

D1. Historic Name: None

D2. Common Name: None

***D3. Detailed Description** (Discuss overall coherence of the district, its setting, visual characteristics, and minor features. List all elements of district.):

The historic district is located within the Inner Mission North neighborhood. Contributors to the historic district are buildings that were constructed between 1906 and 1917, during the period of physical rebuilding that followed the earthquake and fires of April, 1906, which completely destroyed earlier development in the area. Contributors are mostly two-story and three-story, multiple-unit, wood-frame structures that exhibit Classical/Roman Revival, Mission Revival, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival architectural styles. The prevailing building typology includes: long, narrow building plans that are suited to San Francisco's high-density lots; ground floors with storefronts and/or walk-up residential entrances; and upper stories with projecting bay windows that are spaced at rhythmic intervals. Façade details typically include: building bases clad in brick or cast stone; wall surfaces clad in wood; detailed wood surrounds at entrances and windows; cast plaster ornament applied to wall surfaces; and terminating entablatures. Contributors are typically built out to the front and side property lines of their lots, wall-to-wall with adjacent structures, such that they form regular and uninterrupted streetscapes. *(Continued on Page 3.)*

***D4. Boundary Description** (Describe limits of district and attach map showing boundary and district elements.):

The historic district is centered on Sycamore Street, which runs east-west between Valencia and Mission Streets, parallel to 17th and 18th Streets. The historic district contains buildings that are located on both sides of Sycamore Street, as well as buildings that are located on Lexington Street, San Carlos Street, and Clarion Alley. *(See map on Page 12.)*

***D5. Boundary Justification:**

The boundary of the historic district contains a coherent grouping of thematic contributors, while excluding non-contributors (altered properties and non-thematic properties) to the extent feasible. In the areas immediately surrounding the historic district, fewer than half of the properties are considered both thematic and intact.

***D6. Significance:** **Theme:** Post-Fire Rebuilding; Edwardian-Era Architecture **Area:** Inner Mission North, San Francisco
Period of Significance: 1906-1917 **Applicable Criteria:** California Register of Historical Resources Criteria 1 & 3
(Discuss district's importance in terms of its historical context as defined by theme, period of significance, and geographic scope. Also address the integrity of the district as a whole.)

Criterion A: The historic district is eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1 at the local level, because it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history. The historic district contains buildings that are significant because they are the products of the major rebuilding efforts that occurred within vast destroyed areas of the Inner Mission North and in San Francisco after the earthquake and fires of April 1906. In the years and decades that followed the disaster, which involved citywide upheavals and socioeconomic reorganization, San Francisco was entirely reconstructed and up-built in a manner that was unprecedented in scope and pace. The reconstruction of this residential alley enclave, located between the major streetcar and commercial corridors of Mission and Valencia Streets, is directly associated with the period of post-fire reconstruction, and it indicates the historic recovery of the working-class residential ecology in the Inner Mission North.

Criterion C: The historic district is eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 3 at the local level, because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of type, period, region, and methods of construction, and it possesses high artistic values. The historic district exhibits architectural value that is expressive of San Francisco's "Edwardian" era. During this period, which included the post-fire rebuilding and up-building of San Francisco, the Inner Mission North was reconstructed in mostly uniform, Beaux Arts-influenced architectural styles. The historic district includes excellent examples of: Classical Revival (or Roman Revival), which predominates; Mission Revival; Craftsman; Colonial Revival; as well as local variants that combined stylistic elements. The historic district also includes vernacular structures that reflect the kinds of construction techniques and craftsmanship that were employed during the very early relief phase of the post-fire reconstruction. *(Continued on Page 13.)*

***D7. References** (Give full citations including the names and addresses of any informants, where possible.): *(See Page 21.)*

***D8. Evaluator:** Matt Weintraub, Preservation Planner

Date: April 2011

Affiliation and Address: San Francisco Planning Dept., 1650 Mission St, Ste. 400, San Francisco, CA 94103-2479

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***D3. Detailed Description:** *(continued from Page 1)*



View west on Sycamore Street, towards Valencia Street, within the urban residential alley enclave that was reconstructed during the post-fire era. *San Francisco Planning Department.*



View east on Sycamore Street, towards Mission Street, within the urban residential alley enclave that was reconstructed during the post-fire era. *San Francisco Planning Department.*

Character-Defining Visual Characteristics

The visual characteristics of the overall historic district include but may not be limited to:

- The early 20th century, Edwardian-era architectural styles that are uniformly applied throughout the historic district, as well as local variations that combine stylistic influences.
- The generally consistent form, scale and massing of structures: mostly two to three stories in height; rhythmic bay windows; and matching floor levels that allow larger and smaller buildings to relate to each other.
- The urban development pattern that maximizes utilization of street frontages, minimizes setbacks at front yards and side yards, provides ground floors that are designed for pedestrian access, and results in mostly unbroken streetscapes.
- The distinctive layout of streets and alleys that forms a residential enclave in the subdivided, square city block, which is characteristic of neighborhood development in the Inner Mission North.

The visual characteristics of individual contributing properties include but may not be limited to:

- Architectural styles and/or types, including: Classical/Roman Revival (columns/pilasters; pediments/porticos; boxed eaves with cornices, dentils, modillions, frieze bands); Mission Revival (wood and/or smooth stucco facing; Spanish tile accents; overhanging sloped roofs; curved parapets); Craftsman (brick/clinker-brick base; box bay windows; divided-light upper sash; overhanging eaves with knee-braces and/or exposed beams/rafters); and Colonial Revival (entry accentuated with column-supported porch; shallow eaves; hipped roof; dormers); as well as examples of vernacular construction that represent the historical period (such as small residential buildings that were constructed during the early post-fire period).
- Height, form and massing, which is generally consistent, but that may vary among individual structures, including: heights from one to five stories, façades with or without bay windows; and rooflines that may be unbroken or that may be feature individual masses such as towers.
- Cladding materials, which are predominantly wood (including cove/shiplap siding, flush siding, and/or shingles), and which also includes stucco as a secondary facing material, with brick and/or cast stone bases.

