



# DRAFT LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## Hotel Utah

Historically known as Hotel Aberdeen and Hotel Carnot

500-504 Street

DRAFT Article 10 Landmark Designation Report submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission March 21, 2018.

Landmark No. XXX

Cover: Hotel Utah, 2017

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.*

# Hotel Utah

## 500-504 4<sup>th</sup> Street

**Built:** 1908  
**Architects:** J.F. Deininger

### CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

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

*Architecture:* embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic value, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

### PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

1908-1947

The Period of Significance for Hotel Utah is 1908-1947 reflecting the year the building was constructed through the end of World War II when employment along the waterfront and in neighborhood industries declined and the need for housing in the South of Market Area diminished.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hotel Utah is a rare remaining example of the numerous residential hotels built in the South of Market neighborhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Constructed largely to house itinerant and seasonal workers employed in nearby factories, industries and along the waterfront, the hotel is emblematic of a pattern of the development in SoMa that began in the mid-1800s and continued through the post-1906 earthquake and fire reconstruction. The hotel is particularly notable for surviving the large-scale redevelopment of South of Market during the mid-twentieth century during which much of the building stock, including nearly all the residential hotels, dating to the period when the neighborhood served as the city's industrial and manufacturing center was razed. With its ornate millwork, rounded and angled bays, the Hotel Utah is also a striking example of Edwardian style architecture commonly employed in the design of residential hotel buildings constructed during the period.

# HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

## 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 span 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.<sup>1</sup> The South of Market area 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.<sup>2</sup>

Along with the construction of factories and warehouses, boarding and lodging houses sprang up to accommodate the employees of SoMa's growing industries.<sup>3</sup> From the 1860s through the 1920s, residential hotels were built in great numbers to house the increasing population of seasonal laborers and employees, primarily single men, of the nearby factories, mills, warehouses and along the waterfront.<sup>4</sup> One-quarter of the city's boarding houses and half of the city's 655 lodging houses were located South of Market by 1870. A great number of boarding houses and hotels were located along Mission Street between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> streets.

Typically built of wood-frame or brick masonry construction, residential hotels in SoMa were usually two to four stories in height and often had a raised basement level and flat roofs. Those erected after 1915 may have been built of reinforced concrete or steel frame construction with smooth stucco cladding. Most featured double-hung wood sash windows and Classical Revival design influences, particularly those of the Edwardian style, which include roofline cornices and the use of Classical motifs like "applied shield, cartouche and swag ornaments."<sup>5</sup> Residential hotels frequently housed a small hotel lobby and saloons or other commercial businesses on the first floor with the upper floors devoted to lodging.<sup>6</sup> They are dispersed throughout SoMa but most commonly found on corners south of Harrison Street or in close proximity to Mission and Howard Streets west of 5<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>7</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 22; Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA, March 16, 2015, 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA, March 16, 2015, 9-12.

<sup>4</sup> Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 44, 84; "South of Market Building up Rapidly," *The Call*, 11/09/1912; Dineen, J.K. *High Spirits: the Legacy Bars of San Francisco*. Berkeley: Heyday, 2015, 72.

<sup>5</sup> Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 48-49.

<sup>6</sup> Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 42-43; Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA, March 16, 2015, 11; Groth, Paul. *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, 154-155.

<sup>7</sup> Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 48-49.

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.<sup>8</sup> SoMa was only a temporary home for many, but not all the residents were seasonal laborers living in boarding houses and residential hotels. 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 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, Bryant and Harrison streets, adjacent to the site of the future Hotel Utah, was primarily row houses and two-story residences.<sup>9</sup>

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 lodging houses and decimated the neighborhood's population.<sup>10</sup> Following the quake and fire, San Francisco again saw a massive influx of people as temporary workers arrived in the city to aid in the reconstruction. Prior to 1906, 20,000 seasonal building trade workers were employed in the city. Following the disaster that number rose to 60,000. Residential hotels, boarding and lodging houses were again in demand to house the growing labor force. New hotels were constructed in great numbers and many were located on large corner lots and followed the building plan consisting of first floor commercial space with lodging on the upper levels established in years prior to the quake. The newly arrived workers constructed fifty-eight hotels and eighty lodging houses by 1907, with the greatest concentration located between First, Sixth, Market and Bryant streets and the largest number along 3<sup>rd</sup>, Howard and Folsom streets.

