



# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## Marcus Books / Jimbo's Bop City 1712-1716 Fillmore Street

Initiated by the Historic Preservation Commission, September 18, 2013  
Approved by the Board of Supervisors, February 3, 2014  
Signed by Mayor Edwin Lee, February 13, 2014

Landmark No.  
**266**

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The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is a seven-member body that makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding the designation of landmark buildings and districts. The regulations governing landmarks and landmark districts are found in Article 10 of the Planning Code. The HPC is staffed by the San Francisco Planning Department.

# Marcus Books/Jimbo's Bop City

## 1712-1716 Fillmore Street

**Built:** c. 1893  
**Architect:** Unknown

### OVERVIEW

1712-1716 Fillmore Street is significant for its association with Marcus Books, the nation's oldest continuously operating, independent Black-owned and Black-themed bookstore.<sup>1</sup> Marcus Books is located at the street level of a two-story-over-raised-basement Stick-Eastlake building, constructed c. 1893. The bookstore was founded by Julian and Raye Richardson in 1960, as an outgrowth of the family's printing business, the Success Printing Co., which they established in 1947, shortly after settling in San Francisco. The property is also significant for its association with the lifework of Julian and Raye Richardson. As recent graduates from the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee Alabama, the Richardsons perceived a need in the City—which was experiencing an unprecedented surge in Black population at the time—for a center for Black intellectualism and idea exchange. Marcus Books became that space, and has continued to serve this purpose for the City's Black population, weathering changing urban conditions and demographics with creativity and perseverance. The business was originally located on the 1800 block of Fillmore Street and was forced to move several times in avoidance of both rising rents and the demolition brought on by San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) projects in the Western Addition. The bookstore moved into its current home at 1712 Fillmore Street in 1980. At that time, the building had recently been rescued from demolition by the combined efforts of neighborhood historians, activists, and people working within the SFRA and relocated to a small commercial redevelopment project known as Victorian Square. Marcus Books continues to be owned and operated by members of the Richardson family.

The building which houses Marcus Books was originally located three blocks away at 1686-1690 Post Street. Prior to its physical relocation, the building was the site of one of the San Francisco's most famous jazz venues, Jimbo's Bop City. The building is also significant as the former home of Jimbo's Bop City. Beginning in 1950, in what had been a Japanese-owned drug store prior to Japanese internment in 1942, James "Jimbo" Edwards rented the commercial

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<sup>1</sup> Following language preferences modeled at the Marcus Books website and in various interviews and articles about Marcus Books, this report will consistently use the term "Black" to refer to African Americans and persons of African descent, with the acknowledgement that personal preferences and style standards surrounding these terms vary.

portion of the building from Charles Sullivan, a well-known Black businessman and real estate owner. Edwards sold waffles out of his storefront and hosted all-night jazz performances in the large back room. The club quickly developed a reputation as a space for the new “bop” sound in San Francisco and attracted famous performers, including Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Sarah Vaughn, Ella Fitzgerald, and many others. Jimbo’s Bop City was a unique early space where race and gender were regarded as second to one’s ability to play, and the club welcomed anyone to the stage who could contribute to the pioneering new direction jazz was taking at the time. After 15 years of nightly performances, Jimbo’s Bop City closed its doors in 1965, in the face of dramatic changes in the neighborhood, a combination of demographic changes and side effects of the redevelopment projects that were reshaping the Fillmore at that time.

## BUILDING DESCRIPTION



*Figure 1: 1712-1716 Fillmore Street, view looking southeast*

### Overview

1712-1716 Fillmore Street is a two-story-over-raised-basement, rectangular-plan, residential-over-commercial Stick-Eastlake building clad in horizontal wood channel-drop siding and capped with a front gable roof obscured by a paneled parapet. The 4,312 sq. ft. building occupies the majority of its 2,557 sq. ft. lot on the east side of Fillmore Street between Post and Sutter Streets. There is a commercial storefront at the raised basement, and residential units at the first and second stories. The building is set back approximately 15 feet from the sidewalk. The building was originally located at 1686-1690 Post Street, on the north side of Post between Laguna and Buchanan Streets. The building was slated for demolition during the A-2 phase of the SFRA’s redevelopment plan for the Western Addition. However, the building was moved to its current location in 1980 under the auspices of the SFRA as part of a micro-redevelopment project.



## Primary Façade



*Figure 2: Left: View looking east at upper stories of the primary façade. Right: View looking southeast at storefront space.*

At the primary façade, the raised basement features a commercial storefront with a fully glazed wood door at center and a fixed single pane window to the left of the door. Both the door and the window are topped by fixed wood sash transom windows. The windows and the door are framed by wide wood surrounds. The area below the large fixed window features a chevron-pattern panel, a motif which repeats at the first and second stories of the building. At right, a straight wood staircase rises to the primary entrances, located at the first story. The staircase is framed by newel posts and turned wood balusters.

At the first story of the primary façade, two entrances are located at the top of the stair, set within a paneled entry alcove. The entrance doors are both partially glazed wood paneled doors, and both are topped by fixed transom windows which, in pair, form an arch. The entry alcove is framed by a compound bracketed portico with a dentil cornice and a semicircle-shaped front panel. Additional fenestration at the first story includes a rectangular bay with double-hung wood frame windows above chevron-pattern spandrel panels. The bay is capped by a belt cornice above dentil molding.

At the second story of the primary façade, the bay repeats at left with the same window and panel configuration, with the addition of panels above the windows and button details at the center of each panel. At right, there is a single-hung wood frame window topped by a flat window hood.

The primary façade terminates with a compound cornice. Above the bay, the cornice is front gabled, supported by scrolled brackets and decorated by a button detail. The remainder of the cornice features a paneled frieze and a row of dentil molding and is supported by scrolled brackets.

The primary façade is clad in horizontal wood channel-drop siding and has simple corner molding at its vertical termini.

## North Façade



*Figure 3: Views looking southeast at the north façade*

At the north façade, the raised basement features three adjoining wood-sash casement windows each topped by an awning transom window, located near the front of the building. Additional fenestration at this story is obscured by a contemporary fence with a pedestrian entrance. At the rear of the building a three-story bay projects from the side of the building and presumably features a secondary pedestrian entrance.

At the first story of the north façade, fenestration includes a pair of double-hung wood sash windows, a smaller wood-sash awning window, a single double-hung wood sash window, and, at the rear bay, a narrow double-hung wood sash window.

The first story fenestration pattern repeats at the second story, with the addition of a contemporary projecting greenhouse window which has replaced the pair of double-hung wood sash windows closest to the front of the building.

The north façade is clad entirely in horizontal wood channel-drop siding and terminates with flush eaves.

**South Façade**

The south façade of the building is obscured at the exposed basement and first stories by an abutting building. Aerial views reveal a light well towards the rear of the building which appears to feature two double-hung windows at the first and second stories.

The south façade is clad entirely in horizontal wood channel-drop siding and terminates with flush eaves.

**Rear Façade**

The rear façade of the building is partially obscured by a fence and foliage. Visible fenestration includes, at the first and second story, three double-hung windows. The gable roof is visible at the rear façade, and the façade is clad in horizontal wood channel-drop siding and terminates with flush eaves.

# HISTORY

## Introduction to Marcus Books: A Community Centerpiece for Black San Franciscans

Marcus Books is the nation's oldest continuously operating Black-owned and Black-themed bookstore.<sup>2</sup> Since its earliest incarnation as Success Printing Co.—established by Julian and Raye Richardson in 1947—through its formal establishment as a retail bookstore in 1960, Marcus Books was conceived of and continues to operate as a space where the City's Black population could gather to contribute to and receive a striking breadth of knowledge, from canonical and cutting-edge Black scholarship to contemporary self-help, street literature, and local-interest titles. Under the continued guidance of the Richardson family, Marcus Books has operated as a space of Black community collectivity, empowerment, and action. Changes to the surrounding neighborhood brought by the SFRA in the 1960s and 1970s were experienced, addressed, adjusted to, discussed, and in many cases rejected from within the walls of this bookstore. Larger economic and demographic changes on the national and global stage have also been explored here, in a space which the founders describe as a haven where Black people “didn't have to apologize for their difference, their intellect, or their pain from racism.”<sup>3</sup> The bookstore has functioned as this haven for more than 50 years.

## Julian and Raye Richardson: Publishing Pioneers, Community Leaders

The story of Marcus Books begins necessarily with the story of its founders, Julian and Raye Richardson. Julian Richardson was born in 1916 in Birmingham, Alabama, and Raye was born four years later in 1920 and raised outside of Chicago.<sup>4</sup> The Richardsons met while attending Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1937—Raye had been admitted at the young age of 16—where they both studied under renowned scholar George Washington Carver and alongside author Ralph Ellison. Julian Richardson studied printing and lithography, and after graduation in 1940 the Richardsons moved westward to California.<sup>5</sup> After a brief stint in Los Angeles, Julian and Raye settled in San Francisco in 1941, and Julian began work as the first Black typesetter at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while Raye took a job at the post office. Adjusting his original plan of starting the City's first Black newspaper (this task had already been accomplished as early the 1860s with titles including *The Elevator* and the *Pacific Appeal*), Julian decided instead to open a print shop, and was working on accumulating the necessary equipment to do so when he was drafted into the United States Army in 1942.<sup>6</sup>

When he returned to San Francisco in 1944, Julian Richardson found a city transformed by World War II. Within a broader city-wide population increase, the Black population had exploded, tripling between 1940 and 1944, and increasing by 800 percent between 1940 and 1950.<sup>7</sup> The new arrivals generally experienced well-paid employment in war-related industries and clustered residually in the Fillmore and the Western Addition. These neighborhoods were historically ethnically mixed and offered the twin benefits of the lack of exclusionary racial covenants and, ironically, available housing due to the wartime internment of the area's large Japanese American population. By the late 1940s, the Fillmore and the Western Addition had become the City's main Black neighborhoods. Raye Richardson recalls that the area “was bustling. It was...it was warm. It was friendly. There was a joy in the people, a

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<sup>2</sup> Reginald Smith, “Black Bookstores in the United States: A Short View by the Numbers” (draft of November 21, 2012), supplemented by personal email exchange with the author, December 2012.

<sup>3</sup> “The History of Marcus Books”, Marcus Books website, [www.marcusbookstores.com/history.html](http://www.marcusbookstores.com/history.html).

<sup>4</sup> “Community Mourns Passing of Julian Richardson,” Lee Hubbard, *The Sun Reporter*, August 24, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Jasmine Johnson and Shaun Ossei-Owusu, “From Fillmore to No More: Black Owned Business in a Transforming San Francisco” (draft of November 2012), 75.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> US Census data reprinted in *Pioneer Urbanites*, Douglas Henry Daniels (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990.)165.



love of life.”<sup>8</sup> Commercial establishments sprung up to meet the needs of the area’s residential population, and it was into this milieu that the Richardsons began their family business, the Success Publishing Company, in 1947.<sup>9</sup>

The Success Publishing Company began in a commercial storefront located at 1821 Fillmore Street, one block north of where Marcus Books is now located, on a block that was eventually demolished and rebuilt by the SFRA.<sup>10</sup> The business served the general publishing needs of the surrounding Black community, printing flyers for political meetings, pamphlets, celebration programs, business cards, and newsletters. However, at the same time, Julian recalls, “my wife and I began looking for Black literature...but we had to go all over the country to find it.”<sup>11</sup> What started as a search for personal reading material quickly grew into a broader community role for the Richardsons: “You had to scout so hard for books by the Harlem Renaissance writers such as Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, and Anna Bontemps, that when I would find them I would buy extra copies, mainly for friends. I began putting them in my window and selling them.”<sup>12</sup>

Response to these books was strong, and Julian and Raye embraced their shop’s emerging reputation as a gathering place for the City’s Black intelligentsia and for those who sought a text-based path to self- and community-empowerment. They began using their printing presses to reissue texts that they considered canonical to the Black community and that were unavailable at other general interest bookstores in the City. The first book that they reissued was Marcus Garvey’s *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, a 1923 treatise on the lost history of the pan-African diaspora and the importance of Black economic and financial self-reliance. Garvey’s writings were foundational to the development of the Black Nationalist movement, which in turn inspired the Black consciousness movement and related groups including, most famously, the Black Panthers. Other texts the Richardsons reissued during this time included *Stolen Legacy: The Egyptian Origins of Western Civilization*, *Early Black Christians*, *Black Man: The Father of Civilization*, and *The Miseducation of the Negro*, books that aimed to broaden narrow and often incorrect accounts of Black and African-diaspora history.<sup>13</sup> In 1960, the Richardsons turned their book-printing and selling operation into a formal retail establishment, naming the store Marcus Books, after Marcus Garvey.

Julian and Raye Richardson used their printing business to reinforce concepts of Black economic security and Black community self-reliance. In addition to the reissue of texts on these subjects, the Richardsons worked hard to promote inter-reliance between Black business owners, helping to establish a Black business owners group called the Committee for Community Solidarity. The Committee used the Richardsons’ press to publish, in 1959, a comprehensive guide to Black-owned businesses in the City, called *The Success Directory*.<sup>14</sup> In addition to informing readers where they could shop for goods that would keep money in the Black community, the *Directory* brought the pervasive nature of Black business ownership to the attention of both the Black community and the larger City population, and amplified the political power these businesses could wield. To ensure the continued attention to these issues, a monthly newsletter, *The Success Newsletter*, updated the business listings, noting new and dissolved businesses, and outlined pointers for starting new businesses, including which types of businesses the community lacked and needed. In their continued involvement with the *Success Newsletter*, the Richardson family used their

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson and Ossei-Owusu, 74.

<sup>9</sup> Equal access to some of these commercial ventures were hard fought: in an interview with her granddaughter Jasmine Johnson, Raye Richardson recalls the turn-over that happened, from primarily white-owned businesses, many of which refused service to new Black neighbors, through sit-ins and shop-ins to change these discriminatory practices, to finally the fleeing of white-owned businesses and the replacement with Black-owned businesses. More information about this is found in an unpublished draft of an article by Jasmine Johnson and Shaun Ossei-Owusu, “A Case Study of Black Owned Business in a Transforming San Francisco” (heretofore referred to as “Case Study”), 2-3.

<sup>10</sup> Polk’s Crocker-Langley San Francisco City Directory, 1951.

<sup>11</sup> “Marcus Books: A Black History”, Michael Kazin, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, February 22, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> “If It’s Black, These Booksellers Carry It”, authorship unattributed, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 2, 1968.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson and Ossei-Owusu, Case Study, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson and Ossei-Owusu, From Fillmore to No More, 76.

printing press to reaffirm their commitment to the larger Black business community and the cause of economic community self-reliance.

Through the following decades, both Julian and Raye Richardson were regarded not just as business leaders but as mentors and teachers within the Black community. Both were closely associated with the student strike at San Francisco State University (SFSU) in 1968-1969, allowing student groups to meet at their bookstore and publishing the student newspaper, *The Organ*, as well as the black student newsletter *Black Dialogue*, when students were barred from using university printing presses. The Black Student Union, which convened informally at Marcus Books, outlined the establishment of a Black Studies Department as one of their primary demands during the strike, and Raye was appointed the first interim chair of the Black Studies Department when it was established in 1970.<sup>15</sup> Raye retired in 1988 as the first Professor Emerita of the School of Ethnic Studies at SFSU.<sup>16</sup> Julian taught journalism at SFSU, and both were recognized by the University of California at Berkeley's Graduate Theological Union with Doctoral degrees in Humanity and Letters.<sup>17</sup> Julian also became a director for the Fillmore Community Development Association, a group which opposed the A-2 phase of the SFRA's plan for the Fillmore and sought community-based strategies to improve and redirect the SFRA's plan.<sup>18</sup>

Through all of these actions, the Richardsons used their printing press and their bookstore as spaces of Black personal and community empowerment. Julian Richardson passed away in 2000 at the age of 84.<sup>19</sup> For their legacy to the city, the Richardsons were recently honored in the naming of the newest housing development by Community Housing Partnership and Mercy Housing, the Julian and Raye Richardson Apartments, located in Hayes Valley.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 4: Julian and Raye Richardson. Courtesy of the Marcus Books website.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Leahy, "On Strike! We're Gonna Shut it Down: The 1968-1969 San Francisco State Strike", published in *Ten Years that Shook the City: San Francisco 1968-1978*, Chris Carlson, ed. (San Francisco, City Lights Books, 2011) 15.

<sup>16</sup> List of Emeritus Faculty, San Francisco State University, <http://www.sfsu.edu/bulletin/faculty2.htm>

<sup>17</sup> "Threats, Lies and Videotapes", by Carol Harvey, published at [www.Beyondchron.org](http://www.beyondchron.org/news/index.php?itemid=3736), October 2, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> "Julian Richardson, 84, Famed Bookstore Owner", Associated Press, August 22, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Press release for the Richardson Apartments, David Baker & Partners Architects website, [http://www.dbarchitect.com/project\\_detail/117/Richardson%20Apartments.html](http://www.dbarchitect.com/project_detail/117/Richardson%20Apartments.html).

## The Black Bookstore as a Space for Black Intellectualism, Empowerment, and Activism

The provision of Black-authored and Black-themed books that the Richardsons undertook was pioneering, but it was merely the first action of importance at Marcus Books. The ripple effect of this action continues to spread throughout San Francisco's Black community. From its earliest inception as the Success Publishing Company in 1947, through its establishment in 1960 as a formal retail bookstore, and continuing to the current day, Marcus Books has functioned as what scholar Jasmine Johnson describes as a "text-based" space for Black people to explore conversations about intellectualism, personal and community empowerment, and activism. In providing, for over 50 years, a safe and supportive space for the Black community to gather and engage in these relevant and necessary conversations, Marcus Books has made an important historic contribution to the city.

African American-studies scholar Maisha T. Fisher writes that historically, "creating alternative and supplementary knowledge spaces for learning, and literacy learning in particular, is part of the African American experience in the United States."<sup>21</sup> In response to slavery-era prohibitions on literacy through to persistent twentieth-century education inequalities, African Americans have continuously sought alternative sources and configurations for transmitting and learning about their own history. Gaps often remain in the quality and the content of the education African Americans receive in formal educational settings, ranging from the teaching of Anglo-dominant histories to the subconscious transmission of institutionalized racism.<sup>22</sup> Spaces like Marcus Books can operate to fill these gaps.

In an article that includes extensive research on Marcus Books and its relation to the Black community it serves, Maisha T. Fisher outlines the specific ways Black bookstores in general serve their users, ways that reach far beyond just offering Black-authored and Black-themed texts. As outlined in Fisher's article, visitors to Black bookstores use these spaces in some cases to supplement the formal education they or their families are receiving. Others use the bookstore as an alternative institution, a place to come when they have chosen to homeschool or to bypass broader educational norms. The intergenerational interactions that take place in Black bookstores are also called out as valuable, as they create a kind of "village forum" in which history and strategies of past generations, be it African folk tales or civil-rights era activists, can be verbally transmitted to younger generations. And the exposure of children to Black authors provides explicit modeling for careers in the literature arts. These types of lessons constitute the "dual degree" that Fisher states give these spaces their cultural value.<sup>23</sup>

At Marcus Books, Julian and Raye Richardson understood that their bookstore had the potential to act as an alternative site of learning for the Black community. In addition to printing and selling books, the Richardsons endeavored to create a space of inquiry and activism. As Jasmine Johnson writes in her exploration of the social role of the bookstore, "Marcus [Books] became a space where organic and formal black intellectualism was honed, performed, and called into action through its author signings, roundtable discussions, reading groups, children's literacy programs and events."<sup>24</sup> By offering a wide range of texts, from children's books to scholarly work and everything in between, the bookstore ensures that the space encourages interactions between intergenerational readers. An extensive schedule of author readings encourages discussion and offers direct modeling for people who are interested in becoming writers. A partial list of authors who have read at Marcus Books includes James Baldwin, Huey Newton, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Jesse Jackson, Ntosake Shange, Toni Morrison, Angela Davis, Michael Eric

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<sup>21</sup> Maisha T. Fisher, "Earning Dual Degrees: Black Bookstores as Alternative Knowledge Spaces", *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (Vol. 37, No.1.) 85.

<sup>22</sup> This subject of performance gaps is explored in depth in the 2009 Federal report "Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress." Reasons behind these gaps are explored in depth in "Racism and The Achievement Gap", Julian Weissglass, *Education Week*, August 8, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Fisher, 94.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson and Ossei-Owusu, Case Study, 5.

Dyson, Eric Jerome Dickey, Cornel West, Ismael Reed, Rosa Parks, Terry McMillan, Barbara Lee, Taj Mahal, Willie Brown, George Moscone, Stanley Crouch, and Octavia Butler.<sup>25</sup> In hosting Black book clubs, as outlined in Maisha Fisher's research, Marcus Books encourages "literature as a safe place" to begin the discussion of difficult issues.<sup>26</sup> And acting as an informal community center, Marcus Books has served as the meeting place for local chapters of the Association of Black Psychologists, the Black Panther Party, black-nationalist group the US Organization, and the Fillmore Community Development Association, and Fillmore Residents, Inc., both groups that were cofounded by Julian Richardson to facilitate an organized Black opposition to SFRA plans that were decimating the neighborhood.<sup>27</sup>

Beginning in 1974, a more formal educational arrangement was conceived from a casual interaction at Marcus Books. As recounted in Jasmine Johnson, one day a customer in the bookstore complained to Raye Richardson about the Eurocentric education his children were receiving in public school. "Well, do something about it," she replied, "Start a school here."<sup>28</sup> Shortly thereafter, a Saturday school was developed, meeting at the bookstore, with many of Raye Richardson's SFSU students serving as teachers. In 1976, the Saturday school became the Malcolm X School, a credentialed kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school with a Black Nationalist curriculum. A former student recalls the curricula: "We learned Swahili, different songs from the diaspora, we celebrated the first Kwanzaa there, we did math and science and nutrition. Self-determination and affirmation was key."<sup>29</sup> According to Blanche Richardson, daughter of Julian and Raye and former teacher at the Malcolm X School, "Our students had very high levels of achievement. When the school closed and our students transferred to public school, they were two or three years ahead of their age groups. Some of the families ended up putting their children in private schools to keep up the momentum of achievement."<sup>30</sup>

Interviewed for an article in *The San Francisco Chronicle* in 1968, Julian Richardson expressed his desire to find and promote books and other publications that were written not just by black people but *for* black people. "Most civil rights books are written for a white audience," he opined, and while these books were a good match for white teachers who came to the store looking for materials to expand their official public school curricula, he continued to search for books that eschewed white voices in favor of black voices.<sup>31</sup> In the same 1968 article, William Gray, proprietor of another black bookstore on Fillmore Street called The More, cited the impetus of Stokely Carmichael in his decision to open a bookstore. "Carmichael stressed Black unity, and how important it is to get information through to our people. Since we don't control the tubes, a bookstore struck me as a way." He goes on to describe the empowerment that these new Black-focused bookstores could bring as "a new phenomenon. I want to get it to all of my people. We are trying to let them know that they are citizens. We want to create, develop, and spew out Blackness."<sup>32</sup> This sentiment is mirrored in the scholarly work of Maisha Fisher, Jasmine Johnson, and Colin Beckles, with Beckles going as far as to say that Black bookstores are the sites where a "Black counter-hegemony" can begin to be established.<sup>33</sup>

William Grey's bookstore on Fillmore Street is no longer open. It was located at 1413 Fillmore Street on a block that fell victim to demolition in advance of the SFRA's redevelopment plan for the neighborhood, and was gone by 1971.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> A much fuller list of authors can be found at the Marcus Books website, <http://marcusfillmore.wordpress.com/about/>.

<sup>26</sup> Fisher, 95.

<sup>27</sup> Johnson and Ossei-Owusu, *From Fillmore to No More*, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson and Ossei-Owusu, *From Fillmore to No More*, 79.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> "If It's Black, These Booksellers Carry It", authorship unattributed, *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 2, 1968.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Fisher, 94, Johnson, *Fillmore to No More*, 78, and Colin Beckles, "Black Bookstores, Black Power, and the FBI: The Case of Drum and Spear", *Western Journal of Black Studies* (Volume 20, 1996) 64.

<sup>34</sup> 1971 Polk's Crocker-Langley San Francisco City Directory.

By then Marcus Books had changed location several times, largely for the same reason. When the Richardsons opened their bookstore in 1960, it was located at 1834 Fillmore Street, between Sutter and Bush Streets, in the storefront of the building that housed their printing presses. Three years later they had moved several blocks south, to 1216 Fillmore Street, between Turk and Eddy Streets. Both of these early locations are no longer extant, replaced by redevelopment construction. By 1965 Marcus Books and Success Publishing Company had been driven out of the Fillmore, and were located in the Tenderloin, at 146 Leavenworth Street between Golden Gate Avenue and Turk Street. Five years later, the printing press was still on Leavenworth Street, but the bookstore had moved to 540 McAllister Street between Van Ness Avenue and Franklin Street. After four moves in 10 years, Marcus Books was able to stay at the 540 McAllister Street location for ten years, not moving again until the opportunity arose, in 1980, to move the bookstore back to the recently created redevelopment project called Victorian Square on Fillmore Street, just one block from the store's original location.<sup>35</sup> The Richardsons also opened a second location of Marcus Books in Oakland on Martin Luther King Boulevard in 1976, which is still in operation and which houses the family's printing presses.

Several well-known and long-standing Black bookstores around the country have shuttered their doors. The first Black bookstore, the African National Memorial Bookstore in Harlem, opened in 1932 and closed in 1974. Aquarius Bookstore in Los Angeles, opened in 1941 and closed shortly after the riots, in 1994.<sup>36</sup> According to researcher Reginald Smith, the average lifetime of a Black bookstore is 12 years, and only 25% of Black bookstores survive longer than 15 years.<sup>37</sup> Some are shifting to on-line retail, which undercuts some the spatial benefits that Black bookstores provide, outlined in this report. Others struggle with the changing market conditions that threaten all independently-owned bookstores. Marcus Books faces these challenges, as well as a demographic shift in San Francisco that has seen a decrease in African American population over the past thirty years. However, despite these changes, Marcus Books continues to offer the same mix of intergenerational interactions, book club meetings, author readings, and community center activities that mark it as an important space of Black intellectualism, empowerment and activism.

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<sup>35</sup> All store location information comes from Polk's Crocker-Langley San Francisco City Directories.

<sup>36</sup> Reginald Smith, personal correspondence with the author, December 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Reginald Smith, "Black Bookstores in the United States: A Short View by the Numbers", unpublished draft of November 21, 2012.



## Jimbo's Bop City



Figure 5: Exterior sign at Jimbo's Bop City. Courtesy Carol P. Chamberland.

The property at 1712-1716 Fillmore Street that houses Marcus Books is also significant for its history as the building that housed Jimbo's Bop City, one of the City's most well-known and artistically ambitious jazz clubs. From the time it opened in 1950 until it closed its doors in 1965, Jimbo's was among the most vibrant music venues in San Francisco, a site specifically known as a place where established talents and young newcomers could mingle as equals on stage.

In the late 1940s, the building that is now located at 1712-1716 Fillmore Street was located three blocks away, at 1686-1690 Post Street between Laguna and Buchanan Streets. The building was owned at that time by Charles Sullivan, a well-known and active Black businessman and real estate leader.<sup>38</sup> Sullivan rented the ground-floor restaurant space to a man named Slim Gaillard, a talented jazz musician with little skill for the restaurant business.<sup>39</sup> When Gaillard decided to move to Los Angeles, Sullivan approached James "Jimbo" Edwards, a Phoenix native who was working downtown as one of the City's first Black car salesmen. Sullivan offered Edwards a deal. In an interview with the historian Carol Chamberland, Edwards recalled that Sullivan offered to pay his rent for the first three months to help him get established. Edwards accepted the offer, and began to sell waffles and chicken out of the small restaurant storefront in 1950.

Almost as soon as Edwards opened his restaurant, local musicians started using the large space behind the restaurant at the rear of the ground floor (the space where Marcus Books is now located) as a late-night spot to gather, relax and play music together after their paid gigs at other clubs were over. Four months into his new venture, the back-room gatherings were getting so regular the Edwards decided to install a bandstand and bring in a piano. He began to charge admission: one dollar, no charge for anyone carrying an instrument. He named his spot after the recently shuttered Bop City in New York City, and hung a sign out front, announcing that this was the spot to hear the young new "bop" sound that was taking over jazz at the time.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Carol P. Chamberland, "The House that Bop Built", *California History* (Vol 75, No. 3, African Americans in California, Fall 1996) 274.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Robert Tate and Nina J. Hodgson, "The Night Billie's Dog Died and the Chair of all Chairs: Jimbo Edwards on Bop City", *Jazz Now*, March 1998. Unpaginated copy.

As Edwards explained in a 1998 interview, “It wasn’t a normal place. There didn’t nobody get paid to come. They were just workin’ here, there, and everywhere, and at two o’clock here they come.”<sup>41</sup> The network of other, larger jazz venues all over San Francisco brought big name musicians to the City, and when they were done playing their official gigs, often in more formal spaces and for white audiences, they would head to Bop City afterwards to relax and occasionally try out new material or new innovative arrangements in a less formal setting. Edwards’ personal friendship with big-band leader Billy Eckstein, and Eckstein’s support of the club, caused a chain reaction which quickly saw such luminaries as Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday taking turns on the stage.<sup>42</sup> When a celebrity played in the club, his or her name was painted on a chair, and when he or she returned, whoever was sitting in that chair was quickly compelled to get up and return the chair to its rightful owner. Repeat performers were also honored by the inclusion of their likenesses on an evolving set of murals that graced the walls of the club. These types of unique traditions defined the club, which is remembered as an intimate community that fostered both innovation and tradition.



*Figure 6: Flyer for Count Basie at Jimbo's Bop City, 1960.*

*Collection of the San Francisco Public Library's History Center.*

Despite the intimacy of the Jimbo’s Bop City community, Edwards ran his club by a series of strict rules that included prohibitions against standing in the club, note passing, and dozing off, which could be a problem, as the club was only open from 2 to 6 am. Customers had to have their hands up and visible on top of the tables, in order to curtail any gambling or other types of wheeling and dealing that might spring up. Edwards explained that these rules were in place to make sure people were focused on the music, and to protect the celebrities in attendance from the unwanted attention of fans.<sup>43</sup> A review of newspaper headlines from this era shows that many jazz clubs and afterhours clubs, Jimbo’s included, were the ongoing target of police raids and crack-downs on late-night liquor sales (liquor was not technically sold at Jimbo’s but many former patrons admit there were ways to get around that prohibition) and B-Girls, waitresses who walked the line between extortion and prostitution.<sup>44</sup> A cursory search of newspaper archives reveals upwards of 20 reports of raids and busts at Jimbo’s Bop City in the 1950s. In order to

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Chamberland, 274.

<sup>43</sup> Tate and Hodgson, unpaginated copy.

<sup>44</sup> “Clubs Facing Crackdown” *San Francisco Examiner*, July 2, 1954, “Breakfast Club Under Fire”, *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 1954.

keep his unique jazz club in business, Edwards continuously enforced his broad set of rules. As Carol Chamberland writes, if your attitude wasn't right, you didn't get in the door, dollar or no.<sup>45</sup>

Jimbo's Bop City is also remembered for its tolerance on issues of race. Coming out of an era when black performers were blocked from performing east of Van Ness Avenue, and when black musicians and white musicians were members of separate performers' unions, Edwards was part of a new generation of club owners that prioritized talent and enthusiasm over overt racial restrictions. Musician John Handy, who had arrived in San Francisco as a teenager from Dallas Texas and started playing at Jimbo's by age sixteen, recalls, "The place was totally integrated, I was a kid right from the south and here were mixed couples. It surprised me. But after a couple of looks, it seemed like the natural order of things."<sup>46</sup> Chet Baker was also a regular, sneaking away from his barracks at Fort Mason to play through the night at Bop City. Racism certainly didn't disappear from the social scene in San Francisco, but integration was the order of the day in Jimbo's Bop City.



Figure 7: The crowd on stage at Jimbo's Bop City. Courtesy Carol P. Chamberland.

Jimbo's Bop City closed its doors in 1965, the victim of several important shifts. The vanguard of music had moved on, and by the mid-1960s rock and roll was replacing jazz as the young crowd's music of choice. Charles Sullivan, who gave Edwards his start, also owned the Fillmore Auditorium, a larger venue three blocks away that showcased larger touring jazz bands.<sup>47</sup> In 1965, the same year that Jimbo's Bop City closed, Sullivan allowed Bill Graham to present his first Grateful Dead show at the Fillmore Auditorium, marking a significant shift in the neighborhood's musical offerings. Additionally, Bop City had always had a corollary relationship with the City's network of larger jazz clubs that were open during regular business hours—when those clubs began to shut down, including the Blackhawk and the Say When, both of which were closed by 1963, fewer and fewer touring acts came to San Francisco, and fewer and fewer musicians made their way to the Fillmore for the after-hours scene. Also, and most importantly, the Fillmore neighborhood surrounding the site of Jimbos' was, by 1965, feeling the social and economic effects of the SFRA's redevelopment plan for the area. These changes dispersed the Black population and depressed the economic viability of Black (and all other) businesses in the area. When Jimbo's closed, Edwards moved all of the memorabilia from his club, including the famed chairs with performer's names painted on them, into a storage locker

<sup>45</sup> Chamberland, 274.

<sup>46</sup> "Jazz Helped Break the Color Barrier", Jesse Hamlin, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 8, 1998.

<sup>47</sup> "Fillmore History", The Fillmore District Chamber of Commerce website, <http://www.thefillmoredistrict.com/history3.html>.

in Los Angeles.<sup>48</sup> The storefront at 1690 Post Street functioned as storage for the hardware store located next door and in the 1970s came under ownership of the SFRA. The building was slated for demolition in the second phase of the SFRA's plan for the area.

## Building Construction and Occupancy History

Prior to relocation to its current location at 1712-1716 Fillmore Street, the subject property had a nearly 100-year history at its original location on the north side of Post just east of Buchanan Street. The building was constructed prior to 1893, and appears on the neighborhood's earliest Sanborn Fire Insurance map, addressed as 1686-1688 Post Street and demarcated as flats. Although original construction permits for the building were destroyed during the 1906 earthquake and fire, several factors point to an early 1890s construction date.<sup>49</sup> The Western Addition neighborhood experienced intensive residential construction during the 1870s and 1880s, a reaction to both the expansion of the downtown grid into the area after the Van Ness Ordinance (1855-1856) and a decade of explosive population growth in the city (1860-1870).<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the building is designed in a late iteration of the Stick-Eastlake style, the exuberantly decorative trend that rose in popularity in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>51</sup> By the time of its estimated construction, the area had easy streetcar access to downtown sites of employment, and the neighborhood had developed into a middle-class district.

A 1910 building permit filed by the building's owner, K. Kurihara, describes an alteration of the building to include a one-story pop-out addition at the front setback, to be used as a billiard parlor and barber shop.<sup>52</sup> By 1918 the Nippon Drug Company is listed at this address in the Japanese-American Trade Yearbook.<sup>53</sup> The neighborhood had seen an influx of Japanese American residents after 1907, and commercial storefronts arose to meet the needs of the area's new residents. Nippon Drug Co. remained in operation at 1690 Post Street through the 1930s and early 1940s, and was operated during those decades by J. H. Yamada and Toun Arima. Nippon Drug Co., J. H. Yamada and Toun Arima all disappear from the City Directories in 1942, the year of Japanese internment.

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<sup>48</sup> Tate and Hodgson, unpaginated copy.

<sup>49</sup> Original Spring Valley Water Works water tap connections records are likewise missing from the San Francisco Public Utilities historic archives.

<sup>50</sup> San Francisco Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan Historic Context 1880s-1980s. Accessed at the San Francisco Planning Department website, <http://www.sfplanning.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=1862>.

<sup>51</sup> *San Francisco Preservation Bulletin No. 18: Residential and Commercial Architectural Periods and Styles in San Francisco*. Accessed at the San Francisco Planning Department website, <http://www.sf-planning.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=5099>.

<sup>52</sup> The Board of Public Works of the City and County of San Francisco, Application to Make Alterations or Repairs, Permit no. 29234, April 16, 1910.

<sup>53</sup> *Japanese-American Trade Year Book for 1918*, Japanese Chamber of Commerce, San Francisco, 1918.



Figure 8: Advertisement for the Nippon Drug Co. in the 1918 Japanese-American Trade Year Book, published by the San Francisco Japanese-American Chamber of Commerce.

Research has not uncovered the date of property ownership transfer after 1942, but by 1950 the building was owned by Charles Sullivan and the Sanborn Map demarcates the storefront pop-out as a restaurant. Jimbo's Waffle Shop first appears in the City Directory in 1951, and starts being listed as Jimbo's Bop City by 1955. After Jimbo's closed in 1965, the space became Soko Hardware. Soko Hardware operated out of this storefront through the late 1970s, and the space was used for hardware storage in the early 1970s until it came under the ownership of the SFRA. The SFRA physically moved the property to its new location at 1712-1716 Fillmore in 1978, and the Richardsons purchased the building from the agency in 1980.

## 1686-1690 Post/1712-1716 Fillmore: A Story of Government Intervention and Community Response

The property at 1712-1716 Fillmore Street is also notable for the way its history tells a story about government intervention, specifically Japanese internment and the actions of the SFRA, and how these interventions have shaped the cultural landscape in the Fillmore and the Western Addition. The building has had changes in use, occupancy, and even location in direct response to these interventions. Tracing the history of the building can help us understand the complicated legacy of government intervention into the landscape.

In San Francisco, early Japanese immigrants settled first in Chinatown and then in greater numbers in the South Park area.<sup>54</sup> After South Park was destroyed in 1907, Japanese people resettled in the Western Addition, an area that had been fairly ethnically mixed before the quake and would rapidly become more so after. By 1910, census data locates nearly all of the City's 4,700 people of Japanese descent living in the Western Addition.<sup>55</sup> This pattern of residential clustering within a larger racially integrated neighborhood continued through the following three decades.

<sup>54</sup> San Francisco Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan Historic Context 1880s-1980s. Accessed at the San Francisco Planning Department website, <http://www.sfplanning.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=1862>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.





Figure 9: 1686-1690 Post Street is visible in this July 3, 1942 view looking northeast on Post Street at the Japanese American commercial district. At that time the storefront was occupied by the Nippon Drug Co. Source: Dorothea Lange, National Archives and Records Association.

However, the events at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and the official U.S. declaration of war against Japan shortly after, brought a dramatic pause in the neighborhood's development. In the spring of 1942, General John L. DeWitt, under the authority of Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt, began a process which would see all people of Japanese descent expelled from restricted military zones, including the entire city of San Francisco. In response to this federal action, the neighborhood's residential and commercial Japanese community disappeared.

The hollowing out of the area left the neighborhood ripe for the influx of African American immigrants who came to take advantage of war time defense-industry employment. The African American population in San Francisco increased by 600% during World War II.<sup>56</sup> This new wave of neighborhood residents moved into vacant homes and storefronts in the Western Addition and the Fillmore. As recalled by poet and Western Addition resident Maya Angelou, "The Japanese shops [...] were taken over by enterprising Negro businessmen, and in less than a year became permanent homes away from home for the newly arrived southern Blacks. Where the odors of tempura, raw fish, and *cha* had prevailed, the aroma of chitlins, greens and ham hocks now prevailed."<sup>57</sup> The neighborhood witnessed a dramatic transformation that continued into the postwar era. Jazz clubs and nightclubs such as Jimbo's Bop City, Club Flamingo, and Minnie's Can-Do Club formed an emergent "Harlem of the West" centered on Post and Fillmore Streets.<sup>58</sup> The *Japantown Historic Context Statement* documents the postwar return of Japanese Americans to the much-changed Fillmore District.<sup>59</sup>

Starting over was a particular hardship for most Japanese American families who did not own property, as temporary housing was often full. Re-entry into society was met with hostility and mistrust ... Former evacuees held complex, and often ambivalent, feelings about returning to the communities from which they'd been forcibly uprooted ... Following a 1944 tour of San Francisco's Japantown to assess post-war prospects, Japanese American Citizens' league (JACL) president Saburo Kido identified four major areas of concern—housing, jobs, labor union antipathy, and potentially difficult relations with the many African

<sup>56</sup> Donna Graves and Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, prepared for the City and County of San Francisco Planning Department, Revised May 2011, 46.

<sup>57</sup> Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, New York, Random House, 1969. 203-204.

<sup>58</sup> Donna Graves and Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, 52.

<sup>59</sup> Excerpted directly from the *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, pages 47-48.

Americans who had moved into the neighborhood. “Since they occupy the former Japanese residential district, they will resent being displaced by returning evacuees,” Kido wrote.

The *Japantown Historic Context Statement* further notes that although tension over scarce housing and jobs was probably not uncommon, the postwar multiracial community was recalled as thriving and vibrant with nascent interracial programs.<sup>60</sup>

Judy Hamaguchi described post-war Nihonmachi [Japantown] as a “great neighborhood for a child to grow up,” despite living in a cramped subdivided Victorian flat on Post Street, Hamaguchi poignantly recalled the nights that next-door neighbor Jim Edwards, owner of famed Jimbo’s Bop City, shepherded Judy and her three-year-old brother to find their mother as she waitressed across the street at the Miyako restaurant. In 1947, the Buchanan YMCA and Japantown YWCA inaugurated an interracial youth program to serve African American and Japanese American children and teens. Steve Nakajo recalled the 1950s neighborhood of his youth: “I had a mixed group of friends. Japanese. Filipino. Black. Mixed, like the neighborhood.”

Some Japanese American community institutions—such as the Japanese Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) which served African American troops under the United Services Organization (USO)—returned to the Japanese American community, and Japanese American businesses slowly but steadily re-emerged in the postwar era.<sup>61</sup> By 1950, when Jimbo Edwards opened his waffle shop at 1690 Post Street, the surrounding area (centered on Post at Buchanan Streets) boasted a lively Japanese American commercial sector.<sup>62</sup> In the late 1950s, the 1600 block of Post Street contained four known African American businesses and institutions—Jimbo’s Bop City, the Plantation, Rich-Brook Hotel, and Mt. Trinity Baptist Church—set amidst 20 Japanese American businesses.<sup>63</sup> At that time, most African American businesses, including the Success Printing Company, were clustered a few blocks away on Fillmore Street between Post and Bush Streets.<sup>64</sup>

However, intense residential concentration (caused by population increase, racial covenants, and informal restrictions on where Blacks and Japanese Americans could live) caused conditions of overcrowding and accelerated a visible decline in the quality of the area’s building stock and infrastructure. This deterioration, which was largely out of the control of the area’s African American and Japanese American residents (most of whom rented), set up a dynamic which allowed for another round of governmental interventions in the neighborhood.

The SFRA was formed in 1948 and was empowered shortly thereafter by federal housing legislation to conceive of and implement projects that would remove physical blight and improve the urban economy through large-scale real estate projects.<sup>65</sup> In the Western Addition and the Fillmore, residential overcrowding had led to areas of deteriorated infrastructure, and the SFRA invoked the power of eminent domain to implement a plan which would demolish much of the area and replace it with updated and upgraded buildings as well as widened thoroughfares and more open space. In the process of carrying out these plans, the SFRA removed what many people experienced as a vital and thriving African American neighborhood.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 51. Also, as documented in the *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, the 1948 Evacuation-Resettlement Directory lists 150 Japanese American businesses and services, down from a prewar listing of 400 businesses.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>63</sup> Based on a 1956-1959 map of the area created by Ben Pease for the Japanese American Historical Society exhibit, “Back in the Day,” and included as an appendix of the *Japantown Historic Context Statement*. The map displays data from the Success Printing Company’s 1959 Directory of Black-owned businesses and from the *Hokubei Mainichi* and *Nichibei Times* directories of 1956.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Bayview-Hunters Point Context Statement, prepared for the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (KVP Consulting, 2010) 147.

Redevelopment was carried out in the Western Addition and the Fillmore in two phases. The first phase of the redevelopment plan, known as A-1, was approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1956. Jimbo's Bop City, located at 1690 Post Street, was directly across the street from the footprint of the first phase of the redevelopment project. During its A-1 phase, redevelopment demolished the dwellings of over 4,000 people, undercutting the concentrated population that had made the neighborhood, and the club, so vibrant.

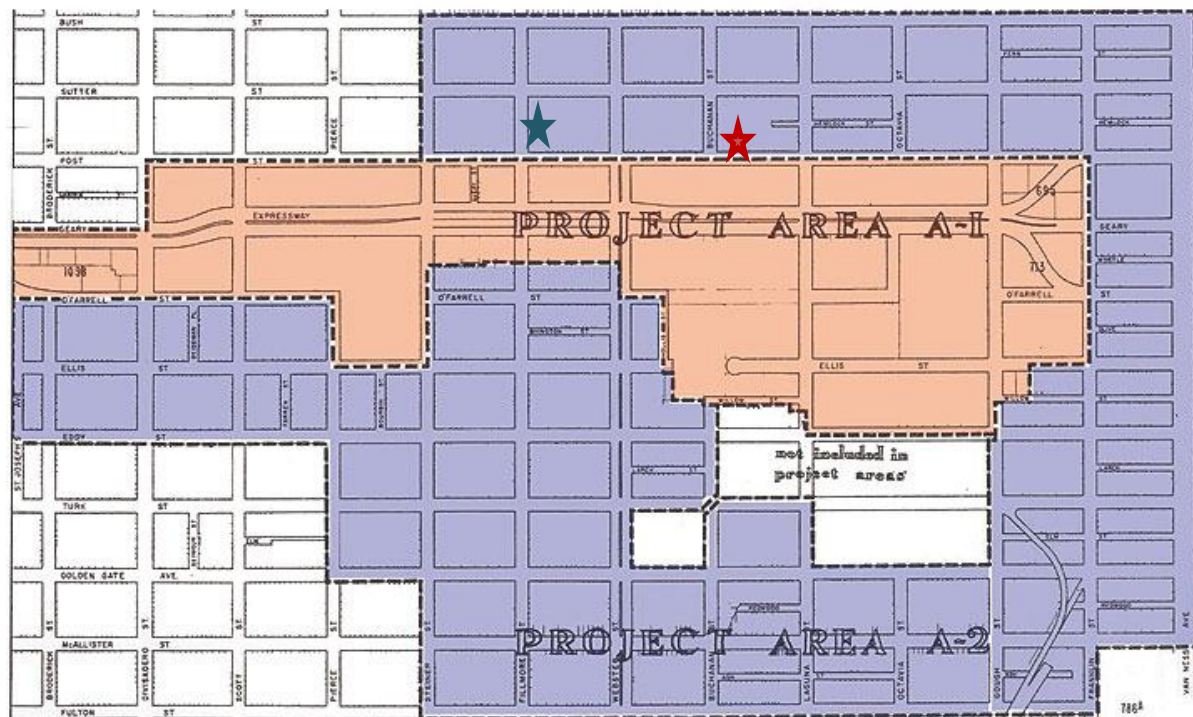


Figure 10: Map depicting the A-1 and A-2 phases of Redevelopment that affected the Western Addition and the Fillmore districts. The red star indicates the approximate location of 1686-1690 Post Street. The building was physically moved to the 1712-1716 Fillmore Street, indicated by the blue star.

The second phase of redevelopment, known as A-2, was adopted in 1964, and affected 60 square blocks surrounding the first phase, including the block which held Jimbo's Bop City at 1690 Post Street. However, details of the second phase reflected some hard-fought concessions won by community activists who had mobilized after the devastation of A-1 phase of redevelopment. Julian Richardson cofounded the Fillmore Community Development Association and Fillmore Residents, Inc., both groups that sought to give Black business owners and residents power in negotiation with the Redevelopment Agency. The United Committee for the Japantown Community served a similar purpose for the Japanese community. Both Black community leaders and Japanese community leaders participated in the Western Addition Community Organization (WACO), which prioritized resident and business retention in the neighborhood and successfully halted redevelopment progress in 1967 until these issues were addressed by the SFRA. In the 1970s, community organizations, including the Committee Against Nihonmachi Evictions (CANE), emerged to address the needs of residents and small businesses, some drawing explicit parallels between the forced Japanese American evacuations of 1942 and the forced evictions of the SFRA-era.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Donna Graves and Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, 65-66.

The success of these contested and slightly more nuanced approaches to redevelopment had mixed results, with over 4,500 of the 6,900 housing units in the area still destroyed under A-2 phase, and with the lowest income and Black tenants and homeowners more heavily affected. WACO had fought for and won the inclusion of a system that used certificates of preference for return to new units to protect displaced citizens and businesses. However, the certificate of preference system was plagued by problems, including a protracted class-action suit against the SFRA and the fact that redevelopment construction took so long that many people lost their certificates.<sup>67</sup> Between human displacement and physical demolition, the interventions of the SFRA rendered the Fillmore community hobbled.

One building that escaped demolition in response to the more nuanced approach achieved by neighborhood activists is the subject property. Despite its original location on Post Street directly in the path of the new Japantown mall, constructed in the 1970s, the building was not demolished. In an act of neighborhood historical preservation, activist and WACO member Essie Collins petitioned the SFRA to move the building from its location on Post Street to a new spot, several blocks away on Fillmore Street.<sup>68</sup> The SFRA was by the mid-1970s beginning to attempt a new approach to the Fillmore, one that showed the germ of regret for their large-scale interventions of the previous two decades, and attempted to breathe new life into the neighborhood by sponsoring and funding smaller economic redevelopment zones. Prior to physically relocating the building to its new site on Fillmore Street, the SFRA demolished the storefront pop-out, which had been inserted in the front yard setback in the 1910s.

The micro-project where the building was moved is called Victorian Square, and it consists of eight Victorian-era buildings of similar vintage, physically moved and reassembled together to present a pleasing streetscape of small scale commercial at the ground floor and residential flats at the first and second story. The Richardson family, glad to find a home for their bookstore that would bring it back to its original neighborhood, and anxious to provide a Black community centerpiece for a neighborhood which had been devastated by 30 years of government interventions, purchased the property from the SFRA in 1980. The Richardsons have operated their historic bookstore at this address since 1980, and three generations of the family have made the upstairs units their home.



Figure 11: The building as it appeared when located at 1686-1690 Post Street prior to relocation.  
Source: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency archives.

<sup>67</sup> Rachel Brahinsky, "'Hush Puppies,' Communalist Politics, and Demolition Governance: The Rise and Fall of the Black Fillmore", published in *Ten Years that Shook the City: San Francisco 1968-1978*, Chris Carlson, ed. (San Francisco, City Lights Books, 2011) 151.

<sup>68</sup> "Threats, Lies, and Videotapes", by Carol Harvey, BeyondChron website, published October 2, 2006.

<http://www.beyondchron.org/news/index.php?itemid=3736>. Also see Jan Batiste Adkins, *African Americans of San Francisco* (San Francisco, Arcadia Publishing, 2012) 93.





Figure 12, Left: Victorian Square, including 1712-1716 Fillmore Street at far right of the photograph.

Below, 1712-1716 Fillmore Street, during the post-relocation rehabilitation. Note the similar configuration of ground story storefront in Victorian Square.

Source: SFRA archive.





# ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK DESIGNATION

This section of the report is an analysis and summary of the applicable criteria for designation, integrity, period of significance, significance statement, character-defining features, and additional Article 10 requirements.

## CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

Check all criteria applicable to the significance of the property that are documented in the report. The criteria checked is (are) the basic justification for *why* the resource is important.

- ☒ Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- ☐ Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.

## Statement of Significance

### Characteristics of the Landmark that justify its designation:

1712-1716 Fillmore Street is significant for its associations with Marcus Books, Jimbo's Bop City, and Julian and Raye Richardson.

### Association with significant events

1712-1716 Fillmore Street is significant for its long-term association with Marcus Books, the nation's oldest continuously operating Black-owned and Black-themed bookstore. Since its earliest incarnation as Success Printing Co.—established by Julian and Raye Richardson in 1947—through its formal establishment as a retail bookstore in 1960, Marcus Books was conceived of and continues to operate as a space of Black community collectivity, empowerment, and action. Changes on the local, national, and global scale throughout the 1960s and 1970s were experienced, addressed, adjusted to, discussed, and in many cases rejected from within the walls of this bookstore. Marcus Books has functioned as a haven for Black intellectualism in San Francisco for over 50 years. Buildings that housed the earliest iterations of Marcus Books were demolished during the SFRA-era. 1712-1716 Fillmore Street represents a long-term association with Marcus Books, housing the store from 1980 to the present. It is the only extant building in the Western Addition that reflects this close association with Success Printing and/or Marcus Books.

1712-1716 Fillmore Street is also significant for its association with Jimbo's Bop City, one of the City's most famous and most innovative and progressive jazz clubs. Jimbo's Bop City operated from 1950 to 1965 in the subject building when the building was located three blocks away at 1686-1690 Post Street. Bop City hosted the most renowned musicians of the day, including Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday, among many others. Jimbo's Bop City, open between the hours of 2am and 6am, fostered the mingling of established musicians and amateurs, as well as a tolerance of social racial integration that was progressive for its time. Its closure in 1965 was a result of changes in the music scene and in the surrounding neighborhood, which was devastated both residentially and economically by the actions of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. The

importance of Jimbo's Bop City, however, and its legacy in the neighborhood and the City were strong enough to earn the building an organized advocacy effort by neighborhood activists, who petitioned successfully to have the building spared from demolition associated with redevelopment and moved to its current location.

### **Association with significant persons**

1712-1716 Fillmore Street is significant because of its association with Julian and Raye Richardson. Soon after their arrival in San Francisco in 1941, the Richardsons began to use their printing press and eventually their retail bookstore to serve the City's rapidly expanding Black community in a myriad of ways. The Richardsons offered a unique combination of services to the Black community of San Francisco ranging from small-scale publishing and book-selling to academic instruction and mentorship. With these actions, Julian and Raye Richardson both led and fostered Black community empowerment. The Richardsons are closely associated with 1712-1716 Fillmore Street: they operated Marcus Books at the ground story and lived in the residential unit upstairs for over 30 years, from 1980 to 2013.

### **Period of Significance**

1712-1716 Fillmore Street's Period of Significance, 1950 to 1980, is based on its areas of historical significance, which overlap chronologically to some degree. The Period of Significance begins in 1950, when James "Jimbo" Edwards began to operate a jazz club out of the back of his waffle shop located at 1690 Post Street. From 1950 to 1965, Jimbo's Bop City was one of the most innovative and popular jazz clubs in San Francisco, pioneering not just the new "bop" sound, but also an attitude that trumped talent over race or gender.

At the same time, and in largely the same neighborhood, Julian and Raye Richardson were laying the foundation for what would become their pioneering bookstore, Marcus Books. This foundation began in 1947 with the establishment of the Success Printing Company, located at 1821 Fillmore Street in a building no longer extant. It continued during the 1950s, as the Richardsons began to reprint and distribute books to their friends, and it blossomed in full in 1960 with the official establishment of Marcus Books. Through the 1960s and 1970s, Marcus Books served as a site of personal and community empowerment for San Francisco's Black population, and functioned as a community center in struggles ranging from the student strike at SFSU to the response to SFRA activity. Marcus Books was able to continue this role as a community centerpiece despite being forced to move, ahead of SFRA demolitions, several times during these two decades.

Marcus Books moved into the building at 1712-1716 Fillmore Street in 1980, returning to the neighborhood where it was established and from which it had been driven out by the SFRA's advancing bulldozers. At that time, the building had recently been moved from its original location at 1686-1690 Post Street. Thus, in 1980, the history of the building (Jimbo's Bop City) and the history of its new occupants finally intersected. In addition to opening their bookstore at the ground floor of 1712-1716 Fillmore Street, Julian and Raye Richardson moved into the residential unit at the first story of the building in 1980, and the Richardson family continues to operate the bookstore and, until recently, lived in the building. The period of significance ends in 1980, with the acknowledgement that the traditions and the benefits outlined in this report that give Marcus Books its cultural and historic value to San Francisco continue uninterrupted at this site to the current day.

## Integrity

The seven aspects of integrity are design, materials, workmanship, feeling, association, location, and setting in relation to the period of significance established above. Cumulatively, the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its association with Jimbo's Bop City, Marcus Books, and Julian and Raye Richardson.

1712-1716 Fillmore Street maintains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The building retains many Stick-Eastlake design details that are either original or altered in a historically-sensitive manner. The storefront and residential stairway design and detailing that were added to the building after it was relocated in 1978 are all still intact, and the same design and detailing are repeated at the storefronts and stairways of adjacent buildings that were also moved to create Victorian Square (see photograph, page 20). From 1910 to 1978, prior to its physical relocation, the building featured a one-story pop-out addition at the front setback. Some of the activity during the building's tenure as Jimbo's Bop City took place when this pop-out addition was present, and the removal of this pop-out addition when the building was moved in 1978 does compromise its integrity, as it relates to Jimbo's Bop City, to some degree. However, most of the activity of Jimbo's Bop City took place in the rear portion of the ground floor of the building, which is still extant.

Integrity of feeling and association are both excellent. Despite the removal of the pop-out, the building retains enough of its physical features to convey the feeling of its historic character. The building's association with Bop City, Marcus Books, and the Richardsons is excellent. The building appears as it did when the bookstore opened in 1980.

Integrity of location is strong, even though the building was physically moved from three blocks away during the SFRA-era. Moreover, the fact the building was saved from demolition and physically moved as part of a redevelopment project reflects the larger story of redevelopment and displacement and the interrelated need and importance of the community function that the bookstore served. Marcus Books has been located at 1712 Fillmore Street for 33 years, and was owned and operated by the Richardson family during all of that time. It is now located just one block from the original Marcus Books location, 1821 Fillmore Street, which was demolished during redevelopment.

Integrity of setting is fair. As outlined in this report, the overall setting of the Western Addition and the Fillmore District has undergone significant changes during the period of significance for the building. These changes were drastic to the point that the building was physically forced to move. Despite these changes in setting, the building retains a commercial storefront with residential units above, a use-pattern which it has maintained for over 100 years and which still holds relevance for the neighborhood setting.

## ARTICLE 10 REQUIREMENTS SECTION 1004 (b)

### Boundaries of the Landmark Site

Encompassing all of and limited to Lot 020 in Assessor's Block 0684 on the east side of Fillmore Street, 55' north of Post Street.

### Character-Defining Features

Whenever a building, site, object, or landscape is under consideration for Article 10 Landmark designation, the Historic Preservation Commission is required to identify character-defining features of the property. This is done to enable owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

The character-defining *exterior* features of the building are identified as:

- Massing and setback.
- All exterior elevations, materials, and rooflines.
- Horizontal channel-drop wood siding.
- Street-level commercial entrance and fenestration, including:
  - Wood glazed door, decorative bulkhead panel, transom windows, and wood sash window at the storefront's primary façade
  - Wood casement windows set in a tripartite configuration and topped with awning transoms at the storefront's secondary facade
- Straight flight stairway to the residential entry with wood treads and risers, and newel posts and turned wood balusters which date to the Victorian Square SFRA-era. The north-facing side of the staircase is clad in channel-drop wood siding to match the storefront cladding.
- Paneled residential entry alcove, including glazed wood paneled doors, arched transom windows, and compound bracketed portico with arched pediment.
- Stick Eastlake design features including rectangular bays, double-hung wood-sash windows with ogee lugs, scored spandrel panels, belt cornice details, dentils, window hoods, and corner molding.
- Compound cornice including gable, bracket, dentils, frieze, and molding details.
- Fenestration at the secondary, north-facing elevation including double-hung wood-sash windows with ogee lugs set in wood surrounds and small awning windows.<sup>69</sup>

The character-defining *interior* features of the building are identified as: None

Note: The recently added benches, free-standing sign post, and storefront awning are not considered character-defining.

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<sup>69</sup> The contemporary pop-out window at the upper-story is not considered character-defining.

## PROPERTY INFORMATION

**Historic Name:** Marcus Books, Marcus Book Stores, Jimbo's Bop  
City, Nippon Drugs

**Popular Name:** Marcus Books

**Address:** 1712-1716 Fillmore Street

**Block and Lot:** 0684020

**Owner:** Nishan and Suhaila Sweis

**Original Use:** Residential flats

**Current Use:** Residential flats over ground story commercial



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