



LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



Pile Drivers, Bridge and Structural Ironworkers Local No. 77 Union Hall 457 Bryant Street

DRAFT report dated July XX, 2017

Landmark No. XXX

Pile Drivers, Bridge and Structural Ironworkers Local No. 77 Union Hall 457 Bryant Street

Built: 1909
Architects: Daniel McIsaac

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

Events: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

1910-1973

The Period of Significance for the Pile Drivers, Bridge and Structural Ironworkers Local No. 77 Union Hall is 1909-1973 reflecting the year that of the first union meeting in the building until the union's move to Oakland in 1973.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pile Drivers, Bridge and Structural Ironworkers Local No. 77 Union Hall is individually eligible for Article 10 landmark designation for its association with events and architecture. As one of the early extant union halls in San Francisco, it played an important role in the growth of organized labor in the city. Constructed shortly after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, the building is also associated with the post disaster reconstruction era in San Francisco.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENTS

Development of South of Market

Following the discovery of gold near San Francisco in 1848, the city's population grew from several hundred to nearly 35,000 in the space of a few years. Many of the newcomers, having arrived from across the globe in search of fortune, resided in large camps made up of tents and temporary wooden shelters established in today's South of Market neighborhood by the early 1850s. These makeshift communities were eventually replaced by more permanent buildings and infrastructure, including more substantial piers and wharves along the nearby waterfront and the establishment of several foundries.¹ The South of Market quickly became the center of industrial production in San Francisco and the major west coast industrial supplier of mining equipment, heavy machinery and other goods to the western states. By 1875, forty-two foundries could be found in SoMa. A great number of warehouses were built to store imported goods and products awaiting export from the city, and smaller manufacturing operations could also be found amidst the larger warehouses.²

By the mid-nineteenth century, South of Market was a bustling and self-contained community. Several churches, social organizations, schools, hospitals and other welfare institutions, along with stores and saloons served a population that by 1900 had grown to 62,000 people, making it the most densely populated section of the city.³ Residential hotels and residential pockets of two-story single-family dwellings, row houses and flats could also be found amidst the manufacturers and commercial operations. By the turn of the century the building stock in the block bounded by 3rd, 4th, Bryant and Harrison streets was primarily row houses and two-story residences.⁴

Post Disaster Reconstruction

South of Market, like much of San Francisco, was devastated by the 1906 earthquake and fire. Only a few buildings in the neighborhood, primarily built of steel-frame construction, survived. The disaster destroyed all of SoMa's residences and decimated the neighborhood's population.⁵ Following the quake and fire, San Francisco again saw a massive influx of people as workers arrived in the city to aid in the reconstruction.

Reconstruction in SoMa focused on reestablishing the neighborhood's industrial and commercial businesses and many of the 62,000 people who lived in the neighborhood at the turn of the century settled in other parts of San Francisco or the Bay Area.⁶ SoMa's population eventually grew to significant numbers, but it never regained its pre-quake and fire magnitude. In 1910, 24,000 people resided in the neighborhood and by 1914, 40,000 single men were living in SoMa (CSOMA 26; HS, 72,

¹ Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 18-20.

² Ibid., 22; Page & Turnbull, Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA, March 16, 2015, 9-10.

³ Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 25-26, 37.

⁴ Page & Turnbull, Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA, March 16, 2015, 12; Averbach, Alvin, *San Francisco's South of Market District, 1850-1950: The Emergence of Skid Row*, California Historical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Fall, 1973), 204.

⁵ Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 11.

⁶ Page & Turnbull, Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA, March 16, 2015, 26-27; Averbach, 204.

PG 153). As was the case prior to the quake and fire, hotels, apartment buildings and residences could be found interspersed between warehouses, manufacturers, and wholesaling businesses, but residential construction was limited.

SoMa remained a manufacturing and housing center for during much of World War I, but with the mechanization of the workplace and the shift to automobile and truck transport from the streetcar and the railroad after the war, shipping, manufacturing and other firms moved outside the city. Changes in employment and labor practices including shorter workdays and a longer term workforce, allowed for commuting longer distances. As historian Paul Groth notes, “suburban employment surged for people with cars”⁷. White collar employment continued to thrive downtown, but blue-collar jobs declined by 40,000 people between 1918 and 1921 leading to a decrease in investments. No rooming or boarding houses were constructed in downtown San Francisco following World War I⁸.

Following World War II, SoMa remained the home base for many low-income single men and retirees, but with the lack of investment in the neighborhood and the decline of jobs along the waterfront, the neighborhood was seen as an area primed for development.⁹ Urban renewal projects conceived in the 1950s and carried out over the course of more than four decades, decimated the area as blocks were cleared for the construction of the complex of buildings that make up the Yerba Buena Center.

