

**HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
CITY LANDMARK DESIGNATION
STAFF REPORT**

**LIVE OAK DAIRY BUILDING
901 NORTH MILPAS STREET
ALSO KNOWN AS 900 PHILINDA AVENUE
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
APN 029-313-015**

DECEMBER 13, 2017

Background:

The Streamline Moderne building was designed in 1939 by Alexander C. D'Alfonso, a noted builder and contractor in Santa Barbara. It sits on the corner of Milpas and East Canon Perdido Streets and is a significant feature of the Milpas corridor.

The building is distinguished by its Streamline Moderne character-defining features, with its canted front entrance with round awning, rounded engaged columns, and stepped piers rising to the central platform supporting the iconic cow statue.

As one of Santa Barbara's few Streamline Moderne buildings, the building is important to Santa Barbara's architectural repertoire. The proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation includes the entire parcel to allow for adequate review of any changes to the parcel for compatibility. Because the building meets the City Landmark eligibility criteria for its architectural style and historical significance, it is the opinion of the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) Designations Subcommittee that the building is an excellent candidate for City Landmark designation.



The Streamline Moderne style Live Oak Dairy building with its corner entrance was constructed in 1939. Photo taken November 19, 2016.

Vicinity Map

Red line indicates proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation that includes the entire parcel.



*Vicinity Map, City of Santa Barbara Mapping
Analysis and Printing System, 2013*

Historic Context:

The 1939 Live Oak Dairy was constructed on Milpas Street, a streetscape that combined industrial, commercial, and residential buildings. The Dairy was constructed when there were over 10 dairies operating in and around the city. The building was Live Oak Dairy's new creamery/processing plant. Owners Abbondio Bazzi, John Zocchi, and Innocente Mariani hired Alex D'Alfonso to design and construct the building. It was an early example of the "flyless" dairy. D'Alfonso created open rectangles (presumably screened) at ceiling height on the Canon Perdido elevation so that air could flow across the ceiling, discouraging flies from congregating.

The owners bought a plaster cow from Alfred Kuhn, a sculptor from Yukaipa, California, for \$1000 and placed it on the roof over the entrance.

Parents would bring the children on Sundays to the soda fountain and to see the cow. The cow was known as Old Bossy. It became a Santa Barbara High School tradition for the seniors to subject Old Bossy to an outlandish painting. In 1965, the city awoke to her costumed in a mask, sombrero, long stinky wig and a flower trimmed poncho emblazoned with the High School team name, "Dons '67." In 1971, they tried to decapitate Old Bossy with a ripsaw. She was repaired and hoisted back up to the roof. The kids also took the bell from the nearby Taco Bell and tied it to her neck. She has become a familiar feature to the Santa Barbara community.

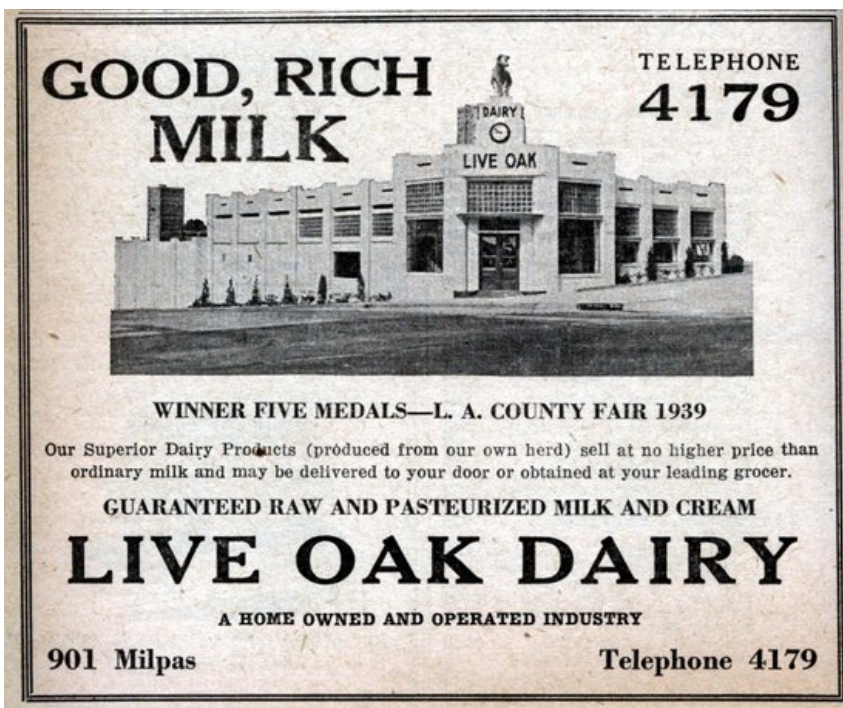
The real Live Oak Dairy cows were actually in Montecito, near 749 San Ysidro Road. Around 1942, the Live Oak Dairy merged with the Riviera Dairy and became Live Oak Riviera Farms. By the late 1940s, new owners named the dairy Petan from combining the names of the owners, Pete and Ann Jackson. Later the building became the home of McConnell's Dairy and Ice Cream shop. The building now has been converted into a restaurant.

