning of streetcar service on P Street in 1892 made the area even more attractive to residents who needed a means to travel to their places of work downtown, increasing residential development in the area.⁷ By 1895, all but two of the parcels on Q Street from 12th to 14th streets were filled with wood-framed single-family houses. The city's alleys often served as auxiliary residential streets in the nineteenth century, and several smaller dwellings occupied the parcels behind Q Street along Whitney and Quill Alleys. The nearest commercial operations were the Siller Bros. lumber sheds on 14th Street between P and Q streets.⁸ Residents included many employees of the Southern Pacific rail yards—such as painters, carpenters, machinists—who worked in the car shops in the northwest corner of the city.⁹

Industrial development increased directly to the south of Q Street in 1907 when the Western Pacific Railroad built a competing set of railroad tracks along Whitney and Quill alleys, parallel to the old SVRR



Figure 5. Houses along Q Street between 12th and 13th streets (1950). Source: Center for Sacramento History Eugene Hepting Collection, 985/024/4959.

route on R Street, which was by then owned by the Southern Pacific Railroad.¹⁰ Freight service began on the line in 1909, and passenger service followed in 1910.¹¹ The new railroad line attracted industrial and commercial businesses but also brought noise and pollution, transforming the once quiet residential neighborhood. By 1915, one-story dwellings, which had been built along the quiet alley in the nineteenth century and which then faced the bustling railroad tracks, had been removed.¹²

Meanwhile, Q Street continued to evolve as the population density increased. Developers attracted potential homeowners to Q Street's "cottages modern" by advertising amenities such as elm shade trees, multiple rooms, large closets, indoor baths,

1 William Burg, "Southside Park" (National Register of Historic Places Draft Registration Form, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2017), 10.

2 "R Street Levee," *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 24, 1854, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SDU18540224.2.5&srpos=11&e=-----185-en--20--1--txt-txIN-%22R+Street%22+Levee+Sacramento-----1>.

3 Richard J. Orsi, "Railroads and the Urban Environment: Sacramento's Story," in *River City and Valley Life: An Environmental History of the Sacramento Region*, ed. Christopher J. Castaneda and Lee M. A. Simpson (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 82.

4 "City Intelligence," *Sacramento Daily Union*, June 11, 1868; Rick Bettis, "A Brief Overview with Historical Vignettes," Sacramento Area Creeks Council, March 8, 1998, <http://saccreeks.org/know-your-creeks/>.

5 Orsi, 89.

6 City Directory, Sacramento, California, 1871, accessed August 29, 2018, www.ancestry.com.

7 "Poles for P Street," *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 9, 1892.

8 Sanborn Map Company, Sacramento, California [map], sheet 37, 1895.

9 1893 *Sacramento, California City Directory*, "U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989," indexed database and digital images, Ancestry.com, accessed August 29, 2018, www.ancestry.com.

10 Page & Turnbull, "R Street Corridor Historic District" (National Register of Historic Places Draft Registration Form, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2013), 5.

11 William Burg, *Sacramento's K Street* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 62-64.

12 Burg, "Southside Park," 10.

gas, and electricity.¹³ Residents included musicians, gardeners, clerks, the city's harbormaster, and working women—who held jobs as clerks and music teachers.¹⁴

The advent of the automobile also changed the physical landscape. By 1915, a two-story garage had been built on the alley behind 1208 and 1212 Q Street. In 1931, it was replaced by a larger one-story brick warehouse that was used as an automobile repair shop.¹⁵ In spite of increasing automobile use, Q Street was still unpaved in 1921 when protests from local residents caused the City's Commissioner of Streets to abandon plans to pave the street from 2nd to 22nd streets.¹⁶ As the automobile increased in popularity, the demand for streetcar service decreased. In 1940, streetcar service on Line 5, which ran down P Street, ended and was replaced by a bus route.¹⁷

