



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Landmark Designation Case Report

Hearing Date: July 1, 2015
Case No.: 2015-005887-DES
Project Address: 90-92 Second Street / 600 – 600½ Mission Street
Zoning: C-3-0(SD) – Downtown-Office (Special Development)
Block/Lot: 3707/012
Property Owner: Laura Yee Marital Trust (50%) and
Moon Park Yee Residuary Trust (50%)
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PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS & SURROUNDING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

90-92 Second Street, historically known as the Bourdette Building, is located on the northwest corner of Mission Street and Second Street. It is a two-story-over-basement brick commercial building designed by the architects Bliss & Faville and constructed in 1903-1904. It is designed in what has been termed the American Commercial Style and features three storefronts on the ground floor, as well as a commercial space on the second floor. The attached draft Landmark Designation Report contains a detailed building description on pages 5-10.

The subject building is located in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood. The immediate vicinity is characterized by a combination of buildings constructed immediately before and after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. The former include the Atlas Building (1905) at 602 Mission Street, as well as the Wells Fargo Building at 71-99 Second Street (1898). The west side of Second Street in this area is characterized almost exclusively by two- to six-story commercial and mixed-use buildings constructed between 1906 and 1908. These buildings form a harmonious and historically significant collection of turn-of-the-century architecture recognized as the New Montgomery-Mission-2nd Street Conservation District under Article 11 of the Planning Code. 90-92 Second Street is located within the district, and has an Article 11 rating of "IV," meaning that it is a contributory building within the district.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The case before the Historic Preservation Commission is consideration to initiate designation of 90-92 Second Street as a San Francisco landmark under Article 10 of the Planning Code, Section 1004.1.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS

The Planning Department has determined that actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (specifically in this case, landmark designation) are exempt from environmental review, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 (Class Eight - Categorical).

GENERAL PLAN POLICIES

The Urban Design Element of the San Francisco General Plan contains the following relevant objectives and policies:

- OBJECTIVE 2: Conservation of Resources that provide a sense of nature, continuity with the past, and freedom from overcrowding.
- POLICY 4: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

Designating significant historic resources as local landmarks will further continuity with the past because the buildings will be preserved for the benefit of future generations. Landmark designation will require that the Planning Department and the Historic Preservation Commission review proposed work that may have an impact on character-defining features. Both entities will utilize the Secretary of Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* in their review to ensure that only appropriate, compatible alterations are made.

SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1 – GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Planning Code Section 101.1 – Eight Priority Policies establishes and requires review of permits for consistency with said policies. On balance, the proposed designation is consistent with the priority policies in that:

- a. The proposed designation will further Priority Policy No. 7, that landmarks and historic buildings be preserved. Landmark designation of 90-92 Second Street will help to preserve an important historical resource that is significant for its associations with the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, as well as architecturally significant as an example of a type and period.

DOWNTOWN PLAN

The Downtown Plan seeks to balance fostering a vital economy with the retention of urban patterns and structures which collectively form the physical essence of San Francisco. The proposed designation is consistent with the Objectives and Policies of the Plan, including:

OBJECTIVE 12: Conserve resources that provide continuity with San Francisco's past.

POLICY 12.1: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural, or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

TRANSIT CENTER DISTRICT PLAN

The historic preservation objectives and policies of the Transit Center District Plan build upon the preservation principles of the Downtown Plan. They are intended to provide for the identification, retention, reuse, and sustainability of the area's historic properties. The proposed designation is consistent with the Objectives the Plan, including:

OBJECTIVE 5.1: Protect, Preserve, and Reuse Historic Properties that have been identified and evaluated within the Transit Center Plan Area.

OBJECTIVE 5.3: Foster public awareness and appreciation of historic and cultural resources within the Transit Center Plan Area.

BACKGROUND / PREVIOUS ACTIONS

90-92 Second Street was added to the Landmark Designation Work Program on May 12, 2012.

OTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

If the Historic Preservation Commission decides to initiate designation of the subject property as an Article 10 landmark, the item will be considered again by the Historic Preservation Commission at a subsequent hearing. At this time the Historic Preservation Commission may adopt a resolution recommending that the Board of Supervisors support the designation. The nomination would then be considered at a future Board of Supervisors hearing for formal Article 10 landmark designation.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION STANDARDS

ARTICLE 10

Section 1004 of the Planning Code authorizes the landmark designation of an individual structure or other feature or an integrated group of structures and features on a single lot or site, having special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value, as a landmark. Section 1004.1 also outlines that landmark designation may be initiated by the Board of Supervisors or the Historic Preservation Commission and the initiation shall include findings in support. Section 1004.2 states that once initiated, the proposed designation is referred to the Historic Preservation Commission for a report and recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to approve, disapprove or modify the proposal.

Pursuant to Section 1004.3 of the Planning Code, if the Historic Preservation Commission approves the designation, a copy of the resolution of approval is transmitted to the Board of Supervisors and without referral to the Planning Commission. The Board of Supervisors shall hold a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation.

In the case of the initiation of a historic district, the Historic Preservation Commission shall refer its recommendation to the Planning Commission pursuant to Section 1004.2(c). The Planning Commission shall have 45 days to provide review and comment on the proposed designation and address the

consistency of the proposed designation with the General Plan, Section 101.1 priority policies, the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation, and the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Bay Area. These comments shall be sent to the Board of Supervisors in the form of a resolution.

Section 1004(b) requires that the designating ordinance approved by the Board of Supervisors shall include the location and boundaries of the landmark site, a description of the characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation, and a description of the particular features that should be preserved.

Section 1004.4 states that if the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days.

ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK CRITERIA

The Historic Preservation Commission on February 4, 2009, by Resolution No. 001, adopted the National Register Criteria as its methodology for recommending landmark designation of historic resources. Under the National Register Criteria, the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, workmanship, and association, and that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or properties that have yielded, or may likely yield, information important in prehistory or history.

PUBLIC / NEIGHBORHOOD INPUT

There is no known public or neighborhood opposition to designation of 90-92 Second Street as an Article 10 landmark. The Department will provide any public correspondence received after the submittal of this report in the Historic Preservation Commission's correspondence folder.

PROPERTY OWNER INPUT

The Planning Department has contacted a representative of the building owners and informed them of possible landmark initiation. As yet, the owners have provided no formal statement in support of, or in opposition to, landmark designation.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The case report and analysis under review was prepared by Department preservation staff. The Department has determined that the subject property meets the requirements for Article 10 eligibility as

an individual landmark. The justification for its inclusion is outlined below under the Significance and Integrity sections of this case report.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Bourdette Building at 90-92 Second Street appears eligible for local designation due to its direct and intimate association with the 1906 Earthquake & Fire. The disaster and the rebuilding that followed is the most significant event in San Francisco history. The fires destroyed nearly 500 city blocks and left a quarter million people homeless—more than half the city’s population. It ranks as one of the worst disasters in the history of the United States.

The building at 90-92 Second Street is a unique survivor of 1906. While the rest of the South of Market was reduced to ashes on April 18, this two-story brick building remained almost miraculously undamaged. Within the entirety of the burned district, it was the only building to survive without anyone inside or outside fighting to save it. In the days following the disaster, crowds gathered in front of the building, astonished. Today it is a direct and tangible link to a precise moment in time, a touchstone of moment when old San Francisco was destroyed and a new city was rebuilt. Much like the emblem on the city’s seal, the building is a phoenix that appeared from the ashes.

The building is also architecturally significant as an embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type and period. There are no other comparable small-scale commercial buildings in downtown San Francisco that survived the disaster. Thus, the building is highly significant as an example of commercial construction in the downtown area prior to 1906. It is also architecturally significant as a work by master architects, Bliss & Faville, one of the most respected and prolific architectural firms in early 20th century San Francisco. Among their works are three San Francisco Landmarks, as well as several others listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A fuller discussion of their career is presented on pages 18-19 of the Landmark Designation Report.

INTEGRITY

The building retains integrity of association, as it has remained in continual use as a commercial building since its construction. Despite alterations to its storefronts, which are the most common features to be altered in a historic building, the subject property retains outstanding integrity on its upper floor, including the survival of its original wood windows and brick corbelling. Overall, the Department has determined that the building retains more than sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling to convey its significance with the events of 1906.

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.

As described in the Landmark Designation Report, the character-defining features of the building are identified as:

- All exterior elevations, architectural ornament and rooflines

- Brick cladding
- Corbelled brick stringcourses separating the first and second stories
- Recessed double-arch window openings on the second floor fenestrated with a tripartite window system consisting of a central double-hung (one-over-one) wood window flanked by two smaller (one-over-one) wood windows. The tops of window frames are arched in alignment with the window opening and the bases rest on a brick sill.
- Brick stringcourse above the windows
- Roofline characterized by a brick dentils, a cornice, and a flat parapet
- Entry at the northeast corner (90 Second Street) featuring a wood door and wood frame transom.
- Entry at the southeast corner (600 Mission Street) featuring a mosaic tile threshold and corner pole (originally rounded, currently squared)
- Recessed entries and storefront bulkheads
- Transom area facing Mission Street, currently obscured by signage

For the purposes of any future alterations to the ground floor, those features that are considered character-defining include the materials, proportions and configuration of windows and entries which existed on April 18, 1906 as evidenced by historic photographs in this case report taken prior to, during, and shortly after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire.

BOUNDARIES OF THE LANDMARK SITE

The proposed landmark site encompasses Assessor's Block 3542, Lot 017 – on which the subject building is located.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Based on the Department's analysis, 90-92 Second Street is individually eligible for Article 10 Landmark designation for its association with the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, as well as its significant architectural expression as an example of a type and period. The Department recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission initiate Article 10 Landmark designation of 90-92 Second Street.

Under Article 10, The Historic Preservation Commission may recommend approval, disapproval or approval with modifications of the proposed initiation of 90-92 Second Street as a San Francisco landmark. If the Historic Preservation Commission approves initiation, a second hearing will be held to consider whether or not to recommend landmark designation to the Board of Supervisors. A copy of the motion of recommendation is then transmitted to the Board of Supervisors, which will hold a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation (Section 1004.4). If the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days (Section 1004.5).

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Draft Landmark Designation Report
- B. Draft Motion initiating designation