Designer

Alex D'Alfonso:

The dairy building as well as the garage behind it on Philinda Avenue were designed by Alex D'Alfonso, whose design and contracting firm was active from 1921 to 1978. Best known for his residential work, D'Alfonso also designed a number of commercial buildings in Santa Barbara.

Born in L'Aquila, Italy, D'Alfonso moved to Santa Barbara in 1915 and began work as a carpenter at the Flying A Studios. In 1921, he began designing and building houses; he drew up the plans, generally in the Mediterranean style, and maintained his own crew of plasterers, painters, carpenters, electricians, and plumbers. In 1946 at the end of World War II, D'Alfonso was joined by his son Daniel. The firm



Above: Early advertisement for the Dairy illustrating the 1939 building (courtesy of Edbat).

bought a tract of land on the lower Riviera above Ortega and De La Guerra Streets and built over thirty houses in the Mediterranean style, laying out the roads and building the sandstone retaining walls. This development, along Diana Lane and Diana Road, remains intact and serves as an excellent example of house siting and design.

D'Alfonso also designed several commercial buildings. In 1926, he designed the Sanchez building, at 301 East Haley Street, in the Mission Revival style, with two towers and arched windows. It was a dominant corner building. In 1949, D'Alfonso built a mixed-use building at 631-635 N. Milpas Street, at the corner of Bond Avenue and Milpas Street, housing four commercial storefronts and a second-floor office for his contracting firm. Designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, its notable features are the tile work on the bulkheads, entry surround, and stair risers, as well as the roof cresting and balcony railings modeled on a 1940s geometric pattern. (Preservation Planning Associates 1998)



The Streamline Moderne Style:

The Streamline Moderne style was prevalent from 1930-1945. In stylistic terms, Streamline Moderne represents the last phase of Art Deco. Whereas Art Deco is concerned with surface ornament, color, and abstractions of natural forms applied as decoration on buildings, Streamline Moderne is essentially a machine aesthetic focused on mass production, functional efficiency, and a more abstract aesthetic coming from the Bauhaus in Germany and the “white architecture” of Europe: the International Style. As the world was transitioning from the exuberance and richness of the “Roaring Twenties” and into the grips of austerity and self-discipline of Depression-era 1930s, the high-style architects were pushed aside in favor of industrial designers.

