

Historic Preservation Historians for a Carmel-by-the-Sea Challenge

This is a reading copy of the earlier recommendation, with the source links embedded so you can follow the supporting material directly.

Margaret Clovis - baseline / City consultant

Margaret Clovis is clearly qualified. Carmel describes her as a qualified professional who exceeds the State Historic Preservation Office qualification standards, and the City has repeatedly retained her for intensive surveys and DPR 523 evaluations. She has also made both eligibility and ineligibility findings in Carmel, so she is not simply someone who always favors designation.

[Carmel staff report: Carmel NovusAgenda - historic eligibility dispute / Clovis](#)

[KSBW coverage: KSBW - Carmel homeowners / historic designation dispute](#)

1. Kent Seavey - probably the strongest Carmel-specific counter-expert

Kent Seavey is an architectural historian with unusually deep knowledge of Carmel's built history. Carmel itself presents Seavey alongside Seth Bergstein as an expert on the city's landmark architecture, and Seavey participated in the City's Historic Context Statement work.

More importantly for your situation, in a 2024 Carmel historic-designation dispute, the property owner retained Seavey to peer-review Margaret Clovis's eligibility determination. Seavey supported another historian's conclusion that the property should not be listed, directly opposing Clovis's analysis. That makes him especially relevant: he has already served in essentially the role you are considering.

[Carmel historic preservation page: City of Carmel-by-the-Sea - Historic Preservation](#)

[2024 Carmel staff report: Carmel NovusAgenda - Ohloff House dispute](#)

2. Seth Bergstein / PAST Consultants - strong formal preservation resume, but check conflicts

Seth Bergstein specializes in identification, analysis, documentation and preservation of historic buildings and has nearly 30 years of combined experience in engineering, materials conservation, architectural history and historic preservation. He meets the Secretary of the Interior qualification standards in Architectural History and History.

However, PAST Consultants has served as Carmel's on-call historic preservation consultant, and Bergstein worked directly on Carmel's Historic Context Statement. For an owner-side challenge, that prior relationship with the City is a reason to investigate conflicts and independence carefully before retaining him.

[PAST Consultants bio: PAST Consultants - Principals](#)

[Carmel context work: Carmel NovusAgenda - Historic Context Statement work](#)

3. Katie Horak / Architectural Resources Group (ARG) - strongest 'big firm' option

If the matter has a realistic chance of becoming adversarial or litigated, Architectural Resources Group is a strong firm to consider. ARG is a major preservation architecture and planning practice founded in 1980, with architects, historians, planners and materials conservators.

Katie Horak, a principal at ARG, is described by the firm as an authority on national and regional historic-preservation standards, policy and legal frameworks, with particular expertise guiding projects through regulatory approvals. For a report intended to withstand City hearings, competing expert reports, depositions, or a writ proceeding, ARG brings substantial institutional weight.

[ARG firm profile: Architectural Resources Group - Who We Are](#)

[Katie Horak profile: ARG - Katie E. Horak](#)

4. Historic Resources Group (HRG), Pasadena - strong outside independent review

Historic Resources Group is another major California preservation consultancy. HRG specializes in preservation planning, architectural consultation and development services and has senior principals accustomed to complex entitlement and preservation work.

HRG would make particular sense if you want a genuinely outside review with less institutional history in Carmel. That can be useful where independence itself may become part of the credibility of the expert opinion.

[HRG: Historic Resources Group](#)

A Carmel precedent that is especially instructive: the J. Henry Ohloff House dispute

The J. Henry Ohloff House dispute in 2023-2024 provides a useful blueprint. Carmel hired Margaret Clovis, who concluded that the house retained sufficient integrity and qualified for the Historic Inventory. The owners then hired Dr. Anthony Kirk and Kent Seavey, both qualified professionals, who argued the opposite. Carmel's staff report explicitly describes their submissions as the applicant's second opinions / peer reviews and lays out their criticism of Clovis's analysis.

That is directly relevant to your situation because Carmel has already recognized the procedural role of an owner's independent qualified historian reviewing and disputing the City's consultant.

[Ohloff House staff report: Carmel NovusAgenda - J. Henry Ohloff House](#)

5. Dr. Anthony Kirk - specifically relevant because he challenged a Clovis determination

Dr. Anthony Kirk is especially interesting because he has already been retained by Carmel property owners specifically to challenge a Margaret Clovis Historic Inventory determination. Carmel's 2024 staff report identifies Kirk as an architectural historian / qualified professional and discusses his written opinion that the property should not be considered eligible.

For your purposes, that means he is not merely a preservation historian with strong academic credentials; he has direct experience providing the kind of adverse second opinion that an owner might need in Carmel.

[Carmel staff report discussing Kirk and Seavey: Carmel NovusAgenda - peer review opinions](#)

Who I would interview for the Chapman / Rowan Maiden house

For your particular objective - critically reviewing Margaret Clovis's conclusion that the altered Chapman / Rowan Maiden house retains sufficient historic integrity - I would interview the following first:

- **Kent Seavey** - for Carmel-specific architectural history, comparative knowledge of local properties, and direct experience peer-reviewing Clovis.

- **Architectural Resources Group / Katie Horak** - for an independent statewide-caliber report with strong regulatory and litigation credibility.
- **Dr. Anthony Kirk** - because he has already produced an owner-side second opinion challenging a Clovis historic eligibility determination in Carmel.

A particularly strong structure could be one Carmel-focused expert plus one genuinely independent statewide expert - for example, Kent Seavey plus ARG. That gives you both local comparative knowledge and an outside opinion that is harder to dismiss as part of Carmel's usual preservation network.

Important caveat

In the Ohloff House matter, the owners' contrary experts did not ultimately persuade the Historic Resources Board to keep the property off the Inventory. That is a reminder that credentials alone do not decide the case. The strength of your evidence - especially the prior removal from the Inventory, the 1994 carport enclosure, original photographs and plans, and a rigorous integrity analysis - will matter more than simply hiring a famous historian.

Questions to ask before retaining anyone

- Have you previously evaluated the Dorothy Green Chapman / Rowan Maiden house?
- Have you worked for the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea on this property or on related historic-resource matters?
- Are there any current or former City relationships that could create a conflict or appearance of a conflict?
- Do you meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards in History and/or Architectural History?
- Are you comfortable concluding that a property does not retain sufficient integrity when the evidence supports that result?
- Will you defend your opinion before the Historic Resources Board, City Council, and, if necessary, in deposition or litigation?
- Will your report specifically compare the original 1949 design and photographs with the 1994 garage enclosure and all later alterations?