

Draft

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



R. (Rube) L. Goldberg Building
182–198 Gough Street

Draft Landmark Designation Report
November 5, 2014

Landmark No. XXX

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Cover: R.L. Goldberg Building façade photographed by Alexandra Baer

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.

The R. (Rube) L. Goldberg Building

182 - 198 Gough Street

Built: 1911
Architect: Bernard J. Joseph

OVERVIEW

The R. L. Goldberg Building is located at 182 – 198 Gough Street at the southeast corner of the intersection with Oak Street. There are three commercial spaces on the first floor, two residential on the second floor in this two story building with basement. The building’s association with the Pulitzer-Prize winning cartoonist, sculptor, and author Rueben (Rube) Garrett Lucius Goldberg spanned 59 of his 87 year life. 194 Gough Street served as his San Francisco residence and studio while 186 Gough Street was designed for and occupied by his father, Max Goldberg, a former police commissioner and fire marshal of the City of San Francisco. Rube Goldberg retained the property until his death in 1970. (Joseph B. Mendelson, Attorney for Petitioner 1972)

The R. L. GOLDBERG BUILDING., as it is labelled in the cornice, is also an exceptional example of an Edwardian era building with Classical influences partially derived from the Beaux Arts style, and the work of master architect, Bernard J. Joseph. Built in 1911, the five-unit building, with two residences upstairs and three commercial spaces at street level, is remarkable for both sophistication of design and for historical integrity. Although the period of significance spans from 1911 to 1970, the years of Rube Goldberg’s ownership and use, the building conveys significant architectural qualities and historical integrity in both the exterior and interior from the period of construction due to the lack of alterations to the building after construction.

Construction History

The R.L. Goldberg Building occupies the entirety of a corner lot at the eastern edge of the Hayes Valley neighborhood. It has changed very little since its construction in 1911.

In *The San Francisco Call* on November 19, 1910 an entry stating “Johanna F. Lutz to Reuben L. Goldberg, lot at the SE corner of Oak and Gough streets, S 60byE55 [sic], \$10”¹ records the transaction during a time when vacant land was still relatively plentiful. The transfer of the vacant lot just three blocks from the Civic Center campus suggests that, like much of the central City in 1910, the future site of the R. L. Goldberg Building was amongst the numerous vacant lots that abounded in the aftermath of the 1906 Earthquake and Fire.

Construction of the commercial-residential building was well underway by the summer of 1911. Under the “Building Contracts” column in *The San Francisco Call*, August 16, 1911, the stucco building’s finished masonry work is recorded:

R. L. Goldberg with Smyth Bros.. – Exterior and interior plaster and cementing, etc., for a two story and basement class C building at SE corner of Gough and Oak streets, S 60 by E 55; \$1,550.²

The *Building and Industrial News* describes the building and work in greater detail:

(3127) Gough and Oak SE S 60 x E 55. Exterior and interior plaster and cementing, etc., for a two-story and basement class C bldg.

Architect Bernard J. Joseph, 1st Natl. Bank Bldg., S.F.

Contractor Smyth Bros, Monadnock Bldg., S.F.

Filed Aug. 15, '11. Dated, Aug. 8, '11.

Interior lathed and plastered 550

Completed and accepted 600

Usual 35 days after 400

Cost \$1,550

Bond, \$775. Sureties, Fidelity and Deposit Co., of Maryland. Forfeit, none. Limit, 30 days. Plans and specifications filed.³

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1913 shows the R. L. Goldberg Building in plan. The three first story commercial spaces are described as a saloon at the corner unit, 198 Gough, and the other two units as stores. The building is confirmed as “STEEL FRAME” and the three light wells are shown with “TIN CL.,” to reflect the tin cladding that tops the copings. The two neighboring buildings are both shown as multi-family residential buildings with no commercial spaces.⁴

The San Francisco Department of Building Inspection shows a history of minor alterations to the building since its construction in 1911 and no history of alterations requiring permits prior to 1958. Examples include applications in 1958 to install an exterior-hung sign for a coin-operated laundry in 1958, an alteration permit to repair damage from an automobile collision in 1977, and re-roofing in 1996. The R. L.

¹ “Real Estate Transactions,” *The San Francisco Call*, November 19, 1910, 11.

² “Building Contracts,” *The San Francisco Call*, August 16, 1911, California Digital Newspaper Collection, San Francisco Call, Volume 110, Number 77.

³ *Building and Industrial News*, August 22, 1911, 11.

⁴ Volume 4, Sheet 330. “San Francisco, California.” 1913. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Goldberg Building is remarkable for its lack of alterations since construction in 1911, a state of preservation particularly rare in commercial-residential buildings.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Exterior

Gough Street/West Façade The R. L. Goldberg Building includes two residential units upstairs and three commercial units downstairs. The Gough Street façade includes primary entrances to the three commercial spaces and two upstairs dwelling units.



Figure 1 "R. L. Goldberg Building" is incised with Roman italic letters in the cornice of the west façade.

Steel frame building technology allowed Edwardian and Beaux Arts architecture to span greater wall openings for larger windows and to more readily support larger, more open rooms within. The R. L. Goldberg Building is an excellent example of this building technology and these design features. The three commercial spaces, for example, are each single structural units on the first floor without the interior structural walls required to span the generous retail and service venues. The upstairs residential rooms are also large with paired double-hung windows or tripartite, double-hung, chamfered bay windows, allowing natural light to flood the interior between broadly spaced structural bays. The R. L. Goldberg Building is made of three structural bays, each approximately 20 feet wide and 55 feet deep. A light well descends to the roof of the central commercial bay below, permitting light into the central retail space through a skylight and lined with fenestration on the light well walls to illuminate the residential units. Two smaller light wells increase light to the southernmost commercial and residential units that abut the neighboring apartment building.

The R. L. Goldberg building's exterior exhibits both the proportions and classical reserve of the Edwardian era but with a theatrical infusion of Roman classicism taken from the Beaux Arts style. Classical Revival styles were popular and widely executed in rebuilding projects following the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. The Classical Revival style emphasized proportion and ornament according to actual classical precedent in contrast to Victorian era styles. Beaux Arts examples in civic, operatic, and theater buildings, the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition, and mansions from Pacific Heights to Hillsborough testify to the style's regional popularity and association with power and status. However, the Beaux Arts stylistic elements were rarely employed, compared with more conventional Edwardian-era classical elements, particularly, on buildings of more modest scale like the R. L. Goldberg Building.



Figure 2 The Gough Street, west façade of the R. L. Goldberg Building.



Figure 3 Classical elements from the Beaux Arts palette including the measured use of moldings to create crisp cornice and panel elements create an impression of exceptional refinement and design quality to R. L. Goldberg Building's edifice.