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- Entrance/fenestration patterns that are orderly and symmetrical, and which utilize wood doors, wood windows (typically double-hung; may also be casements), and bay windows (typically angled; may also be square and/or rounded).
- Ornamentation and detailing, which typically include: wood cornices and trim; wood surrounds at entrances and windows; porticos, hoods, and/or entablatures; cast plaster ornament applied to flat façade surfaces; and other features such as patterned wood shingles, Spanish tile accents, and rafters/vigas.
- Rooflines, which usually terminate in horizontal entablatures, but which may also include shaped parapets, hipped roofs, gabled roofs, and/or dormers.



Residential structures on Sycamore Street with consistent Edwardian-era architectural forms and features, including bilateral entrances/bay windows, and roofline cornices. View to the west from the intersection of Sycamore and San Carlos Streets. *San Francisco Planning Department.*



Residential structures on the north side of Sycamore Street with consistent Edwardian-era architectural forms and features, including bilateral entrances/bay windows, and roofline cornices. View to the northwest from mid-block on Sycamore Street. *San Francisco Planning Department.*

Features and Elements

The historic district is a compact residential enclave that is located within an alley network at the interior of a larger city block, bounded by the Mission District's two busiest transportation and commercial thoroughfares, Mission Street to the east and Valencia Street to the west. The alley network is formed by: Sycamore Street (previously named Willows Street and Sycamore Avenue), a lane that is 35 feet wide and that runs east-west for a single block between Mission and Valencia Streets; Lexington Street (previously named Jessie Street and Lexington Avenue) and San Carlos Street (previously named Stevenson Street and San Carlos Avenue), which are 40 feet wide and that run south for several blocks from their origination points at Sycamore Street; and Clarion Alley (previously Cedar Lane), a true back-alley that is only 15 feet wide and that runs parallel to, and behind the lots that front onto, Sycamore Street. This T-shaped alley-street network was established within these blocks in the late 19th century when the interior of the busy Mission-Valencia Streets corridor was subdivided into many small lots and built out with small working-class dwellings.

After the firestorm of 1906 swept through the area, the preexisting alley block and lot patterns were retained, with the "avenues" of Sycamore, Lexington, and San Carlos renamed as "streets". Property owners engaged in reconstruction as soon as was feasible. Though many of the earliest post-fire dwellings to be built were small vernacular cottages, these relief-era cottages were mostly replaced or relocated to the backs of lots within a few years by construction of larger residential structures, which predominated. Upbuilding at greater scales and densities than had previously existed was a response by property owners to the post-disaster housing crisis and to the boom in the residential rental markets. Consequently, in little more than a decade following the 1906 disaster, the Sycamore Street residential enclave was uniformly reconstructed with multiple-story, multiple-family housing that employed architectural styles and types entirely consistent with the Edwardian era.

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The following sections describe the features and elements that comprise the historic district, including areas, sites, groupings of structures, individual buildings, and their characteristics.

Residential Flats

Residential flats are the predominant building type found within the post-fire neighborhood of the Inner Mission North, including within the Sycamore Street enclave. The area was mostly rebuilt with two-unit and three-unit residential flats that were accordingly two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half stories in height, with bilateral façade arrangements of entrances and bay windows that were typical of the Edwardian era. Buildings were constructed with abutting side walls and minimal or no front yards, which resulted in continuous rows of evenly spaced structures, walk-up entrances, bay windows, and cornice lines. Structures present orderly façades that are typically ornamented with classical entablatures, pilasters, festoons and swags in the Renaissance Revival mode. Other Edwardian-era stylistic influences that were applied to post-fire buildings within the historic district included Craftsman and Colonial Revival.



A group of three buildings that were constructed by speculative builders in 1911 and 1912, at 64-68, 70-74, and 76-78 Sycamore Street. View north. *San Francisco Planning Department.*



A group of three buildings that were constructed by speculative builders in 1916 and 1917, located at 19-21 and 23-25 Sycamore Street, and 9-11 San Carlos Street. View southwest. *San Francisco Planning Department.*

Two multiple-building developments occurred within the historic district, at different ends of Sycamore Street. Near the west end, a triple set of residential flats was designed by architect/builder Paul F. Demartini, who lived on Powell Street and listed no office at the time of construction. Demartini designed the three-unit buildings with Classical architectural features such as columns and pilasters, arched entrances, Palladian windows arrangements, and cornices dressed with modillions. The building located at 64-68 Sycamore Street, the first of the three to be completed in 1911, was constructed by its owners at the time, John B. Demartini, a contractor/builder who lived on 26th Street, and George Lagomarsino, a laborer who lived on Henry Street. The other two buildings in the set, 70-74 and 76-78 Sycamore Street, were built for owner E. Bertucci, who was probably Emanuel Bertucci, the owner of a “fruits” establishment on Valley Street and a resident of Dolores Street. The latter two structures were also built with automobile garages that were integrated into the ground floors. All three of the buildings in this set were likely built as speculative and/or realtor investments, as none of the individuals involved with their design and construction lived in them after they were completed. This pattern of speculative upbuilding typified post-fire reconstruction in the Inner Mission North.

A second multiple-building development that occurred within the historic district is located near the east end of Sycamore Street. This grouping is comprised of two identical structures, and a third structure with a similar design, that were erected by the Cuneo Bros. builders, Antonio and Joseph. The twin set of two-story flats that are located at DPR 523L (1/95)

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19-21 and 23-25 Sycamore Street, constructed in 1916, feature mirrored plans with a combination of Classical features that include dentils, modillion cornices, and simple acroteria-like dressing at entry cornices and bay window rooflines, and Craftsman-style elements such as boxy bay windows, triangular brackets, tripartite window arrangements, art-glass, and divided-light sash. These varied features were applied to the standard, Edwardian-era plan for residential flats structures, with included bilateral arrangements of bay windows on primary façades, short walk-up entrances, and rooflines that terminated with cornice lines. The third structure in the grouping, which is located at 27 Sycamore Street and 9-11 San Carlos and occupies the southeast corner, employed restrained Classical detailing. This building included a store in its ground floor prior to its conversion to an automobile garage.