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. 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. 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.<sup>11</sup>

A 1908 San Francisco *Chronicle* article reported that "the city has gone far enough with office buildings for the present and the real needs of the down-town district are lodging-houses and hotels." The article noted that prior to the quake several downtown streets were lined with "hotels and lodging houses above stores" and that the same type of building would "prove a profitable investment as compared with other buildings." The article went on to state that investors from outside San Francisco were putting their money in new construction and cited JF Deininger, identified as a brewer from Vallejo, as one example.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 25-26, 37.

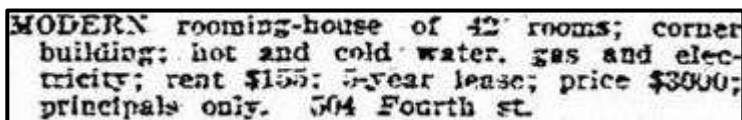
<sup>9</sup> Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA, March 16, 2015, 12; Averbach, Alvin, *San Francisco's South of Market District, 1850-1950: The Emergence of Skid Row*, California Historical Quarterly, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Fall, 1973), 204.

<sup>10</sup> Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA, March 16, 2015, 11, 26-28; Groth, 153; Dineen, 72; Averbach, 204.

### Architect and Architecture

JF Deininger purchased a lot on the southwest corner of Fourth and Bryant streets and “intends to build a hotel with stores beneath.”<sup>12</sup> Deininger may be a member of the Vallejo brewing family of the same name, but is identified in records related to 500-504 4<sup>th</sup> Street and in several city directories as an architect or architectural engineer. Further research is necessary to determine the breadth of Deininger’s career as little biographical information was uncovered during the writing of this report. In 1908, Deininger purchased the property from the estate of Ellen Ruddy for \$12,100. He designed and built a wood-frame four story building with 43 lodging rooms, and following the common pattern for residential hotels and as noted in the *Chronicle*, three commercial spaces were located on the ground floor.<sup>13</sup>



MODERN rooming-house of 42 rooms; corner building; hot and cold water, gas and electricity; rent \$155; 5-year lease; price \$3000; principals only. 504 Fourth st.

1909 San Francisco Chronicle advertisement for 504 4<sup>th</sup> Street

### Edwardian Architectural Style

Many residential hotels constructed immediately after the earthquake were designed in styles popular during the Edwardian era. 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.<sup>14</sup> 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. In San Francisco, the term “Edwardian” is often associated with multi-unit flats or apartment buildings constructed at the beginning of the 20th century. 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. Residential hotels constructed after the earthquake and fire often included rounded corner bay windows, angled bay windows and projecting cornices characteristic of the Edwardian period. Frequently they had centrally located entrances accessing a lobby with stairs to the upper floors. The Hotel Utah, with its prominent rounded corner bay, projecting cornice and canted bay windows, exhibits typical characteristics of the Edwardian style.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Eastern Money for the City, San Francisco Chronicle, April 4, 1908, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 42-43; Groth, 154-155; DPR 523A, 1997, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> San Francisco Preservation Bulletin No. 18, Residential and Commercial Architectural Periods and Styles in San Francisco, January 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 55-56.