Irreversible fragmentation of the formerly cohesive grouping of single-family houses on the 1200 block of Q Street occurred in the middle of the twentieth century. Between 1957 and 1964, two of the houses in front of the brick warehouse were demolished.¹⁸ By 1970, an additional garage, machine and welding shop, parking lot, and shop had been constructed on the parcels near the 1930s-era automobile repair

shop.¹⁹

Redevelopment projects in other neighborhoods of the city also affected Q Street. In 1984, the Capital Area Development Authority (CADA) relocated three high-basement Victorian-era houses from Alkali Flat and one high-basement Craftsman bungalow from 16th Street to the northwest corner of 14th and Q streets in 1984.²⁰ The houses were built in a similar style to those that were built on Q Street in the late nineteenth century and added to the new 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District, which the City designated in 1985.²¹

In the 1980s, construction began on Sacramento Regional Transit's new light rail system, which would run along the Western Pacific Railroad's right-of-way down Whitney and Quill alleys and include a stop at 13th Street. Passenger service began in 1987. Although the light rail introduced an important new amenity to the city, the resulting noise and crime along its route led some residents to vacate houses located directly beside its tracks, including those along Q Street.²² In 2005, "dangerous site structures" at 1218 Q Street, including the last residence in front of the 1930s automobile repair shop, were demolished and replaced by a second parking lot.²³ In 2014, Research America, whose headquarters are located on the site

of a former corner store at 1232 Q Street, purchased 11 properties on the 1200 block of Q Street and the 1700 block of 12th Street with the intention of using them as parking space for the business's employees.²⁴ At least one building on the block remained vacant in 2017.²⁵

13 "Q' Street Cottage," *Sacramento Union*, March 19, 1909.

14 *1900 Sacramento, California City Directory*, "U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989," indexed database and digital images, Ancestry.com, accessed August 29, 2018, www.ancestry.com; "John McArthur Named as New Harbormaster," *Sacramento Union*, August 10, 1912.

15 Sanborn Map Company, 1895; Sanborn Map Company, Sacramento, California [map], sheets 58-59, 1915.

16 "Abandon Paving Plan," *Sacramento Union*, March 25, 1921.

17 William D. Bourne, "Sacramento: Part One-Utility to Authority," *Motor Coach Age* 62, no. 1 & 2, January-June 2011, 10-12.

18 Environmental Science Associates, "R Street Corridor Historic District Survey Report" (report, City of Sacramento Preservation Commission, 2017), 28.

19 "Downtown Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report, Appendix H: Hazards" (report, Sacramento Community Development Department, 2017), 8.

20 "Capitol Area Plan Progress Report" (report, Department of General Services, 2010), 17.

21 "2.2.1 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District" (Ordinance #85-076, Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources, July 30, 1985).

22 Bob Shallit, "Another you-haul-it-away home offer," *Sacramento Bee*, April 14, 2007.

23 Sacramento Community Development Tracker, accessed August 30, 2018. <https://sacramento.civiciinsight.com/>.

24 Hudson Sangree, "Most of prime downtown block changes hands," *Sacramento Bee*, August 8, 2014.

25 "Downtown Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report, Appendix H: Hazards," 8.

Significance

The 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District was designated for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources by the City Preservation Commission in 1985 in Ordinance #85-076.

The following table provides a current evaluation of significance under the requirements and considers the factors based on the above historic district context and the 2018 historic district survey. Additionally, this historic district relates to the Railroad Context Statement of the city’s General Plan Technical Background Report.

