THE FOUNDATION FOR SAN FRANCISCO'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

SOUTH OF MARKET STREET
A BRIEF GUIDE TO ITS ARCHITECTURE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

San Francisco reflects the general rule that industry locates on flat land while residences tend to cluster on hills; that the steeper the topography, the higher the income of the inhabitants. As the city developed, Nob Hill, Pacific Heights, and originally Rincon Hill, were well-to-do areas. Neighborhoods with names ending in Hollow, Valley or Flat were occupied by the less affluent. As the flattest region of the city, the area south of Market Street attracted industry and, inevitably, housing for its workers.

Before 1848, not only did the area have few inhabitants, a good third of it did not exist. When Yankees arrived in large numbers in the late 1840s and early 1850s, their main settlement developed around Portsmouth Square. At that time, not only did today's South of Market area have very few inhabitants, a good third of it was under the Bay. In addition, a swamp stretched westward from the base of Rincon Hill, then one hundred feet high, to a point near the present intersection of Seventh and Market. Nonetheless, it was during this time that South of Market's basic design feature was fixed by City Surveyor Jasper O'Farrell, when he laid out the blocks four times larger than those to the north.

One of the few variations in O'Farrell's grid was developed in 1854 by George Gordon who, hoping to recreate the great London crescents, laid out an oval park in the center of the block bounded by Bryant, Brannan, Second, and Third. Known as South Park, Gordon erected brick mansions in an English urban style. The development never flourished in spite of the area's sunny climate, for with increasing industrial development, the wealthy moved to other sections of the city.

Originally constructed in 1907 for Max Schmidt's lithograph company, the five-story building features all the architectural elements associated with its type: an open bay on the side for a railroad spur; simple reinforced concrete construction of piers and lintels; minimal classical cornice and decoration at the entrance; and, originally, industrial sash windows. Built as an envelope factory, it was one of several large industrial buildings constructed after railroad tracks were laid on Second Street, demonstrating the close relationship between these buildings and the extensive transportation network of South of Market.


This recently rehabilitated industrial loft building features all the architectural elements associated with its type: an open bay on the side for a railroad spur; simple reinforced concrete construction of piers and lintels; minimal classical cornice and decoration at the entrance; and, originally, industrial sash windows. Built as an envelope factory, it was one of several large industrial buildings constructed after railroad tracks were laid on Second Street, demonstrating the close relationship between these buildings and the extensive transportation network of South of Market.


Originally constructed in 1907 for Max Schmidt's lithograph company, the five story and tower portion was added in 1919. Schmidt's firm, established in 1873, was one of the largest on the Pacific Coast. It specialized in labels for California canned goods, although its largest single job was for 10,000 twenty-four-sheet posters of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition's Tower of Jewels. The 1907 section on Sterling Street has not been altered and still features the original S-shaped...
Romanesque style derived from the much earlier ornate as well as architectural interest and remains a functioning monument to the City's important determinant of industrial structures' design. The fire insurance rates assigned different materials and construction methods. In 1908, when this warehouse was built, a minimum insurance rate was obtained through the use of 12-16 inch thick brick walls, metal doors and window surrounds, and special 9-inch thick wooden floors made of planks spiked solidly together. Beyond these purely technical requirements, the architect was free to design using a variety of architectural styles, often classical, but in this case in a castellated and semi-medieval mode. The original design was even more massive and Gothic in appearance with the fenestration limited to a row of flat-arched windows between the bays on the ground floor (three of which remain), windows opening onto the fire escapes, and the slit windows to each side. Even the large garage openings with their massive appearance and decoration reinforce the medieval imagery of the building, an uncommon but inappropriate style for a warehouse.

This warehouse was the first in the city to incorporate a high degree of resistance design and construction. Its architect achieved this effect through a solid ground floor supporting well-proportioned bays separated by stylized Tuscan pilasters and surmounted by a simple entablature and cornice. When it was originally constructed for the local branch of the Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company, the building was considered the most complete and up-to-date in the world. Constructed of flat slab reinforced concrete, the interior walls were lined with white glazed tile to add to the appearance of cleanliness.

Like most city-owned and designed buildings of the period, Pumphouse Station No. 1 was designed in a classical style, reflecting the ideals of the City Beautiful movement as promulgated by Albert Lansburgh. The building's 12-20 inch thick brick walls and small, widely spaced windows were somewhat old-fashioned for its day. These features generally distinguished warehouses where light and air, the need for防晒, and visibility, were as important as in other industrial structures.

The incorporation of a stylized Doric order complete with dentilized cornice, triglyphs and metopes in the fifth story windows and cornice reflect Lansburgh's academic training.
665 Sixth Street, Blaisdell Building, 1908, Nathaniel Blaisdell.

The original owner of this magnificent warehouse/industrial building was Charles Blaisdell, who came to California in 1850. By 1890, Blaisdell was the largest fruit dealer in San Francisco, and his warehouse/industrial building was one of the largest in the area. The building was constructed in 1908, and it features a four-story brick headquarters building constructed in 1908. The ground floor consists of segmentally arched loading docks with keystones made of narrow and irregular bricks.