### Hotel Aberdeen and Hotel Carnot

The hotel operated initially under the name Hotel Aberdeen. By 1916 it was known as the Hotel Carnot and by 1945 the name had been changed to the Hotel Utah.<sup>16</sup> Census and city directory listings indicate the largely single male occupants of the hotel were employed as skilled and semi-skilled workers. In 1910, the fifteen tenants listed in the census were a mix of American and European born men and one woman.<sup>17</sup> The 1920 census lists 32-year-old Margaret Engle as the hotel manager and her husband Clarence as an electrician for the railroad. Listed occupations of the tenants include peddlers, ropemakers, clerks, mechanics and laborers.<sup>18</sup> Early occupants of the ground floor commercial spaces included a barber and a saloon, O'Connor and Faherty's, which operated from the building for several years. Saloon owner Michael Faherty resided at the hotel part of the time the bar was in operation.<sup>19</sup> Commercial operations in the building weren't limited to the ground floor. According to newspaper advertisements, a manicure and massage parlor operated out of hotel rooms as early as 1908.<sup>20</sup>

electrician	Railroad	3
Hotel Manager		0A
Shipfitter	Ship work	3
Laborer	general	3
Laborer	Pipe Mill	3
Laborer	Warehouse	3
Mechanic	Work shop	3
Druggist	Truck driver	3
Barber	Warehouse	3
Electrician	general	3
Iron Worker	Iron shop	3
Laborer	Gasworks	3
none		
Laborer	warehouse	3

1920 census record listing occupations of hotel tenants

The hotel was located in an ideal location for the employees of the ever-expanding number of factories and warehouses in SoMa. A 1912 article in *The Call* noted the section of Fourth Street from Mission to Harrison Street, a few blocks from the site of the hotel, formerly populated by “cheap hotels, poor tenements and small squalid homes,” was developing into an area of “costly factories and tall steel frame hotels.” The article remarked on the convenience of Fourth Street to “all the big factories and warehouses along Third, Second and First streets and the wholesale district extending down to the waterfront. The immediate neighborhood of Fourth Street is also becoming a factory center.” Many of the new and existing industrial and commercial operations were within walking distance of the hotel and employed hundreds of people. At the time of the article’s publication, the Shreve factory was under construction near the hotel and reportedly could to employ as many as 500 people. According to *The Call*, in anticipation of its opening and to accommodate the other growing businesses, a large garage was built on 4<sup>th</sup> at Harrison to accommodate employees’ cars.<sup>21</sup>

SoMa remained a housing center for temporary and seasonal workers during much of World War I, but with the mechanization of the workplace and the shift to automobile and truck transport from the

<sup>16</sup> Crocker-Langley San Francisco Directory 1916, 1945.

<sup>17</sup> DPR 523A, 1997, 2009; 1910 United States Census

<sup>18</sup> DPR 523A, 1997, 2009; 1920 United States Census; 1923 City Directory

<sup>19</sup> Crocker-Langley San Francisco Directory 1916, 1945.

<sup>20</sup> San Francisco Chronicle, November 11, 1908, 13.

<sup>21</sup> “South of Market Building up Rapidly,” *The Call*, 11/09/1912.

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, as opposed to short term or seasonal workers, allowed for commuting longer distances and the need for downtown housing decreased. As historian Paul Groth notes, “suburban employment surged for people with cars.” 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 in housing and residential occupation. No rooming or boarding houses were constructed in downtown San Francisco following World War I.<sup>22</sup>

Following World War II, SoMa remained a neighborhood of 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. Urban renewal projects conceived in the 1950s and carried out over the course of more than four decades, decimated the residential hotel stock in the city as blocks were cleared for the construction of the complex of buildings that make up the Yerba Buena Center. Today, newly arrived families make up a large proportion of hotel residents and well as retired Asian laborers who live in hotels seasonally.<sup>23</sup>

### Hotel Utah

The Hotel Utah remained in operation as South of Market evolved. Beginning in the late 1930s a saloon owned and operated by Ernest Pelli known as the Transbay Café, in reference to the nearby ramps to the recently constructed Bay Bridge, was located in the hotel (1943 directory). According to local lore, it was during the 1930s the antique bar was installed in the building.<sup>24</sup> Al Opatz purchased the saloon from Pelli in 1945 and re-named it Al’s Trans-Bay. The bar catered to blue-collar workers and was frequented by the Delta Club, a duck hunting club, whose members included the Joe Dimaggio’s brothers. Dimaggio, Marilyn Monroe and Bing Cosby were also known to frequent the bar.