(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts	
(1) Requirements	
(a)	The 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District meets requirement (a) for listing on the Sacramento Register, because it is a geographically definable area.
(b)(i)	<p>The 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District meets requirement (b)(i) for listing on the Sacramento Register as an area that possesses “a significant concentration or continuity of buildings unified by: (A) past events or (B) aesthetically by plan or physical development.”</p> <p>The buildings within the district are unified aesthetically by their physical development as part of a distinctive grouping of modest, high-basement houses that were constructed along Q Street between 12th and 14th streets in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The majority of the houses in the district were built in the Queen Anne style, and even those that diverge from this style exhibit a similar scale, era, use of materials, texture, height, and setback, which contributes to their cohesiveness as a grouping. The presence of mature street trees and the addition of four moved houses of a similar style and age to the northwest corner of Q and 14th streets further enhance this visual unity. The district also contains a rare surviving example of a small cottage built along the alley, a formerly common housing type in the nineteenth century when the alleys served as auxiliary housing areas.</p>
(b)(ii)	<p>The 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District meets requirement (b)(ii) for listing on the Sacramento Register as an area “associated with an event, person, or period significant or important to city history.”</p> <p>The district is an example of the development of residential neighborhoods on the outskirts of Sacramento’s city limits toward the end of the nineteenth century. By this time, older neighborhoods near Sacramento’s downtown were becoming increasingly crowded, polluted, and dangerous, leading many residents to search for cleaner and quieter areas in which to build their homes. Flood improvements and the expansion of streetcar service opened up formerly uninhabitable or outlying areas of the city, such as the 1200 and 1300 blocks of Q Street to residential development, leading to the creation of new neighborhoods further from the city center.</p>
(c)	The 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District meets requirement (c) for listing on the Sacramento Register as it aligns with the goals and purposes of historic preservation in Sacramento, as well as the city’s other goals and policies. Per the Sacramento City Code, the preservation of the district enhances the “city’s economic, cultural and aesthetic standing, its identity and its livability, marketability, and urban character.”

Period of Significance: 1868-1910

The period of significance for the 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District begins with the improvement of flood control measures in Sacramento after the redirection of the American River in 1868 and ends with the start of passenger service on the Western Pacific Railroad tracks on Whitney and Quill alleys in 1910, which brought increasing industrialization to the once quiet neighborhood and began its gradual fragmentation.

Property Types from the Period of Significance

- Residential

Architectural Styles from the Period of Significance

- Italianate
- Queen Anne
- Stick/Eastlake
- Folk Victorian
- Classical Revival
- Classic Box
- Prairie
- Craftsman
- Vernacular

(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts	
(2) Factors to be considered	
(a)	Factor (2)(a) states that “a historic district should have integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship and association.” The 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District retains sufficient integrity to meet this factor for consideration as a historic district.
(b)	Factor (2)(b) states that “the collective historic value of the buildings and structures in a historic district taken together may be greater than the historic value of each individual building or structure.” The 1300 block of Q Street within the 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District meets this factor because its buildings and structures represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose collective historic value is greater when taken as a whole. However, the 1200 block of Q Street within the same district does not appear to meet this factor, because of their fragmentation from the rest of the district due to the replacement of historic buildings with parking lots.

Character-Defining Features

Element	Character of Historic District
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-family residences, some converted into multi-family units • Small houses, accessory structures, parking and auxiliary uses located along alley
Mass & Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominately two-story houses with high basements • High basement, or Delta, style buildings with staircases leading up to the primary living spaces on a raised first story • Nineteenth-century houses built on long, narrow plots and exhibit vertical massing • Early twentieth-century houses built on wider plots and exhibit horizontal or cuboid massing • Concentration of houses with Prairie and Classical Revival details on the corner of Q and 14th streets
Cladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominately wood siding, typically wide-width channel rustic siding, three or four lap siding, or shingles, often of varying shapes and patterns on gabled ends
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent front-facing gabled roofs, often with a centrally placed circular vent; some low-pitched hipped roofs with multiple dormers • Brick or clinker brick chimneys
Entries & Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta-style configuration with staircases leading to primary entrances above a high basement • Paneled wood doors, often with a transom above, or integrated glazing
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wood-frame double-hung windows
Porches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent full or half-width porches accessed by a wooden staircase • Brick or clinker brick porch walls and column bases