Architect Bernard J. Joseph paired the scale and proportion of an Edwardian commercial building with the lush classicism of the Beaux Arts. Decorative brackets paired over paneled pilasters, garlands draped through elegantly curved keystones, across gradually curved window-surround lintels, and part-way down paneled window-surround styles (i.e., vertical element of a panel frame) are amongst the carefully designed and executed features. The architect successfully employed the Beaux Arts style's elaborately decorated surfaces and commitment to both classical elements and symmetry but without the imperial scale in which the style is typically exhibited. The success of the design is a testimony to the mastery of the architect and may also reflect the preferences and sophistication of Rube Goldberg as a visual artist.



Figure 4 View of the commercial facades on Gough Street, viewed to the north-northeast.

The three commercial facades of the R. L. Goldberg Building embody the emphasis on maximizing diffuse daylight and visibility from the street that wide structural bays permitted. Components of the building's commercial edifice include the bulkhead, sash, cladding materials, vestibule, and paving at the base, display windows and platforms, door with transom window, and awnings above, and transom windows with fixed and awning sash from the awnings up to the first floor ceiling level. Due to changing uses over time, commercial edifices are particularly prone to alteration. However, the R. L. Goldberg Building's commercial edifices reflect a remarkable state of preservation.



Figure 5 Black tile bulkhead with lozenge and bead narrow course as seen here at the east end of 198 Gough Street's commercial facade on Oak Street.

The bulkhead tile cladding of the R. L. Goldberg building appears to be an early 20th Century type material and may be original. Black tiles were particularly popular at the time, as found at the subject property. Below the first course of black square tiles, is a narrow tile course containing a white lozenge and bead pattern. The square black tiles are stacked four courses high for most although raised paving in some areas obscures a portion of the bottom tile course.



Figure 6 The marble threshold tread with white square mosaic vestibule floor at 194 Gough Street.

The very gradual elevation increase from south to north is reflected in the vestibule thresholds which are one step high at the south end of the façade to at grade at the north end of the Gough Street façade where the corner entrance is located. The vestibule threshold for both commercial and residential entrances on Gough Street are composed of marble tread and riser with a white mosaic tile floor.

Residential and commercial vestibule entrances are differentiated by the shape. Where residential vestibules are recessed with right-angle walls from the façade, commercial entrances broaden to the sidewalk, allowing better viewing into display cases and welcoming onlookers to enter and explore merchandise for sale.



Figure 7 The commercial facade of 182 Gough Street with the residential entrance to 186 Gough St. seen to the north (left).



Figure 8 The commercial facade of 188 Gough Street flanked by the residential entrances to 194 Gough St. (left, Rube Goldberg's residence) and 186 Gough St. (right, Max Goldberg's residence).

The raised window platform space or displace space is defined on the interior by a drop tripartite window frame with a sill in alignment with the sill of the transom window over the front door. The framing is mimicked by paneled display sidewalls and ceiling, lending the space an elegant, highly finished appearance.



Figure 9 The tripartite transom windows and wood paneling of the 188 Gough Street. This finished carpentry remains in all the display windows of the three commercial spaces.

The commercial facades of the R. L. Goldberg Building retain retractable fabric awnings. Adjustable fabric awnings allowed shopkeepers to protect goods from the damage of direct sunlight, to reduce glare within retail spaces to improve visibility of merchandise, and to reduce solar heat gain for greater comfort.



Figure 10 The commercial facade of 198 Gough St. viewed to the south.

The transom windows of the R. L. Goldberg Building's commercial facades are perhaps the most remarkably preserved historic elements. Both framing and glazing are original, Interior-operating awning sashes still function. The glazing is colorless but minimally opaque to show merchandise in true color but disperse and refract otherwise damaging sun rays to more evenly light the interiors. The transoms are optimally practical, starting from the lintel of the display windows and top of the fabric awnings up to the top of the commercial interiors' ceilings. The transom windows stretch from end to end of each commercial space and, in the case of 198 Gough Street, the corner unit, extending around the corner onto Oak Street in concert with the display window below.



Figure 11 Primary façade window with Beaux Arts decorations of garlands, shaped keystone, and curved lintel. Two sets of paired windows in this form center the second stories of both the Gough Street façade and the Oak Street elevation.

The Edwardian building possesses the style's classical influences borrowed particularly from Beaux Arts antiquarianism. Stylistic evidence on the R.L. Goldberg Building include exacting replication of classical features such as roped garlands over subtly arched windows broken by pronounced curvilinear keystones. The placement of fenestration and decorative applications are symmetrical. The revival of more exacting classical proportion and the selection of classical elements mimicked scrupulously, such as the entablatures over the residential entrances with triglyphs astride on the subject property, is a hallmark of the Edwardian-era design.



Figure 12 The entrance to the residence at 194 Gough Street where Rube Goldberg resided and worked during his stays in San Francisco.

A classicism based in Beaux Arts studies of actual Greek and Roman architecture was a rising architectural fashion in urban centers across the country and amongst those with the means to employ noted architects. In San Francisco in particular antiquarian classicism was becoming increasingly popular. Led by architects to privileged clientele and for large civic projects, architects Arthur Brown, Willis Polk, Gustave Lansburgh, Bernard J. Joseph, and the early work of Bernard Maybeck reflect the Beaux Arts-influenced classicism trend in a city that was at once rebuilding from disaster and preparing to host the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Joseph, though less well documented than the others, designed and co-designed buildings such as the Emporium, Orpheum Theater, and the Gunst Building (now demolished). The 28 year old Rube Goldberg commissioned a building of particular sophistication relative to the neighborhood and to mixed-use buildings of similar scale in San Francisco.



Figure 13 The living room designed for Max Goldberg was illuminated by this bay window on the southern end of the west facade at 186 Gough Street. The paneled pilasters on either side of the fenestration topped with garlands and paired brackets create the illusion of a projecting wing and emphasize the symmetry of the façade because the feature is repeated at the north end of the façade. Note the relieved cornice molding that contributes to the illusion of the end feature's projection.

At the time of the R.L. Goldberg Building's construction the Civic Center remained largely a vast open space with many civic operations still run out of the still-standing east wing of the otherwise collapsed City Hall. Arthur Brown's Beaux Arts design was still an unrealized plan in 1911 and would not be completed until 1915.

