



**REPORT TO THE HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

AGENDA ITEM NO. VIB  
HPC MEETING: 05/23/16

May 23, 2016

FROM: DANIEL ZACK, AICP, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
Development and Resource Management Dept.

APPROVED BY

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR

BY: KARANA HATTERSLEY-DRAYTON, M.A.  
Historic Preservation Project Manager  
Secretary, Historic Preservation Commission

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF REQUEST BY THE PROPERTY  
OWNER TO RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL THE DESIGNATION OF  
THE A. EMORY AND CORA WISHON HOME LOCATED AT 1284 N. WILSON  
AVENUE TO THE LOCAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC RESOURCES, WITH  
ADOPTION OF FINDINGS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT RECOMMENDATION  
PURSUANT TO FMC 12-1609

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Commission find that the A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home located at 1284 N. Wilson Avenue is eligible for listing on the Local Register of Historic Resources under Criteria i and ii. Staff further recommends that the property be forwarded to the Fresno City Council for designation pursuant to FMC 12-1609. As required by the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the property was publicly noticed in the *Fresno Bee* (published 13 May 2016).

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The new owners of the A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home have requested in writing that their building be considered for listing on Fresno's Local Register of Historic Resources. The full 2-story Arts and Crafts inspired residence was initially built in 1913 and significantly altered by a major addition in 1921. The residence was apparently a "surprise" for A. Emory Wishon from his wife, Cora, who was pregnant with the couple's second child at the time. In 1922 the reconstructed home was featured in the Journal of Electricity and Western Industry in an article, "The Electrical Home for the Electrical Man." A. [Azro] Emory Wishon was the son of Albert Graves Wishon and like his father worked his entire life in the development of electrical energy, both for the San Joaquin Light and Power Company and for Pacific Gas and Electric (PGE), when the earlier SJLPC was absorbed by the San Francisco based corporation. Upon his death in 1948 Wishon was eulogized as a "national eminent figure in the public utility field and a pioneer in the development of the power industry and a civic and industrial leader in California" (Madera Daily Tribune 3 January 1948).

Architecturally, the home has suffered some loss of integrity due to the change-out of the original wood balustrade to wrought iron and the addition of some new windows with faux muntins. The interior, however, retains original features such as the four fireplaces (some

with apparent Batchelder tiles), as well as woodwork and built-in bookcases. The new owners plan to restore the property.

Because of its early construction and its association with the Emory Wishon family, the home (and garage) appear eligible to the Local Register of Historic Resources under Criteria i and ii.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Local Register Criteria and Protocols:**

The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance is located at Chapter 12, Article 16. Section 1607 outlines the criteria for designation of a resource to the Local Register of Historic Resources. A "historic resource" is "any building, structure, object or site" which is generally more than fifty years of age and "possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

- (i) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- (ii) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- (iii) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; or
- (iv) Has yielded or may be likely to yield, information in prehistory or history.

The City's criteria for assessing significance are patterned after the National Register of Historic Places (1966 as amended) which uses letters A-D for significance. Fresno's Local Register is also similar, although not equivalent, to the California Register of Historical Resources which uses a numbering system of 1-4 for criteria. Although the concept of "integrity" is not specifically defined in the City's Ordinance, it is implicitly understood to follow the National Register which defines "integrity" as "the ability of a property to convey its significance." "To retain integrity a property will always possess several and usually most, of the aspects." ("How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" 1988:44).

The process for designating a historic resource is outlined in FMC 12-1609. In brief, a request to designate a resource to the Local Register may be made by the Council, the Commission, the Secretary to the Commission, the property owner, or an authorized representative of the owner (12-1609(a)). Applications for listing use the state protocol for survey forms with both a DPR 523A (Primary) as well as a DPR 523B (Building, Structure, Object Form) (12-1609(a)(1-9)). A notice must be published in a local newspaper at least 10 days prior to the hearing and sent to the property owner as well. Commissioners must also physically visit the property prior to the Commission hearing (12-1609(c)(1)).

Attachment:           Exhibit A - State of California Survey Forms for the A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home located at 1284 N. Wilson Avenue  
Prepared by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, M.A., Historic Preservation Project Manager 6 May 2016.



## PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_

HRI # \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_

Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**P1. Resource Name:** A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home

**\*P2. Location:** \*a. County: Fresno

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: Fresno North 1965 Photorevised 1981

c. Address: 1284 N. Wilson Avenue, Fresno

d. Assessor's Parcel Number: 451-253-22

**\*P3a. Description:** The Emory and Cora Wishon Home is a full two stories with an irregular "L" plan. It faces west onto N. Wilson Avenue on a .34 acre parcel. The residence has a complex roof, although the street façade is side Jerkinhead gabled with exposed rafter tails, wide overhanging eaves and an eyebrow bow in the center. The home is stucco clad and has a rational façade with a fixed window flanked by two 1/1 double hung sash windows on either side of the first floor and two matching double hung wood sash windows on the second story of the façade. The solid wood front door is centrally located and is flanked by sidelights of 12 panes each with wood muntins. A one story porch with flat roof is supported by matching stout piers with flat caps as well as matching Ionic columns. A sliding double door with vinyl faux muntins is located above on the second story and is flanked by 1/1 double hung sash windows. A white wrought iron balustrade encircles this deck and is also located on the south end of the front porch. A one story bay is located on the south elevation. This bay may well have originally supported double French doors, but is now a blank wall although sidelights are extant. The southeast elevation of the home extends back into the yard and is evidence of the home's original end gabled design. Ten casement windows of eight lights each are located on the second story. The lower story windows have been changed out for vinyl although they match the original design. A one story utility porch with hipped roof is located on the northeast corner of this portion of the home. Exterior fireplaces with decorative caps are on both ends of the façade. A one story wood trellis on the south end of the homes serves as a *porte cochere*. A side gabled two car garage with replaced door is located on the southeast corner of the parcel behind the home.

**\*P3b. Resource Attributes:** HP2 (Single-family residence and garage)

**\*P4. Resources Present:** ●Building

**P5b Photo date:** 6 May 2016

**\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:** 1913, correspondence with Emory Wishon Esq. 5 May 2016  
Building permits for porch and addition 1920 and 1921

**\*P7. Owner and Address:**  
Brannon Edward Davies &  
Shantay Renee Davies

**\*P8. Recorded by:**  
Karana Hattersley-Drayton, M.A.

**\*P9. Date Recorded:** 6 May 2016

**\*P10. Survey Type:** Intensive



**\*P11. Report Citation:** "Evaluation of the A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home for the Local Register of Historic Resources."

**\*Attachments:** ●Building, Structure and Object Report; ●Continuation Sheet  
**DPR 523A (1/95)**

**\*Required information**



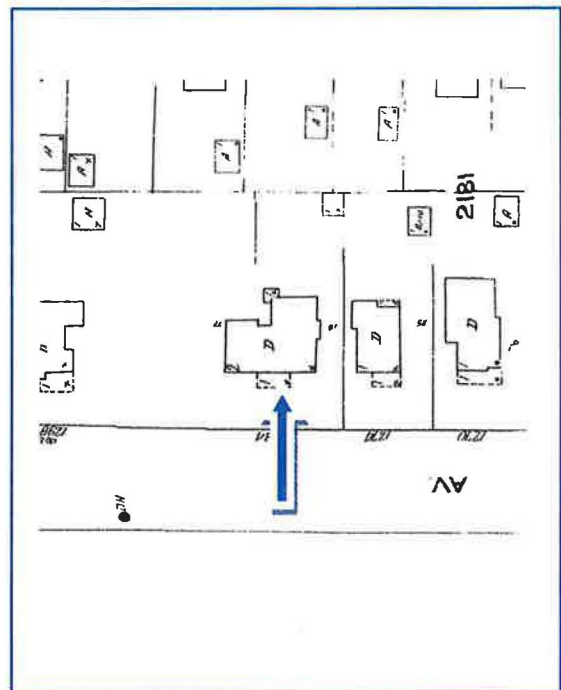
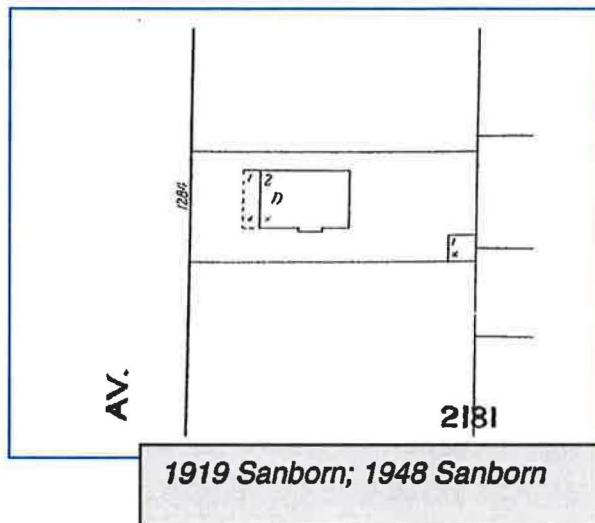
*Rear elevation showing original  
footprint; façade looking southeast*