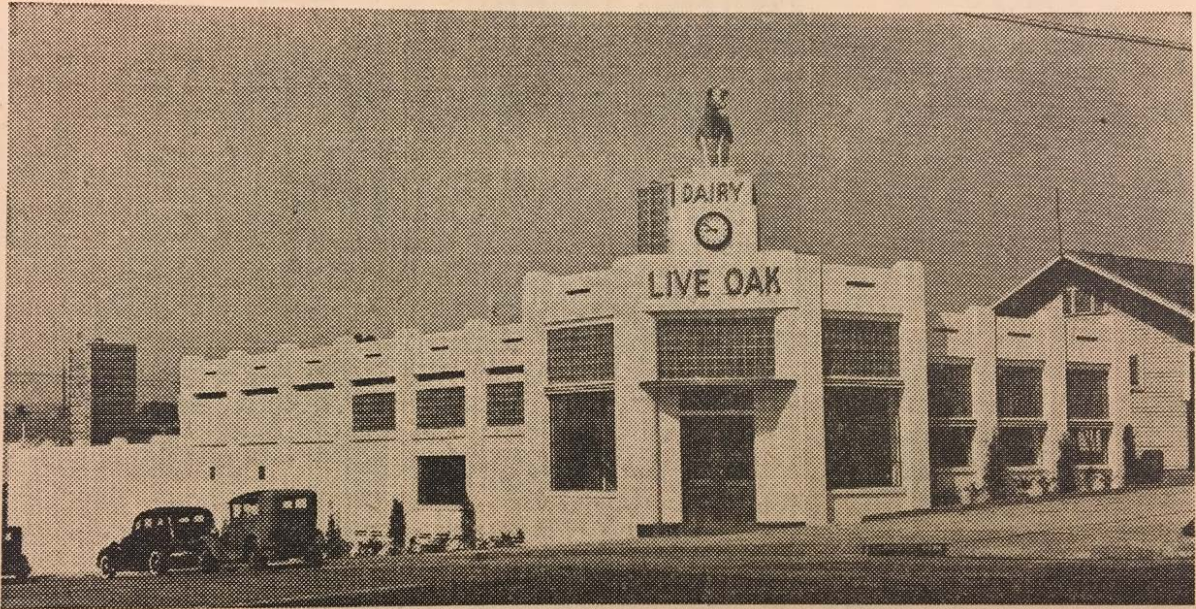
These designers began to favor simpler, aerodynamic lines and forms in the modeling of ships, airplanes, and automobiles. In the modern machine age, smooth surfaces, curved corners, and an emphasis on horizontal lines gave the feeling that airstreams could move smoothly over and under them. This streamline aesthetic was put in service of everyday objects and activities of a democratic society: fast food, cheap travel, appliances, and the automobile. Roadside diners, motor hotels (motels), cinemas, early strip malls and shopping centers, seaside marinas, and air and bus terminals all borrowed forms and profiles from the designs of railway trains, ship hulls and ocean liners, airplane fuselages, and the latest coupes and sedans.

Without a doubt, prominent expositions and fairs during the 1930s in the U.S. were major advocates and proponents of Streamline Moderne, and they helped to spread the taste and preference for the style. These were the Chicago's Century of Progress World's Fair of 1933-34, Dallas' Centennial Exhibition of 1936, the New York World's Fair of 1939-40, and the San Francisco Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939.

The Live Oak Dairy building has the following character-defining features of a Streamline Moderne building:

- the one-story with horizontal emphasis;
- the white predominant color;
- the corner entry and windows accented with the rounded flat metal awning and round, fluted pilasters;
- the ribbon band of glass block windows;
- the flat roof;
- the smooth wall finish;
- horizontal vectors and lines and the rounded awning at the front entrance.

NEW CREAMERY PLANT OPENS TODAY



At the opening of the new ultra-modern creamery of the Live Oak dairy at 2:30 o'clock this afternoon, a program will be presented featuring an "ice cream derby" for children who are accompanied by their parents. The new edifice, which houses the general business offices, production and distribution equipment as well as the retail store, is at Canon Perdido and Milpas streets. It was constructed by Alex D'Alfonso, general contractor.

Significance:

The City of Santa Barbara defines historic significance as outlined by the Municipal Code, Section 22.22.040.

Any historic building that meets one or more of the eleven criteria (Criteria A through K) established for a City Landmark to be considered significant. It is the opinion of the Historic Landmarks Commission Designations Subcommittee that the building at 901 North Milpas Street is an excellent candidate for City Landmark designation per the following six criteria:

Above: Article in the Santa Barbara News Press dated September 3, 1939

Criterion A. Its character, interest or value as a significant part of the heritage of the City, the State or the Nation

This building is an excellent example of the Streamline Moderne style. There are only a few examples of this style in Santa Barbara. As a rare and excellent example of the style in Santa Barbara, the Live Oak Dairy building also represents a time in Santa Barbara when there were many small dairies supplying local customers rather than huge grocery store chains.

Criterion D. Its exemplification of a particular architectural style or way of life important to the City, the State, or the Nation

The building embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Streamline Moderne style, an important architectural style of the 1930s and 1940s.

Criterion E. Its exemplification of the best remaining architectural type in a neighborhood

The building sits on the Milpas Street, which is a mixed streetscape of commercial and residential buildings. The building is the best remaining Streamline Moderne style building on Milpas Street and in Santa Barbara.