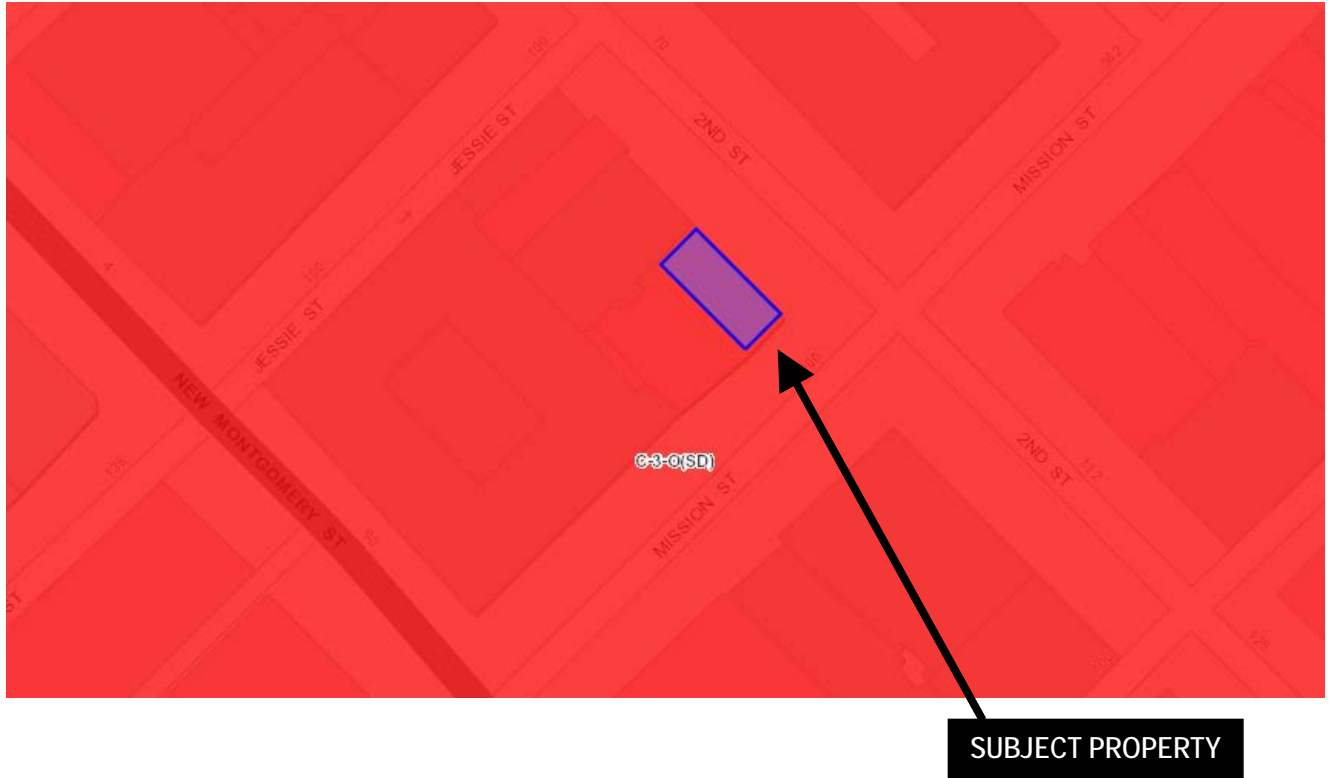
Parcel Map



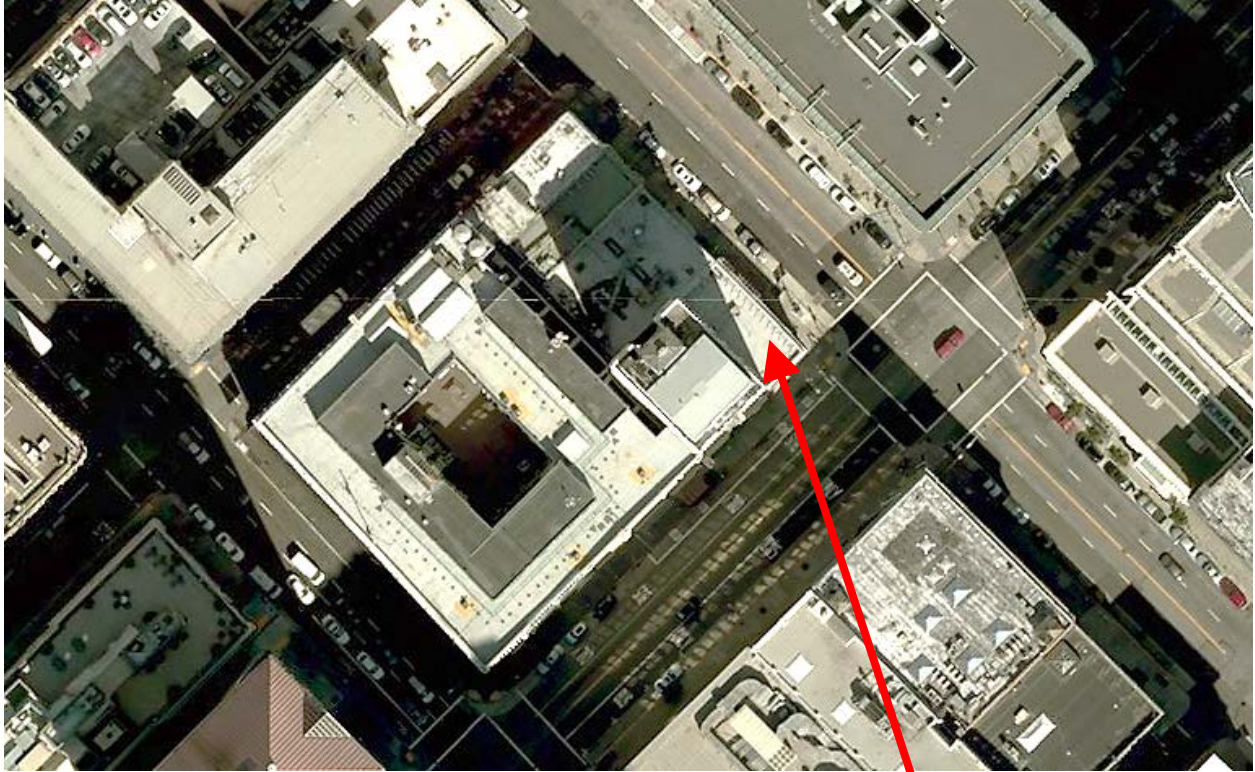
SUBJECT PROPERTY



Zoning Map



Aerial Photo



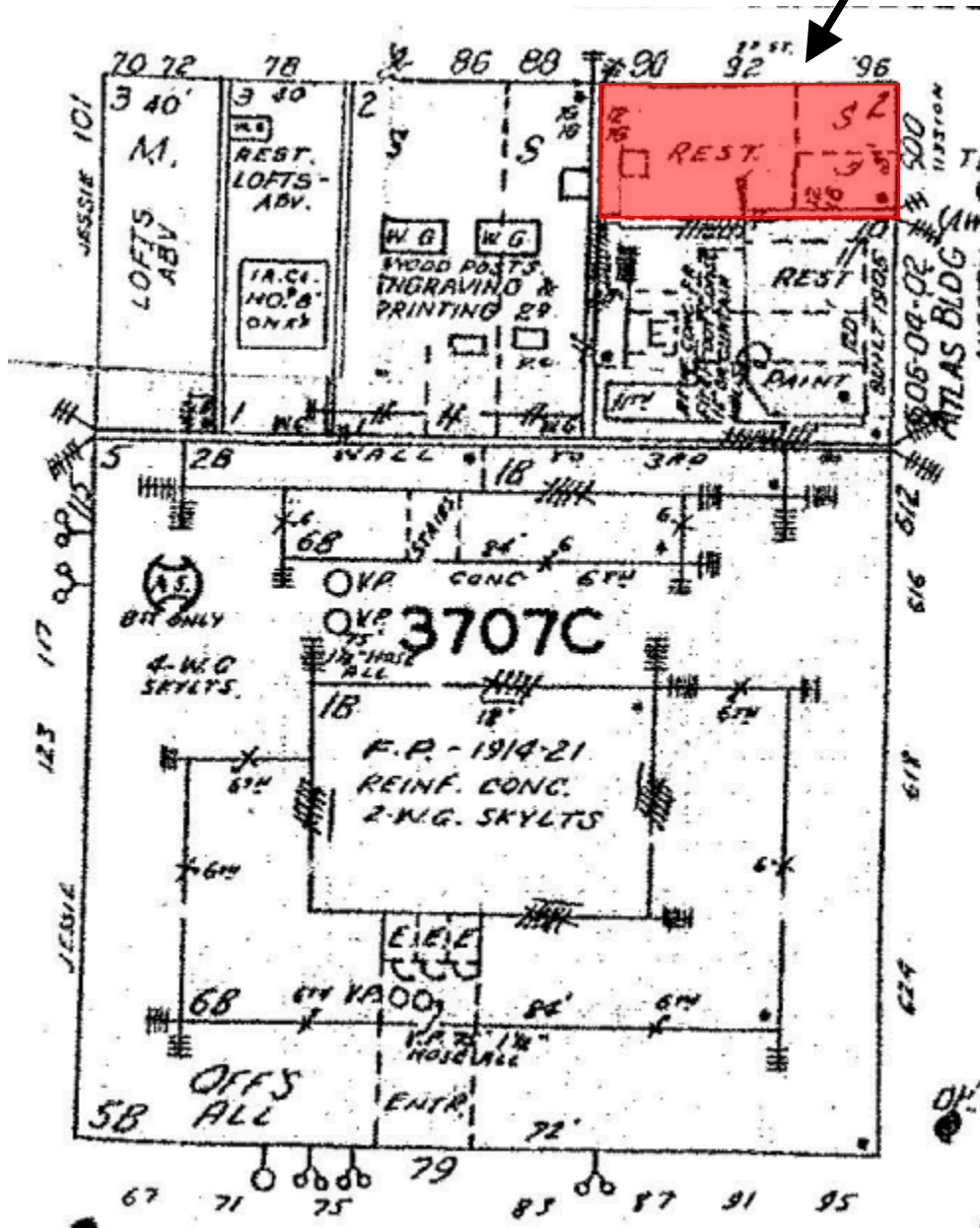
SUBJECT PROPERTY



Article 10 Landmark Designation
Case Number 2015-00587-DES
Bourdette Building
90-92 Second Street

Sanborn Map*

SUBJECT PROPERTY



*This Sanborn map was produced in the 1990s and may not accurately reflect existing conditions.



Article 10 Landmark Designation
Case Number 2015-00587-DES
Bourdette Building
90-92 Second Street



DRAFT LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



Bourdette Building 90-92 Second Street / 600-600½ Mission Street

Draft Article 10 Landmark Designation Report submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission, July 1, 2015

City and County of San Francisco
Edwin M. Lee, Mayor

Planning Department
John Rahaim, Director

Landmark No.
XXX

Cover: View of fires from Nob Hill, April 18, 1906 (upper left); Bourdette Building amid the ruins, May 15, 1906 (right); Bourdette Building 1929 (lower left). Sources: Bancroft Library and California Historical Library

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.

This Draft Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the initiation and designation process. Only language contained within the Article 10 designation ordinance, adopted by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, should be regarded as final.

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Bourdette Building

90-92 Second Street / 600-600½ Mission Street

Built: 1903-1904
Architect: Bliss & Faville
Contractor: J. C. Bateman

OVERVIEW

He stood and watched the fire until driven away by the soldiers. He saw the awning and sign in front of his establishment burn. Everything around the little building burned ... but the little place stood firm, untouched by either of the great forces that laid waste the greater part of the city.

--*San Francisco Call*, June 18, 1906

The Bourdette Building is significant for its association with the 1906 Earthquake & Fire. The disaster and the rebuilding that followed is the single most significant event in San Francisco history. For three days the city's residents gathered on hilltops and in public squares and watched their city reduced to ashes. Upward of 3,000 people were killed, most on the first day. The fires destroyed nearly 500 city blocks and left a quarter million people homeless—more than half the city's population. From Van Ness Avenue to the Ferry Building, nearly every building was destroyed. The city's principal commercial and industrial districts were gone, as were hundreds of churches, schools, hospitals, theaters and social halls. It ranks as one of the worst disasters in the history of the United States.

The Bourdette Building is a unique survivor of the burned district, an area where more than 28,000 buildings were destroyed. While the rest of the South of Market succumbed to the flames on April 18, 1906, this two-story brick building remained almost miraculously undamaged. As described by Stephen Tobriner, it was the "sole building in the fire district to survive with its contents intact and windows unbroken, without people on the inside or outside fighting to save it from the flames."¹ In the days following the disaster, crowds gathered in front of the building, astonished.

The subject property is also significant as the only remaining pre-1906 small-scale commercial building within the downtown area. With its fine brick masonry detailing and economical fireproof design, the Bourdette Building was originally constructed as an investment property for owner William B. Glidden, a wholesale silver merchant. In 1903, Glidden commissioned master architects Bliss & Faville to design the building, which was completed in January 1904. When it opened the ground floor was occupied by a saloon, while the second floor was used as the offices of a dress goods importer.

During their partnership Bliss & Faville were one of the most respected and prolific architectural firms in the early 20th century San Francisco. Both were graduates of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and trained at the New York architectural firm of McKim, Mead, & White. Their firm is responsible for some of San Francisco's most iconic landmarks including the St. Francisco Hotel at Union Square (1904), the Masonic Temple at 25 Van Ness Avenue (1913), and the Southern Pacific Building at 1 Market Street (1916).

¹ Stephen Tobriner, *Bracing for Disaster: Earthquake-Resistant Architecture and Engineering in San Francisco, 1838-1933*, (Berkeley, Heyday Books, 2006), 31.

In 1905, the building was sold to the prominent local attorney, John W. Bourdette, whose name was associated with the building following the earthquake. As reported in the *San Francisco Call*, which incorrectly spelled his name as “Burdette,” the attorney was unaware for four days that his building had even survived. During his first visit after the fire, Bourdette reported feeling too dazed to admit he was the owner.

Several other buildings also remained standing in the vicinity—including the adjacent ten-story Atlas Building, which had partially shielded the Bourdette Building from the flames. Like the Atlas Building, all of the nearby survivors were large steel-framed commercial buildings which had largely been gutted by fire. The Bourdette Building, by contrast, only had minor damage to its roof. Not a window was cracked, and reportedly not even a single liquor bottle in the saloon had been broken.

The Bourdette Building remains a remarkable touchstone to the 1906 calamity. After a passage of more than a century, the building still retains overall excellent architectural integrity and readily conveys its association with the disaster. It also offers excellent opportunities for interpretation, as numerous photographs not only show the building before and after the earthquake, but during the fire itself.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION



The subject property is a two-story-over-basement, brick commercial building constructed in 1903-1904 and located on the northwest corner of Second and Mission streets (APN 3707/012). The building is rectangular in plan and is designed in a turn-of-the-century commercial style. It is clad with orange-pigmented Vitrolite (structural glass veneer) on the first story and painted brick laid in a running bond on the second story. The first and second stories are separated by a corbeled brick stringcourses and the facade terminates in brick dentils and a molded cornice. The building is capped by a flat roof and a flat parapet with metal coping.

Ground Floor Commercial Spaces

The ground floor of the building includes three storefronts. All feature midcentury aluminum and plate glass storefront window systems and an orange-pigmented Vitrolite veneer. At least two of these storefronts are currently vacant. The corner storefront (formerly Henry's at 600 Mission Street) includes an angled entry vestibule with a corner pier and a raised marble threshold featuring a triangular field of mosaic tiles. The primary entry consists of wood double doors with molded vertical glazing. The vestibule includes a paneled wood ceiling with a single pendant light fixture. The storefront bulkheads have a rough-stucco finish. The interior is currently gutted.

The storefront is crowned with vintage aluminum-framed illuminated box signs which wrap the corner. The signs carry advertisements for Coca-Cola and Henry's Beer – Wine – Candy - Cigarettes. Vintage advertisements for 7UP are also located at the base of the storefront windows within the entry vestibule. The display windows that face Second Street are topped with a roll-up fabric awning.



Corner storefront addressed as 600 Mission Street.



Corner storefront addressed as 600 Mission Street. Note mosaic tile threshold and paneled ceiling.