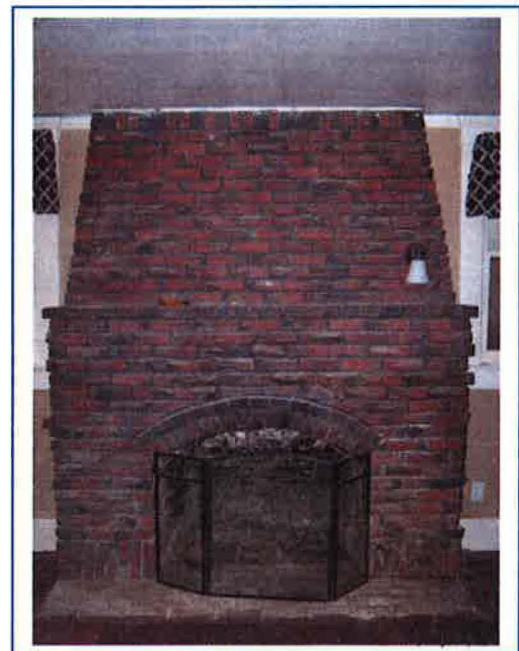
\*Recorded by: Karana Hattersley-Drayton, M.A.

\*Date: 6 May 2016

■ Continuation



*Fireplace above in living room (library) of 1921 addition. Fireplace with clinker bricks in the basement card room.*



**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

\*NRHP Status Code: 5S3

\*Resource Name: A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home

**B3. Original Use:** Single family residence

**B4. Present Use:** Single family residence

\*B5. **Architectural Style:** Modified Arts and Crafts

\*B6. **Construction History:** According to Wishon family history the original home was constructed in 1913 for \$3,000. A building permit was issued 27 January 1920 to enlarge the porch and a substantial addition (valued at \$10,000) was permitted on 2 November 1921.

\*B7. **Moved?** ☒ No

\*B8. **Related Features:** A two car garage is located on the southeast corner of the parcel.

**B9a. Architect:** Unknown

**B9b. Builder:** S.L. Allen on the 1921 addition

\*B10. **Significance: Theme:** Fresno's Expansion North

**Area:** Claremont Park Tract (now Tower District)

**Period of Significance:** 1913-c1926 **Property Type:** Single family residence **Applicable Criteria:** i, ii

According to family history, the Arts and Crafts style Emory and Cora Wishon Home was built in 1913. The footprint as depicted on the 1919 Sanborn fire insurance map is a two-story end-gabled residence. In 1920 the porch was "enlarged" and in 1921 an addition, valued at \$150,000 in today's dollars, radically altered the exterior so that the building is now side-gabled and "rational" in appearance, thus the façade has a symmetrical design. It is possible at the time of the alterations that the home was also stucco clad, as there is a wood egg and dart molding at the beltcourse that is almost hidden by the stucco.

The house was apparently built as a surprise. Cora Wishon, wife of A. [Azro] Emory Wishon, was pregnant with the family's second child and wanted to have a house of her own. When Mr. Wishon didn't accede to her request, Cora Wishon borrowed \$3,000 from a friend in banking, secured the contractor/architect, and had the house built. "And when everything was in shipshape order, she met Mr. Wishon after work, and drove him to his new abode. The surprise was complete." (1) A. Emory Wishon was the son of Albert Graves Wishon, who developed the San Joaquin Light and Power Company and developed the Alta Vista Tract.

(Continued)

\*B12. **References:** 1919, 1948, 1963, 1970 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps' Building Record, Personal interviews with Emory Wishon III (5 May 2016) and Larry Fortune (16 May 2016); Obituary Emory Wishon, Madera Daily Tribune 3 January 1948; "The Electrical Home for the Electrical Man" Journal of Electricity and Western Industry 15 December 1922, 441-442; Charles L. Palmer, "Albert G. Wishon, Founder of the San Joaquin Light and Power Company," Fresno Past and Present 2:1 (January 1960) 3; San Joaquin Light and Power Magazine (July 1913) 315.

\*B14. **Evaluator:** Karana Hattersley-Drayton, M.A.  
Historic Preservation Project Manager  
Fresno, CA

\*Date of Evaluation: 17 May 2016

(This space reserved for official comments.)





**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_

HRI# \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

Page 5 of 7

Resource: A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home 1284 N. Wilson Avenue

\*Recorded by: Karana Hattersley-Drayton, M.A.