During the 1990s, SoMa transformed from an industrial and manufacturing section of the city to a high-tech center. In the 1990s, the population grew nearly 80%. By 2000, nearly 13,500 people were living South of Market. Many of the spaces that once held SoMa’s manufacturing, commercial distribution, and industrial business have been converted to residential and office use. Old building stock has been demolished to allow for the construction of new buildings to keep up with the demand for housing and the creation of live/work spaces. (PT 1)

Union Activism and the General Strike¹⁰

SoMa was inhabited by thousands of single male workers, many of whom laboring in newly unionized industries. The South of Market Area became a hotbed of union activism, culminating with the 1934 Waterfront and General strikes, also known as the Big Strike.¹¹ The 83-day waterfront strike over hiring and working conditions culminated in a San Francisco general strike. The wharves and piers along the entire waterfront were affected both by the absence of striking workers and, for over two weeks, by the presence of National Guard troops stationed inside transit sheds and patrolling the Embarcadero. The resolution of the Big Strike was one of the most spectacular victories in American labor history. Although the strike began among the longshoremen, when San Francisco’s port was shut down, it galvanized other workers, including the Pile Drivers.

The 1934 strike completely transformed labor relations on the West Coast. Before 1934, the employers in San Francisco, through the shape-up, where men gathered every morning in front of the Ferry

⁷ Paul Groth, *Living Downtown*, University of California Press, 1994, p. 270.

⁸ Paul Groth, p. 182.

⁹ Groth, p. 156; Page & Turnbull, p. 67

¹⁰ Adapted from the Port of San Francisco Embarcadero Historic District National Register of Historic Places Nomination, January 2006.

¹¹ PT Soma 5

Building and waited to be selected for work, had total control of working conditions. After the 1934 strike, Pacific Coast workers had the hiring hall. The hall was to be jointly administered by the union and the employers. However the union had direct, onsite control of hiring handing out job assignments on a strict rotary basis. The old shape-up was overthrown and in its place was a hiring hall providing an equitable distribution of work. The hall became the heart of the community, the center of a vibrant social and political life enjoyed by longshoremen after the 1934 strike. In later years, men would often say that that “the union is the hiring hall”.¹²

The strike profoundly affected life and politics in San Francisco. The deployment of the National Guard by the governor was a central event of the strike. The three-state strike, and especially the events in San Francisco, attracted widespread attention and contributed significantly to the evolution of national labor policy.

Pile Drivers and Pile Driving Work¹³

Wooden piles were driven into the mud for waterfront walls, piers and other structures by the Romans in ancient times. Pile driving in the Roman Empire was slow, hard, manual work by slave labor, perhaps assisted by animal power. For centuries, the same technology was employed with cheap labor whenever harbor works were built.

Steam-driven pile hammers were invented in 1839. With the use of steam power, a mechanical hoisting engine raised and dropped the hammer to drive the piles. Pile drivers “generally perform foundation work on large scale construction projects such as piers, wharves, drydocks, breakwaters, underwater pipelines, bridges, highways, skyscrapers, and parking lots. They are also called upon to reconstruct, repair, maintain and even demolish existing structures.”¹⁴

Pile drivers are known, both within and outside the union, by their occupational nickname, “pile butts.” The butt is a discarded pile end. Pilings are driven into bay mud, and then their tops, or butts, are cut to conform to the right elevation. “This constant and necessary butt cutting somehow led to a verbal shorthand”.¹⁵ The nickname was first used in California in the early 1930s, and appeared in union local documents in the early 1940s. The nickname conveyed pride and power in the work, although some members at first believed it to be undignified.¹⁶

Pile driving work was a very tough job — strenuous, dangerous, and noisy. There were no safety rules about the health effects of constant hammering, and no precautions were taken to prevent damage to the ears. Piles were treated with creosote which was applied to the piles before delivery to the waterfront. It was a hazardous material that burned the skin and eyes of many pile drivers. There were no safety guidelines about handling creosoted piles on the job.

¹² (Mills and Wellman 1987:174-175; Wellman 1995:60)

¹³ Adapted from the Port of San Francisco Embarcadero Historic District National Register of Historic Places Nomination, January 2006.

¹⁴ Michael S. Munoz and Local Union Number 34, “Pilebutt”: *Stories and Photographs about Pile Driving, Pile Drivers*; <http://www.folkstreams.net/context,264>, accessed July 14, 2017.