A specific kind of residential flats that are found within the historic district were historically referred to as “Romeo and Juliet” flats, or “Romeo” flats. These higher density residential structures were designed with four, six, or more units, depending on the heights and widths of individual buildings. A Romeo flats building plan contained two mirrored, vertical stacks of long narrow apartment units, each as wide as one of the identical bay windows that were found on the primary façade. Between the bay windows and the fronts of the apartment units, a common entrance at the sidewalk accessed an internal stairwell that led to individual apartment doors at all levels. While many Romeo flats buildings utilized central stairwells with overhanging balconies that were without front walls and that were open to the street, others such as the two examples that are located within the historic district on Lexington and San Carlos Streets included enclosed stairwells. These enclosed versions included large windows at the stairwell landings that still allowed for Shakespearean call-ups, i.e., the Romeo and Juliet balcony scene, which provided the impetus for this building type’s common moniker. These enclosed versions also represented a progression in multiple-family residential design, away from buildings with separate street entrances for individual units, which were in keeping with Victorian-era ideals and which also characterized most Edwardian-era flats, and towards true apartment buildings with single street entrances and completely anonymous internal units, which emerged a quarter of the way into the 20th century as one of the most common residential building types.



Multiple-story, multiple-family residential buildings, including an enclosed “Romeo” flats (located at left), with Classical architectural details, located on the east side of Lexington Street near its intersection with Sycamore Street. View northeast. *San Francisco Planning Department.*



Multiple-story, multiple-family residential buildings with Classical architectural details, located on San Carlos Street, near its intersection with Sycamore Street (in background). View north. A Romeo flats-style duplex with a second-story addition is visible on Sycamore Street. *San Francisco Planning Department.*

The historic district contains only two properties that were not upbuilt during the post-fire reconstruction, but instead were rebuilt with lower density dwellings similar to those that existed before the 1906 disaster. The structure located at 34-38 (formerly 36-38) Sycamore Street was originally built as a single-story duplex, with Edwardian-era bay windows and a central entrance plan that resembled an open Romeo flats. Also, the small cottage located at 50 Sycamore Street with Colonial Revival elements is the smallest scale property that is located within the district. Constructed in 1906 and 1907, respectively, both of these buildings exist in somewhat altered conditions. In an example of later upbuilding, the duplex building was expanded vertically in approximately 1920, with a second story and box bay window addition, while the primary façade of the cottage was refaced during the mid-century period (though it also appears that much of the original historic features and materials are extant beneath the applied facing).

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Mixed Uses and Early Automobile Garages

Within the historic district, several residential structures contain specific features that distinguish them as sub-types of standard Edwardian-era flats. These structures include mixed-use buildings that were originally designed to contain corner stores as well as housing, and several structures that were originally designed with early automobile garages integrated into their primary façades. These structures fit seamlessly into the overall milieu of Edwardian-era reconstruction, in terms of the scale, massing, and forms that characterizes this densely populated urban residential enclave.



Mixed-use building with a corner storefront, constructed in 1906 at 39-45 Sycamore Street. View southwest. *San Francisco Planning Department.*



Former mixed-use building, constructed in 1917, at 27 Sycamore Street and 9-11 Lexington Street. View southeast. *San Francisco Planning Department.*

Two mixed-use structures are located within the historic district on opposite corners at the intersection of Sycamore and San Carlos Streets. The building located at 39-45 Sycamore Street, which was erected in 1906 at the site of previously existing store, was designed with a tall first story and without a semi-raised basement in order to accommodate a corner storefront. The remainder of the ground-level story and the upper story contained separate residential flats. The building located at 27 Sycamore Street and 7-9 San Carlos Street, which also contains dwellings above an original commercial ground floor, was built a decade later in 1917. These corner establishments proliferated throughout the Mission District, spaced regularly a block or two apart, and provided important neighborhood goods and services, including during the critical period of post-fire refugee relief, neighborhood reconstruction, and community resettlement. The store at the southwest corner continued its use at the site through the early 20th century, until eventually the commercial space was occupied by a church in the mid-century period. This building still retains its turn-of-the-20th century commercial design with an angled corner entrance flanked by large rectangular windows. The store at the southeast corner, which was constructed later, was converted to an automobile garage by mid-century.

Other specialized features that are found in some buildings within the historic district are automobile garages that were integrated into the primary façades of the buildings during the original construction. These buildings with integrated garages, erected in the 1910s, constituted very early examples of the expanding influence of private automobile ownership and use, and presaged much greater influence to come during the 20th century. The earliest integrated “auto basements” in San Francisco were believed to have been installed shortly before 1910, and the practice did not become common in American residential architecture until the 1920s. Therefore, the buildings within the historic district that feature integrated garages represent rare prototypes of a property type. They include: two matching residential flats buildings that were constructed in 1912 at 64-68 and 70-74 Sycamore Street (the third building in the matching set, which was constructed a year earlier, did not include a garage); and the four-unit apartment house that was constructed in 1913 at 48 Sycamore Street. Within the historic garage openings, extant doors may or may not be original.

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Detail of an early integrated automobile garage, constructed in 1912 at 70-74 Sycamore Street. View northeast. San Francisco Planning Department.



Detail of an early integrated automobile garage, constructed in 1912 at 64-68 Sycamore Street. View northwest. San Francisco Planning Department.



Building with an early integrated automobile garage, constructed in 1913 at 48 Sycamore Street. View northeast. San Francisco Planning Department.

Relief-Era Cottages

Within the historic district, two structures remain intact from the early relief-era phase of rebuilding, which was typified by the expedient construction of small vernacular dwellings that were often replaced within months or years. These relief-era structures are a pair of cottages that are found together on Clarion Alley, the back-alley to Sycamore Street. Both of these cottages on Clarion Alley, which are located on adjacent lots, appear to have been constructed out of pure necessity within a few weeks of the disaster of April 1906. They indicate vernacular methods of construction, are based on very small and simple plans, and display no elaborate ornamentation, which were all characteristics of working-class refugee-built housing. These cottages on Clarion Alley share their lots with larger, multiple-family residential buildings that were likely constructed on Sycamore Street after the cottages were built (and that are also contributors to the historic district). These very small back-alley cottages provide important, rare associative links to the historical conditions of refugee housing. The category of relief-era housing includes structures that were built by the U.S. Army as part of the official relief effort, as well as those that were erected by individuals without any central planning or subsidies, such as those that are found within the historic district.

