

SAN FRANCISCO
PRESERVATION BULLETIN NO. 18

**RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURAL
PERIODS AND STYLES IN SAN FRANCISCO**

San Francisco has a unique and varied architectural history, with many architectural styles and building forms represented. While this Preservation Bulletin discusses the foremost architectural periods, styles and building forms found in the City, it is not intended to be a comprehensive listing of architecture in San Francisco. Information is presented in roughly chronological order. Where possible, San Francisco Landmarks are used to represent an example of an architectural style. Information on the City's major architectural periods -- both commercial and residential -- precedes architectural styles.

San Francisco's Principal Residential Architectural Periods

Period -- Victorian (1860-1900). During this period, San Francisco's architectural styles evolved from Mission-inspired and vernacular designs to styles of classicism and ornamentation. During the last decades of Britain's Queen Victoria's reign, a number of architectural styles were popularized in the United States. Loosely based on medieval prototypes, these styles are exemplified through multi-textured or multi-colored walls, asymmetrical facades and steeply pitched roofs. During this period, advances in technology resulted in the mass-production of housing materials such as doors, windows and siding, and the construction of complex shapes and elaborate detailing.

Period -- Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Revivals (1890-1940). Commencing at the turn of the century and picking up steam in the 1920s, Period Revival architecture occurred amidst several great building booms. The longing for a foreign atmosphere, always a part of San Francisco culture, is exemplified during this period in which both traditional and exotic tastes found acceptance.

Period -- Edwardian (1901-1910). Frequently, historic resources in San Francisco are referred to as "Edwardian," in design and appearance. The term "Edwardian" was created to describe architecture produced in Great Britain and its colonies from 1901 to 1910, with the reign of Edward VII. Edwardian architecture encompasses a number of styles, with five main strands identified: Gothic Revival, Arts and Crafts, Neo-Georgian, Baroque Revival and the Beaux-Arts style. Interpreted in the United States and in San Francisco, the term "Edwardian" is often associated with multi-unit flats or apartment buildings constructed at the beginning of the 20th century.

Period -- Modernistic (1925-1970). Beginning with the Art Deco style, the Modernistic period represented a radical departure in architectural expression. Art Deco was followed by Art Moderne, which, like its predecessor, was expressed through smooth surfaces, curved corners and the horizontality of structures. The period concludes with the International style, characterized by an absence of ornamentation and the use of rich materials, refined details and proportions.

San Francisco's Principal Commercial Architectural Periods

Period -- 19th Century Commercial (1850-1900). Early commercial buildings in the heart of San Francisco were usually two-story brick buildings with decorative details that included exposed anchor bolts, triangular or curvilinear pediments over windows and cornices supported on decorative brackets. Ground stories often featured cast iron shutters between cast iron pilasters with stylized capitals. Walk-up and later elevator buildings are generally of brick bearing wall construction with timber-framed interiors with the occasional use of cast-iron posts.

Period -- Warehouse/Industrial Buildings (1867-1900). Large expanses of red brick walls, large first floor openings to accommodate wagons and trains and small windows that feature flat or segmental arches are common. Decorative through-wall tie rods, iron shutters and hinged doors are also found on this form. Decorative detailing is usually confined to simple wall arches and corbelled cornices and paneled parapets.

Period -- Chicago School (1890-1915). Popular after the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, style from the period features steel frames enclosing a neutral grid of space. Large expanses of glass permitted ample natural lighting and exhibited the structural expression of steel frames. From this style, the "Chicago Window" was named; a large central pane flanked by two narrow casements. As the 20th century progressed, steel and reinforced concrete framing techniques gradually replaced masonry bearing walls although masonry continued to be used for curtain walls. Often conceived of as single volumes, floor plans were either hollow-core, or consisted of light wells in an E, F, L or H-shaped arrangement.

Period -- Commercial (1890-1920). Often three or more stories tall, commercial structures from this period were typically executed with straight fronts, flat roofs and level skylines. From a steel skeleton construction with non-bearing masonry veneer, the buildings often feature a moderately projecting cornice. Windows often served as the building's ornamentation, with tripartite "Chicago" windows, or slightly projecting bays commonplace. Other ornament, such as a cartouche, festoon, or garland can also be found.

Period -- 20th Century Industrial (1900-1950). Ironically, widespread adoption of reinforced concrete and steel-frame building techniques spread to industrial buildings after having been first popularized in commercial architecture. By the 1920s, almost all industrial buildings were constructed with modern framing techniques, clad in unfinished concrete and punctured by generous amounts of steel sash windows. Industrial buildings are located along the northern and eastern shoreline of the city, in the South of Market, India Basin and Bayview/Hunter's Point areas.

Period -- High Rise Commercial (1890-1955). Beginning with technological developments such as high strength steel framing and elevators in the 19th century combined with curtain wall construction/non-load bearing walls, buildings began to grow taller, framing lighter and window expanses larger by 1900. These new buildings appeared in all major cities as symbols of progress and prosperity. Brick and stone were always popular as cladding materials but terra cotta was equally popular, especially in San Francisco after the 1906 disaster. Gothic and Romanesque architectural detailing were favored on early buildings but by 1900, Classic Revival forms were popular.