Immediately to the west is a smaller storefront address as 600½ Mission Street. It features a slightly-recessed entry with a fully-glazed wood door and a marble step. The storefront is covered by an aluminum frame fabric awning. Some panels of the Vitrolite veneer are missing from the base and western portion of the storefront.



Storefront addressed as 600½ Mission Street. Note marble step.

The Second Street facade of the building includes a pedestrian entry at the north end and a large storefront near the middle. The pedestrian entry provides access to the second story and is addressed as 90 Second Street. It includes a shallow vestibule featuring a marble threshold and wood double doors crowned with a large wood-framed transom. The interior of this entry (visible through door glazing) includes a mosaic tile threshold. Prior damage to the structural glass veneer is evident to the right of the entry, as well as various other areas along the facade.



View toward Mission Street along the Second Street facade.

Near the center of the Second Street facade is the storefront at 92 Second Street, formerly Henry's Restaurant. It features a recessed boxed entry with two fully-glazed aluminum doors. The ceiling of the vestibule is covered with two metal vents. The storefront bulkheads are clad with stacked rectangular tiles that have been painted. The

northern display window features a vintage interior painted sign reading "Chinese & American Food." The entirety of the storefront is covered by an aluminum frame fabric awning.



The storefront addressed as 92 Mission Street, formerly occupied by Henry's Restaurant.



*Detail of painted sign on the northern portion of the storefront at 92 Second Street.
Note the stacked tile veneer on the bulkhead.*

Second Story

The second story of the building is marked by a series of recessed double-arch window openings. Each is fenestrated with a tripartite window system consisting of a central double-hung (one-over-one) wood window flanked by two

smaller (one-over-one) fixed wood windows. The tops of window frames are arched in alignment with the window opening. The bases rest on a brick sill. Just above the arches is a slightly-projecting brick stringcourse.



Detail of windows and roofline on the Mission Street facade.



Detail of brick corbelling on the Second Street facade.

There appear to be several areas of repairs made to the exterior brickwork over time. This includes somewhat crudely executed stucco patching of the corbelled beltcourse separating the first and second stories, as well as patched repair of the dentils below the cornice.

Neighborhood Description

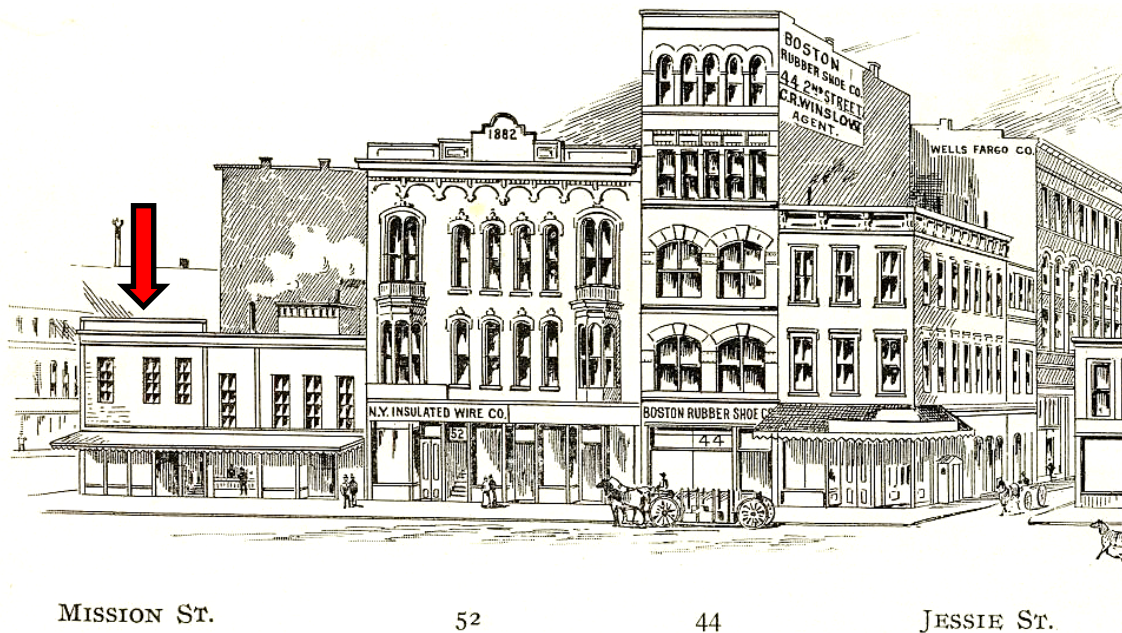
The immediate vicinity of the Bourdette Building is marked by a combination of buildings constructed immediately before and after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. The former include the Atlas Building (1905) at 602 Mission Street, as well as the Wells Fargo Building at 71-99 Second Street (1898). The west side of Second Street in this area is characterized almost exclusively by two- to six-story commercial and mixed-use buildings constructed between 1906 and 1908. Today they form a harmonious and historically significant collection of turn-of-the-century architecture recognized as the New Montgomery-Mission-2nd Street Conservation District under Article 11 of the Planning Code.



View southwest along Second Street from Jessie Street. The Bourdette Building is at center left.

CONSTRUCTION HISTORY & EARLY USE

Prior to the construction of the Bourdette Building, the subject lot was occupied by a similarly-shaped two-story building that may have been constructed as early as 1862.² During the mid-1890s this building was owned by the Wulzen Brothers and housed Andrew Knudsen's cigars, as well as Bridget McFadden's coffee saloon. Adjacent to the north at 52 Second Street was a lodging house constructed in 1882 which housed the offices of the New York Insulated Wire Company on the ground floor. Moving north was the Boston Rubber Shoe Company building at 44 Second Street, while a three-story boarding house known as the Wilcox House stood on the corner of Second and Jessie streets. The entire west end of the block was occupied by a six-story building housing the offices of Wells Fargo & Co., although that building would be renamed the Crossley Building in 1902.³ The multiplicity of residential, commercial and industrial uses in this portion of the South of Market was not uncommon. Indeed, decades before the 1906 Earthquake, the blocks immediately south of Market Street functioned as a transitional area where the commercial activity of downtown merged into a neighborhood dense with light industrial and residential uses.



*West side of Second Street between Mission and Jessie, 1895.
Arrow added by author to show the future location of the Bourdette Building.
(The Illustrated Directory by Hicks-Judd Company)*

The Bourdette Building Constructed

What is today referred to as the Bourdette Building was originally constructed for William B. Glidden, a dealer in wholesale silverware. In May 1903 the *San Francisco Call* reported that Frederick H. Wulzen and wife had sold their property at the northwest corner of Second and Mission streets to William, Thomas and Frederic Magee, real estate agents and editors of the *San Francisco Real Estate Circular*. The sales price was approximately \$47,000. Before the sale closed, however, the property was resold to Glidden for approximately \$50,000. According to the newspaper notice, "Mr. Glidden intends to erect a fine six-story brick building on the corner."⁴

² Spring Valley Water Company water connection record for 90 Second Street.

³ "Builder's Contracts," *San Francisco Call*, October 1, 1902.

⁴ "Week's Realty Sales are Good," *San Francisco Call*, May 31, 1903, 29.

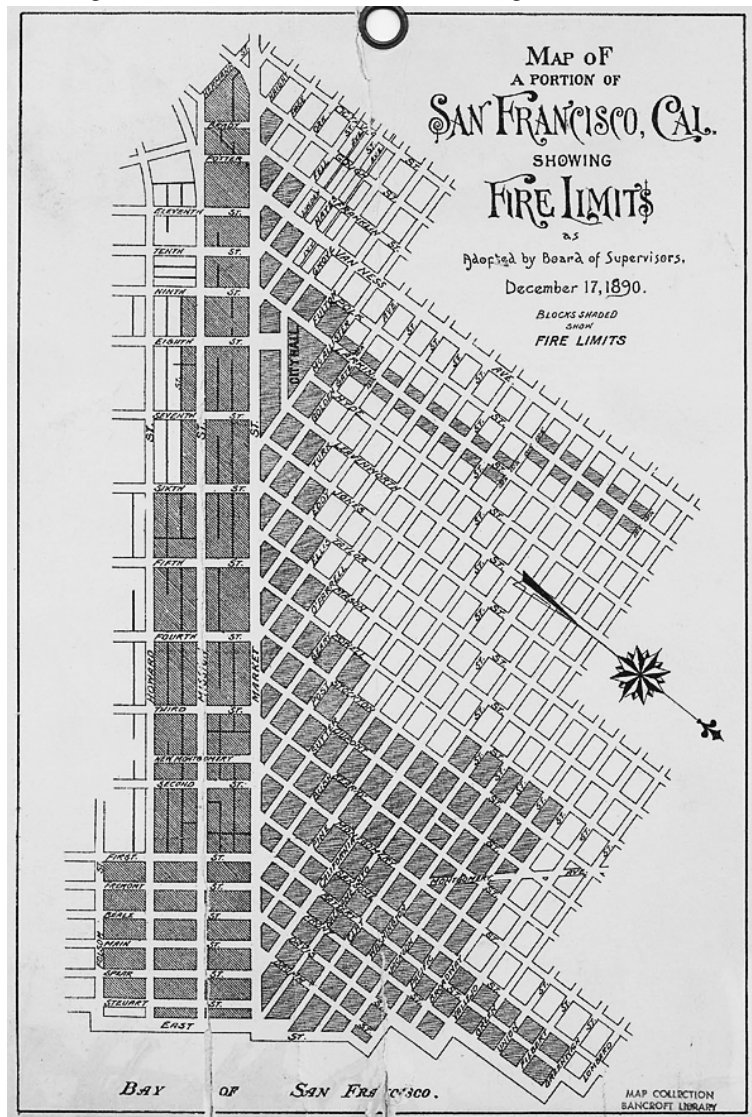
In August 1903 the “Builders’ Contracts” notice in the *San Francisco Call* stated that W. B. Glidden, owner, had engaged contractor J. C. Bateman and architects Bliss & Faville to construct a three-story office building on the corner of Second and Mission streets for \$9,300.⁵ (A fuller discussion of Bliss & Faville is included at the end of this section.)

It remains unclear why Glidden chose to reduce the building’s intended height from six stories to two-stories over basement. A newspaper article written in 1906 states that the building had been designed to be expanded, and that foundations for a twelve-story building were actually constructed at the site.⁶ It is indeed plausible that Glidden constructed the building with a foundation capable of supporting additional stories. This was not uncommon at the time, and would allow Glidden to expand the building at a future date, or to sell the building to someone else who would enlarge it.

As with most buildings in its vicinity, Glidden’s building was designed to be “fireproof.” In practice, this meant that the exterior and roof would feature materials capable of slowing the progress of a fire, such as brick, stone or terra cotta cladding. The area where such construction was mandated was referred to as the “fire limits.” They covered all of Market Street from the waterfront beyond Van Ness Avenue, as well as intersecting side streets for varying distances. It included the financial district, as well as nearly of the city’s principal commercial buildings.

Under the Fire Limits adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1890, fireproof construction in the vicinity of the Glidden’s building was required between Market and Howard streets from First Street to Sixth Street. The fire limits were not retroactive, though, and thus in some areas newer fireproof buildings were interspersed with older wood-frame structures.

On the subject block, however, Sanborn maps show all of the buildings were constructed using brick. This would help retard fire communicating from one building to the next. But it would not necessarily protect the interior contents of a building—especially if fire were to enter through one of the windows. Indeed, as future events would prove, many brick structures collapsed after their interior wooden beams were destroyed by the flames.

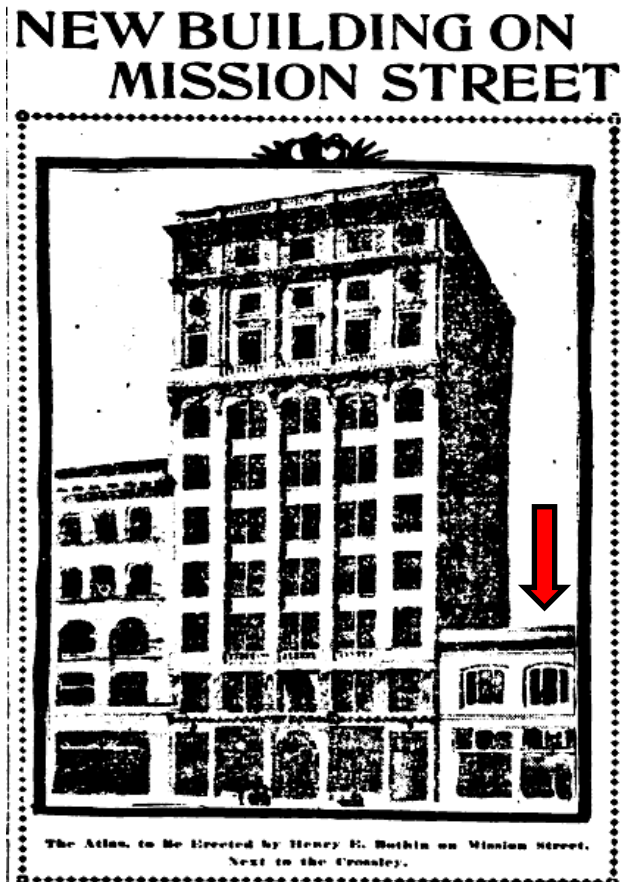


Circa 1890 map of San Francisco Fire Limits produced by the Guardian Assurance Company of London (Bancroft Library)

⁵ “Builder’s Contracts,” *San Francisco Call*, August 26, 1903.