\*Date: 6 May 2016

■ Continuation

Emory Wishon followed in his father's footsteps and at his death in 1948 was eulogized as "a national eminent figure in the public utility field and a pioneer in the development of the power industry and a civic and industrial leader in California." (2) He was born in St. James, Missouri on July 18, 1882 and received an engineering degree from the University of Missouri. He married Cora Hoen of Fresno on July 30, 1906. Emory Wishon organized the Coalinga Water and Electric Company in 1909 and introduced electricity into oil well operations. In 1910 he joined the San Joaquin Light and Power Company as Assistant General Manager in charge of the southern division with headquarters in Bakersfield. He was promoted to the position of Assistant General Manager of the Company in 1913 and was General Manager in 1920. The family moved from Fresno sometime in the 1920s due to his further promotions in the overall operation of what was becoming the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. In July 1947 he was the Executive Vice President of PGE's \$350,000,000 expansion program. He died at his Danville country home following a heart attack; services were held in Fresno at the Lisle Funeral Home (3).

The house, as redesigned in 1921, was featured in the December 19, 1922 edition of the Journal of Electricity and Western Industry in an article entitled, "The Electrical Home for the Electrical Man." At this time the San Joaquin Light and Power Company (later PGE) was promoting the safe use of electrical appliances and "modern wiring." The home reportedly had 268 electrical outlets "and almost every species of electrical appliance known to man" including a very rudimentary dishwasher. Of interest is that the article mentions that the tennis court (long gone and probably located on the north of the house) had flood lights with a switch located in the house near the main switch and fuse panel (4).

In addition to the Emory Wishons, two other families of note were early-on associated with the home at 1284 N. Wilson, the Harold Fox family who bought the house from the Wishons and the Don Fortunes, who lived in the home from c1951-1962 (5). The Fox family is related to the Wishons through marriage; a daughter Jane Fox married the youngest Wishon son, A. Emory Jr. in 1941 (6). Don Fortune worked as a teacher, war time surplus dealer and thereafter established a real estate company which is still in operation today, Fortune Associates. Larry Fortune recalls that their neighbor across the street was Mayor Dunn, for whom his father served as campaign manager (7).

The A. Emory and Cora Wishon Home appears to be eligible to the Local Register of Historic Resources due to its importance in the expansion of Fresno in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Criterion i) but mostly for its association with A. Emory and Cora Wishon (Criterion ii). Architecturally the home has lost some integrity to its period of significance due to the removal of the wood turned balustrade (second story), the addition of wrought iron in its place and the intrusion of some new windows. The interior maintains high integrity, however, with four original fireplaces (of which three appear to have Batchelder tiles), woodwork and built-ins. It should be noted that the new owners are keen to restore the home.

1) *Anecdote about Cora Wishon, Emory Wishon III personal correspondence 5 May 2016. The story is also included in the July 1913 edition of the San Joaquin Light and Power Magazine although "Central Avenue" is noted as the site of the new home. As this location would have been south of the city in the country, it is assumed that this breezy mention is in error.*

2) *Obituary, Madera Daily Tribune 3 January 1948.*

3) *Ibid.*

4) *Journal of Electricity and Western Industry 16 December 1922 pp. 441-442.*

5) *Personal correspondence with Larry Fortune 16 May 2016.*

6) *Letter to former owner from Emory Wishon III 23 December 2013.*

7) *Fortune correspondence, 16 May 2016.*

*Thanks to Assistant Natalie Robertson for additional research on the history of the Emory Wishon family.*



The attractive electrical home of A. E. Wishon, in Fresno, California

## The Electrical Home for the Electrical Man

By Norman S. Gallison

ONE of the severest indictments against the electrical man is that, in the use of domestic devices, he does not practice what he preaches. Investigations show that the percentage of electrical appliances in the homes of electrical men is no greater than in the homes of non-electrical men. One investigation of 6,700 homes showed that out of this group of people whose business it is to sell electric service in the home only about twenty per cent use any of the appliances except the electric iron.

"Selling the Electrical Idea to the Electrical Man" is a constructive piece of work which could well occupy the attention of the various organizations within the industry now designed to educate the public to the many advantages of electricity in the home. There is a general criticism, and a just one, that one branch of the industry often stands in the way of the other. Examples are not unknown of electrical men "knocking" various appliances such as heaters, ranges, and water heaters. Individual organizations could well afford to do missionary work among their own employees to stimulate the increased use of appliances.

Stimulation of the use of electrical appliances by electrical men is today one of the greatest undeveloped resources of the industry. Electrical homes of electrical men represent not only examples pointed to and emulated by the community, but they augur well for the owners' part in forwarding the industry.