Hotel Utah, 2017

Opatz sold the building in 1977 to movie producer and screenwriter Paul Gaer. Gaer expanded the bar so it occupied the two other ground floor commercial spaces and renamed it the Hotel Utah. The saloon hosted a wide range of internationally known musicians and stand-up comedians including Robin Williams, PJ Harvey, Whoopi Goldberg, Guns N’ Roses. Gaer transformed the hotel rooms from spaces long occupied by drug dealers into residences for artists and musicians. During Gaer’s ownership the bar became a central gathering place for photographers working at New Lab, a photo

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<sup>22</sup> Groth, 182, 270.

<sup>23</sup> Groth, 11 156; Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009, 67.

<sup>24</sup> DPR 5234A, 1997.



lab located across the street. The management accommodated the daily crowd of photographers by installing lightboxes behind the bar so their patrons edit their work while enjoying a drink.<sup>25</sup>

During the 1990, 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.<sup>26</sup>

## **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 building has undergone some external modifications since construction, including changes to the storefront window openings and entrances on the ground floor, and the loss of a dome that capped the corner bay, but the alterations do not impact the overall integrity of the building's design, materials, and workmanship. The first floor storefront alterations

As it was historically, 500-504 4<sup>th</sup> Street is largely surrounded by one to three-story largely industrial buildings. Numerous structures were demolished during for the construction of the Interstate 80 ramp located across from the hotel on Bryant Street. The building remains in its original location and continues to function as a residential hotel with a saloon on the ground floor. Overall, the exterior of the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its original use, design, and period of construction.

## **BOUNDARIES OF THE LANDMARK SITE**

Encompassing all of and limited to Lot 001 in Assessor's Block 3007.

## **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. Character-defining features include all primary exterior elevations, form, massing, structure, architectural ornament and materials identified as:

- Four-story, rectangular building plan
- Wood tongue and groove siding
- Finishes, including painted siding and millwork
- Existing window and door openings on the street facing (north and east) elevations
- Angled and rounded bays
- Flat roof with projecting bracketed cornice with egg and dart and dentil molding

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<sup>25</sup> Dineer, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Page & Turnbull, South of Market Historic Context Statement, San Francisco, CA, June 30, 2009,1.

- Pediments above bay windows
- Molding and ornamental millwork surrounding windows and located on bays
- One-over-one double hung wood windows with ogee lugs
- Brackets beneath second floor bays
- Multi-lite transom on north and east elevations (currently obstructed by awnings)

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

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

Page & Turnbull, Central SoMa Historic Context Statement and Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA, March 16, 2015.

Groth, Paul. Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

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

Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Records, 500-504 Fourth Street, July 16, 1997; June 2009.

San Francisco City Directories

U.S. Census

*San Francisco Chronicle*

*The Call*

South of Market Area Historic Resource Survey, San Francisco, CA,

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

**Historic Name:** Hotel Aberdeen, Hotel Carnot, Hotel Utah

**Address:** 500-504 4<sup>th</sup> Street

**Block and Lot:** 3777/001

**Owner:** Hotel Utah Investments LLC

**Original Use:** Residential Hotel and Commercial

**Current Use:** Hotel Commercial

**Zoning:** SLI – SOMA Service – Light Industrial

PHOTOGRAPHS



*Hotel Carnot, 1923, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley*



*Hotel Utah, 2017*



*Hotel Utah, 2017*



*Hotel Utah, 2017*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **San Francisco City and County**

Mark E. Farrell, Mayor

Jane Kim, District 6 Supervisor

### *Historic Preservation Commissioners*

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Vice-President: Aaron Jon Hyland

Commissioners:

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Diane Matsuda

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Desiree Smith, Senior Planner, Shannon Ferguson, Senior Planner

### **Photography**

All contemporary photography by Planning Department staff unless stated otherwise