Criterion F. Its identification as the creation, design or work of a person or persons whose effort has significantly influenced the heritage of the City, the State or the Nation

The building was designed by Alex D'Alfonso, one of Santa Barbara's noted designers and contractors. D'Alfonso is noted for his design efforts that significantly influenced the heritage of the City. He is recognized for several well-known public buildings and residences in Santa Barbara.

Criterion G. Its embodiment of elements demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials and craftsmanship

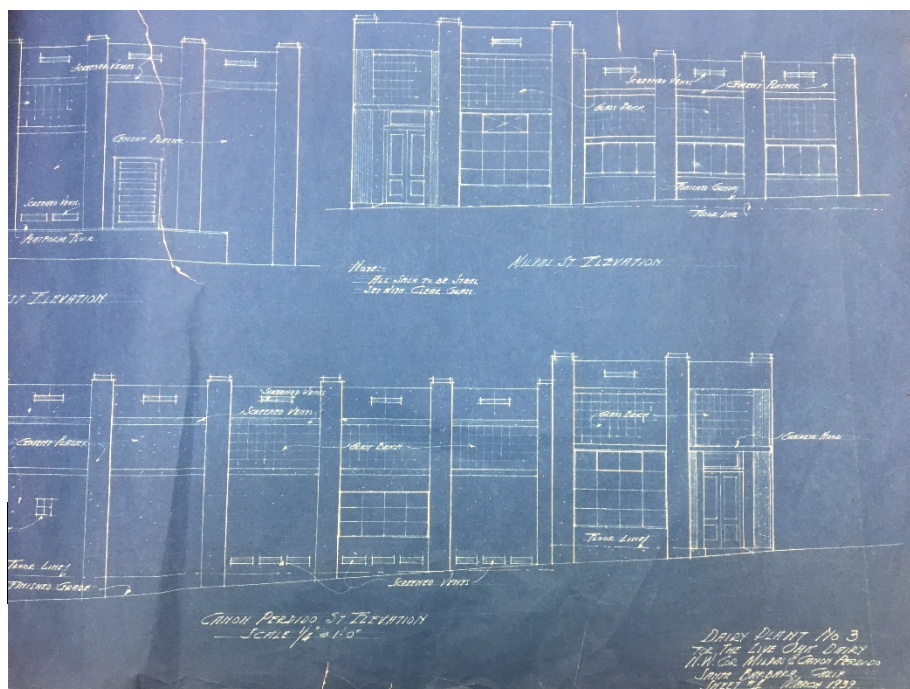
In addition to featuring D'Alfonso's "flyless" design, the Dairy building's corner-facing entry accented with the rounded flat awning and round fluted pilasters demonstrates outstanding attention to architectural design. The ribbon band of glass block windows in between the stepped piers demonstrates outstanding attention to detail, materials, and craftsmanship.

Criterion I. Its unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood

The Dairy is a unique Streamline Moderne building on Milpas Street and has been an established and familiar feature of the community since 1939. The iconic cow set on the roof of the building represents an established and familiar feature of the city as it receives an annual painting and costuming by the local High School students.

Historic Integrity:

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its original appearance. There are essential physical features that must be considered to evaluate the integrity of a significant building. There have been some minor changes to the dairy building. On the south elevation doors were added to the middle bay and the small glass block windows on the last two bays were changed to casement windows, the lower windows under the glass block on the east elevation were altered and there an addition of offices to the rear. The dairy building's streamline moderne character-defining feature remain intact, with a high level of integrity. Since 1939, the dairy building has high integrity of location and setting. The dairy



building is now used as a restaurant; however, it retains the iconic cow on the roof in homage to the dairy roots of the building, giving it integrity of association and feeling. The original design, materials, and workmanship have been retained so that the building conveys its original 1939 appearance. Thus, the building has retained a high level of historical integrity.

Recommendation:

The HLC Designations Subcommittee and staff recommend that the HLC adopt a resolution to recommend to City Council that the Live Oak Dairy building be designated as a City Landmark. Staff recommends the proposed boundary of the City Landmark designation include the entire parcel, as the parcel is small and mostly dedicated to the Live Oak Dairy Building, to allow for adequate review of any changes for compatibility.

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