The design formula was based on the classical column with a base of two, three or four stories with decorative elements that cap the construction. Later, Art Deco high rises had sleeker, stepped profiles at the upper stories and stylized ornament from non-classical sources. By the early fifties the use of any ornament was shunned and the use of glass as a cladding material had gained popularity with the International Style.

San Francisco's Principal Architectural Styles



**Landmark #113: SF Mining Exchange,
350 Bush St.**



**Landmark #66: Stanyan
House, 2006 Bush St.**

Style -- Greek Revival (1850-late 1860s). The style, based on the architecture and decoration of Greek temples, is characterized by simple detailing, flat-arched openings and low-pitched gable roofs, often front-facing. The style was frequently employed for institutions, commercial and domestic buildings.



**Landmark #2: St. Mary's
Church, 660 California St.**



**Landmark #32: Phelps House,
1111 Oak St.**

Style -- Gothic Revival (1850-1925). Popular at the same time as the Greek Revival and partially in response to the austerity of that style, the Gothic Revival style has deep roots in the romantic ideals of the 17th century. The chief characteristic of the style is pointed arched openings for both doors and windows, asymmetrical massing, steeply pitched gable roofs, bargeboards at the eaves and label or drip moldings over the doors and windows.



Landmark #12: Hoteling Bldg., 451 Jackson St.



Landmark #57: Talbot-Dutton House, 1782 Pacific St.

Style -- Italianate (1860s-early 1880s). The Italianate style incorporated elements of Roman or Italian classical decoration and is characterized by straight rooflines, bracketed cornices and picturesque asymmetry. Entrance windows are typically balustrated and doors are paired and capped by a hood. False fronts are also a distinguishing feature. Walls can be stone or brick but are most commonly of rustic wood siding, especially for houses. In San Francisco, the style appeared in two versions: the flat-front Italianate, popular during the 1860s and the 1870s bay window Italianate, which featured a dominant two-story bay window.



Landmark #135: Westerfeld House, 1198 Fulton St.

Style -- Stick and Eastlake (early 1880s-1890s). Both styles are frame styles that replaced Italianate in popularity for residential buildings. The *Stick* style has geometrical, flat ornament with open brackets or braces and square columns at the porch. Roofs are usually pitched behind parapets. The interior structure is often mimicked on the exterior by superficial cross bracing, half timbering and diagonal bracing. The *Eastlake* style has incised ornament on rounded brackets and columns. Turned, or rounded columns are rarely classical in form or shape. There is often elaborate turned work, resembling beads or buttons, on the porch, at the bays, or in the gable.



Landmark #69: Haas Lilienthal House, 2007 Franklin St.



Landmark #182: Theodore Green Apothecary, 500 Divisadero St.

Style -- Queen Anne (mid-1880s-1900). The style is characterized by open facing gable roofs, asymmetrical arrangement of massing and openings and a variety of siding surface treatments and window shapes. Square, round and octagonal towers became popular in the later 1880s. Wall surfaces feature imbricated shingles, plaster, wood paneling and rustic siding, sometimes all on one building. Red brick with terra cotta trim was used for chimneys. The open facing gables have decorated verge boards and sometimes sunburst or floral patterns in wood. Porches feature round, square, or small-scale classical columns. Leaded or stained glass windows vary in size, shape, arch and molding styles.



Landmark #196: Hanson House, 126 27th Ave.

Style -- Shingle or First Bay Tradition (1880-1915). In San Francisco, the Shingle style is often referred to as the First Bay Tradition, adapted for construction on narrow city lots. The Shingle style dispensed with the complex building surfaces of the Queen Anne style and used simple shingles for all surfaces. These buildings are characterized by symmetry with bulges, incisions and cavities enshrouded by a "skin" of patterned shingles. Usually featuring restrained, small-scale ornamentation, Shingle buildings often feature decorative details such as Palladian windows.

Style -- Colonial Revival (1880-1955).

Colonial Revival homes are typically recognized by classical ornament and an accentuated front door featuring a decorative crown (pediment) and pilaster or columns that form an entry porch. Sidelight windows and a transom over the front door -- usually in fanlight pattern -- are also common to the style. Double hung windows are also typical and feature multi-pane glazing. The most common building form is the side-gabled roof, with the accentuated front door and entry centered on the building.



**Landmark #126: Brandenstein House,
1735 Franklin St.**



**Landmark #58: SF Gas & Light Co., 3640
Buchanan St.**



**Landmark #75: Whittier Mansion,
2090 Jackson St.**

Style -- Romanesque Revival (late 1880s-early 1900s). Although the style became popular in the early part of the 19th century, only later examples of the style are found in San Francisco. Chief characteristics are round arched openings for doors and windows, corbels and corbel tables and ornament derived from European churches.