One of these cottages, located at 40 Clarion Alley, is a rectangular structure with a gable roof (clad in built-up material), minimal eaves, wide clapboard-type facing on the façade that faces Clarion Alley, and shiplap siding on the visible (east) side elevation. The Clarion Alley façade features a square window with simple wood trim and water table. This cottage is set on a concrete foundation, which was very likely installed in the 1910s or 1920s, during a period when many other concrete foundations were installed in order to meet building codes. A small boxy horizontal addition to the small dwelling appears to have been installed at the southwest portion of the building. This relief-era cottage at 40 Clarion Street shares a lot with a two-unit residential flats building that was constructed at 40-42 Sycamore Street in 1908.

The other cottage, located at 48 Clarion Alley, is the smaller of the two back-alley cottages. This tiny dwelling is a hipped-roof box clad in rectangular wood shingles (and built-up material on the roof), that is set back a few feet from the edge of Clarion Alley, behind a plywood fence. The primary façade that faces Clarion Alley contains a centrally located entrance door and two flanking rectangular windows. Wide, flat wood trim at the door and windows suffices for detail. The cottage appears to be semi-attached to a small, single-car garage that was added at the west side during the first half of the 20th century. This relief-era cottage at 48 Clarion Alley shares a lot with a four-unit apartment house that was constructed at 48 Sycamore Street in 1913.

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In addition, these two historical properties contain artworks on their surfaces facing Clarion Alley that are part of a gradually changing tapestry of community-produced murals that has continuously filled the surfaces of structures within Clarion Alley since 1992.



Relief-era cottage, constructed circa 1906 at 40 Clarion Street. View southwest. *San Francisco Planning Department.*



Relief-era cottage, constructed circa 1906 at 48 Clarion Street. View southeast. *San Francisco Planning Department.*

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Contributors

Contributors to the historic district qualify for assignment of California Historical Resource Status Code (CHRSC) of "3CD" ("Appears eligible for CR [California Register of Historical Resources] as a contributor to a CR eligible historic district through survey evaluation"), according to the California State Office of Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Bulletin #8. In addition, several contributors appear to be individually significant historic and/or architectural properties, and therefore qualify for assignment of CHRSC of "3CB" ("Appears eligible for CR both individually and as a contributor to a CR eligible historic district through survey evaluation").

The following list includes information for the **18 contributing properties** located within the historic district:

Street Name	Address	Assessor Parcel Number	Property Type	Architectural Style	Construction Date	Individual CHRSC
Clarion Alley	46	3576/069	Single family residential	Vernacular	1906	3CD
Clarion Alley	40	3576/068	Single family residential	Vernacular	1906	3CD
Lexington Street	9-11	3576/043	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1910	3CB
San Carlos Street	7-9	3576/024A	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1917	3CB
San Carlos Street	8	3576/026	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1907	3CB
San Carlos Street	15-17	3576/022	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1906	3CD
Sycamore Street	19	3576/023	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival/Craftsman)	1916	3CB
Sycamore Street	23	3576/024	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival/Craftsman)	1916	3CB
Sycamore Street	34	3576/067	Multiple family residential	Edwardian	1906; 1920	3CD
Sycamore Street	39-45	3576/025	Mixed-use, residential/commercial	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1906	3CB
Sycamore Street	40-42	3576/068	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1908	3CB
Sycamore Street	48	3576/069	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1913	3CB
Sycamore Street	50	3576/070	Single family residential	Edwardian (Colonial Revival)	1907	3CD
Sycamore Street	51-61	3576/044	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1907	3CB
Sycamore Street	54	3576/071	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1909	3CD
Sycamore Street	64-68	3576/073	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1912	3CD
Sycamore Street	70-74	3576/074	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1912	3CB
Sycamore Street	76-78	3576/075	Multiple family residential	Edwardian (Classical Revival)	1911	3CD

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Non-contributor

The historic district contains a non-contributor that was constructed during the historic district's period of significance, but that has undergone physical alterations (cumulative) that negatively affect the ability of the property to convey historical and/or architectural significance. This property is assigned CHRSC of "6L" ("Determined ineligible for local listing or designation through local government review process; may warrant special consideration in local planning"), according to the California State Office of Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Bulletin #8. The non-contributor is compatible with the scale, massing, and uses that characterize the historic district, which retains overall integrity.

The following list includes information for the **1 non-contributing property** located within the historic district:

Street Name	Address	Assessor Parcel Number	Property Type	Architectural Style	Construction Date	Individual CHRSC
Sycamore Street	60	3576/072	Multiple family residential	None (altered)	1910	6Z