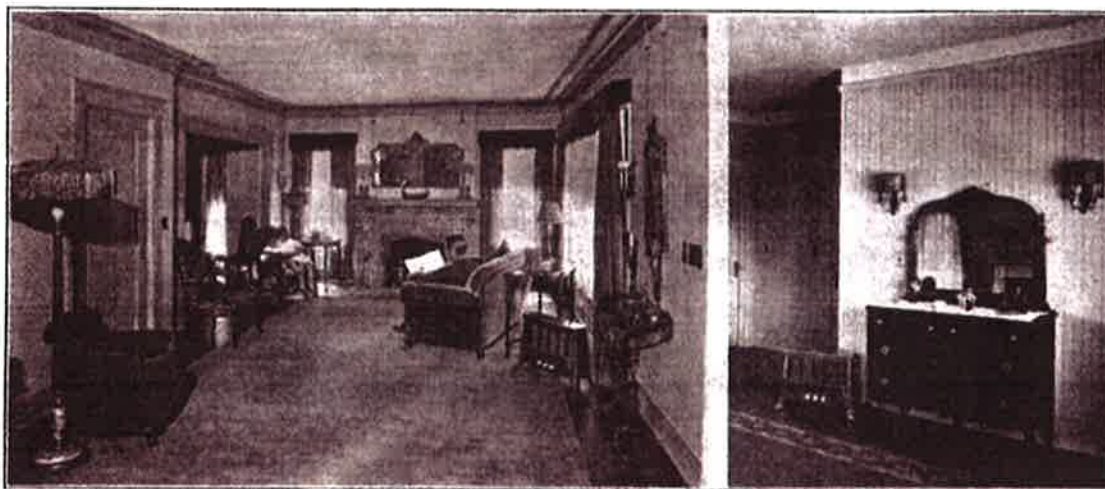
One central station manager who believes in the electrical home idea so thoroughly that he owns one himself is A. E. Wishon, general manager of the

San Joaquin Light & Power Corporation in Fresno, Calif. His home, views of which are shown here, contains 263 electrical outlets—and almost every species of electrical appliance known to man. Perhaps because of the support which the central station gives to the electrical idea by thus showing that they believe in it, Fresno not only has had its electrical home, but it has an electrical home district, where the general contractor builds nothing but houses which are fully equipped with convenience outlets and modern wiring.

The main sitting room in the Wishon home, shown on the following page, has 16 outlets, including the master burglar switch which is found in every room and which controls one light in every part of the house. A fine variety of lighting effects is obtainable in this room, where portable lamps and wall brackets may be separately controlled. Note the movable electric fixtures on the mantel-piece which may be shifted to vary the effect, or removed entirely for purposes of cleaning.

Although the tradition of the wood fire has been kept for the sake of its winter beauty, electrical heaters are provided for the practical heating of the house. In the dining room, a toaster, a percolator and a waffle iron help to make an electrical breakfast. Center outlets, so that connection may be made under the edge of the table, provide for convenience in the operation of table equipment. The fixtures for each room were especially designed to fit into the scheme of decoration and both shades and metal work tone in with the coloring of wall paper and woodwork.





Main sitting room and corner of bed room in Wishon home

An electric range, a dish washing machine and a complete outlay of electrical equipment make the kitchen a pleasant place to work, even in the hot weather of summer which helps to ripen that raisin crop for which the country in the vicinity of Fresno is so famous. The pull switch for the light which is installed directly over the electric range is seen below the hood. A small ventilating fan in the ceiling of the hood draws off all odors of cooking and any heat which may be radiated from the kettles themselves.

Washing machine and electric ironer are conveniently situated on the laundry porch. Convenience outlets are at hand for all needs. Outlets are situated some fourteen inches above the floor rather than at the floor level, as a more convenient height for the housewife. An electric motor operates the sewing machine. Electric fixtures are placed considerably lower on the wall in the Wishon-home than is the usual custom. They are located about 4 ft. 6

in. from the floor, or, where the light is required at table height, the bracket is even lower.

Switches at each major entrance, convenience outlets near the bed and bureaus, the convenient electric heater and all such other equipment as go to make a bedroom comfortable are found here. A burglar switch in this case is located where it may be reached from the bed. Wall brackets are placed low on either side of the bureau, giving better light without casting shadows. All metal of the fixtures and of the switch plates is especially toned down to fit in with the coloring of the room.

Mr. Wishon has equipped his tennis court with flood lights, making possible the enjoyment of the game in the evening. This adds considerably to the pleasure of the sport, especially in the summer. The switch for the tennis court lights is located in the house near the main switch and fuse panel. Needless to say each fuse on the panel is plainly marked and directions show which rooms are involved.



Kitchen and dining room have the latest in electrical conveniences