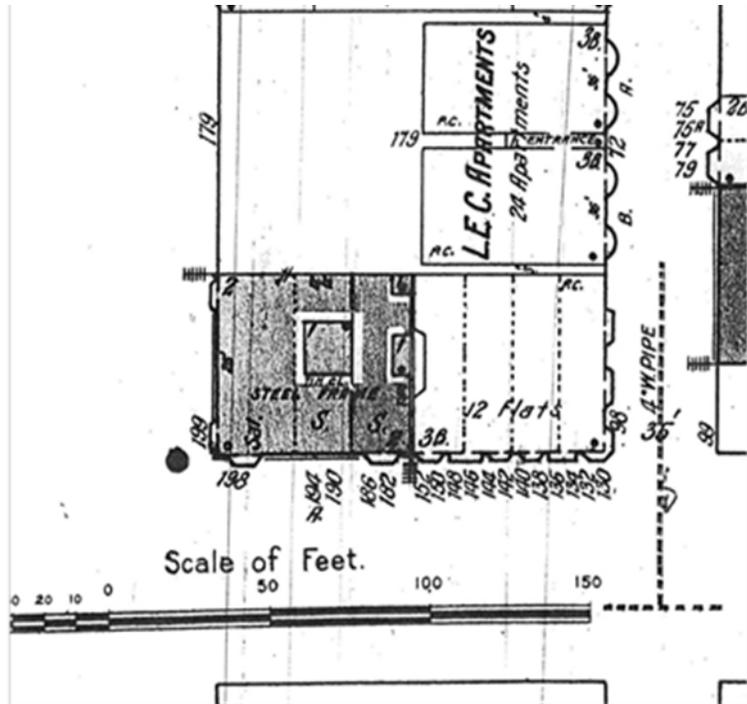


Figure 14 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Volume 4, Sheet 330, 1913.

The rectangular-plan building, clad in stucco, is capped by a flat roof. The foundation is not visible from the street. The primary façade faces west toward Gough Street and is 4 bays wide. A secondary elevation faces north toward Oak Street. The first story features a restored storefront in the left bay with a recessed, corner entrance and metal-frame, fixed windows set high on the wall. The center bay features a storefront with recessed center entry and wood-frame plate glass windows. The center storefront is flanked by recessed entrances with bracketed cornice caps leading to the residential units on the second floor. The residential unit entrances have glazed wood doors. The right bay contains a storefront nearly identical to the center storefront. A continuous divided wood transom glazed with ribbed glass set in a hopper or awning configuration runs along the top of the first story.



Figure 15 Steel frame visible at the utility area at the east end of the building. Note the I-beam and brick-veneer pilaster containing the steel column at the intersection of the northern and central structural bays. View of the east wall, photographed to the northeast.

The second story is clad in stucco scored to look like ashlar masonry. The story features chamfered bay windows in the end bays with double-hung wood sash, spandrel panels, pilaster surrounds, and cornices. Both windows are framed by paneled pilasters with keystones at the capitals and roped garland at the top of the paneling. The center bays contain paired, double-hung, wood sash, keystones, and garlands outlining the top of the surround. The façade terminates in a projecting cornice with paired brackets framing the end bays. A sign centered on the frieze reads "R. L. Goldberg Building." A parapet wall rises above the cornice line and has shaped parapets with end piers above the end bays.

The Oak Street elevation is 3 bays wide. The first story features an asymmetrically divided fixed wood sash with keystone set high on the wall in the first bay. The second bay features a secondary entrance with glazed wood door and keystone in the second bay under an identical window. The third bay features another secondary entrance with a flat lintel and keystone and flush wood door with a transom. The entrance is flanked by small, square, fixed wood sash. The upper story features semi-hexagonal bay windows in the first and third bay with identical sash and detailing to those on the façade. The center bay has an arched window opening with bracket keystone fitted with double-hung, wood sash. The elevation terminates in a shaped parapet wall with peaked sections with end piers over the bay windows. A single-story two-car garage with flat roof and dentil cornice is attached to the rear (east) elevation.

North Elevation

The north, Oak Street elevation is also a refined Edwardian edifice but clearly presents a secondary face to the street. Above the corner entrance to the commercial space the commercial transom windows wrap around from the façade to Oak Street for about 20 feet. The ground floor has private utilitarian entrances to the northernmost commercial space and, near the northeast corner, secondary access to both residences.



Figure 16 View of the corner entrance of the 198 Gough Street.

The fenestration of the commercial level, like the residential above, maximizes the infusion of natural light with tall transom windows running in a continuous band across the full width of the façade. The preserved feature gives light to the two residential street entrance stairwells as well as the commercial spaces. Original transom glazing is opaque, allowing the full spectrum of light to enter without allowing direct, more harmful and glaring sun rays to create shadows and damage merchandise and upholsteries. Large panes form the rest of the commercial façade with the exception of a glazed ceramic tiled bulkhead rising an average of one and one half feet from the pavement to the sill of the display windows. The corner post is boxed in finished wood and likely houses a structural steel corner post.

Rectangular concrete patchwork on the sidewalk just outside 198 Gough Street suggest a coal storage room that extends from the basement to approximately five feet under the sidewalk. Its existence and extent could not be confirmed.



Figure 17 Original marble step and mosaic tile landing at 190 Gough Street. All five thresholds on the façade retain their original marble and tile finishes. Note the black tile with weather course that runs the length of the façade.

Oak Street/North Elevation

Decorative trim on the Oak Street elevation on this corner building's second story retains the same fenestration sequence and sophisticated decorative elements as on the façade. On the secondary elevation's first story a smooth stucco wall scored to appear like finely finished stone is punctuated by high square windows and service doors carefully placed at in relation to one another and second story fenestration.

The western three quarters of the first floor elevations is occupied by the commercial unit at 198 Gough Street. The commercial façade wraps around with all the elements of the primary façade including bulkhead, display windows, retractable fabric awning, and transom windows. In the middle of the first story wall, two pairs of square windows each accented with pronounced keystones align perfectly with the two pairs of windows on the second floor. Beneath the eastern pair, is a service entrance to the commercial space.

Beneath the eastern bay window are two square windows astride another service entrance with a transom window and keystone above. These first floor elements are aligned with the bay window above and provide access and light to a service entrance for both residential units above. Within is an unfinished room for waste with a utilitarian stairway leading up to workrooms off the kitchens of the two residences.

Alterations to the Oak Street elevation are minor and reversible. They include the removal of glazing only and replacement by vent louvers from two windows above the commercial unit's service door and painted-over transom windows above the unit's corner entry.



Figure 18 View of the Oak Street elevation, the entirety of the second floor that is visible here was the residence of Rube Goldberg. The north-facing elevation is replete with windows and northern light, a perfect work environment for the visual artist.



Figure 19 Pair of square raised windows with keystone and incised stucco in imitation of stone set high on the Oak Street elevation's first story.



Figure 20 Service door at the east end of the Oak Street elevation. The door is topped by a keystone and flanked by high-set square windows with prominent sills.



Figure 21 View from Oak Street of the east elevation (left) and the Oak Street, north elevation (right), the garages are a part of the neighboring property.



Figure 22 The east elevation of the R. L. Goldberg Building. The garages in the foreground belong to the neighboring property.

Roof and Light Wells

The roof is pierced by three light wells, each generously lined with windows and the central with a skylight.



Figure 23 The large, central light well, note pressed tin cladding on the interior is impressed as faux bricks.

Interior

The interior of the R. L. Goldberg Building encompasses approximately 3,300 square feet, not including the basement. On the second floor are two residential apartments, on the first floor three commercial units and a utility room and secondary exit at the northeast corner, and below grade are three basements, each connected to the commercial space above.

Residential Level, Second Story

Of the two residences on the second floor, the larger unit is 194 Gough Street and was the residence of Rube Goldberg. Natural light floods the residential units. Natural light appears to have been a priority for the artist. It is not known which room was used by Rube Goldberg as his studio but large windows along the north elevation likely provided ample defuse light.



Figure 24 The architectural features in Rube Goldberg's living room have not been altered. This bay window facing Gough Street is one of two in the living room. The other bay window faces Oak Street.



Figure 25 Rube Goldberg's living room with the bay window facing Oak Street and original fireplace mantel. The gas heater insert appears to be from the third quarter of the 20th Century but appears to be a reversible addition that did not damage the original materials or workmanship of the fireplace. Note original wallpaper on the east wall of the living room.

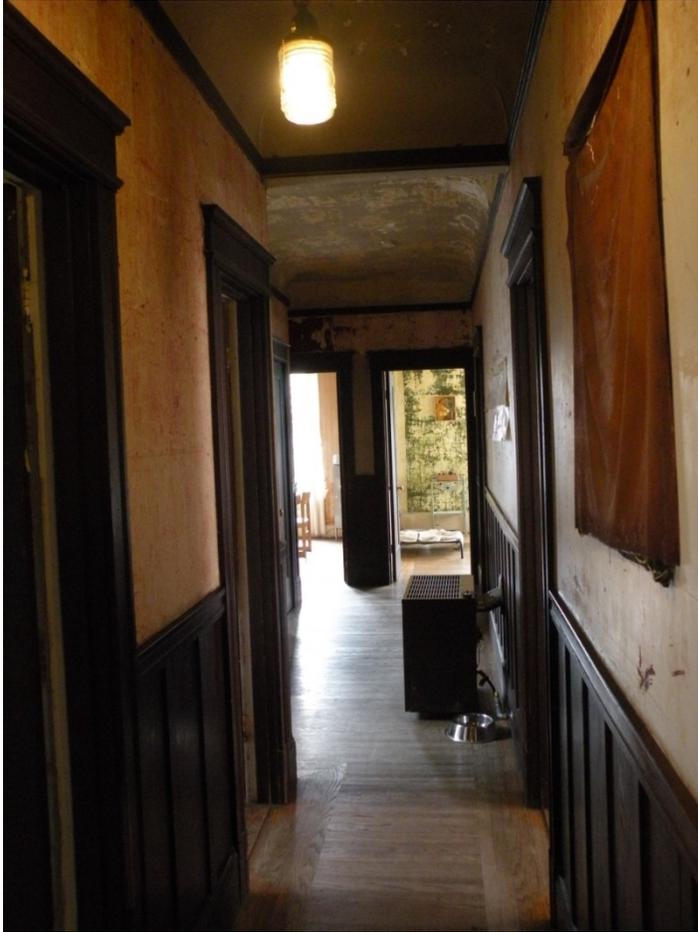


Figure 26 A view down the hallway of Rube Goldberg's apartment shows original finish on the woodwork including wainscoting, surrounds, picture rails, and floor. The hallway, like the rooms off of it, has high cove ceilings. A second gas heater from the third quarter of the 20th Century is set in the hallway.



Figure 27 The cove ceilings and original woodwork in Rube Goldberg's San Francisco residence.



Figure 28 A view from the landing above the stairwell leading down to the front entrance at 194 Gough Street. Note the bright interior of the silver-roof light well.



Figure 29 The bronze handle and speaking-horn at the top of the stairwell at 194 Gough Street is unlike Rube Goldberg's elaborate machinations that accomplished a mundane task with great effort. These devices allowed him to communicate with the person at the front door downstairs and to pull the lever to open the door if they are welcomed guests without having to descend the steps himself.



Figure 30 High ceiling in the commercial units on the first floor require a high stairwell from the front doors to the flats of the Goldbergs' residences. Pictured is Rube Goldberg's entry stairs with original woodwork and lath and plaster.



Figure 31 Early 20th Century wallpaper is retained in a portion of this bedroom at 194 Gough Street and is the first wall treatment over the lathe and plaster. Note the original surrounds, hardwood floor, and cove ceiling.



Figure 32 This wall sconce in the restroom in 194 Gough Street is amongst many original light fixtures in both residential units.



Figure 33 An original ceiling light fixture in a bedroom at 194 Gough Street.



Figure 34 Hardware of brass and bronze from 1911 remain in the residential and much of the commercial units of the building.



Figure 35 An original sink in Rube Goldberg's bathroom.



Figure 36 The bathroom in Rube Goldberg's apartment. The toilet is in a separate room from the bath room.



Figure 37 Max Goldberg's living room retains original mantel, hearth tiles, picture rail, cove ceilings, surrounds, and hardwood flooring.



Figure 38 The hallway, hardwood floors, fretwork balustrade, newel post, surrounds and other finished carpentry in 186 Gough Street where Max Goldberg resided.

Commercial Level, First Floor

The interior of the commercial spaces retain original fenestration configuration and, in the case of transoms and



Figure 39 Interior view of the corner commercial space at 198 Gough Street at the corner of Oak Street. Note original finished carpentry on the ceilings of the display area and transom windows of the former saloon. Some doorway framing has been replaced in-kind in a recent rehabilitation by the current tenant.



Figure 40 A detail of the wood ceiling moldings and a vent in the front window of 198 Gough Street.



Figure 41 The original storefront at 190 Gough Street viewed from within.



Figure 42 Original finished carpentry preserved in the display window of 190 Gough Street.



Figure 43 Looking up at the hip-form skylight in the center of the ceiling of 190 Gough Street. The skylight is set at the foot of the central light well.



Figure 44 The basement of the central commercial unit, 190 Gough Street, has been finished in drywall. Original stair balustrade and wood door surrounds were left in place.



Figure 45 Impressions on the basement wall reveal that the foundations are cast board-formed concrete.

Hayes Valley Neighborhood

Bounded by Grove Street to the north, Franklin Street to the east, Market Street to the southeast, and Webster Street to the west, Hayes Valley is one of the largest neighborhoods within the Western Addition. Similar to Duboce Triangle, most of Hayes Valley lies within the boundaries of the Market and Octavia Neighborhood Plan Area. Laid out in 1856 as part of the Western Addition, the name Hayes Valley historically referred to a 160-acre tract of land belonging to Colonel Thomas Hayes, an early landowner and developer. Consisting of some of the most tightly woven and intact nineteenth century residential fabric in the Western Addition, Hayes Valley consists largely of Italianate, Eastlake, and Queen Anne style flats and dwellings, with early twentieth-century commercial development and apartment infill located along Market, Haight, and Hayes streets. Most of Hayes Valley escaped the fire associated with the 1906 Earthquake and today contains some of the oldest extant dwellings in San Francisco. (Page & Turnbull, Inc. 2007)

HISTORY

RUBE GOLDBERG, AN INTRODUCTION

Rube Goldberg made a lasting mark on the cultural history of the United States, ultimately reaching millions of households during a period when the newspaper was the most influential form of media. His comic genius spanned many facets of visual storytelling, from cartoons exaggerating and revealing human nature to inventions with chain reactions that might require a well-placed bellows and a patient, hungry lion to accomplish the simple task of not waking a sleeping wife upon the return of a wayward husband.



Figure 46 Inventions of Professor Butts, a chain reaction invention (Source: Jennifer George and Adam Gropnik, *The Art of Rube Goldberg* [New York: Abrams Books 2013], 13)

His work is intelligent and urbane without taking itself too seriously, the art reflecting the personality of the artist. Some work was intended purely for belly laughs while other work was primarily for adults, sometimes pushing social morays of sexual representation or political commentary. But most were a complex combination of both purposes. His was a visual arts translation of the vaudeville tradition, laugh-out-loud humor with social observations and commentary lending lasting substance and interest. Many cartoons of his contemporaries seem naïve and dated compared to the vigor and edginess of his representations in cartoon, animation and sculpture. With friends like Charlie Chaplin and Groucho Marx, Rube Goldberg was an influential celebrity of the early to mid-20th Century who shaped American

cultural ideas of humor and social and political commentary. Like Charlie Chaplin's satire of Adolf Hitler in his role as Adenoid Hynkel in "The Great Dictator," Rube Goldberg's preposterous contraption for the "Automatic Hitler Kicking Machine" from 1942 or his Pulitzer Prize-winning "Peace Today" drawing of a teetering atomic bomb from *The New York Sun*, July 22, 1947 did not shy away from controversy or his personal anger or fears.

A trained engineer, Rube Goldberg showed a nation dedicated to rationalism and science during the machine age how to laugh at and perhaps even question the devices marketed in the name of convenience or efficiency in the home and at work. Many of his most absurd chain reactions seemed to be rooted deeply in the American psyche of the early and mid-20th Century. He testifies in *The Rube Goldberg Plan for the Post-War World* (Franklin Watts, 1944) to be the "the world's great science cartoonist." He sincerely called for simplicity in all things even writing stating:

A good writer regards his manuscript as a rough draft. He goes over it again and again to tighten it to eliminate unnecessary wordage, to simplify it. Only when he has completed that step will he consider his manuscript polished and complete. A good engineer should look upon each design as a rough draft that needs polishing and simplification. He should look back to see what he has designed *in* that can be designed *out*.

He reveals his complicated and improbable chain-reaction inventions that accomplish so little to be more than a laugh. Rube Goldberg invites his readers to explore his unpretentious and hilarious worlds thoughtfully, question societal precepts, and open ourselves up to a healing laugh.⁵

THE SAN FRANCISCAN 1883 TO 1907

Reuben Garret Lucius Goldberg (Rube Goldberg) was born in San Francisco on July 4, 1883. His father, Max Goldberg, was a Prussian Jewish émigré, landing in the United States before the Civil War. His mother, Hannah, nee Cohen, died when Rube was in his early teens leaving Max to raise (eldest to youngest) Garret, Rueben, Walter, and Lillian.

Max was a powerful personality and loomed large in Rube's life. The widowed Max was a consummate investor in resources in the West and rose to prominence in San Francisco as a Republican Party operative and campaign manager, police commissioner, fire marshal and banker. Max embraced the West adopting colloquialisms such as "looka here" and "I reckon" and wearing a broad-brimmed Stetson hat. Max Goldberg was portrayed under such a hat in the mural that climbs the stairs of Coit Tower in San Francisco.

⁵ Jennifer George and Adam Gropnik, *The Art of Rube Goldberg* (New York: Abrams Books 2013), 15 – 19.



Figure 47 A gold San Francisco Police Department badge given in honor of Max Goldberg's service in the year he moved into his residence at 186 Gough Street in the building his son built. (Source: Jennifer George and Adam Gropnik, *The Art of Rube Goldberg*)

The Goldberg's attended temple at Sherith Israel where Rueben Goldberg studied for his *bar mitzvah*.⁶ Two months later (FROM WHAT?) he is cited in the article "Israel Lights Chanuka Candles: Honor to Ancient Heroes" as a celebrant in Ms. Miriam B. Levy's class at Sabbath School at the "Geary Street" temple. Temple Beth Israel that stood at 1839 Geary Street served the then largely Jewish neighborhood that stretched from The Fillmore District to Hayes Valley.⁷

⁶ "Society," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, October 18, 1896, 33.

⁷ "Jewish Children Make Their Vows," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 7, 1897, 8.

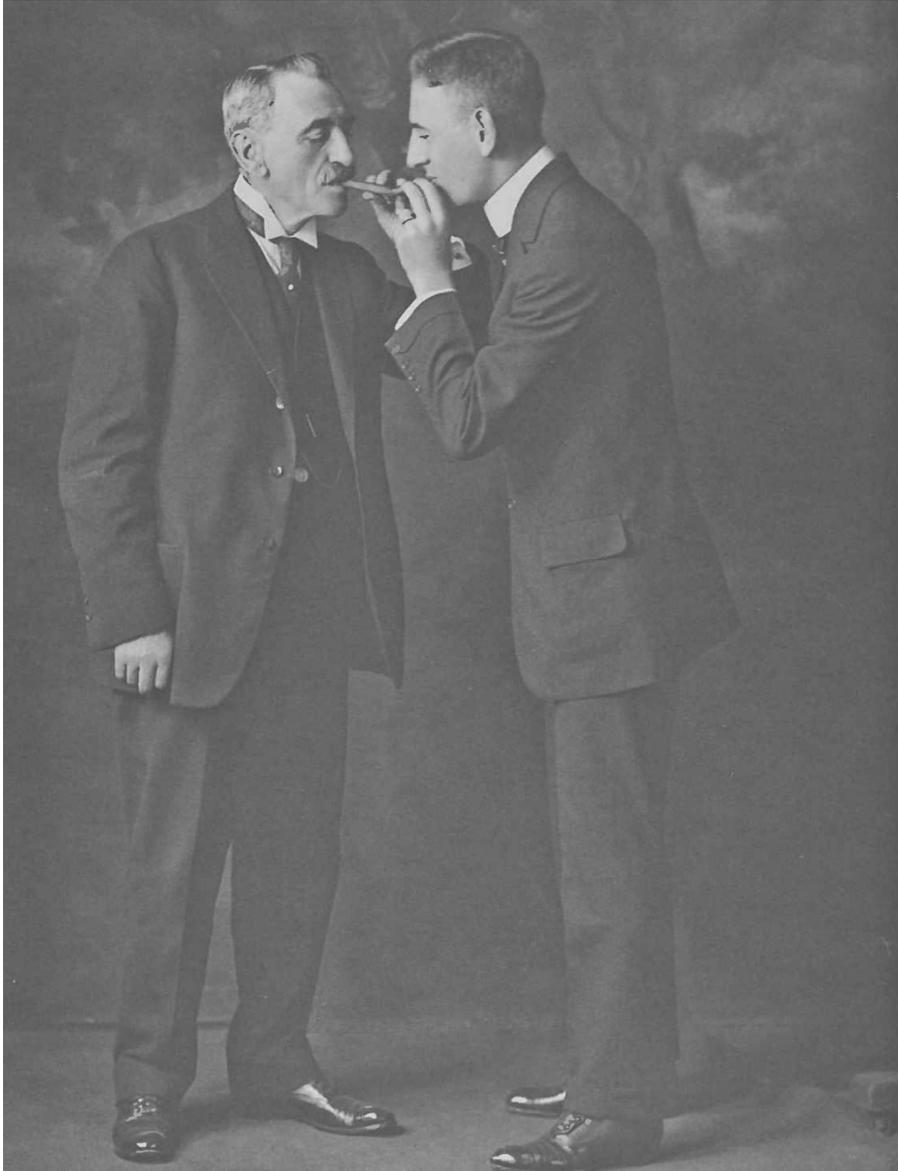


Figure 48 Rube (right) lights Max's cigar, ca. 1911 (Source: Jennifer George and Adam Gropnik, *The Art of Rube Goldberg*)

Max Goldberg remained a very influential person in Rube Goldberg's life, particularly prior to Rube's marriage to Irma in 1916 when he was 33 years old. So when Max, who had encouraged and paid for Rube's art lessons, steered Rube to study engineering instead of art, Rube obeyed. He commuted from his family home in San Francisco to Berkeley during his entire three and a half years of study at the University of California, Berkeley. After graduating with a degree in engineering in 1904, Rube went on to work as an engineer for the City of San Francisco Water and Sewers Department, recording the location of the sewer system in civil engineering drawing sets.⁸

Max Goldberg stated in retrospect:

⁸ Jennifer George and Adam Gropnik, *The Art of Rube Goldberg* (New York: Abrams Books 2013), 39-40.

My idea of an artist was a fellow who loafed the greater part of the time, and, when he had nothing better to do, hung around street corners and asked people for quarters.⁹

After six months Rube left the Sewers Department to become an office boy in the sports department of *The San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper and taking a two-thirds pay-cut in the move. While there he began to submit drawings and cartoons to the editor until he was finally published in early 1905.

On April 18, 1906 at 5:12 AM the San Francisco earthquake hit hard. Although Max Goldberg's house was not badly damaged, the San Francisco Chronicle building was destroyed by the earthquake and fire that followed. He worked from home producing cartoons to help soothe the shaken confidence of San Franciscans. ??? Rube Goldberg stayed with *The San Francisco Chronicle* but was disillusioned with his prospects. As he recounted in 1928:

I was completely sold on the idea that the big city [New York] was the only place where a fellow in my line had a chance to make good in a real way.¹⁰

RUBE GOLDBERG: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Figure 49 Rube Goldberg ca. 1915 Jennifer George and Adam Gropnik, *The Art of Rube Goldberg* [New York: Abrams Books 2013], 14)

In October 1907 Rube Goldberg took the train to New York to seek employment as a cartoonist. He was turned down by five newspapers until the *New York Evening Mail* hired him to draw daily cartoons for \$50.00 per week; *The San Francisco Chronicle* had paid him \$8.00 per week. He continued to draw sports cartoons as well as humor and human interest work. Between 1908 and 1910 when Rube Goldberg bought the lot at the corner of Gough and Oak streets in San Francisco, he drew 450 "Foolish Questions" cartoon panels and had them published in a book.

1910 would also be the year he made his first appearance on the stage at the Colonial Theater in New York. Cracking jokes, drawing cartoons, and interacting with the audience, Rube Goldberg even traveled doing performances from 1910 to 1915 up and down the East Coast while continuing to work as a cartoonist. Remarkably he also bought and developed the R. L. Goldberg Building in San Francisco in 1910- 1911 during this especially prolific time in his life.

At 28 years of age, Rube Goldberg was a returning successful newspaper cartoonist in 1910 when he bought the property. Still a bachelor, Rube returned frequently to the city of his birth and from his initial success as a cartoonist from employment in New York City beginning in late 1907; his fortunes would increase dramatically in 1916 and following. Built to house himself in one residential unit, 194 Gough Street, during numerous and extended working-visits to San Francisco and his widowed father and mentor Max Goldberg in the other, 186 Gough Street, the residences are large and well appointed. Like the three commercial units below, the residential units are deep, extending some 55' from the west façade to the rear wall on the east. (Samuelson 2013)

The Goldbergs, father and son, had connections in local entertainment and the police department. Since Rube had made New York City his primary residence by 1915, it is not surprising that the Crocker

⁹ Jennifer George and Adam Gropnik, *The Art of Rube Goldberg* [New York: Abrams Books 2013], 65)

¹⁰ Ibid, 41.

Langley City Directory of 1915 shows 194 Gough Street residents Frederick Eggers, Sherriff of San Francisco and Allen Walter, a musician, as tenants. It is likely that, like Rube Goldberg, Officer Eggers and Mr. Walter were part-time tenants of the space. At 186 Gough, that same year, a Monta Brown (widow of John) is listed. Her relationship to Max Goldberg, who also occupied 186 Gough is not known. (Samuelson 2013). Other tenants are also listed in the two bedroom 186 Gough Street and three bedroom 194 Gough Street.

Rube Goldberg hired Bernard J. Joseph, Architect, to design his building. Although no records of their correspondence could be located, there are blueprints of plans for the first and second floor. As a trained engineer himself and survivor of the San Francisco 1906 Earthquake and Fire, Rube Goldberg is likely to have had a professional opinion in the selection of a structural steel frame and stucco cladding both to better withstand lateral seismic forces and to retard fire. Although steel frame construction was in wide use for commercial and mixed residential-commercial properties by 1911, San Francisco did not adopt seismic requirements for new construction for more than a decade after the subject property's 1911 construction. Wood frame buildings often with poor lateral force performance, such as those built over parking garages, continued to be built after 1906.

Rube Goldberg's return visits to San Francisco were as a celebrity. In an article headlining M. H. de Young's purchase of John D. Spreckel's *The Morning Call*, *The San Francisco Chronicle* took the opportunity to reflect on their own successes, "Among the artists whose merits were first recognized by the 'Chronicle' and who won their first fame on this paper are ... 'Rube' Goldberg..."¹¹ But his fame was more generally recognized by San Franciscans, beyond a former employer's self-congratulatory statement that they had "first recognized" his talents. The July 17, 1915 article "Personal and Hotel Gossip" begins with the statement:

Rube Goldberg, San Francisco cartoonist, who achieved brilliant success in New York, is visiting his people in San Francisco, and will be here a month. Goldberg is a member of the art staff of the New York Mail and during his visit here will do a number of exposition cartoons for his paper. The local artist has taken up motion pictures as a sideline, making his own films from his own drawings.¹²

The article exemplifies the long working-visits that Rube Goldberg took from his New York residence to his San Francisco apartment.

Animation was a new entertainment technology in 1915 and Rube Goldberg was at its forefront. The Orpheum Theater, which was designed by Bernard J. Joseph and G. Albert Lansburgh, advertised that among their live performances was a movie, the "Animated Cartoons" of Rube Goldberg.¹³

Jennifer George, Rube and Irma Goldberg's granddaughter, recounts the bedtime story that her grandfather told her repeatedly.

I was eleven years old in 1970 when my Papa Rube died. I have many memories of him, some fuzzy and fading, others clear and sharp, as if they happened yesterday. One of those memories, a recounting of the 1906 earthquake, falls in the latter category and was told to me frequently by my grandfather at bedtime. I write

¹¹ "M. H. de Young Purchases The Morning Call: Publication to Cease August 31 and Be Consolidated with The Chronicle," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, August 15, 1913, 1.

¹² "Personal and Hotel Gossip," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, July 17, 1915, 16.

¹³ "Orpheum," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 11, 1916, 25.

about it in my preface to *The Art of Rube Goldberg*, the best-selling coffee table book that was released by Abrams Books last year.

The story mesmerized me. My grandfather explained how the ground shook, lamps swung overhead, and his bed rolled from one side of his room to the other – then just as suddenly as the earth moved, it stopped. According to my grandfather, San Francisco was never the same. He told me about the fires that raged, the lack of clean water, the smoke that lingered in the air – his city in ruins. He vowed that one day if he was lucky enough, successful enough, that he would build a building, with his name on the top, to prove that the city would rise again – and that he was a part of it.

He talked about the building, his building – its stone exterior, its bay windows, the pediment with his name carved into its façade. The building had two apartments, one for me, my two pussycats, and all my stuffed animals; the other for him and my grandmother. He would elaborate about the stores in the bottom of the building. One would sell only whipped cream – his favorite dessert. One would be reserved just for him. An art studio – filled with drawing tables and stools, paper and pencils, clay and wife – all the things we did together. And I would nod off, imagining my life in this special building, this magical place, built in part I thought just for me.

I heard this story, my fairytale, so many times, that I could recite it almost verbatim. Yet I never knew, until last November [November 2013], that the building in my bedtime story, built in San Francisco in the aftermath of 1906 earthquake, the one with my grandfather's name set in its eaves, actually existed.¹⁴

¹⁴ Jennifer George to London Breed, March 1, 2014.

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

Criteria

Check all criteria applicable to the significance of the property that are documented in the report. The criteria checked 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:

The R. L. Goldberg Building at 182 – 198 Gough Street derives its significance from its close association with the life and work of Reuben “Rube” L. Goldberg and its sophisticated Edwardian and Beaux Arts architectural design by master architect Bernard J. Joseph.

Association with significant person

Built in 1911, the R. L. Goldberg Building is closely associated with the life and career of nationally famous cartoonist and artist Rube Goldberg. Incised “R. L. GOLDBERG BUILDING,” in the cornice, the building was named by and for its original owner, popularly known as Rube Goldberg. A native San Franciscan, Rube Goldberg bought the property and commissioned the design and construction of the building to house himself and his widowed father, Max Goldberg, in the two apartments on the second floor and for income from leasing the commercial units on the first story. Built with large windows for natural lighting for the prolific cartoonist, Rube Goldberg took extended visits to his West Coast home, drew there, and retained the property until his death in 1972.

Rube Goldberg built the R. L. Goldberg Building at the time that his career as a cartoonist was beginning to rise and shortly after his move to New York City. His first cousin, Hannah Samuelson, recounts that the building was his San Francisco residence and studio during his lengthy visits. (Samuelson 2013)

Significant Architecture

The R. L. Goldberg building is an exceptional example of an Edwardian era commercial and residential structure with Beaux Arts decoration. An unusually successful and rare example of Beaux Arts character-defining features on a commercial building of modest scale, the building reflects theatrical design elements from the architect, Bernard J.

Joseph, who helped design the Orpheum Theater and perhaps from Rube Goldberg himself who associated with leading actors, directors, and composers of Broadway in New York and some of the earliest film animators. The building reflects the mastery of the architect, retains a high degree of historic integrity, and is an outstanding example of its type in the years following the 1906 Earthquake and Fire and leading up to the 1915 Panama-Pacific World Exposition. The commercial storefronts of the R. L. Goldberg Building are remarkably unaltered since construction in 1911. Framing has been restored around display windows, minor repairs made to tilework bulkhead and vestibule flooring but all three the storefronts retain original materials from 1911.

Period of Significance

Although Rube Goldberg built and retained ownership of the R. L. Goldberg Building from 1911 to 1972 (i.e., two years after his death when dispersed to his heirs), his use of the building appears to be greatest from 1911 to 1916, the year he married New York heiress Irma Seeman. The materiality of the building reflects few changes over time and strongly evokes its original design and period of greatest association with Rube Goldberg. However, its significance to Rube Goldberg is reflected in his lengthy ownership of the building bearing his name until his death in 1970. He continued to use the building after 1916 but appears to have made fewer trips to San Francisco after his marriage.

Integrity

The seven aspects of integrity are location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association in relation to the period of significance established above. Cumulatively, the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its association with Rube Goldberg and its exceptionally successful design as a mixed-use building of the Edwardian era and Classical Revival style.

Location, Feeling, Setting, Association

The R. L. Goldberg Building at 182 – 198 Gough Street was constructed in 1911. Located on the corner of Gough and Oak streets, the building has not been moved. Both neighboring buildings remain the same and appear in the same footprint since at least 1913 when they appear in a Sanborn Insurance Map. Buildings across Gough Street also appear to have relatively minor alterations. Located just two blocks north of Market Street, the building is near the Market Street Masonry Landmark District, a City of San Francisco designation denoting the historic integrity of the neighborhood to the south, and two blocks west of the Civic Center National Historic Landmark District. The Beaux Arts inspired R. L. Goldberg Building is readily associated with the Beaux Arts Civic Center design, although on a much more modest scale.