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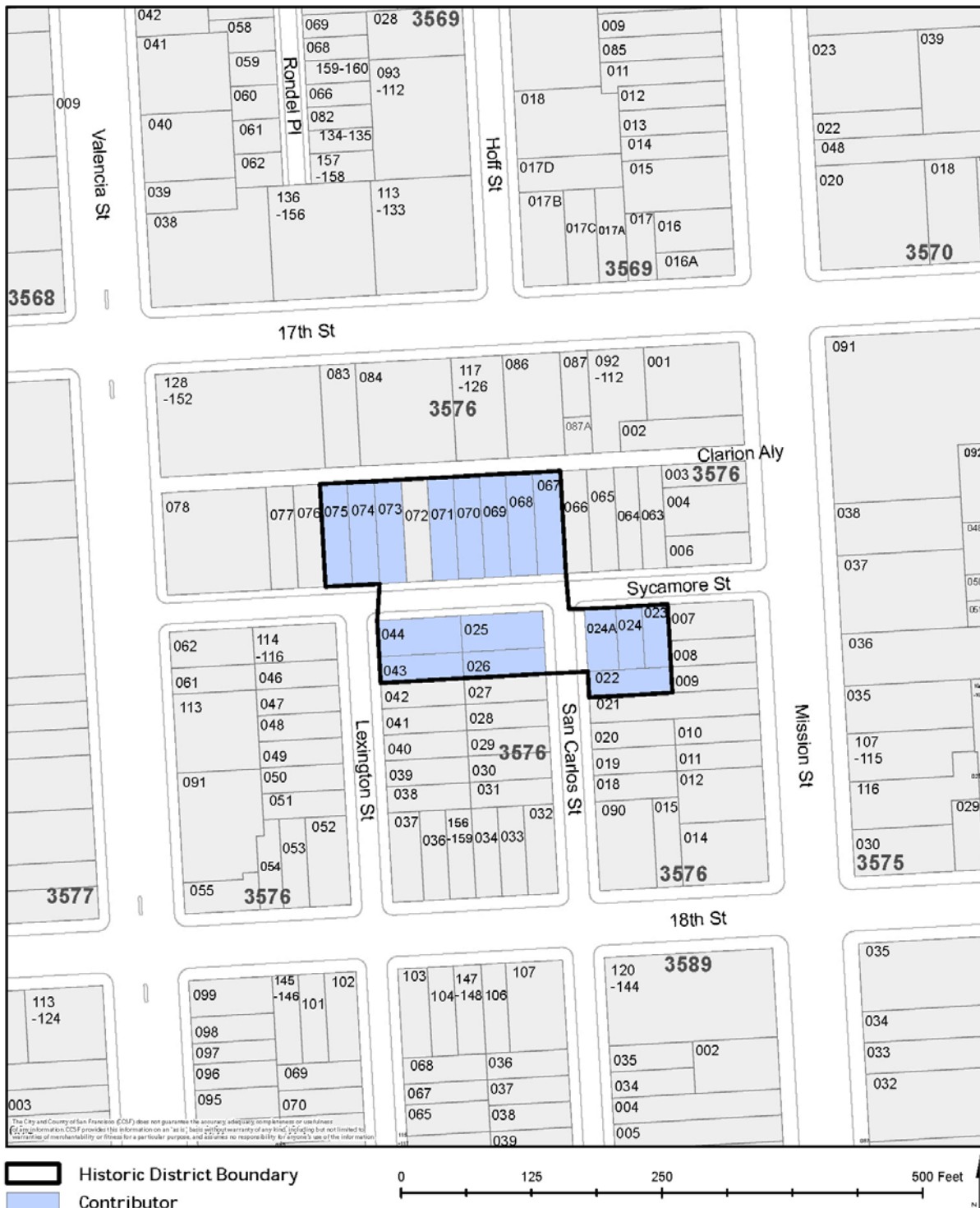
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Boundary Map

Properties are labeled with Assessor block numbers and lot numbers for identification purposes.



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***D6. Significance:** *(continued from Page 1)*

The historic district, a significant and distinguishable entity, qualifies for assignment of California Historical Resource Status Code (CHRSC) of "3CS" ("Appears eligible for CR [California Register of Historical Resources] as an individual property through survey evaluation") according to the California State Office of Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Bulletin #8.

Historical Context

After the Inner Mission North was destroyed by the earthquake and fires of April 1906, the initial "relief" phase, which extended into 1908, was characterized by small ad hoc cottages and shacks that provided immediate, temporary shelter for the desperate refugee population. The second phase of "rebuilding" involved the construction of permanent replacement structures, which in some instances began immediately after the 1906 disaster, and in other instances continued well into the 1910s. Within the historic district, which is part of the most urbanized area of the Inner Mission North, only a very few small, plain buildings remain intact from the early "relief" era. Most of the extant buildings represent the permanent "rebuilding" period, during which substantial multiple-story structures were erected to replace either destroyed buildings and/or the earliest temporary structures.

The historical context of the 1906 earthquake and the post-fire period of rebuilding and recovery in the Inner Mission North is further established in the following sections, which is largely excerpted from the San Francisco Planning Department's National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (NPS Form 10-900-b), *Historic Neighborhoods of the Mission District, San Francisco, California*, which was adopted by San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission Motion No. 93 on November 17, 2010.

1906 Earthquake and Fire

The great earthquake of April 18th, 1906, and the citywide fires that followed, were defining for the Mission District, as for all of San Francisco. While the earthquake itself destroyed mostly brick structures and buildings that stood on filled land, it also started dozens of major fires, most of them in the densely crowded South-of-Market area of tenements and industry. Firefighting was hampered by broken water mains, and the fires spread and merged uncontrolled, feeding on the primarily wood building stock. The ensuing conflagration, whose severity was compounded by numerous tactical errors on the part of city officials and army commanders, utterly consumed four-fifths of San Francisco, including approximately 28,000 buildings, over the next three days. Thousands of lives were lost. "The flames ravaged the financial district, the downtown commercial center, much of the industrial sector, and the city's most densely populated residential neighborhoods north and south of Market. The economic and social core of the west's greatest metropolis was in ruins."

During the second night of disaster, the conflagration moved into the Mission District from the north, where two separate firestorms, the South-of-Market blaze and the Hayes Valley "ham-and-eggs" fire, had combined. As the flames spread through the Inner Mission North, firefighters in charge of protecting the working-class area (including City employees, National Guard, and private citizens – not the Army, which focused its efforts north of Market Street) adopted a containment strategy. They managed to establish and hold eastern and western firebreaks along two wide boulevards, Howard and Dolores Streets, while the wall of flames continued southward and preparations were made in advance for a southern firebreak.

The achievement of the western firebreak along Dolores Street involved an infantry of volunteer citizens and refugees from the Mission Dolores neighborhood. They raided old wells and dairies for liquids, beat back flames with wet blankets, and patrolled rooftops to extinguish sparks and embers in order to prevent the fire from spreading west of Dolores Street. In doing so, they also protected the Mission Dolores chapel, whose sturdy redwood beams and solid construction had ridden out the temblor intact. The timely arrival of additional City firefighters and the discovery of an intact reservoir and hydrant at 20th and Church Streets also proved critical to holding the line at Dolores Street.

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Valencia Street lay in ruins one day after the 1906 earthquake. View north towards 18th Street. When this photograph was taken, the firestorm was visibly approaching from the north, and apparently it had already reached the next block. All of the buildings shown in this photograph burned within hours, as seen in the photograph to the right. *San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (Historical Photograph Collection Photo Id# AAC-3549).*



Valencia Street in the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake and fires. View north from approximately the same location as in the photograph to the left. There was total destruction of structures, roads, transit lines, and utility lines. *San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (Historical Photograph Collection Photo Id# AAC-3252).*

On the eastern side of the Inner Mission North, pioneer settler and capitalist John Center was credited with saving the neighborhood. During the late 19th century, Center had built the John Center Water Works, including water tanks with 125,000-gallon capacity located on the blocks bounded by Folsom, Shotwell, 15th and 17th Streets. While the water works functioned as a commercial enterprise, supplying water to nearby residences, John Center's objective was also fire prevention. In 1906, when the South-of-Market fires approached, Center's water works was used successfully to buffer the flames around his home and neighborhood, and to create an eastern firebreak that shifted from Shotwell to Howard to Capp Streets. During the event, John Center's nephew George L. Center directed firefighters and provided knowledge of private water mains.

As the eastern and western lines held, firefighters scrambled to prepare a southern firebreak at 20th Street ahead of the conflagration. Dynamite was used to take down large buildings on the north side of the street, and men and horses pulled others down with ropes. In addition to the hydrant at 20th and Church Streets, water was found in a cistern at 19th and Shotwell Streets. This allowed firefighters to employ a pincer-like attack on the wall of flames and to hold the firebreak at 20th Street. After three days of citywide destruction, the fire's advance was finally halted in the Mission District, though not before approximately 30 blocks in the Mission were leveled (out of a total citywide of more than 500 blocks). Just as the citywide firestorm had wiped out the core of San Francisco, leaving a broken ring of surviving outlying neighborhoods, the Mission District fires had carved out the oldest and most crowded area of the Mission, the Inner Mission North, while leaving untouched neighborhoods to the south, east, and west.

Rebuilding and Up-building

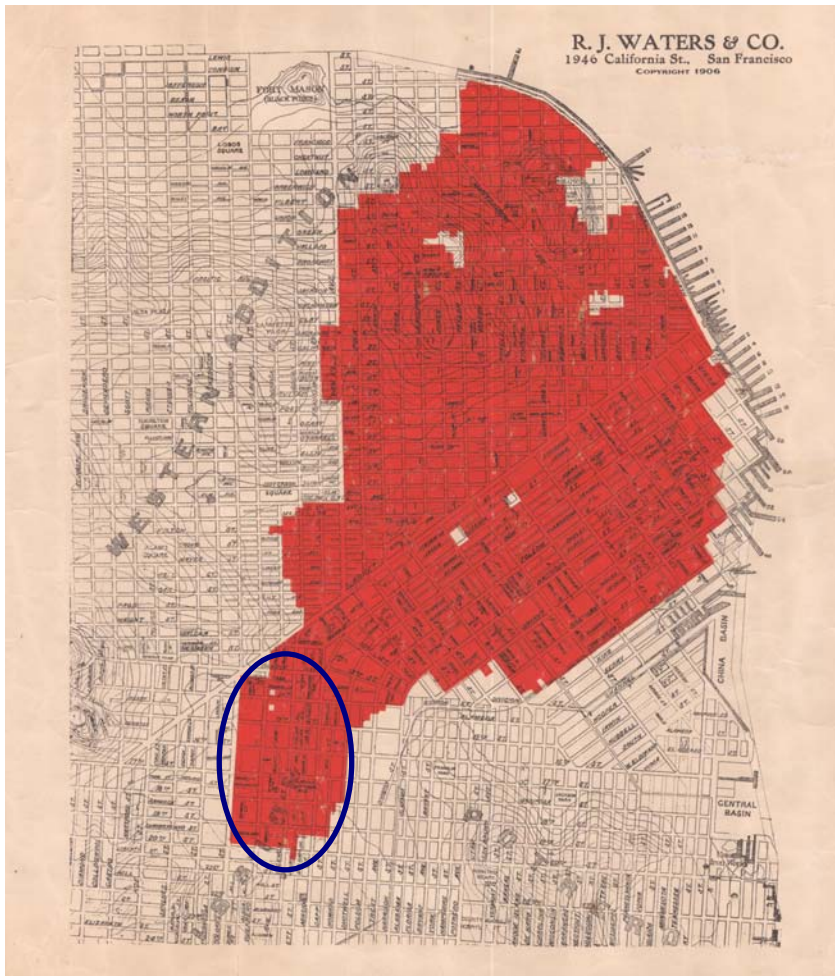
The rebuilding of San Francisco in the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake and fires was unprecedented in scope and effort. Rebuilding required clearing of approximately four square miles of absolutely devastated urban landscape (involving temporary installation of debris-carrying rail-cars through city neighborhoods), repair of broken utilities, transit lines, and roads, and total replacement of burned structures and neighborhoods. All of this was accomplished and more, without central plan or control, by private citizens, businesses, and city government. In *The Earth Shook, the Sky Burned*, Bronson celebrated the physical reconstruction of the city as a victory for character, efficiency, and technology:

"And the job was not only done, but it was done faster and better than anyone thought possible. In three years, almost all of the burned area was rebuilt... In 1909, more than half of America's steel and concrete buildings stood in San Francisco. In three years, the assessed valuation of the City was half again as much as it had been before the fire. Twenty thousand buildings – bigger, stronger, more

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modern than the 28,000 which went up in smoke – had been finished in that space and time.” (Pages 178-179)

In the burned area of the Inner Mission North, at least 600 buildings were constructed from the summer of 1906 through 1908, which was the peak of rebuilding activity citywide. From 1909 until the beginning of World War I, as building activity gradually tapered off, another 400 or so buildings were erected in the neighborhood. Complete reconstruction of the Inner Mission North took longer than for that of downtown and its nearby residential neighborhoods, due in part to politics and business, which dictated that restoration of the downtown core was highest priority. Also, working-class and/or immigrant citizens experienced difficulties and delays in obtaining insurance claims. In many cases, insurance pay-outs ultimately could not cover costs of rebuilding and owners were forced to sell their properties to speculators and commercial builders. A decade after the fire swept through the neighborhood, there remained more undeveloped and underutilized land in the Inner Mission North than there had been before the fire.