Element	Character of Historic District
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queen Anne details, including incised brackets under roof eaves; slender, turned porch posts and balusters; and stained-glass windows, especially on transoms over primary entrance • Classical Revival details, including fluted square columns and pilasters, modified Ionic columns, and dentils along cornice • Prairie details, including wide overhanging eaves and horizontal massing
Property Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brick pier fences or low brick retaining walls around small front lawns or gardens • Generally uniform setback of approximately 20-30 feet from the sidewalk to primary, street-facing house facades with approximately seven-foot-wide wide parking strips and seven-foot-wide sidewalks • Some narrow driveways leading to landmarked houses
Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rows of mature, evenly spaced, deciduous street trees—most often sycamore, palm, and walnut trees—planted in a parking strip along the street curb. Generally uniform setback of approximately 20-30 feet from the sidewalk to primary building facades with approximately seven-foot-wide wide parking strips and seven-foot-wide sidewalks

Boundaries & Location

The following map shows the boundaries and location of the 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District.

To view the statuses of individual properties as contributing or non-contributing resources to the historic district, refer to the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources.



Figure 6. Map of the 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District. Source: City of Sacramento and Page & Turnbull, 2019.

District-Specific Standards & Criteria

Design Principle

Carefully and thoughtfully plan projects in the 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District to minimize visual impacts that would disrupt the highly cohesive character of the district contributors.

Rationale

The 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District contains a particularly cohesive grouping of houses, the majority of which share a similar architectural style, building scale, massing, use of materials, siting, and landscaping. Because of the small geographic scale and high level of architectural uniformity of the district, any physical changes will have disproportionate impact on the consistency and character of the district.

In addition to the Standards & Criteria Common to Sacramento's Historic Districts in Section 1, the following district-specific standards and criteria apply when planning a project in the 1200-1300 Q Street Historic District.

1. Rehabilitation of Contributing Resources

- 1.1 Maintain, preserve, and, where necessary, repair and restore historic elements associated with the predominate Delta style of residential architecture, especially historic staircases, porches, and doors.



Figure 7. The replaced staircases and porch railings of these houses are compatible with the historic character of the houses and the wider historic district.



Figure 8. Preserve and maintain characteristic wood features, including decorative exterior ornamentation.

2. Additions & Accessory Structures for Contributing Resources

- 2.1 Design additions with proportions that do not visually dominate the modest scale and long, narrow, massing of contributing buildings in the district.
- 2.2 Avoid additions that cause a building's height to exceed that of the surrounding contributing buildings.
- 2.3 Discourage additions that alter the historic district's dominant pattern of front-facing gabled roofs.
 - Additions that add height to the property should be located well behind front gable roof volume.
- 2.4 Maintain open porches and front-facing stairways.

3. New (Infill) Construction & Alterations to Non-Contributing Resources

- 3.1 Avoid constructing new buildings that are taller than contributing buildings, to the extent feasible.
 - It is recommended that the height of new buildings should fall within the range of heights of surrounding contributing buildings.
- 3.2 Preserve the historic pattern and articulation of long, narrow 40' x 160' parcels, wherever possible.
 - Consider breaking down the massing of large infill developments into smaller masses that reflect the historic lot pattern.
- 3.3 Design infill to be sympathetic to the historic district's dominant pattern of front-facing gabled roofs.
- 3.4 Provide street-facing, covered front porches or entries at new infill development.



Figure 9. Additions and new construction should avoid altering the consistent scale, massing, setbacks, and building forms that characterize much of the historic district.

4. Site Features, Streetscape, & Landscaping

- 4.1 Avoid creating new curb cuts on Q Street.
- Locate driveways and parking access on numbered streets or at the rear of lots via Quill Alley.

5. Alley Infill

- 5.1 On a typical unsplit parcel, set back alley infill buildings a minimum of 30 feet from the primary building on the parcel. If a parcel is split, set back alley infill buildings a minimum of 15 feet from the lot split.
- 5.2 Aim to locate alley infill so that it is a minimum of 10 feet from contributing buildings on adjacent parcels.
- 5.3 It is recommended that the height of alley infill should fall within the range of heights of surrounding contributing buildings.

