

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BLACKSTONE COURT

The Blackstone Court Landmark District is noteworthy as an unusual mid-block enclave of five structures on a blind alley. The Court contains a rare surviving pocket of properties that follow a Gold-Rush-era development pattern that is contrary to San Francisco's more contemporary street grid.

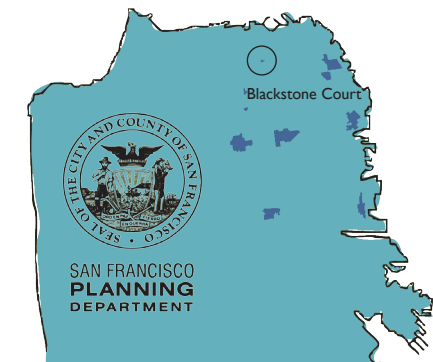
San Francisco streets primarily align with a grid in downtown San Francisco that was created by city surveyor, Jasper O'Farrell in the 1830s. Blackstone Court, however, was built along a pre-Gold Rush trail that lead from the Village of Yerba Buena (later to be renamed San Francisco) toward the Military base at the Presidio. Along the trail, the area surrounding Blackstone Court was settled to take advantage of a fresh water found in nearby Washerwoman's Lagoon. In 1847, the area was surveyed by William Eddy who laid the streets in a grid that began at the lagoon's shoreline and went northeast. An 1852 map of San Francisco shows the grid's alignment with Washerwoman's Lagoon and Blackstone Court. The northern boundary of Blackstone Court is the last remnant of an 1860s path that ran west around the lagoon. As the city expanded westward from downtown, so did O'Farrell's street grid. Buildings were moved or demolished beginning in 1889 as Gough, Franklin, Filbert and Greenwich Streets were graded and incorporated into the larger city fabric.

From 1885 to 1947, Charles Abraham operated the Western Nursery on most of this block. It was the last agricultural enterprise in the Cow Hollow/Marina district. An Australian peppermint tree and a Monterey Cypress within the district appear to date from the Western Nursery.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

The preservation of significant historic and cultural properties is a vital component of planning and managing the built and natural environment in San Francisco. Landmarks and landmark districts are unique and irreplaceable assets to the City and its neighborhoods. Landmark districts are regulated by Article 10 of the Planning Code. Since 1967 San Francisco's Historic Preservation Program has identified and protected a wide range of the City's rich history as depicted in its buildings, districts, places, structures, or objects.

As staff to the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Department's preservation planners work with property owners, city departments, and the general public to promote the preservation of these resources through incentives, long-range preservation planning efforts, public outreach, and technical assistance.



The locator map above shows the Landmark Districts found throughout the City of San Francisco.

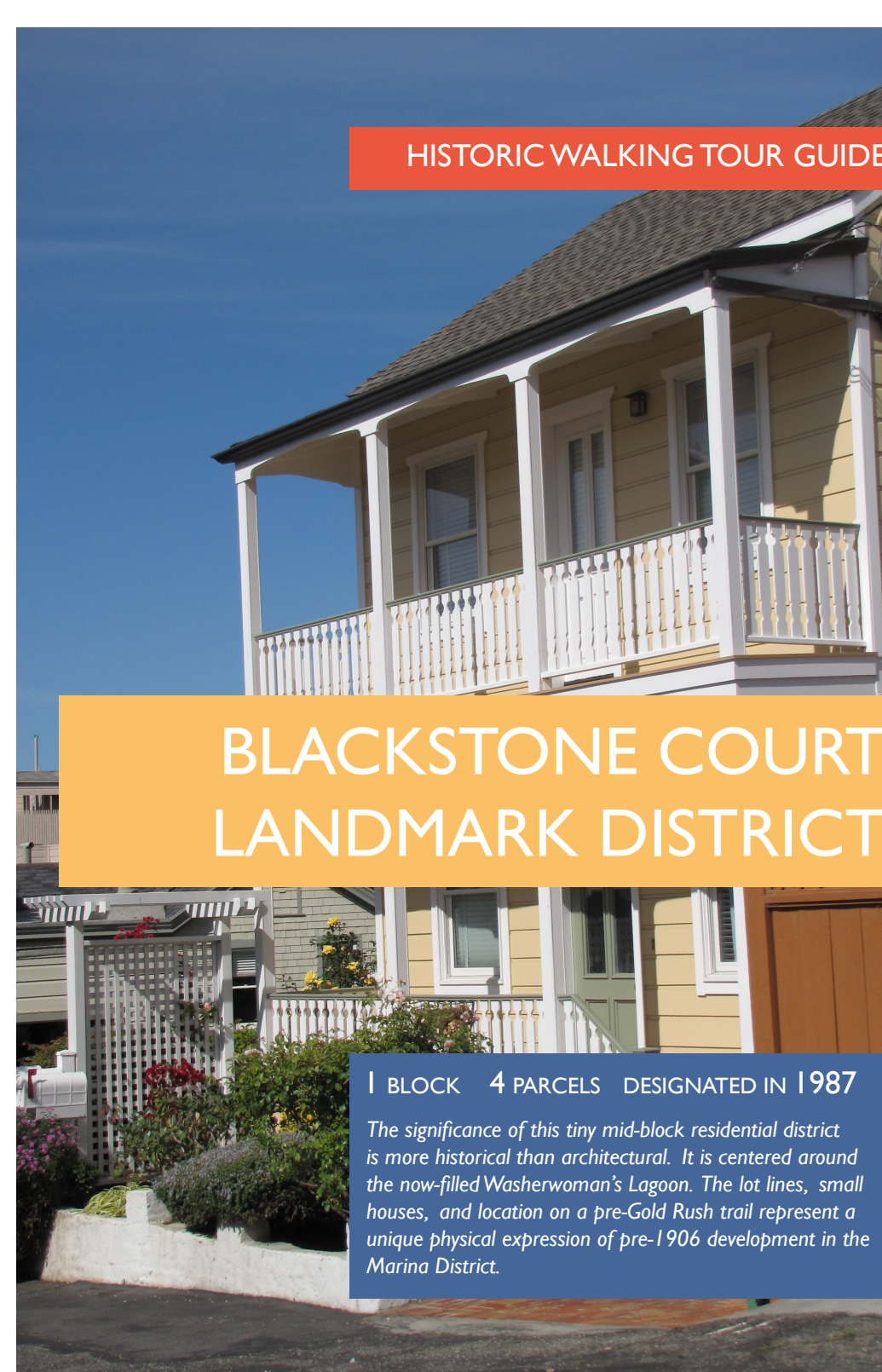
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This guide highlights a small selection of the area's historical buildings. To learn more about landmark districts and historical buildings, visit sfplanning.org.