Map of San Francisco by R.J. Waters & Co. (1906), showing the vast area (shaded) that was destroyed by the firestorm of 1906, and that was reconstructed in phases during the years and decades that followed. The outlined area indicates the northern portion of the Mission District that was destroyed by fires and that was rebuilt.

These small vernacular dwellings were usually intended as temporary housing solutions; many were replaced with larger residential buildings within a few years, while others were retained at the backs of lots and multiple-family housing was constructed in front. More rarely, some property owners in the Inner Mission North bucked the trend of upbuilding and

The physical rebuilding of San Francisco and the Inner Mission North involved “upbuilding,” a process of constructing larger structures with more units to replace those that had been destroyed. The upbuilding of the Mission was related to a lucrative rental market for permanent housing following the disaster, which prompted rebuilding at higher density. Post-fire residential buildings were taller, bulkier, and covered more of their lots so that front and side yards were reduced or eliminated. In the Inner Mission North, where single-family dwellings and two-family flats had dominated the formerly suburban neighborhood before the fires, the post-fire upbuilding resulted in a mostly three to six-unit housing stock, built cheek-to-jowl and forming solid blocks of urban streetscape. Overall, the upbuilding and the greater population density of the Inner Mission North changed the neighborhood character from suburban to urban, as indicated by Godfrey in *Neighborhoods in Transition*: “The housing shortage in the city encouraged the development of increased densities in the Mission...[V]acant lots were developed, often with higher-density flats and apartment buildings, to house refugees from ravaged areas...This lowered the social standing of the district, making it a more strictly working-class area.” (Page 146)

In the first year or so after the disaster, while building materials, labor, and capital were scarce, many owner-builders endeavored to construct small, plain single-family cottages just large enough to provide basic shelter.

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rebuilt permanent, full-size single-family houses, some of them architect-designed, rather than convert their land to rental housing.

While post-fire buildings were essentially larger, more crowded versions of the wood boxes that had been built for decades, their façades revealed clear shifts in architectural tastes that occurred around the turn of the century. Post-fire row-house construction uniformly incorporated Beaux-Arts-influenced architecture that emphasized formal classicism over the riotous decoration and textures of the late Victorian era. Post-Victorian-era architecture was described by Alexander and Heig in *San Francisco: Building the Dream City*:

"Generally referred to today as 'Edwardian,' these buildings loosely followed the Roman Revival Style popular in the city just before 1906. Completely of frame construction, their first floors are generally given a veneer of yellow or Roman brick. The finer examples have a columned entrance, sometimes with marble steps and paneling, and perhaps leaded, beveled glass in the front door and side panels. Above the first floor are rows of curved bay windows whose large glass panes are also curvilinear, especially at corners. The heavy roof lines are turned out with modillions and cornices, and any stray door or window handsomely ornamented with pilasters and consoles, in the approved Roman Revival style." (Page 362)

In addition to these more fully developed examples of Edwardian-era architecture, plainer and less expensive versions were built in the Mission. Workingman's Edwardians featured slanted bay windows rather than curved; cast stone bases rather than brick; simple cornice details such as "block" modillions; and fewer façade details. Waldhorn and Woodbridge's *Victoria's Legacy* provided this alternate description of similar building stock:

"Edwardian buildings are two to three stories high with flat roofs and shallow cornices made up of small, flat brackets with rows of molding underneath, usually dentils and egg and dart. The bay windows are the three-sided slanted variety, although buildings on corner lots often have a rounded corner bay. Some Edwardians have exterior stairs forming a series of balconies in the center of the front of the building; apartments in this type of Edwardian were called "Romeo" or "Romeo and Juliet" apartments because of the balconies..." (Page 205)



Mission (Dolores) Park after the fires in 1906. The park is filled with makeshift tents and cottages that were erected by refugees, some of which were eventually moved and turned into permanent housing. View southwest. *San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (Historical Photograph Collection Photo Id# AAC-3114).*



Guerrero Street in 1928. View north towards 14th Street. All of the buildings that appear in the photograph were constructed to replace properties destroyed in the 1906 fires. *San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (Historical Photograph Collection Photo Id# AAB-3941).*

Within the fire zone, the massive reconstruction effort over a short period of time generated swaths of remarkably consistent, early 20th-century architecture. Stylistic variations occurred, though standard façade layouts and building plans dominated. In addition to Roman Revival-derived architectural styles, other popular styles included: Mission Revival, which substituted classical features for Spanish tile accents and bell-shaped parapets; Craftsman with clinker-

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brick bases, boxy window bays, and bracketed eaves; and later Queen Anne, which was classically-influenced and featured ornament that was toned down from late 19th-century versions. Some builders expanded the Edwardian-era lexicon by artfully combining features of different styles such as Craftsman and Mission Revival, or Classical Revival with Moorish influence.

Community Resettlement

The fires resulted in approximately 230,000 to 300,000 refugees without homes, out of a total population of 410,000. For months and years, people lived in makeshift camps and in official relief housing in the city's squares and parks. By 1908, the refugee population had largely transitioned to permanent residential building stock in rebuilt neighborhoods, and the relief camps closed. However, many people found it impractical, impossible, or undesirable to return to their original homes or neighborhoods, which were not the same as before the disaster, physically or culturally. In *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906*, Fradkin explained that a citywide restructuring in socioeconomics took place during the post-fire rebuilding period:

"San Francisco became more stratified – physically, socially, and economically. Inequities made this worse, as a study of the reconstruction process pointed out: "At one end of the spectrum, upper-class districts and individuals stabilized rapidly, whereas unskilled workers at the low end of the spectrum were still in motion five years after the disaster..." Higher-income housing moved westward into the unburned district. Lower-income housing, when it eventually became available, was pushed further south. After the earthquake, the physical gap between the rich and the poor and the distance traveled for blue collar workers from home to job became greater." (Pages 226-227)