A belt course separates this floor from the store above, which consists of triple windows between piers surrounded by capitalless shafts, frieze, cornice and parapet. The brickwork is laid in Flemish bond with the header bricks glazed a darker color to add additional visual interest to the façade. Soon after the construction of this building, reinforced concrete became the material of choice for warehouse and industrial buildings. 665 Sixth Street thus represents a late and superb example of brick industrial design in San Francisco.

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commissioned to design parks, industrial buildings, even bridges, thus creating a semblance of order out of the chaotic late nineteenth-century urban landscape. While relying on the most advanced engineering, in this case fireproof construction of steel frame and brick walls, the architect incorporated traditional architectural elements, proportions and massing. This building has a rusticated base with grand classical entrance, undifferentiated shaft with beltcourse, brackets and, originally, a cornice and parapet.

The warehouse was constructed for Baker and Hamilton, importers and jobbers of hardware, agricultural implements, vehicles, bicycles, crockery, outfittings and supplies, engines, boilers, etc. The building features an impressive pilastered colonnade with a central entrance. The side and rear elevations consist of more traditional buttressed 12-16 inch-thick brick walls with segmentally arched windows and parapets.

Although constructed of brick with walls 16-20 inches thick, this building has windows almost as large as those common in reinforced concrete structures. The segmentally arched windows were necessary to span the large width of the bays. The architect was an important academic designer of the early twentieth century.

27] 385 Bryant Street, Schmidt Lithograph Plant, 1924, Maurice Coochet and Jesse Rosenfeld.
This four-story reinforced concrete industrial plant uses Gothic-derived ornamentation. It was originally constructed for the Schmidt Lithograph Company. In addition to the fifty-foot tower, notable details included the griffins with shields squaring on the beltcourse, pilaster colonnade with a central entrance. The above the ground floor, fleur de lys ornaments, and Gothic tracery in the parapet and fourth-floor windows. This medieval decoration was probably designed by Coochet, an engineer of French descent, and easily adorns an entirely modern building.

One of the best recent rehabilitation and conversion to office uses South of Market, 539 Bryant was originally the factory for the San Francisco jewelry firm of Shreve and Co. The building is somewhat unusual in having a high two-story arched base supporting a mere two stories crowned with a prominent cornice. A compatible new entrance to the rear light court of this U-shaped building provides a spectacular view of the new duct work and the superstructure of the huge U-shaped sign on the roof.

When this three-story reinforced concrete building was constructed it contained the most advanced engineering features of the time including flat slab construction, freight and passenger elevators, spiral merchandise chutes and a railroad spur line. The top floor contained a kitchen, rest room and recreation room for employees.

Constructed in 1893 as the steam power plant for the Market Street Railway and expanded in 1895, this building was downsized to a substation in 1911 and became outdated by the 1920s. In 1927, for example, the same amount of power could be generated in 5% of the space of the 1900s plant. Nevertheless, the power plant is a monument to the city's public transit system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The architectural style of the building is Romanesque with powerful arched openings set into relatively undorned brick walls 20 inches thick. A simple cornice, parapet and corner tower complete the design and conceal the multigabled roofs and skylights.
grow with the expansion of the automotive industry, achieving its peak in the 1920s when Kleiber constructed this two-story reinforced concrete assembly plant, the largest west of Chicago, and purchased land in Atlanta, Georgia for an even grander factory. Kleiber trucks were exported to Australia, Russia, Hawaii and elsewhere, and had a very good reputation for sturdiness and reliability. Unfortunately, this reputation did not enable the company to survive the Depression. Worth an estimated $5,000,000 in 1929, Kleiber's estate was valued at $1,000 in 1939 when he died. The company he founded has long since vanished, but the building remains, a monument to the automobile industry of the 1920s.


This may be the earliest surviving brewery building in the city, constructed just before the earthquake, then reconstructed immediately afterwards. The Jackson Brewery Company was founded by Thomas Green in the 1850s at 235 First Street, and taken over by William Frederick in 1868. He moved the plant to 1428 Mission in 1872, and to this site in 1906. The building is in a Romanesque style and was originally five stories tall on both the Folsom and Eleventh Street wings (now two stories). The corner. This portion contained the offices and, to the south on Eleventh, the brew house, stock house, wash house, loading platform. The Folsom Street wing contained the barley and malt, kiln and engine house. At the rear of the lot was the bottling house. The cold storage cellars held 20,000 barrels, and the plant had a capacity of producing 45,000 bottles of beer a day.


This 1929 design by Dodge A. Riedy for the San Francisco Galvanizing Works incorporates at least one smaller wood and corrugated iron structure designed by Rogers in 1913. The 1929 remodeling has been described as in a "Jules Verne/Buck Rogers" style and is a rare example of iron-clad construction combined with period graphics.

34] 1275 Harrison Street, Gladding, McBean and Company Bldg., 1936, Gladding, McBean and Company.

Founded in Chicago in 1875 Gladding McBean moved to Placer County, California the same year. Their first product was vitrified sewer pipes for San Francisco. The company rapidly added other clay products including architectural ornamentation. Terra cotta manufacturers like Gladding, McBean and Company played a key role in San Francisco's architecture in that it allowed architects to design classically ornamented buildings, knowing that the necessary decorative elements would be available. By 1943, Gladding, McBean had nine plants, 300 kilns and 2,000 employees. Their main showrooms and headquarters was built in 1936, and demonstrated the company's diverse products. