Von Schroeder-Welsh Block

**Boundaries:** Block bounded by South Van Ness Avenue, Capp, 22\textsuperscript{nd} and 23\textsuperscript{rd} Streets

**Period of Significance:** 1889-1895

**Eligibility:** California Register of Historical Resources

**Thematic Summary:** This block in the central Mission District was almost uniformly developed by prominent local architect Thomas John Welsh with Stick/Eastlake-style and Queen Anne-style row-houses, for real estate developer Baroness Mary E. Von Schroeder. The block contains the largest collection of Welsh buildings known to exist; most of his early work was destroyed in the earthquake and fires of 1906.

This historic district, comprised of 25 contributors and 29 total properties, contains one of the most cohesively developed, late 19\textsuperscript{th}-century blocks extant in the Mission District. The long sides of the block feature nearly identical rows of Stick/Eastlake-style flats on both Capp Street and South Van Ness Avenue. The district also includes small groupings of mirrored Queen Anne-style flats on

*East side of Capp Street between 22\textsuperscript{nd} and 23\textsuperscript{rd} Streets.*
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South Van Ness Avenue, as well as Victorian-era mixed-use properties with commercial ground floors along 22nd Street.

During the period of U.S. pioneer settlement, the district area lay at the eastern boundary of the Broderick Estate, a tract of land that likely belonged to the estate of Senator David Broderick, who was famously killed in a pistol duel at Lake Merced in 1859. During the 1870s and 1880s, as the surrounding central Mission District developed into a densely populated streetcar suburb, the block that comprises the district area remained conspicuously undeveloped. Even by the late 1880s, only three dwellings were located on the entire block, the largest of which was located at the northeast corner of 22nd and Capp streets. This large house is still extant, though it was raised and moved forward on its lot to accommodate the addition of a commercial ground floor.

The Stick/Eastlake-style flats that give this district its distinctive character were completed in 1889 for Baroness Mary E. Von Schroeder, a real estate developer. The architect was Thomas John Welsh (1845-1918), a prominent Bay Area architect whose works included the Sacred Heart Church at Fillmore and Fell Streets, and St. Mary’s Cathedral which stood at Van Ness Avenue and O’Farrell Street. In 1890, architect T.J. Welsh was listed in the City Directory as working out of 302 Montgomery Street. Welsh is also known to have designed numerous buildings within the Mission District. Notable design elements of his Stick/Eastlake-style flats on the subject block include entry porticos with Classical columns and spindlework, art glass in the upper sash of the windows, and facades that terminate in applied vertical wood strips beneath paneled friezes. Notably, a few of the flats, such as 723 Capp Street, departed from the boxed bay window design and instead featured angled bay windows and elaborate applied cast swags above the entrance to an enclosed entry porch.

The Queen Anne-style flats on South Van Ness Avenue, constructed in 1894, are exuberant examples of the form, featuring copious use of applied garlands and floriated ornament, dentils, floriated brackets, and paneled entry porches with columns. Two other mirrored Queen Anne flats located along the 22nd Street portion of the district were raised on their foundations to add new commercial ground floors during the first half of the 20th century.

Apparent physical integrity varies widely across this district, ranging from near pristine buildings to a few altered non-contributors. All of the Stick/Eastlake-style flats originally included a false pedimented gable end, finial, and metal
San Francisco Planning Department – South Mission Historic Resources Survey
Historic District Description

cresting at the roofline above their bay windows. Today, only two flats within
the district, 715-717 and 719-721 Capp Street, retain this feature.
Despite this and other alterations, the overall historic cohesion of the district
remains intact. There are very few intrusions on the block.

West side of South Van Ness Avenue between 22nd and 23rd Streets, circa 1890. (San
Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection Photo ID AAB-4166).
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