¹⁵ (Green 1993:375)

¹⁶ (Green 1993:424-426)

Pile Drivers, Bridge and Structural Ironworkers Local No. 77¹⁷

The first pile drivers labor union in San Francisco was the Wharf Builders' Union, organized in 1883. It received a charter from the American Federation of Labor in May, 1901, becoming the Pile Drivers and Bridge Builders Union No. 9078. It was an independent local union for the first few years. But in 1904 the A.F.L. leadership assigned the San Francisco local into the international union that had jurisdiction over their work — the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers.¹⁸ The San Francisco pile driver union's new status within the mainstream union movement was recognized with a new name: Pile Drivers, Bridge and Structural Iron Workers Union No. 77.¹⁹

In 1911, Local 77 drafted an ambitious program of working rules for pile driving in California. It included work the pile drivers were already performing as well as work they intended to claim as their own, "construction, reconstruction, repairing, removing, and wrecking of wharves, piers, docks, bridges, viaducts, towers, masts . . . Pile driving in all its branches; Cutting off and capping of piles, abutments, foundations, submarine or other work . . . Operation of all derricks, tools or machinery necessary in performing any of the aforesaid work."²⁰

From 1917-1920, pile driver union locals throughout the country were taken over by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, affiliated with the A.F.L. In San Francisco, the transition took place in May 1920. Pile Drivers, Bridge and Structural Iron Workers Local No. 77 in San Francisco, which had about 800 members, became Local 34 of the International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.²¹

Although after 1920 they were part of the same international union as carpenters, pile drivers had separate union locals, and separate jurisdictions on the waterfront. Pile drivers built piers and pier decks. After the deck was finished, the carpenters' union would take over to build the pier sheds.

One of the important leaders of Local 34 was Jack Wagner, who served as the union business agent for twenty-five years, starting in the late 1930s. He had begun his career as a union activist during the 1934 maritime strike, joining other picketers during the siege of Rincon Hill on Bloody Thursday. Wagner joined the Pile Drivers' Local 34 in 1934 and worked on construction of both the Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. He was a social unionist, a self-defined radical who believed in a strong rank and file, racial integration of the workforce, and followed the industrial unionist principles of the CIO.²²

Ownership and Construction History of 457 Bryant

The parcel on which 457 Bryant is located was owned by Thomas Green from 1887 to about 1906.²³ City Directories show that Thomas Green owned Burke & Green, with David Burke. Green may have purchased the property as an investment, because the 1887 Sanborn map shows that the single-family

¹⁷ Adapted from the Port of San Francisco Embarcadero Historic District National Register of Historic Places Nomination, January 2006.

¹⁸ (Munoz 1986:27; Green 1993:421)

¹⁹ (Munoz 1986:27; Green 1993:421)

²⁰ Green, 421.

²¹ (Munoz 1986:30-35; Green 1993:421)

²² Munoz 1986:41; Green 422

²³ San Francisco Block Books, 1894, 1906

dwelling that occupied the lot was vacant. Green quickly established water service on August 26, 1887 and by 1899 the Sanborn map shows that a three-story plus basement building with three flats, addressed as 439, 439 ¼ and 439 ½, Bryant, had been constructed, likely to serve the working-class population that had starting moving into the neighborhood in the 1890s.

Approximately three months after the 1906 earthquake and fire, J. J. Olson applied for a building permit to construct a one story dwelling with two rooms for the estimated cost of \$200.²⁴ This dwelling may have been constructed to house his family who were currently living at 632 Fell Street. On March 19, 1908, Olson, now living at 457 Bryant Street, applied for a building permit to add an addition to an existing one-story dwelling for the estimated cost of \$450. The addition had two rooms, each 13 x 16 feet with 10 foot high ceilings.²⁵ Olson does not appear to have resided at 457 Bryant for very long or he could have been squatting on the land until title to the parcel was established, a common occurrence after the disaster. By 1909, the block book shows that the parcel was owned by California Title Insurance & Trust Co. as Trustees.

The Pile drivers met in January 1909 and agreed to purchase a lot south of Market and east of 3rd Street for less than \$10,000. The new union hall would be located near the homes and jobs of their members. By February 17, 1909 the union had purchased the current lot for \$4,025. Drawings were prepared by April for \$5,500. In June Healy Tibbitts Construction Company was awarded the contract to construct the basement at a cost of \$1,540. On May 20, 1909 Daniel McIsaac's bid of was awarded the construction contract for the rest of the building at a cost of \$3,978. The two-story building with a shop on the first floor and hall on the second floor was completed by October 1909.