Red brick with terra cotta trim is most commonly used for walls, with naturalistic spiky leaf style ornament a part of the decorative program. The style was used for commercial buildings, churches, schools, hospitals, institutions, houses and apartment buildings. Later examples from the early twentieth century often include Byzantine decorative elements.



**Landmark #64: Flood Mansion,
1000 Washington St.**



**Landmark #95: Koshland Mansion,
3800 Washington St.**

Style -- Beaux Arts (1890-1920). The style became extremely popular after the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, where it reigned supreme. The stylistic elements are derived from the classical architecture of Greece and Rome with an architectural vocabulary that includes columns with Doric, Ionic and Corinthian capitals, egg and dart molding, and Greek key fretwork and cornices with modillions and dentils. Commonly associated with such institutions such as banks, it was also popular for public buildings, schools and occasionally houses.



**Landmark #130: Hibernia Bank, 1 Jones
Street**



**Landmark #143:
Firehouse #2, 460 Bush
Street**

Style -- Classical Revival (1893-1920). Structures designed in the Classical Revival style are typically larger than its Greek Revival forerunner. Massive in form, Classical Revival structures have simple wall surfaces and lack ornamentation, but often feature pedimented porticos and large windows with lintels.



Landmark #56: Roos House, 3500 Jackson St.



**Landmark #220:
Firehouse #31, 1088
Green St.**

Style -- Tudor Revival (1890-1940). Tudor Revival structures are typically represented by steeply pitched, side-gabled roofs with prominent cross gables all clad with slate, clay tiles and shake shingles.

Decorative half timbering, parapeted gables and vergeboards are also evident. Walls are typically clad with several materials including smooth or textured stucco, brick and/or stone and wood clapboard or shingles. Windows are tall, narrow casement windows in multiple groups with multi-paned glazing.



**Landmark #86: Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, 953
DeHaro St.**

Style -- Bungalow/Craftsman (1900-1930). Craftsman structures feature projecting eaves with structural wood elements used as simple ornamentation. Windows are often irregular in pattern; horizontal windows are paired with upper sash windows featuring multiple lights. Craftsman structures are typically of natural wood construction and siding with shingles or clapboard siding. A concrete block or stone foundation and porch piers are typically associated with this style.



36th Avenue at Rivera Street

Style -- Mediterranean Revival (1920-1950s). In San Francisco, the majority of residences constructed west of Twin Peaks (Excelsior, Sunset and Richmond neighborhoods) post-1920 are a derivative of the Mediterranean Revival style; identified by red tile roofs or parapets, faced in stark white or pastel colored walls over a structural system made of wood or concrete block.

Exterior ornament and detail varies building by building but may include ornate doors and door surrounds and unique window patterns. Mediterranean Revival includes the French Renaissance architectural style.



Landmark #195: Islam Temple (Alcazar Theater) 650 Geary Blvd.

Style -- Exotic Revival (1900-1940s). Exotic Revival-styled structures are designed with an exuberance of ornamentation and motifs. Decoration is most often expressed through “Oriental,” Turkish, Byzantine, Egyptian, Moorish, Mayan or Venetian designs. The Moorish/Byzantine Revival is most often found on apartment and commercial buildings and movie theaters.



Landmark #111: Family Service Agency, 1010 Gough St.



Landmark #159: Gaylord Hotel, 620 Jones St.

Style -- Spanish Colonial Revival (1915-1930). The popularity of this style begins with the Panama-California Exposition held in San Diego in 1915. The style is characterized by smooth stucco walls and red tile roofs and features elaborate molded ornament around doors and windows, polychrome tile at entries and wrought iron grilles and balconies. The style was popular for commercial buildings, institutions, apartments and houses.



Medical Arts Building, 450 Sutter St.



Style -- Art Deco/Art Moderne (1925-1950). Named for an international exposition held in Paris in 1925, the style was used on commercial, industrial, governmental, institutional, schools, theaters, apartments and residences. Ornamental designs were derived from a variety of sources including Egyptian, Mayan and "Oriental" art and architecture. The style is noted for its use of rich materials and profuse ornament of zigzags, rays and chevrons.



The next phase -- often called Art Moderne -- begins in the mid-1930s when the ornamentation becomes more subdued and streamlined, often limited to three parallel lines (speed lines), and simple roundels or octagon shapes with black glass or glass block inserts. Rounded and curved elements are used, often with a nautical flavor such as porthole windows.

Apartment Building, 1360 Montgomery St.



Landmark #183: Crown Zellerbach Complex, 1 Bush St.



Schiff House, 2055 Jefferson St.

Style -- International Style (1937-1970). Based on the philosophies of European architects such as Le Corbusier, Marcel Breuer and Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe, the style is characterized by an absence of ornamentation and the use of rich materials, refined details and proportions. It was intended to provide cities with efficient buildings of timeless beauty as examples of modern technology.

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