The commercial storefronts still function as transparent and approachable sales venues, readily integrating the mixed-use building into similar building types, particular buildings across Gough Street from the R. L. Goldberg Building. The refined classical entrances to the residences, also facing Gough Street, retain their relationship to the street and are unaltered.

Design, Materials, Workmanship

The exterior of the building retains design features that were originally constructed in 1911 on the second floor and integral to the architects and owner's design concepts. The more elaborately decorated second story exteriors on the Gough Street façade and the Oak Street side elevation have no apparent alterations. This is also true of the first story along Oak Street. The façade has minor alterations to the framing materials of the display windows on a portion of the northernmost and the central commercial bays. These alterations to the materials and workmanship of those window frames do not depart from the original building design and are too minor of an alterations to significantly affect historical integrity. Storefront elements that are extant include vestibule shape, paving, bulkhead paving, raised window display platforms, rear transoms of window display areas, bulkheads, metal sash systems in continuous transoms, retractable fabric awnings, and ribbed glass transom. Although awning fabrics are not original and framework around

display windows have been replaced in-kind, storefront materials and design are unchanged and retain a high degree of historical integrity.

The interior of both residential units retain their original lay-outs, decorative woodwork including door and window surrounds, hardwood floors, fireplace mantels, picture rails, and many bathroom porcelains. The kitchens in both units have not been altered with the addition of later cabinets and counters. Both units still have original bronze levers, reminiscent of a Rube Goldberg contraption, to unlock and pop open their front doors without having to descend the stairs.

In the apartment at 194 Gough Street which Rube Goldberg had designed for himself, many original materials were retained. Early 20th Century wallpapers and paints from the period of significance when Rube Goldberg occupied the unit have been preserved *in situ*.



Figure 50 A sheet of early 20th Century wallpaper and writing on the raw plaster stating "10 rolls," presumably of wallpaper, are preserved in apartment 194 Gough Street where Rube Goldberg residing when visiting San Francisco.

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Exterior character-defining features are identified as:

Commercial/First Story

- All architectural finishes and features, the height, scale, and massing of the building;
- Window display cases, configuration and materials;
- All fenestration and surround elements such as prominent sills and keystones facing Oak Street;
- All window sash, decorative surrounds, and materials (wood, steel, and stucco);
- Commercial transom window ripple glazing, wood sash, mullions, moldings, and surround elements;
- Bulkheads rising to the base of display windows, materials including tile size, color, and finish;
- Vestibule shape and configuration, marble and tile paving, soffits, open and glazed transoms with color and style of painted address numerals, doors styles and materials;
- Awning angle, attachment between display and transom windows, size, and materials;
- Piers and facing materials between commercial bays, materials, moldings and proportions;
- The corner vestibule, post, and coffered ceiling.
- The hip-form skylight with wire glass glazing illuminating the central commercial bay.

Residential/Second Story

- Residential vestibules on the first story, two entries on Gough Street and a service door on Oak Street - materials, scale, marble and tile paving, soffits, open transom and glazed transom with color and style of painted address numerals, and doors;
- Cornice with classically-inspired end pediments facing Gough and Oak Streets, details, copings, and entablatures;
- Italic incised lettering in cornice frieze "R. L. GOLDBERG BUILDING"
- All decorative features of Gough and Oak street elevations including their scale, proportion, symmetry, materials and finishes;
- Bay windows and paired windows, their placement, curvilinear lintels, keystones, decorative surrounds, sashes, designs and materials;
- Design and ornamentation associated with the Classical Revival style;
- Parapet and flat roof form;
- Stucco cladding's texture;
- Scoring of stucco to appear like finished stonework;
- Fenestration about the central light well and the two smaller light wells.

Interior: Commercial/First Story

Interior character-defining features are associated with the commercial first story and identified as:

- Raised display window platform at the 190 Gough Street storefront;
- Transom windows at the back of display cases up to and including the display plate glass windows;
- Coffered ceilings and grates inside the plate glass windows in the corner commercial space, their design and materials;
- The retention of three largely open retail and service spaces;
- Stairs to basement level;
- Original interior door surrounds and other molding;

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APPENDIX A – LIST OF OCCUPANTS

Below is a list of the various occupants of the R. L. Goldberg Building over time, organized by year and address. This should not be considered a definitive list, but rather is a sampling of different years as drawn from research using city directories and other sources.

182 Gough Street (commercial unit)

J. Lewis Glazier (1914)
Frank Errico Shoemaker (1918)
Jerry Jeremiah Cleaners (1929)
George Masrobian Clothes Cleaners (1939)
Best Cleaners & Tailors (1953)
Best Cleaners & Tailors (1982)

186 Gough Street (residential unit)

S. O. Thatcher—no occupation given (1913)
Fred and Caro Scott and Monta Brown—widow (1915)
Frederick Eggers—no occupation given (1917)
Frank Mayer—janitor (1920)
Harry Miesner—driver (1922)
Mattie Tyrrell—widow (1923)
Nellie Reeder—dancing teacher (1929)
Mrs. H. G. O’Hanlon—no occupation given (1938)
Christina Keyes—no occupation given (1953)
Christina Keyes (1971)
Georgee Jarvis—no occupation given (1982)

190 Gough (commercial unit)

Charles F. Hagman Painter (1915)
Charles F. Hagman Painter (1922)
H. P. Olsson Painter (1924)
Bien Danish & Norwegian newspaper (1929)
Bien Danish & Norwegian newspaper (1932)
Puzant Shamlian Paints (1938)
Mrs. Victoria Shakarian Printer (1940)
M.C. Ross Electrical Contractor (1951)
Rapid Reproduction Service lithographers (1962)
Bradshaw Real Estate & Investment Co. (1966)
San Francisco Advertiser (1971)

194 Gough (residential unit)

Joseph Henderson and Cecila Thomas—widow (1912)
Frederick Littman—machinist (1913)
Leonard Jones—steward (1914)
Frederick Eggers—San Francisco Sherriff (1915)
Walter Allen—musician (1915)
Leo D. Funchess—machinist (1917)
Loretta C. Petersen—widow, and John Wobbe—warehouseman (1918)
Ray E. Miller—machinist (1923)
Charles Berg—contractor (1927)
Joan Grandon—nurse (1953)
Frank Lippi—no occupation given (1962)
Mrs. J. E. Lippi—no occupation given (1982)

198 Gough (corner commercial unit)

Bray & O'Connor Liquors (1912)

M. F. Bray Liquors (1915)

M. F. Bray Liquors (1918)

F. N. Mertes Druggist (1925)

Thomas Bullard Notions (1929)

Economy Food Store (1930)

Economy Food Store (1938)

George Kallas Grocers (1939)

Thomas Pothier Grocers (1951)

The Whirlomat Laundry (1960)

Do It Yourself Laundry (1963)

Do It Yourself Laundry (1982)