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HISTORIC WALKING TOUR GUIDE

BLACKSTONE COURT LANDMARK DISTRICT

1 BLOCK 4 PARCELS DESIGNATED IN 1987

The significance of this tiny mid-block residential district is more historical than architectural. It is centered around the now-filled Washerwoman's Lagoon. The lot lines, small houses, and location on a pre-Gold Rush trail represent a unique physical expression of pre-1906 development in the Marina District.

NOTE: The public street portion of Blackstone Court ends at the metal gate. The area beyond this is private property and should not be accessed.

1 BLACKSTONE COURT Alleyway

The 1852 U.S. Coast Survey Map shows the present-day Blackstone Court as part of a curving trail that led from the intersection of Washerwoman's Lagoon just beyond Lombard Street. In 1853, Mary Anne Blackstone purchased the property, sold the eastern half to her husband, Nathaniel, and constructed a house in 1856. The Blackstone's house no longer stands, but the Court and the District continue to bear their name.



2 "BLACKSTONE HOUSE" 9-11 Blackstone Court

Around 1892, as the City's streets were being gridded, this house was moved from its original location. Historians suspect it was originally built during the Gold Rush on a site closer to Washerwoman's Lagoon. Nicknamed "Blackstone House" for its location and not for the original owners, the house was purchased by Cherubino and Letizia Favilla in 1897. The Favillas added a new ground floor in 1899 and stables in 1906. Favilla operated a prosperous store, Favilla-Bricca Furniture, on Columbus Avenue in North Beach.

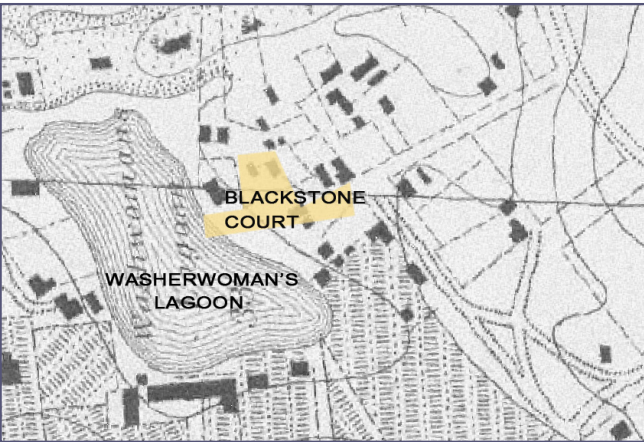


3 ABRAHAM HOUSE & WESTERN NURSERY 30 Blackstone Court

In 1885, German-born florist Charles Abraham, leased half a block of land and opened the Western Nursery. He filled in the high water-line of Washerwoman's Lagoon and his plants thrived on the nutrient-rich soil. Abraham became Northern California's premier nurseryman by importing a wide variety of sub-tropical plants, and introduced the first bougainvilleas, fuschias and Italian olives to California. He donated many exotic species to the Golden Gate Park Conservatory of Flowers. The Western Nursery's "thousand-gallon-a-day well" provided fresh water after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire.



Aerial photo looking north.



1859 Map of San Francisco showing Washerwoman's Lagoon and Blackstone Court.