Prior to construction of 457 Bryant Street, the union met in the Audiffred Building, which provided space for several other unions, such as the Sailor's Union of the Pacific and Marine Firemens' Union, to meet and organize as well as socialize in the three saloons located on the first floor.²⁶ On October 6, 1909 the Pile Drivers, Bridge and Structural Ironworkers Local No. 77 held their first meeting in the new building. In the 1920s, several unions met in the hall, including the Carpenters' Union No 34, Warehouse and Cereal Workers. The Pile drivers occupied the building until 1973 when, citing parking and safety problems, the Union moved to Oakland. Edward Zak purchased the building and continues to own it today.

Healy Tibbitts

Still in operation today, Healy Tibbets specializes in marine construction, pile driving and deep shoring systems. Healy's areas of expertise include construction of piers and wharves, submarine pipelines and cables, offshore structures, dredging, pile driving, marine heavy lifts, bulk stevedoring, and marine transportation. Healy Tibbitts was founded in 1886 by two San Francisco waterfront workers who decided to start their own construction company. Twenty years later, Healy was one of the construction companies to help clear rubble and rebuild San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. Through the 1900s the company continued to grow as a marine and foundation contractor both

²⁴ Building Permit No. 1970, July 27, 1907

²⁵ Building Permit No. 15642, March 19, 1908.

²⁶ Labor Landmarks Guidebook, p. 2.

domestically and internationally.²⁷ Healy Tibbitts likely employed members of the Pile drivers, Bridge and Structural Ironworkers Local No. 77 on many of their construction projects.

Daniel McIsaac, Builder

The construction contract was awarded to D. McIsaac on May 20, 1909.²⁸ Daniel McIsaac was born September 21, 1877 in Antigonish, Nova Scotia and immigrated to San Francisco in December 1904.²⁹ At age 30, McIsaac worked as a carpenter and lived with his wife Freda and three female boarders in the Lower Nob Hill.³⁰ World War I Draft Registration Cards show that McIsaac, age 40, lived in a residential hotel in Oakland and worked as a foreman and carpenter for Healy Tibbitts Construction Company. By 1930, McIsaac worked as a carpenter and owned his own home in the Excelsior where he lived with his second wife Mary, two young daughters and a step-daughter.³¹ It is unknown if McIsaac is responsible for constructing any other buildings in the Bay Area. It is possible that 475 Bryant is the only building contract he was ever awarded on his own. He may have contributed to the design of many piers and wharves constructed by Healy Tibbitts, but this information could not be located. McIsaac died in San Francisco in 1939 at age 62.

Architectural Influences: Edwardian Style

457 Bryant exhibits the typical characteristics of the Edwardian style. The term “Edwardian” was created to describe architecture produced in Great Britain and its colonies from 1901 to 1910, with the reign of Edward VII. Edwardian architecture encompasses a number of styles, with five main strands identified: Gothic Revival, Arts and Crafts, Neo-Georgian, Baroque Revival and the Beaux-Arts style. All five strands reflected a movement away from the ornately embellished buildings constructed during the Victorian period (c. 1825-1901) towards buildings with simpler, more handcrafted details. Edwardian style buildings were constructed prior to the 1906 earthquake and fire, however it was an extremely common style used in the post-disaster reconstruction. Edwardian buildings are highly concentrated in areas that were rebuilt after the earthquake and fire, including the South Park, South of Market, downtown and much of the Mission neighborhoods.

Halls in the early 20th century

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, fraternal societies were one of the primary sources of health insurance for the working classes, as well as burial services. At their peak in about 1920, over one quarter of all adult Americans were members of fraternal societies.³² Some fraternal groups limited membership to a particular ethnic or religious group. Others were pan-ethnic and centered on business or professional affiliations.

Buildings that housed halls generally conform to one of three subtypes. The first includes single-story buildings that may or may not have been intended to be temporary. Simple in construction, they did not require elaborate building materials, nor did they support other uses. Many were later replaced by permanent buildings on the same site, such as the Equality Hall at 139 Albion Avenue, while others

²⁷ www.healytibbitts.com. Accessed July 14, 2017.

²⁸ Index to Papers on File.

²⁹ California Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1959, ancestry.com accessed July 14, 2017.

³⁰ US Census 1910, Ancestry.com, accessed July 14, 2017.

³¹ US Census, 1930. Ancestry.com, Accessed July 14, 2017.