⁶ “Burdette’s Building is Intact Amid Ruins,” *San Francisco Call*, June 18, 1906, 3.

According to service records of the Spring Valley Water Company, construction of the subject building was completed in January 1904. Three months later the *San Francisco Chronicle* published an image of the building as part of an article about the construction of the Atlas Building. This was a new ten-story building designed by the architect Frank S. Trees which would be constructed between Glidden's new building to the east and the Crossley Building to the west.⁷ It appears this same image was also used in *Modern San Francisco and the Men of To-Day*, 1905-1906, published by the Western Press Association.



Drawing appearing in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on March 17, 1904 showing the Bourdette Building adjacent to the proposed Atlas Building. Arrow added by author.



From *Modern San Francisco and the Men of To-Day*, 1905-1906, page 63.

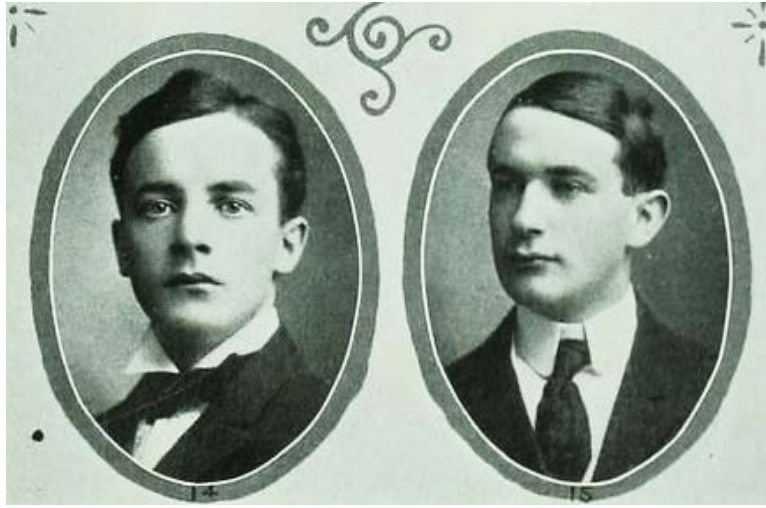
Pre-1906 Commercial Occupants

The Spring Valley Water Company application shows Glidden as owner, and also includes the name of McCosker & Alford, a commercial firm that occupied the second floor. The firm was owned by Redmond A. McCosker and Thomas K. Alford, importers of linens, woolens, silks, and dress goods. The company maintained a warehouse in New York City and was profiled in a 1904-1905 guide promoting San Francisco's business potential:

One of the firms recently established in the city is that of McCosker & Alford, with office and storeroom at 90 Second street. They are importers of fine Irish linens, woolens, dress goods, silks, and all kinds of

⁷ "New Building on Mission Street," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 17, 1904, 7.

high class dry goods. Although having been in business here since February, 1904, this firm has already established a fine trade in the city and State and are branching out in the Oriental countries.⁸



Thomas K. Alford (left) and Redmond A. McCosker (right).

From: *San Francisco Her Great Manufacturing, Commercial and Financial Institutions are Famed the World Over*, p. 177)

The ground floor of Glidden's building was occupied by Corey & Phillip's Saloon, addressed as 600 Mission Street and owned by Charles Corey and Bernard Phillips. Charles E. Corey was a former superior court clerk who retired from public service in 1904 to run the saloon. Corey was active in the Republican Party and entered office as a political appointee in 1895. In 1901 he also ran on the Republican ticket for San Francisco Recorder. When he resigned office the *San Francisco Call* described him as the "popular and efficient clerk of Judge Graham's Court ... Corey, who has embarked in business, will be greatly missed at City Hall, for he was one of the most competent, obliging and genial clerks in the municipal service."⁹

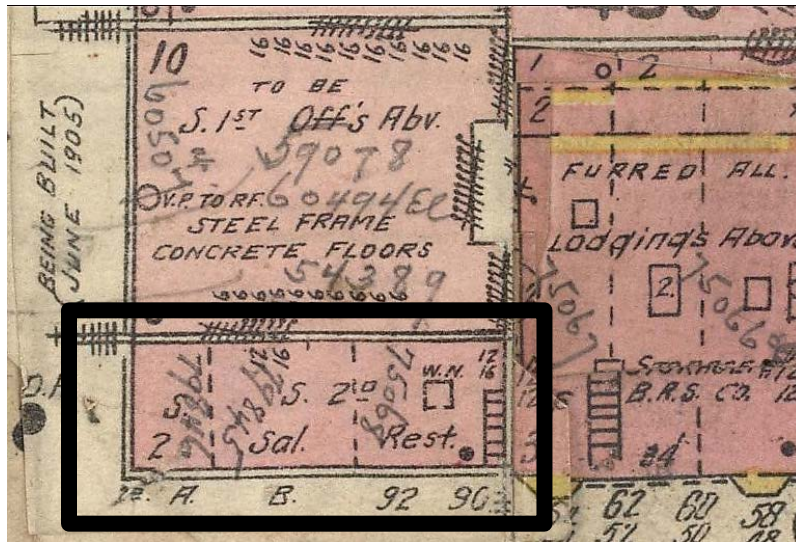
**Corey & Phillips, 600 Mission. Mercantile Lunch inserved between 11 and 2, 15c.
Cedar Brook Whiskey, formerly W. H. McBrayer—10 years old.**

Town Talk, March 3, 1906 Vol XIV, No. 705

The same month that Corey left City Hall, small advertisements for his saloon were running in *Town Talk*, a local publication. These ads show that Corey & Phillips' saloon also served food, described as a "Mercantile Lunch." Based on a Sanborn map issued around the same time, the saloon's food service area was located at the north end of the building and partitioned from the saloon. Another partition is shown between the saloon and a corner store, which appears to have sold cigars and tobacco.

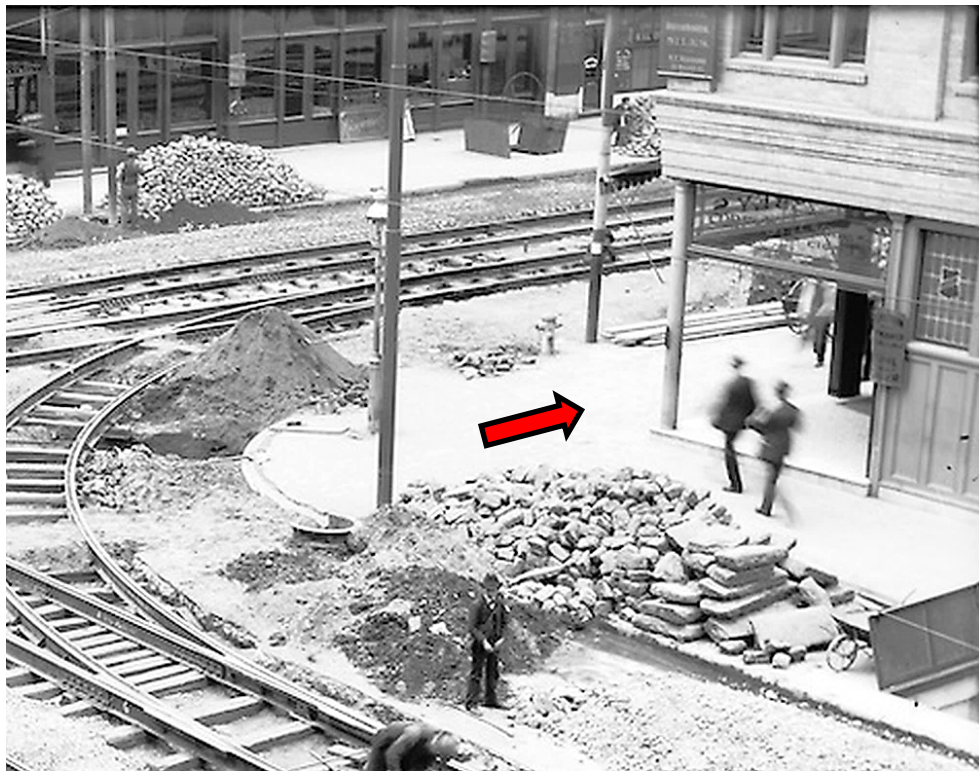
⁸ W. C. Wolf, ed., *San Francisco Her Great Manufacturing, Commercial and Financial Institutions are Famed the World Over*, (San Francisco: The Pacific Art Company, 1904-1905), 176.

⁹ "Corey Leaves City Hall," *San Francisco Call*, March 3, 1904.



1905 Sanborn map (Sheet 132) with a rectangle indicating the Bourdette Building

In July 1904 a photographer documenting the rebuilding of streetcar tracks at Second and Mission street captured an image of the corner of the building. The photo clearly shows that the Mission Street entrance to the building was marked by an entry porch covered by the overhang of the second story, and partially enclosed by a glass transom advertising the name of the business. A portion of the wall facing Second Street is also visible, and shows a wood paneled wall cladding and a leaded glass window with a shield motif. Another sign is visible on the second story, where the word “silks” can be read—doubtless part of a sign for McCosker & Alford.



View of track construction at the intersection of Mission at Second Street, July 27, 1904. The Bourdette Building is at extreme right. Note the primary entry is open to the corner. (SFMTA Photo Archive)



View toward Market Street as a streetcar approaches track construction at Second and Mission, circa July 1904. A small portion of the Burdette Building is visible at the extreme upper left. (SFMTA Photo Archive)

Apparently McCosker & Alford did not fare well in their new location, and by 1906 the A. S. Keeler Company, hardware merchants, had moved into the upper floor.¹⁰ *The Journal of Electricity, Power and Gas* in February 1906 stated that they were then “a new firm acting as manufacturers agents for several leading concerns” and maintained “warerooms” at 90 Second Street.¹¹ Immediately after the 1906 Earthquake the firm would advertise that it had stock on hand and its building was intact.

A. S. KEELER & CO.

90 Second Street

STOCK ON HAND:

Williamson Double Swivel Vise.

Empire Dry Batteries.

Fair Telephones.

Appleton Fuse Wire.

Desk Room for Rent. Building Intact

San Francisco Chronicle, April 29, 1906

¹⁰ “Burdette’s Building is Intact Amid Ruins,” *San Francisco Call*, June 18, 1906, 3.

¹¹ *The Journal of Electricity, Power and Gas*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, February 1906, 114.

Sale of the Building to John W. Bourdette

Barely a year after its construction, the *San Francisco Call* reported in April 1905 that William B. and Jerusha A. Glidden had sold the property to attorney John W. Bourdette (1856-1944).¹² The reasons for the sale are unclear, but Glidden enjoyed considerable profit on his investment. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the sale price was “a little under \$90,000.”¹³ Rents for the building were cited as \$500 a month. It appears that Bourdette purchased the building as an investment property, and would continue to own the property until his death in 1944. A biography published in 1912 states that John W. Bourdette was born in San Francisco in 1856 and graduated from St. Ignatius College in 1872. For ten years he served as a deputy county clerk, and then studied law in the offices of W. C. Burnett. Bourdette was admitted to the bar of the California Supreme Court in 1890, and was associated in the law department of the Southern Pacific Railroad from 1890-1893. He then formed a practice with Col. E. G. Preston that lasted from 1893 to 1905.¹⁴

During this period Bourdette frequently represented John D. Spreckels, son of the sugar magnate Claus Spreckels. At the time he purchased the subject building, Bourdette maintained an office nearby in the Claus Spreckels Building, popularly known as the Call Building because it housed the offices of the *San Francisco Call* newspaper, owned by John D. Spreckels. Bourdette was also noted as an avid sportsman. He joined the Olympic Club about 1880 and served as chairman of its advisory board. He also contributed to efforts to stock the rivers and streams near Lake Tahoe with Rainbow Trout and Eastern Brook Trout. In 1905 he was profiled in the publication, *Outing*, which noted that, “His home is a model farm of eighty acres at Belmont, an hour’s ride from San Francisco ... Five o’clock of every morning in the year, in all weathers, finds him out and starting on a walk of seven or eight miles. A cold shower, and breakfast, and Mr. Bourdette is ready for the 8.15 train to his office in the city, an energetic, cheerful, untiring type of man, who at nearly fifty years of age, can walk most of the youngsters to a standstill in a long day’s gunning or fishing.”¹⁵

After the 1906 Earthquake, Bourdette formed a partnership with attorney Walter R. Bacon and continued to represent John D. Spreckels in various matters. He was also associated with a number of business concerns, including the Oceanic Steamship Company, the Tacoma Mill Company, the K. H. Oil Company and the Eagle Brewery of San Jose.¹⁶ He was president of the latter, and also served as attorney for the California State Brewers’ Association during the 1910s. Bourdette likewise continued to dabble in real estate, purchasing at least one other lot in the South of Market where he apparently funded the construction of 1058 Howard Street in 1914.¹⁷ Later in life Bourdette’s served as president of the K. H. Oil Company. Bourdette died at his home in Belmont and was interred at Holy Cross Mausoleum in Colma.



John W. Bourdette returning from a fishing trip in 1905.
(Reprinted from *Outing*, February 1905, page 598)

¹² “Real Estate Transactions,” *San Francisco Call*, April 25, 1905.

¹³ *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 15, 1905.

¹⁴ J. C. Bates, ed., *History of the Bench and Bar of California*, (San Francisco: Bench and Bar Publishing Company, 1912), 237.

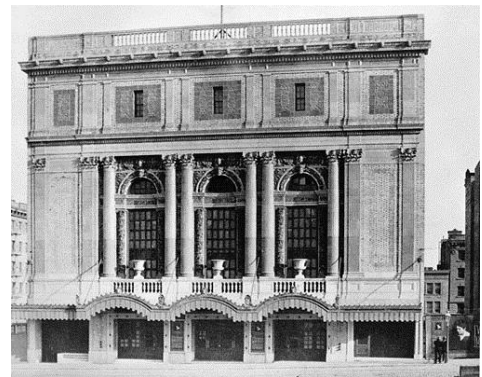
¹⁵ “A Western Friend of Fish and Fowl,” *Outing*, Vol. XLV, No. 5, February 1905, 599

¹⁶ “John W. Bourdette,” *Walker’s Manual of California Securities and Directory of Directors, Third Annual Number, July 1911*, (San Francisco: H. D. Walker, 1911), 360.

¹⁷ “Kerner & Eisert’s Sales,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 15, 1913.

Bliss & Faville, Architects

The Bourdette Buildings is a previously unknown work by Bliss & Faville, one of the most respected and prolific architectural firms in early 20th century San Francisco. Among their works are three San Francisco Landmarks: the Bank of California (1908), the Savings Union Bank (1908), and the Richmond Branch Carnegie Library (1914). Additionally, several other buildings designed by the firm are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Geary Theater (1910), the Hotel Oakland (1910) and the Matson Building (1910). Other prominent works include the St. Francis Hotel at Union Square (1904), the James Flood Mansion at 2222 Broadway (1912), the Masonic Temple at 25 Van Ness Avenue (1913), the Southern Pacific Building at 1 Market Street (1916), the Bank of Italy at 1 Powell Street (1920) and the California State Building on the north side of Civic Center Plaza (1922).



*Works by Bliss & Faville. From left to right: the St. Francis Hotel, the Masonic Temple and the Geary Theater.
(San Francisco Public Library and the Bancroft Library)*

Walter D. Bliss (1873-1956) and William B. Faville (1866-1946) both studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and were trained at the New York architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White. They arrived in San Francisco in 1898, forming a partnership that would last until 1925. Bliss was a native Californian and a member of a successful family that provided him society connections to business leaders. Historic newspaper research shows that the firm received a number of varied commissions prior to the 1906 Earthquake. In addition to the Bourdette Building, these included the St. Francis Hotel, the main power station for the Independent Electric Light and Power Company in the Potrero, a kindergarten for Emanu-El in the South of Market, and several private residences in the Pacific Heights and Presidio Heights neighborhoods. They also worked in Oakland, designing the Prescott School and a Carnegie Library which today houses the African American Museum Library.



Advertisement appearing in the *San Francisco Call*, June 1, 1906.
Displaced by the fire, the firm relocated to the *St. Francis*,
a hotel they had designed two years earlier.

The firm was best-known for Beaux Arts inspired designs and a conservative aesthetic that attracted owners seeking to convey a respectable image with their buildings. Some of their earliest work was distinctly reminiscent of designs done by McKim, Mead & White, while later designs absorbed influences from the Italian Renaissance. In 1914, B. J. S. Cahill writing in the *Architect and Engineer* stated that the firm had benefited from a “liberal and continual supply of commissions,” and that their work had “brought credit to the status of architecture on the Pacific Coast, as well as inspiration to their brethren and pleasure to the public, who enjoy the many-sided benefits conferred by well-arranged and beautiful buildings.”¹⁸ The *National Trust Guide to San Francisco* is less effusive, describing the firm as “accomplished if unoriginal architects” who nevertheless “produced some of the finest neoclassical buildings in the city.”¹⁹

Their earliest offices were located in the Claus Spreckels Building, but from at least 1902 until the time of the 1906 Earthquake they maintained offices in the Crocker Building. Faville served on the Board of Advisors for the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition, while also designing the Palace of Education for the Exposition grounds. Later he served as the president of the American Institute of Architects from 1922 to 1924. In 1925, Faville established a solo practice, while Bliss formed a new partnership with J. Steward Fairweather, and would go on to design buildings that included the Mangrum & Otter building at 1235 Mission Street (1928), as well as Glen Park Elementary School (1934).²⁰

¹⁸ B. J. S. Cahill, “The Work of Bliss & Faville,” *The Architect and Engineer of California*, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, January 1914, 48.

¹⁹ Peter Booth Wiley, *National Trust Guide to San Francisco*, (John Wiley & Sons, 2000), 158.

²⁰ Carey & Co., Inc., *Historic Resources Evaluation – Glen Park Community Plan, San Francisco California*, December 21, 2010, 25.

THE 1906 EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE

As waves of powerful tremors rocked San Francisco shortly after 5 a.m. on the morning of April 18, 1906, the famed opera singer, Enrico Caruso, was in a room at the Palace Hotel—approximately a block-and-a-half away from the Bourdette building. As related by Caruso:

... I wake up about 5'oclock, feeling my bed rocking as though I am in a ship on the ocean, and for a moment I think I am dreaming that I am crossing the water on my way to my beautiful country. And so I take no notice for the moment, and then, as the rocking continues, I get up and go to the window, raise the shade and look out. And what I see makes me tremble with fear. I see the buildings toppling over, big pieces of masonry falling, and from the street below I hear the cries and screams of men and women and children.²¹



View west toward Third and Mission streets with the Aronson Building (extant) at right.
This photograph was taken around 9:00 am on April 18, 1906.
(California State Library)

The South of Market was one of the first areas of the city to burn following the Earthquake. Indeed, multiple fires erupted in the district, which was then the city's most densely populated neighborhood. As mentioned previously, buildings along Howard, Mission and Market streets typically featured "fireproof" brick construction. But south of Howard Street the neighborhood was dominated by wood-framed residences and commercial buildings that offered no resistance to the firestorm.

The Progress of the Fire

Considerable documentary evidence is available about the progress of the fire in the vicinity of the Bourdette Building. A major reason is that the Bourdette Building was within a short walk of "Newspaper Angle," the nickname given to the intersection of Market, Third and Kearny streets. Here were concentrated three of the city's leading newspapers: The San Francisco *Chronicle*, *Call* and *Examiner*. With so many reporters and photographers in one area, the movement of the fire from block to block and building to building is among the best documented aspects of the disaster.

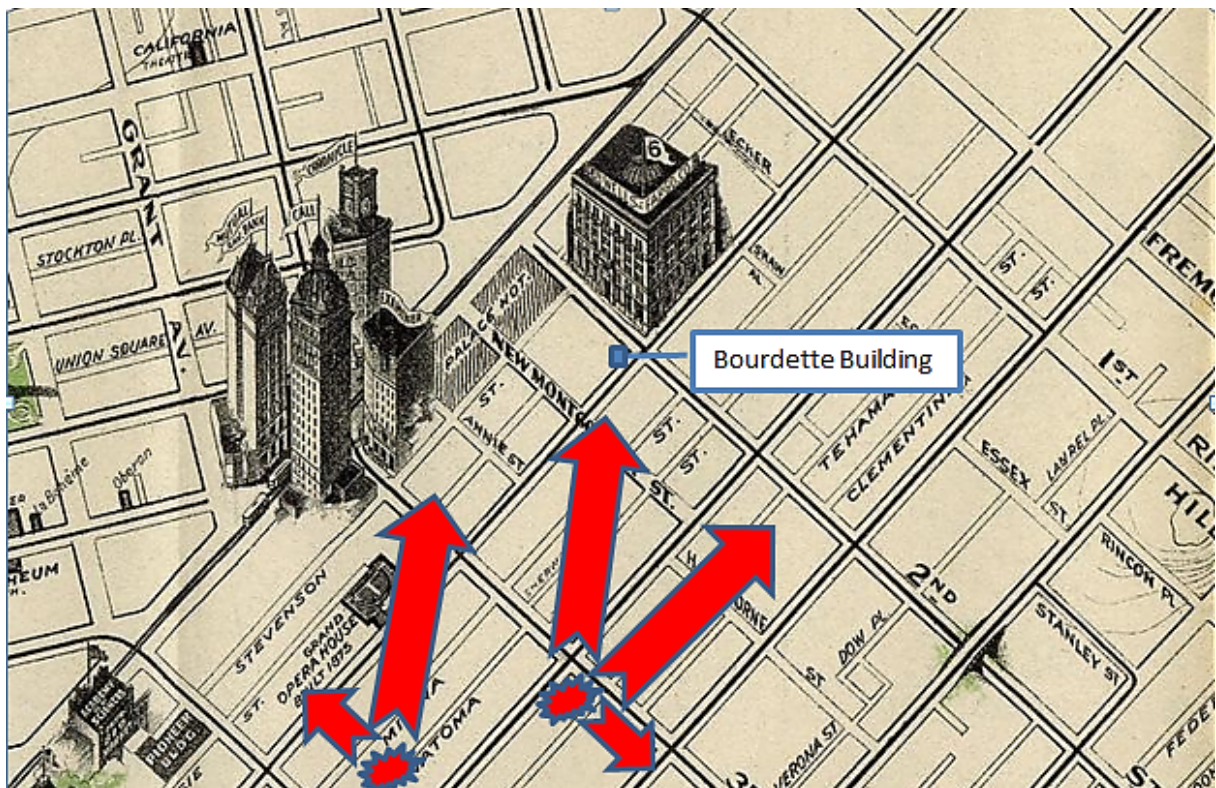
²¹ Malcolm E. Barker, *Three Fearful Days: San Francisco Memoirs of the 1906 Earthquake and Fire*, (San Francisco: Londonborn Publications, 1998), 215.

There were two major fires in this area that merged as they approached Market Street. Generally speaking, they moved in a southwest to northeast direction. As described by Lawrence J. Kennedy, who prepared a master's thesis regarding the progress of the fire:

On Howard Street near Third, was a Chinese Laundry in a wooden building. Fire was left in the furnace all night, and when the earthquake occurred a fire started. This fire spread in both directions along Howard Street, and when it reached Third, spread south to Folsom where it was checked in its southerly progress. It reached Second Street a 12 o'clock. At this fire a hard fight was made by the firemen who relayed water from cisterns at First and Harrison Streets and at Second and Folsom Streets.

At No. 282 Natoma Street, near Fourth fire broke out in a small frame dwelling house. Spreading to the north, it crossed Minna Street, reached Mission Street at about 9 o'clock, and crossed to the Grand Opera House at 9:30. Burning through to Market, it destroyed the buildings along the south side of Market Street from Third to Fourth by noon. The Call building was on fire at 11 o'clock. This same Natoma Street fire burned east to Third Street, crossed Third at the Oaks Hotel, at Minna and Third, and was burning in that block at the end of the first period....

The fire north of Howard Street between Third and Second Streets finally got to the Palace Hotel, after the tremendous fight made to save it from a private water supply, at 3 o'clock, and at half past 3 it was all ablaze. From it the Grand Hotel took fire, and early Wednesday night practically the whole south side of Market Street from the Ferry west was burned down.²²



Progress of the 1906 fire in the vicinity of the Bourdette Building, approximately 6:00 am – 12:00 pm, April 18, 1906. (August Chevelier Commercial, Pictorial and Tourist Map of San Francisco, 1904; edited by author).

²² Lawrence J. Kennedy, *The Progress of the Fire in San Francisco April 18th-21st, 1906. As Shown by Analysis of the Original Documents*, Master's Thesis for the University of California Berkeley, April 20, 1908, 5-6.

The progress of the fire was not necessarily determined by the direction of the wind, but rather by other factors common to fires in urban settings. This was underscored by S. Albert Reed in *The San Francisco Conflagration of April, 1906*, prepared for the National Board of Fire Underwriters:

Apparently there was a spread from building to building with a great variety of individuality in different places and with only a moderate leeward tendency. The ordinary rules of exposure seemed to have prevailed and the leading part was played by the familiar factors, individual combustibility, adjacency, opposing openings, short distances and excess height. As is usually the case with exposure fires, the vulnerable points in brick buildings were the glass of windows, the wood of window frames, the skylights, the boards of roofs covered only by a thin sheathing of metal or other material, and the combustible cornices and roof structures of various kinds, while distant ignition appears to have been largely by brands.²³



View south on New Montgomery Street near Mission Street. The Rialto Building is at center right (California Historical Society)



Fire burning at 640 and 644 Mission Street, a short distance west of New Montgomery Street (California Historical Society)

As the fire crossed Mission Street toward Market Street it roared through the four-story Bernhard Mattress Company warehouse at 644 Mission Street and engulfed the adjacent P. N. Kuss Building at 640 Mission Street. Just behind these buildings fronting Jessie Street was the General Depot of the U.S. Quartermaster. And on the other side of Jessie Street stood the west facade of the Palace Hotel.

The flames destroyed Post Office Station K on the northwest corner of Mission and New Montgomery Streets, then jumped New Montgomery to the Crossley Building on the northeast corner. The fire was "so intense that, deep within the 'fireproof' vaults in the Crossley Building, rolls of silver dollars were melting into solid ingots."²⁴

²³ S. Albert Reed, *The San Francisco Conflagration of April, 1906, Special Report to the National Board of Fire Underwriters Committee of Twenty*, (New York, 1906), 7.

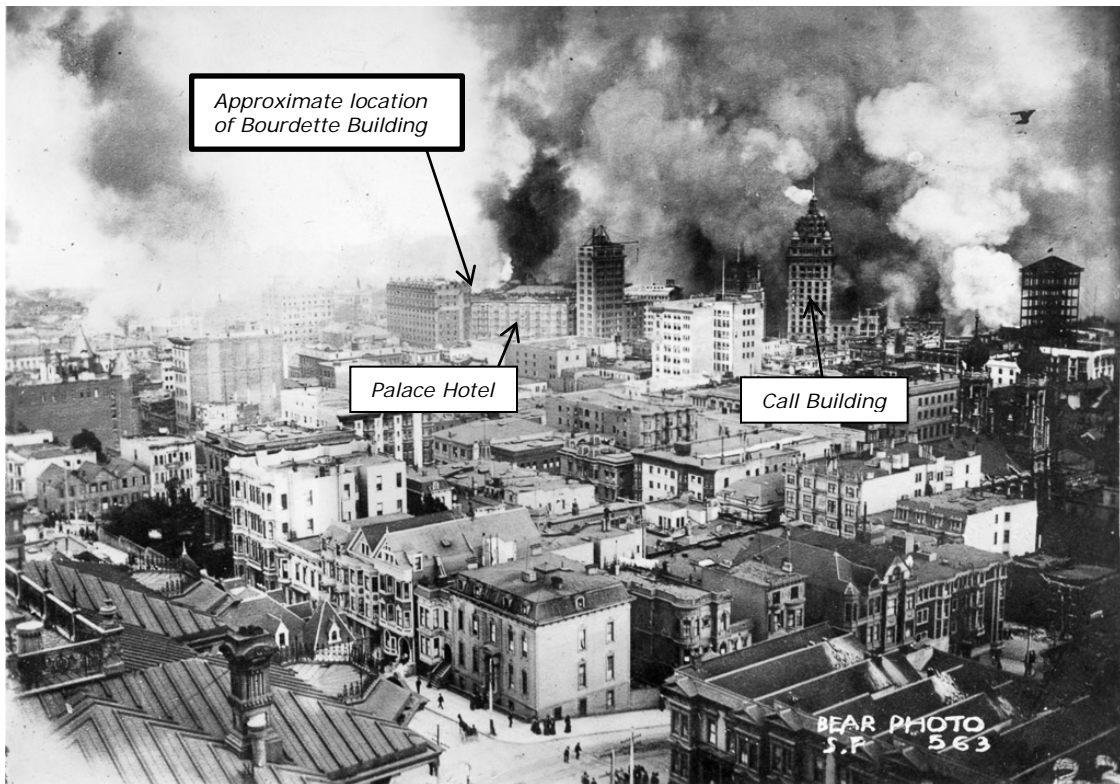
²⁴ John Castillo Kennedy, *The Great Earthquake and Fire San Francisco 1906*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963), 53.



View south down Annie Street toward Mission Street with the Palace Hotel at left, the Monadnock Building at right (California State Library)



Fire in the Crossley Building, fronting on the east side of New Montgomery Street from Jessie to Mission streets. The rear of the Grand Hotel is at left. The side of the Palace Hotel is barely visible at right. (Huntington Library)



View from Nob Hill showing fires in the South of Market, approximately 1:30 pm April 18, 1906. Arrows added by author. (Bancroft Library)

The approach of the fire was accompanied by scenes of intense pathos. Only seventy-five feet east of the Bourdette Building, the three-story brick boarding house known as the Wilcox House had collapsed, leaving many injured persons buried in the wreckage. For several hours rescuers attempted to bring them out, but finally had to abandon the scene due to the intense heat of the fire. The scene was recounted by Charles B. Sedgwick in his essay, "The Fall of San Francisco – Some Personal Observations:"

Later, passing along Second street, I observed at the corner of Stevenson [sic - actually Jessie Street] another fallen building. Two firemen were wearily pitching bricks from the heap, and a woman standing near called out to me: "Go over and help them, mister; there are people buried there." "They must be dead," I said. "No," she replied, "they are not all dead, for we hear them groan. There must be twenty there; it was a rooming house upstairs."

I willingly climbed the pile and went to work throwing bricks. Soon a half-dozen others came to help. We could hear groans, occasionally, but oh! so faint and seemingly distant. We all worked in silence, nobody speaking a word. Soon the firemen were called away, and the rest of us involuntarily stopped work and looked at each other. It must be that each of us read in the others' faces the same thought, "a hopeless task," for we all climbed down and went our way. There was a day's work for a hundred men there, and we could have remained but a few minutes longer at the best, for the fire was close behind us, eating up the great Crossley, Rialto and other blocks on New Montgomery and Mission streets. And the heat was fast becoming intolerable.²⁵



Rescue efforts at the Wilcox House, located only 75 feet north of the Bourdette Building at the southwest corner of Second and Jessie streets. The large building on the left beyond the wreckage is the Crossley Building. At right in the distance are the rear facades of the Grand Hotel and Palace Hotel. (Bancroft Library)

²⁵ Available from: <http://www.sfmuseum.net/1906.2/ew20.html>

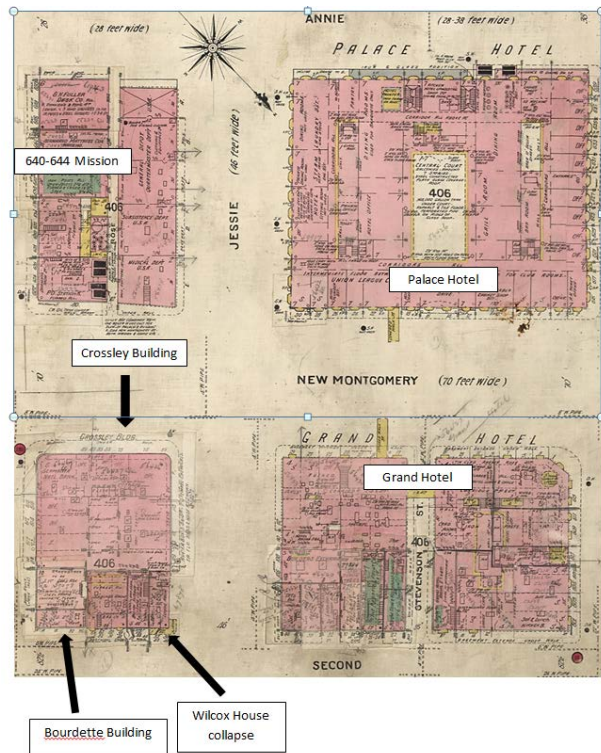


View west on Jessie Street from Second Street toward New Montgomery Street, approximately 3:00 p.m., April 18, 1906. The ruins of the Wilcox House are at lower left. The Palace Hotel burns in the center distance. (California Historical Society)

The fight to save the Palace Hotel was among the most determined of the disaster. Built at great expense by William Ralston in 1875, the Palace had been constructed with massive brick foundations that withstood the earthquake with little damage. It also had a considerable internal fire-fighting system. As noted by John Castillo Kennedy in *The Great Earthquake and Fire, San Francisco, 1906*:

[The Palace] had been built to be fireproof, as much in anticipation of danger from within as from without, since every one of the eight hundred rooms had an open fireplace Heroic precautions had been taken: three artesian wells, with a capacity of 28,000 gallons of water per hour, were drilled; a storage reservoir holding 630,000 gallons had been dug under the building; seven tanks, with 130,000 gallons more, on the roof

All over the hotel now, from subbasement to roof, hotel employees and firemen were busy wetting down the seven floors, soaking the walls, determined to keep the fire at bay ... [but] in a few hours the water, drained off by firemen in futile attempts to rescue other building, would run out, and the Palace too would be destroyed.²⁶



²⁶ John Castillo Kennedy, *The Great Earthquake and Fire, San Francisco, 1906*, (New York, William Morrow and Company, 1963), 55-56.

Albert S. Reed, reporting to the National Board of Fire Underwriters, made a similar assessment: "There was a good attempt made by the occupants to defend this hotel. They had an independent well and pump and a considerable equipment of fire apparatus; but the defense of a hundred or more closely attacked and unprotected wooden frame windows and a vulnerable roof naturally swamped the defenders."²⁷



New Montgomery and Market streets, approximately 3:30pm. The Grand Hotel at left, the Palace Hotel at right. (California Historical Society)

Fire Reaches the Bourdette Building

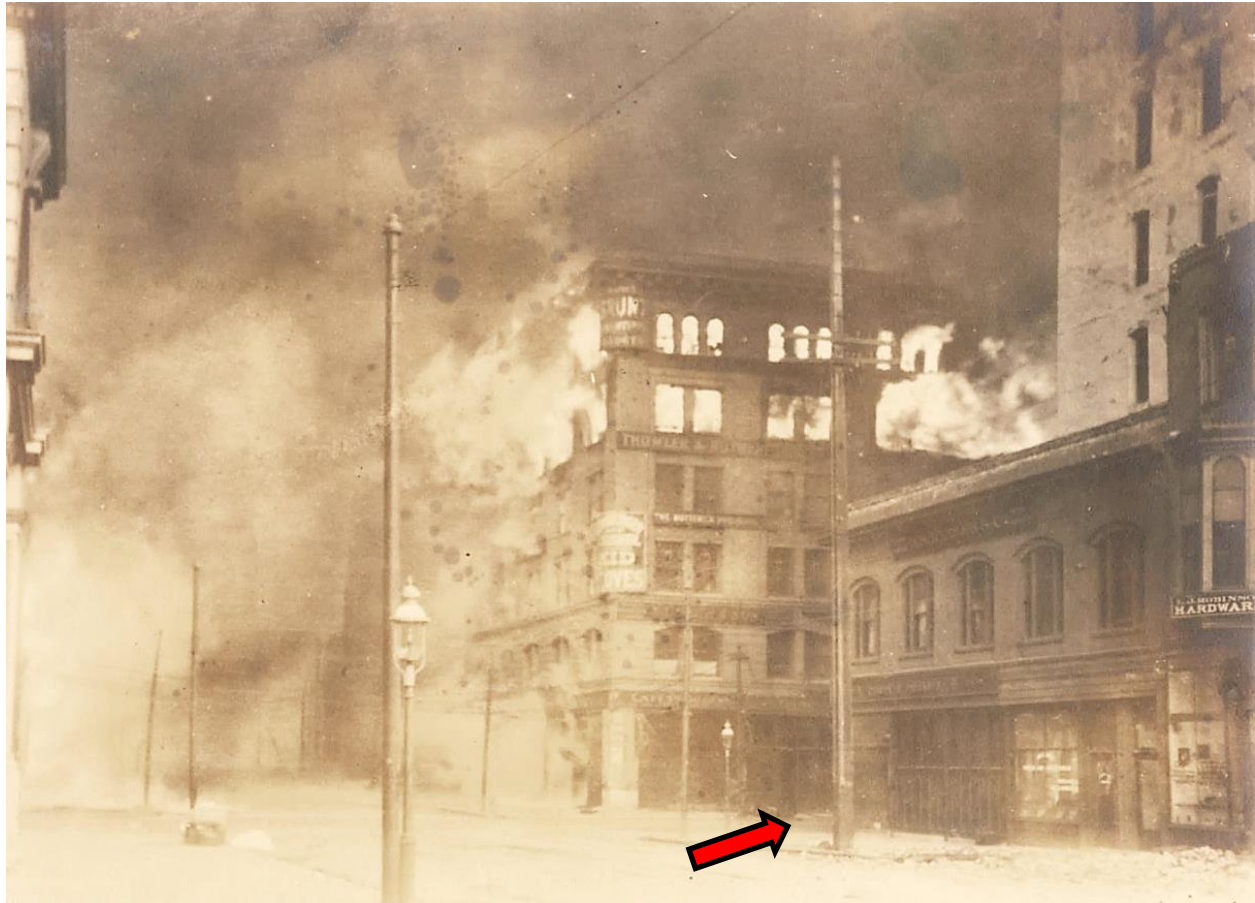
Charles Corey visited his saloon at the Bourdette Building on the morning of the earthquake. He found that nothing had been broken except a small chartreuse glass. As recounted by the *San Francisco Call*:

None of the glassware on the bar fixtures fell. Huge jardinières sitting in precarious positions did not move a fraction of an inch. The whole building inside and out, was practically undamaged by the shake. The Western Union observatory clock did not stop running ... [but as the fire approached] He could see nothing but destruction coming his way. He gathered his books together and carried them to the California Market for safe deposit. He stood and watched the fire until driven away by the soldiers. He saw the awning and sign in front of his establishment burn."²⁸

²⁷ S. Albert Reed, *The San Francisco Conflagration of April, 1906, Special Report to the National Board of Fire Underwriters Committee of Twenty*, (New York, 1906), 9.

²⁸ "Burdette's Building is Intact Amid Ruins," *San Francisco Call*, June 18, 1906, 3.

The buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Bourdette Building likely burned around the same time as the Palace Hotel. A photographer was on hand to capture the destruction of 601-609 Mission Street, a six-story brick building directly across from the Bourdette Building. The ground floor included two stores and a saloon, while the top floors housed the printing and book binding works for Thumler & Rutherford. Directly to the south was a four-story building that contained an art glass workshop, while across the street at 597 Mission stood an underwear factory and warehouse.



The Bourdette Building, April 18, 1906. Arrow added by author. The building across the street housed the printing and book binding works of the firm Thumler & Rutherford. (Bancroft Library)



Detail view from the image on the previous page. This is the best photo available showing the original configuration of the Second Street storefront systems.

How the Bourdette Building survived the inferno will never be known with exact certainty. But several factors surely worked in its favor. The adjacent ten-story Atlas Building shielded it from the intense flames that destroyed the Crossley Building. Across Mission Street to the east was the six-story Wells Fargo & Co. Building, clad with fireproof granite and terra cotta. Air currents flowing between these two larger-scale buildings may also have directed some of the heat away the Bourdette Building—indeed the above image appears to show the flames flowing away from the

corner. Regardless, the fire did pass over this area. The heat in the Wells Fargo Building had been intense enough to severely damage the marble treads of its stairways.²⁹

From the South of Market, the fire crossed Market Street, merging with other fires burning near the Ferry Building and in the wholesale district. By midnight almost the entire retail district was gone. By 2:00 a.m. the St. Francis Hotel at Union Square was on fire. An hour later, the flames reached Old St. Mary's Church. Meanwhile, another fire that had started in Hayes Valley began burning into the Mission District. These and several other fires merged, and the flames would not be stopped until they reached the western borders of Van Ness Avenue and Dolores Street. When the last flames were doused on April 20, virtually everything from the Ferry Building to Mission Dolores had been destroyed.



View southeast from Russian Hill of the fire in the wholesale district. The tower of the Hall of Justice fronting Portsmouth Square is visible at center right. (California State Library)



Fire burning in Chinatown (California Historical Society)

²⁹ Grove Karl Gilbert, Richard Lewis Humphrey, et. al., *The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of April 18, 1906 and Their Effects on Structures and Structural Materials*, United States Geological Survey Bulletin No. 324, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 48.



*View northeast from Dolores Park of fires in the South of Market and Hayes Valley approaching the Mission District.
(Bancroft Library)*



*Fire at the corner of Van Ness Avenue and Vallejo Street.
(Bancroft Library)*

When the smoke finally cleared and San Franciscans could take stock, the scale of the disaster was appalling. Nearly 25,000 wooden buildings had been destroyed, along with some 3,400 brick structures.³⁰ While practically all of the new steel-framed buildings in downtown remained standing, most were gutted. Elsewhere, blocks were marked by heaps of rubble and ash. Within the burned district, a few small pockets of buildings had survived—most famously the area around what is today Jackson Square. But these areas had been saved by firefighters. Only the Bourdette building survived practically unscathed with no protection from within or without.



View north from Folsom Street near Second Street, circa May 1906.
Arrow added by author to show the Bourdette Building.
(California Historical Society)

Owner John W. Bourdette first visited his building four days after the fire. He wasn't even aware it was standing. The *San Francisco Call* printed his account two months after the fire—although the paper incorrectly spelled his name as Burdette.

I walked in from Baden on the first morning of the fire, and then had to skirt the entire water front and come down Kearny street to get near my offices in The Call building. I saw The Call building burn, watched the flames finally seize the Palace, and then hung around while they made their way up Market street. I knew that my little building at Second and Mission streets had gone up hours before and I did not attempt to get near it.

³⁰ Charles J. O'Connor, Francis H. McLean, et. al., Russell Sage Foundation, *San Francisco Relief Survey: The Organization and Methods of Relief Used after the Earthquake and Fire of April 18, 1906*, (New York: Survey Associates, Inc.: 1913), 4.

Four days later I again walked in to San Francisco and skirted the water front to see if the foundations of my building were saved. I intended to rebuild at once. When I reached Howard street, I saw that the walls were still standing. "That's funny," I thought. A minute later and I could see the glass unbroken in the windows.

"Funny how the building could be gutted and the glass remain perfect," came to my mind, for I never once thought the building could be unharmed in the midst of the havoc about it.

Then I realized for the first time that my little building had escaped unhurt from the earthquake and conflagration. I saw it standing erect amidst acres of ruins. A crowd was standing in front looking at it. "He's a lucky fellow that owns that," said one. I was still too astonished to say that I was the owner and I was still dazed when I left. But it was there. I was not dreaming. My little building was there alive and well.³¹

THE SAN FRANCISCO CALL, MONDAY, JUNE 18, 1906.

BURDETTE'S BUILDING IS INTACT AMID RUINS

Structure in Heart of District Where Fire Burned Fiercest, and Contents, Have Marvelous Escape.



BOARD OF MANAGERS OF THE NAPA ASYLUM LETS BIG CONTRACTS

Merchants of San Francisco

CURIOUS SURVIVOR SOUTH OF MARKET ST.

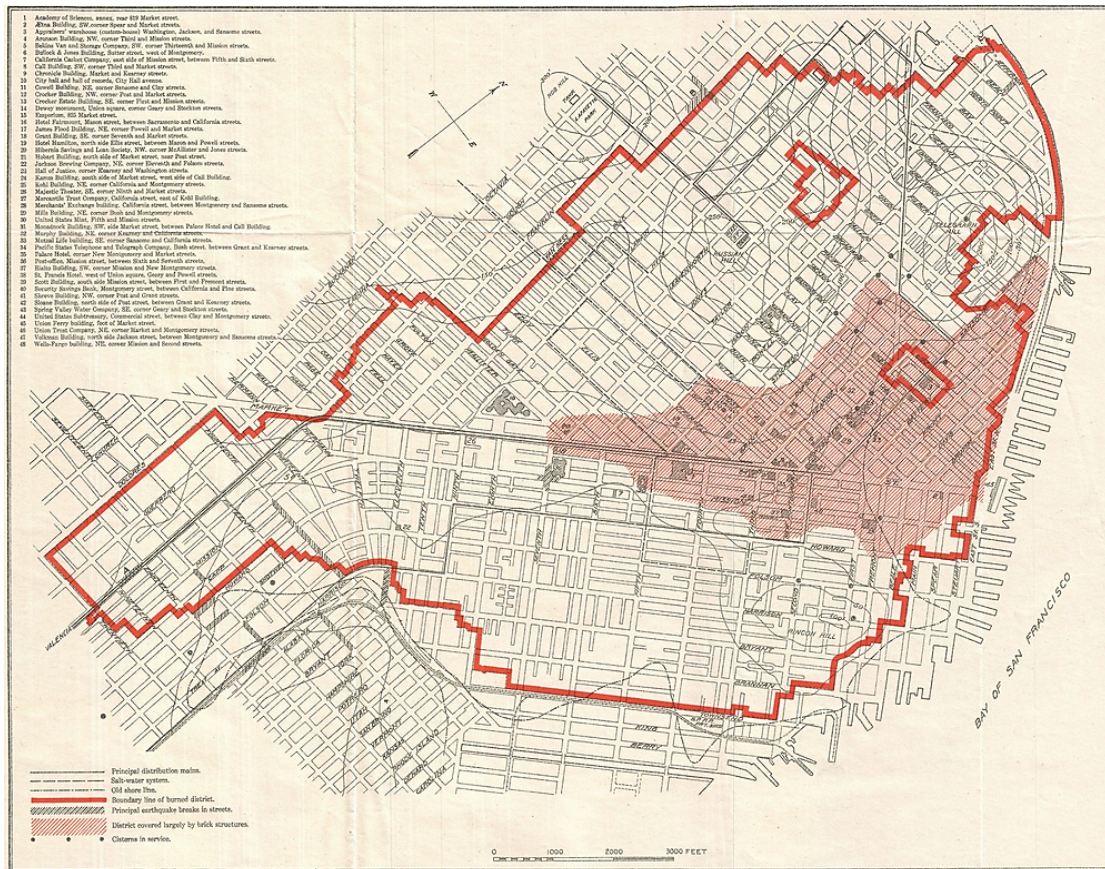
THREE-STORY STRUCTURE AT SECOND AND MISSION THAT PASSED SAFELY THROUGH QUAKE AND FIRE.

One of the few buildings that es-

LEARNS THE FACTS ABOUT RAMESES II IN DARKEST EGYPT

Chicago Explorer Comes Back

³¹ "Burdette's Building is Intact Amid Ruins," *San Francisco Call*, June 18, 1906, 3.



MAP OF SAN FRANCISCO SHOWING BURNED DISTRICT; ACCOMPANYING REPORT OF RICHARD L. HUMPHREY.
 1907
 Map of San Francisco Showing Burned District, accompanying Report of Richard L. Humphrey.
 (U.S. Geological Survey)



View of the South of Market from Seventh and Mission streets.
 (Huntington Library)



*View east along California Street toward Nob Hill. The frames of burned cable cars are at center.
(Bancroft Library)*



*View from Nob Hill toward Chinatown, the Wholesale District and Telegraph Hill
(Bancroft Library)*

The Bourdette Building was photographed several times in the weeks and months following the disaster. It was a curiosity, not least of which because it was part of a pair of fire survivors. The adjacent Atlas Building had come through both earthquake and fire with only moderate damage—although the shaking caused X-shaped cracks on the east side of the building which remain visible today. The Atlas Building was profiled in *The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire*, a 270-page illustrated book written by Abraham Lincoln Artman Himmelwright and published in 1906 by the Roebling Construction Company. This work discusses the effect of the earthquake and fire on dozens of structures, focusing on how they were constructed and what fireproofing methods they employed. The assessment of the Atlas Building included the following observations.

There was comparatively little fire in this building. The west wall is of brick without openings. The east wall has openings above a two-story building which escaped the fire. The flames from adjoining buildings entered the Atlas Building through the windows on the north side and consumed all the combustible contents in the upper stories. The lower stories and elevator halls are practically undamaged, except by plaster cracks and by smoke. The fire-proof floors in the portions of the building that burned are in good condition. The partitions also stood, but are bulged out of plumb in some cases. The steel frame is uninjured.³²



The Atlas and Bourdette buildings, May 15, 1906. Visible at left is the brick shell of the Palace Hotel and the dome of the Claus Spreckels Call Building. (Turnbull & Miller photo for the California Promotion Committee, California Historical Society collections)

³² Abraham Lincoln Artman Himmelwright, *The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire*, (New York: Roebling Construction Company, 1906), 124

Almost inexplicably, the description of the “two-story building which escaped the fire” is the only time the Roebeling book refers to the Bourdette Building. Similar accountings of the effects of the fire are likewise silent. Among the only authors to offer an opinion about what happened were Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts, who wrote in 1906 that the Atlas building had been “surrounded by buildings that were burned fiercely The escape of the ordinary two-story brick building adjoining it at the corner of Second street, indicates that the fate of both was largely due to a freak of the fire, or some fortunate shifting of the flame currents.”³³

The Atlas and Bourdette buildings were photographed in May 1906, only a few weeks after the disaster. An enlargement of this image—along with that shown on page 28—provides a fair amount of detail about the Bourdette Building’s original storefronts. The Mission Street facade was open to the sidewalk, divided into two bays crowned with glass transoms. The east facade facing Second Street included a wood paneled wall topped with leaded glass windows with a shield motif at the saloon. An additional storefront toward Market Street housed a restaurant and featured a wood-frame storefront display system.

A month after the fire the front of the building carried an advertising banner for “Corrugated Concrete Piles, while another banner attached to a street post advertised Corey & Phillips’ saloon and the availability of cigars and tobacco. Another banner near the northeast corner advertised the restaurant.



Detail from Turnbull & Miller photo's for the California Promotion Committee, May 1906.

³³ Frank W. Aitken and Edward Hilton, *A History of the Earthquake and Fire in San Francisco*, (San Francisco: The Edward Hilton Co., 1906), 236.

REBUILDING THE CITY

As rebuilding commenced after the earthquake and fire, the neighborhood around the Bourdette Building recovered as fast as any in the city. One reason for the rapid pace of rebuilding was that this area was already included in the fire limits. Thus, there was a degree of certainty in terms of what sorts of materials and construction methods would be mandated for reconstruction. Downtown property owners were also more likely to receive favorable insurance settlements. The pace of recovery was astonishing. By the end of 1907 many of the streets in the vicinity of the Bourdette Building were almost entirely reconstructed. Within three years Downtown San Francisco had largely been rebuilt.



"6 Months After." Circa October 1906 view of the Bourdette Building and Atlas Building. (California State Library)

In October 1906 the Atlas building was photographed as repairs were underway. Changes at the Bourdette Building are also apparent in the photo. At this time a large awning advertising “El Belmont” Havana cigars had been placed above the Mission Street storefront. Other banners may be seen along the Second Street facade, but their text is not legible. The upper floor of the building features a “To Lease” sign, indicating that A. S. Keeler’s hardware operations had relocated. Of interest, the photo also appears to show a barber pole on the Second Street facade.



Enlargement of a circa October 1906 view of the Bourdette Building. Note the awning advertising El Belmont cigars – “The New Kind.” Visible on the scrim of the awning is the name of George Borchardt, a cigar dealer, as well as Corey & Phillips (Bancroft Library)

In addition to the Atlas Building, rehabilitation work also commenced at three other steel-framed buildings in the immediate vicinity. Some, such as the Atlas, were restored relatively quickly. Others took longer—especially if they sustained structural damage. The Wells Fargo Building (1898) at the northeast corner of Second and Mission came through the fire with no damage to its structural steel. Overall it required relatively minor exterior repair and the restoration of the interior finishes. By contrast, the Rialto Building (1901) at the northwest corner of New Montgomery and Mission streets, was badly racked by the failure of several columns and six bays at the northwest corner entirely collapsed, requiring extensive repairs. Similarly, the Aronson Building (1903) at the northwest corner of Third and Mission streets had several structural columns buckle during the fire and much of the interior needed to be rebuilt. On all of these buildings the terra cotta cladding had performed admirably, although other materials such as Colusa sandstone used on the Aronson Building had spalled badly.