The Mission District ultimately absorbed many of the South-of-Market refugees, whose original neighborhoods ceased to exist when the South-of-Market was rebuilt almost exclusively as industrial and commercial amidst consideration of stricter fire codes for the area. The influx of newcomers, which followed a well-established pattern of migration from South-of-Market to the Mission, reinforced the blue-collar image and identity of the area. In *San Francisco, 1865-1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development*, authors Issel and Cherny explained the general resettlement pattern: "After the destruction of 1906 (which spared much of the Mission), the area became even more working-class and more Irish as families left South of Market and followed Mission Street south. For the next thirty years or so, until World War II, many Mission residents were consciously Irish, often consciously working class, and very conscious of being residents of the 'Mish.'" (Pages 65-66) The post-fire mass migration of people from South-of-Market to the Mission swelled the ranks of existing ethnic communities in the Mission and reinforced the area's Old World cultural character while also crowding it. Godfrey described the post-fire population of the Mission in *Neighborhoods in Transition*: "By 1910 the population of the Mission District exceeded 50,000, reaching about its present level. One-third of the Mission's 1910 population was foreign-born, including 3,800 Irish, 3,200 Germans, and over 1,000 Italians, Swedes, and English." (Page 146)

The post-fire relocation and consolidation of ethnic and religious communities in the Mission District supported the rapid rebuilding of churches, religious schools, youth clubs, and fraternal halls, even as individual families and citizens faced formidable hardships. While some community institutions were rebuilt on pre-fire sites, a general westward and southward shifting of sites occurred, as South-of-Market institutions migrated into the Mission, and institutions that originated within the burned area of the Inner Mission North moved out to the surviving fringe areas. The identities of post-fire cultural and community institutions located within the Mission District indicated a complex social realm. They included: the Knights of Pythias "castle hall" at Valencia and McCoppin Streets; the leftist-oriented Tivoli Hall on Albion Street near 16th; the First Swedish Baptist Church on 17th Street near Valencia Street; the Mission Turner Hall (German Turn Verein) on 18th Street near Valencia; B'nai David Synagogue on 19th Street near Valencia; German Savings & Loan Society Bank at Mission and 21st Streets; and the Hebrew Home for the Aged and Disabled at 21st and Howard Streets.

The consolidation of the city's working classes to the Mission District had the effect of increasing the area's role in organized labor, including establishment of union halls. Following the up-and-down struggles of organized labor in the late 19th century, conditions during the post-fire period favored unions and San Francisco became "Labor's City," according to Issel and Cherny in *San Francisco, 1865-1932*:

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"Both the 'open shop' and 'law and order' took a back seat among businessmen after the earthquake and fire of April 1906. In the rush to rebuild, many San Francisco employers agreed to wage increases and improvements in working conditions as a necessary part of maintaining and expanding their work forces. By one estimate, union scales advanced 20 percent in the year following the earthquake...The years from 1907 to the outbreak of war in Europe brought stable times for the city's labor movement with few major conflicts and no strong open-shop campaign among the city's employers. By World War I, San Francisco had acquired a reputation as the most unionized city in the nation: a 'closed-shop city.'" (Page 91)



First Swedish Baptist Church in 1954, located at 17th Street and Dearborn Street. Built in 1918. *San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (Historical Photograph Collection Photo Id# AAB-1115).*



Dovre Hall in 1946, located at 18th Street and Laidge Street. Built as the Mission Turn Halle in 1910. *San Francisco Planning Department Landmark Nomination Report.*



San Francisco Labor Temple in 1929, located at 16th Street and Capp Street. Built in 1914. *San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (Historical Photograph Collection Photo Id# AAC-4995).*

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Integrity

The historic district and its contributing properties retain integrity of historic physical condition such that they convey relationships to the historic period of significance. Few alterations have occurred to contributing properties within the historic district. Contributors retain most or all of the aspects of integrity, as discussed further in the following analysis.

Location

Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred. Contributors are located on the sites of properties that were destroyed by the earthquake and fires of 1906. Contributors were either constructed at those locations or, in some cases, moved to those locations during the post-fire reconstruction, which is also an important facet of the post-fire era. Therefore, integrity of location is retained.

Design

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. Contributors exhibit architectural designs that are closely associated with Edwardian-era development patterns and the period of post-fire reconstruction. Contributors includes characteristics such as styles, spatial arrangements, proportion, scale, ornamentation and materials that relate to each other in ways that reflect historic functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. Some contributors have experienced alterations to design that have achieved significance in their own right. For the historic district as a whole, design includes the way in which buildings, sites, and structures are related, including the spatial relationships between buildings, the visual rhythms in streetscapes, and the layouts of walkways and roads. Therefore, integrity of design is retained.

Setting

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property, and it refers to the character of the place in which the property played its historical role. Contributors exist in the same basic physical conditions under which they were built and functioned, including: topography; block and lot layout; street design; neighborhood composition of commercial retail corridors and residential enclaves; relationships between buildings; and relationship of the historic district to nearby areas. Therefore, integrity of setting is retained.

Materials

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. Contributors retain the majority of exterior, visible materials that were used to in the historic construction, ornamentation, and/or improvement of buildings during the period of significance. Some contributors have experienced alterations to materials that have achieved significance in their own right. Therefore, integrity of materials is retained.

Workmanship

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. Contributors display evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing and/or altering buildings, as expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes, as well as in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. The workmanship of contributors furnishes evidence of the technology of crafts, illustrates the aesthetic principles of the historic period, and reveals individual, local, regional, and national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles. Examples of workmanship in historic buildings include tooling, carving, painting, graining, turning, and joinery. Therefore, integrity of workmanship is retained.

Feeling

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time, which results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. Contributors retain

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historic design, materials, workmanship, and setting that cumulatively relate the feeling of the early 20th century. Therefore, integrity of feeling is retained.

Association

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. Contributors retains association by virtue of being located in the place where the significant historic events and activities of post-fire reconstruction occurred, and by virtue of being sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Therefore, integrity of association is retained.

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