³² Woodmen and Fraternalism (booklet), Form 4154 R-5/97; Modern Woodmen of America History, 1997.

were redeveloped as residential building sites such as the Veteran Hall at 432 Duboce Avenue. Of the dozen or so examples of this type known from the period, only one has survived: the Woodmen of the World lodge at 2140 Market Street (now the Lucky 13 bar), located on the same block as the Swedish American Hall.

The second type included halls that occupied temporary sites within other buildings. These might include pre-1906 Earthquake buildings where a generic storefront was used as a hall; or when the lowest flat in a multi-story apartment building was used as a hall. Two examples of this type are extant: Callegari's Hall at 421 Union Street (1906); and Coleman's Hall at 1988 Bush Street (ca. 1902). However, the facades of these building give no indication of their use as social halls.

The third type, to which Pile Drivers, Bridge and Structural Ironworkers Local No. 77 Union Hall belongs, are purpose-built mixed-use buildings where the ground floor was occupied by storefronts, while the meeting rooms were located on the upper floor(s). There are only nine examples of this type constructed prior to 1907 which survive and have good integrity: Divisadero Hall at 321 Divisadero Street (1896); Equality Hall at 139 Albion Street (1908); Findlay's Dancing Academy at 3245 16th Street (1907); Mission Turn Verin Hall at 3543 18th Street (1910); Oakland Hall at 1805 Divisadero Street (1903); Richmond Hall at 309 4th Avenue (1908); the Sheet Metal Workers Hall at 224 Guerrero Street (1906); Stegeman's Hall at 225 Valencia Street (1907) and New Era Hall at 2121 Market Street (1906). The Sheet Metal Workers Hall is San Francisco Landmark #150, while Mission Turn Verin Hall is San Francisco Landmark #178.

In the years following the 1906 disaster, many fraternal societies rebuilt their own permanent halls. These included the Odd Fellows, who constructed a new hall at 7th and Market Streets in 1907. The After World War II, membership in many fraternal organization began a steady decline. Contributing factors included a diminishing need for fraternal orders as insurance companies and doctors became more professionalized. Working class San Franciscans were also presented with an increasing variety of diversions for their spare time.³³

INTEGRITY

The seven aspects of integrity used by the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, and Article 10 of the Planning Code are: location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association in relation to the period of significance above. The buildings retain sufficient integrity to convey its association with its original design, use, and period of construction.

BOUNDARIES OF THE LANDMARK SITE

Encompassing all of and limited to Lot 085 in Assessor's Block 3775.

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

³³ Siddeley, Leslie, *The Rise and Fall of Fraternal Insurance Organizations*. Humane Studies Review, V7, No. 2 Spring 1992.

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.

All primary exterior elevations, form, massing, structure, architectural ornament and materials identified as:

- Rectangular plan
- Two story massing
- Two bay form at primary façade
- Flat roof
- Horizontal wood shiplap siding at primary facade
- Wood storefront with wood and glass double doors, paneled bulkhead and columns, plate glass windows, and multi-lite transom windows
- Arched entry with pilasters, volutes, dentils and pediment
- Mosaic tile floor at entry spelling out "Pile drivers B & S I W Local 77"
- Wood paneled double doors with diamond shaped lites and wood frame transom window at entry
- Terrazzo step, terrazzo paneling with wood paneling above at entry
- Paired angled bay windows framed by colonnettes with wood paneled spandrel at base, molded sill, molded cornice and paneled spandrel at top
- Double-hung, wood sash windows with ogee lugs in wood frame
- Molded cornice with oversized dentils
- Beveled horizontal siding on secondary elevations
- Double-hung, wood sash windows with ogee lugs in wood frames

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

South of Market Area Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009.

Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Records, 457 Bryant Street.

Port of San Francisco, Embarcadero Historic District National Register of Historic Places Nomination, January 2006.

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Historic Name: Gran Oriente Filipino Residences and
Masonic Temple

Address: 104-106 South Park Street; 45-49 South Park
Street; 95 Jack London Alley

Block and Lot: 3775 / 058; 3775/039

Owner: Gran Oriente Filipino

Original Use: Apartment building and assembly hall

Current Use: Apartment building and assembly hall

Zoning: SPD – SOMA South Park

PHOTOGRAPHS



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Page & Turnbull, San Francisco Filipino Heritage Addendum to the South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, March 13, 2013.

Habal, Estella. "Revolutionary Brotherhood and the Gran Oriente Filipino Masonic Organization in the U.S." *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association Annual Meeting, Renaissance Hotel, Washington D.C., 2014-11-28.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

San Francisco City and County

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All contemporary photography by Shannon Ferguson unless stated otherwise