1906 Fire survivors. (Left) the Wells Fargo Building at the northeast corner of Second and Mission streets, the Aronson Building and the Rialto Building (Reproduced from *The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire*)

The Bourdette Building After 1906

For as long as he lived—and he lived until 1944, John W. Bourdette never sold his building at Second and Mission. As a successful business man with an identity steeped in popular images of strength and vitality, he almost certainly identified with the little building’s survival in the face of disaster. It must have also seemed a lucky token.

In the years following the 1906 fire, the building accommodated a succession of tenants, although the uses on the ground floor remained remarkably consistent. A cigar/tobacco store operated from the 600 Mission Street address from 1906 until at least 2000. For several years after the fire, George Borcharchts’s cigar store continued to share space with the saloon. Other durable occupants include Samuel Freidman Cigars (circa 1917-1933), Whiddon’s Cigars (circa 1943-1953), and Commins & Whiddon Cigars (circa 1954-1967).

The restaurant also continued to operate. In 1910, the *San Francisco Call* mentioned that “Charles Corey’s place” at Second and Mission streets had been visited by representatives of the Culinary Crafts Board to unionize the bartenders, cooks and cooks’ helpers.³⁴ Corey & Phillips continued to be listed at 600 Mission Street until 1913, when ownership appears to have passed to George Corey, presumably Charles Corey’s brother. In 1918, Berger and Kaindle, liquor merchants, are listed at 600 Mission Street. Circa 1919, however, it appears that the saloon was closed to accommodate an expansion of the restaurant. A building permit application from that year details the installation of an ornamental hood over the kitchen equipment, as well as the installation of partitions in the basement for men’s and women’s lavatories.

Tenants on the upper floor, addressed as 90 Second Street, appear to have been more transient. No later than 1909 the upper floor was home to the San Francisco Art Leather Company. The firm was founded in 1895 and manufactured belts, purses, card cases and advertising novelties. A sign for the company is visible in a photograph of the Bourdette Building taken in March 1911 (see following page).

The building’s storefronts were reconfigured sometime prior to 1929. Research did not reveal any building permit application for the alterations, although they may have been done in association with the 1919 work on the restaurant. A photo from 1929 shows that a continuous transom had been installed, as well as marble bulkheads. The Mission Street facade had also been divided into two storefronts: 600 and 600½ Mission Street. The latter was occupied by a barber as evidenced by a barber pole. Comparison with the photo shown on page 28 indicate that the Second Street storefront had been reconfigured with a new entry flanked by display windows. From at least 1924 to

³⁴ “Strike Board is Victor at Corey’s,” *San Francisco Call*, September 1, 1910. See also August 27 and August 30 editions.

1938 this storefront was occupied by a restaurant owned by Henry Cramer. The entrance to 90 Second Street remained at the northeast corner as it is today.



*View north on Mission at Second Street, March 7, 1911.
(SFMTA Photo Archive)*



*The Bourdette Building in March 1929
(U. C. Berkeley Bancroft Library)*



*Detail view of the Bourdette Building in March 1929
(U. C. Berkeley Bancroft Library)*

The Bourdette Building as it Appears Today

Much of the present appearance of the storefronts was the result of a 1949 alteration. Following John W. Bourdette's death, Arthur Kanzee, Jr. (1904-1961) became the new building owner. In 1949, a building permit application was filed to "Face building with vitrolite - 3' band above windows and vitrolite below windows." Vitrolite, a.k.a. vitreous marble, was a trade name that became generic for pigmented structural glass. Doubtless its installation was an attempt to modernize the building in accordance with contemporary tastes. The aluminum frame storefront systems also likely date from this era.

The use of bold, orange-tinted glass was designed to catch the eye, and may have been installed for a new restaurant. City directories show that the Canopy Fountain Lunch, owned by Julie and Frank Orsi, occupied 92 Second Street from at least 1953 to 1968. During the late 1960s the manager of the Canopy Fountain Lunch is shown as Henry Yee, who was likely related to Moon Park Yee who acquired the building in 1962.³⁵ In 1973 Henry Yee filed a permit application to remodel the restaurant with a new seating area and cooking area. Applications were also filed to install a double-faced quarter-inch plastic sign for Henry's Cafeteria, as well as a stationary canvas awning. The property remains in the Yee family today. A listing of other known occupants and alterations is presented below.

Photographs from the 1970s show that the upper floor of the building then featured an elaborate system of awnings advertising the Harry J. Shulman Company, office supplies.

³⁵ Charles Hall Page & Associates, Supplementary data form for 90-96 2nd Street, 1977.



*Circa 1977 views
(Charles Hall Page & Associates)*



*Interior of Henry's Cafeteria, circa 2010.
(Yelp.com)*

OCCUPANT AND ALTERATION HISTORY

San Francisco city directories provide detailed information about the occupants and uses of the building, while building permits identify alterations made in conformity to changing uses.

Occupants

600 Mission Street

1904-1912:	Corey & Phillips saloon
1906-1910:	George Borchardt cigars
1913-1917	George H. Corey and Thomas A. Corey saloon
1917-1933:	Samuel Freidman, cigars
1918:	Berger and Kaindle, liquor merchants
1939-1941:	Emerson Ward, cigars
1940:	Thomas Pengola, shoeshine
1943-1953:	J. I. Whiddon, cigars
1954-1961:	Commins & Whiddon, cigars
1962-1967:	James G. Commins, cigars
1968-1976:	George J. Commins, cigars and tobacco
1978-circa 2010:	Henry's Smoke Shop (Henry Yee)

600 ½ Mission Street

1940-1948	Dominic DiFiore, barber
1953-1967:	Ideal Barber Shop
1968-1971:	The Top Hat barber shop
1974-1980:	Original Palace barber Shop

90 Second Street

1904-1905:	McCosker & Alford, fabric importers
1906:	A. S. Keeler & Company, electrical and hardware agents
1910:	San Francisco Art Leather Company
1914:	Connor-Baker Specialty Company, patent models
1920:	Wells Morris Manufacturing Company
1923:	John R. Atchison, manufacturer's agent
1929:	M. H. E. Beckley, school maps, globes and charts
	Howard Hill hospital equipment
1945:	Bacon & Lawrence Advertising Agency
1948-1961:	Mahlon T. Dolman Letter Shop
1962:	Litho Art
1964-1970:	Karl Riek, commercial photographer
1970s:	Harry J. Shulman Company, office furniture

92 Second Street

1920-23:	Canaris & Deyl, stationers
1924-1938:	Elmer Cramer, restaurant
1939:	Elmer Cramer, liquors
1953-68:	Canopy Fountain Lunch
1973-circa 2010:	Henry's Cafeteria

History of Alterations

The following is a list of known building permit applications for the Bourdette Building. The original building permit was destroyed in 1906.

- 1919: Erect partitions in the basement for men's and women's lavatories. Install ornamental hood over kitchen equipment on main floor.
- 1935: Install a horizontal electric sign ten feet above the sidewalk.
- 1945: Install a neon sign.
- 1949: Reface the first floor of the building with Vitrolite panels in a three-foot band above and below windows.
- 1973: Remodel first floor of existing building to accommodate a new restaurant, including a seating area and cooking area. Install a double-faced quarter-inch plastic sign for Henry's Cafeteria. Install a stationary canvas awning with pipe frame.
- 1981: Reinforce parapet
- 1982: Remove three partitions, two counters and part of the floor, as well as a heating unit at 90 Second Street. Add track lighting. Install a three-foot by five-foot entry canopy.
- 1991: Replace tar and gravel roof.
- 1994: Replace glass block at sidewalk with a structural slab.
- 1995: Seismic strengthening at first and second floor. Install two steel frames south of existing walls at roof & second floor.
- 2001: Re-roofing
- 2014: Re-roofing

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:

Association with Significant Events

The Bourdette Building is significant for its direct and intimate association with the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. As stated in the introduction, the Bourdette Building is a unique and near-miraculous survivor of the disaster. There are, of course, many other tangible links to the events of 1906 that dot the city today. Some are quite famed, such as the “golden fire hydrant” at 20th and Church streets which provided water that helped to stop the fire in the Mission District. Also famous is the Hotaling whiskey warehouse at Jackson Square, and the Audiffred Building southeast of the Ferry Building—both San Francisco landmarks.

Many notable buildings damaged by the fire were also rehabilitated, including the Call Building, the Flood Building, the Shreve Building and the Fairmont and St. Francis hotels. Poignantly, dozens of earthquake refugee cottages built to house citizens after the disaster were relocated from the refugee camps and are today scattered throughout San Francisco’s neighborhoods.

None of these structures, however, share the experience of the Bourdette Building as having passed through the flames with no one inside or outside fighting to save it. Today the building is a direct and tangible link to a precise moment in time, a touchstone of moment when old San Francisco was destroyed and a new city was rebuilt. Much like the emblem on the city’s seal, the building is a phoenix that appeared from the ashes.

Significant Architecture

The Bourdette Building is also significant as an example of a type, period and method of construction. There are no other comparable commercial buildings in downtown San Francisco that survived the disaster. Thus, its “fireproof” brick masonry construction and economical design mark it as a highly significant example of small-scale commercial construction in the downtown area prior to 1906. It is also architecturally significant as the work of master architects, Bliss & Faville, one of the most respected and prolific architectural firms in early 20th century San Francisco.

Period of Significance

Although it was constructed in 1904, the Bourdette Building is significant for its association with a single event: the Earthquake and Fire of April 18, 1906. Its period of significance is therefore assigned as 1906.

Integrity

The seven aspects of integrity are location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association in relation to the period of significance established above. The building retains integrity of association, as it has

remained in continual use as a commercial building since its construction. Despite alterations to its storefronts, which are the most common features to be altered in a historic building, the subject property retains outstanding integrity on its upper floor, including the survival of its original wood windows and brick corbelling. Overall, the building retains more than sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling to convey its significance with the events of 1906.

ARTICLE 10 REQUIREMENTS SECTION 1004 (b)

Boundaries of the Landmark Site

Encompassing all of and limited to Lot 12 in Assessor's Block 3707 on the northwest corner of Second and Mission streets.

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:

- All exterior elevations, architectural ornament and rooflines
- Brick cladding
- Corbelled brick stringcourses separating the first and second stories
- Recessed double-arch window openings on the second floor fenestrated with a tripartite window system consisting of a central double-hung (one-over-one) wood window flanked by two smaller (one-over-one) wood windows. The tops of window frames are arched in alignment with the window opening and the bases rest on a brick sill.
- Brick stringcourse above the windows
- Roofline characterized by a brick dentils, a cornice, and a flat parapet
- Entry at the northeast corner (90 Second Street) featuring a wood door and wood frame transom.
- Entry at the southeast corner (600 Mission Street) featuring a mosaic tile threshold and corner pole (originally rounded, currently squared)
- Recessed entries and storefront bulkheads
- Transom area facing Mission Street, currently obscured by signage

For the purposes of any future alterations to the ground floor, those features that are considered character-defining include the materials, proportions and configuration of entries which existed on April 18, 1906 as evidenced by historic photographs in this case report taken prior to, during, and shortly after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire.

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PROPERTY INFORMATION

Historic Name: Glidden Building / Bourdette Building

Popular Name: Bourdette Building

Address: 90 – 92 Second Street, 600 – 600 ½ Mission Street

Block and Lot: 3707/012

Owner: Laura Yee Marital Trust and Moon Park Yee Residuary Trust

Original Use: Commercial building

Current Use: Commercial building

Zoning: C-3-0 (SD) Downtown-Office Special Development

Gloria Yee
804 STANYAN STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94117

October 19, 2015

DELIVERED BY: EMAIL, USPS

Jonathan Lammers
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RE: 2015-005887-DES: 90-92 Second Street – Northwest corner of Second and Mission streets, Lot 012 in Assessor's Block 3707, Landmark Designation

Dear Mr. Lammers,

My name is Gloria Yee, I am the Trustee of the Laura Yee Marital Trust and the Moon Park Yee Residuary Trust, owners of the property located at 90-92 Second Street, San Francisco, CA.

I am aware that the Historic Preservation Commission will be meeting to consider recommending Landmark Designation of 90-92 Second Street at their upcoming hearing on November 04, 2015.

Please be informed that the owners of the property strongly oppose having this designation ascribed to the property. It is our firm belief that the overall value of the investment will be diminished by having this Historic Landmark designation. To begin with, our investment (the Property) will be dramatically impacted through the curtailment of property rights in the form of challenging limitations on demolition and restrictions on how the structure may be altered physically. These undesirable restrictions would add a great deal of extra cost, expense and time to any remodeling or renovation project, which could discourage tenants from leasing or making improvements.

For these reasons, I hereby state my committed objection to having the Historical Landmark designation placed on the property.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gloria Yee, Trustee". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Gloria Yee, Trustee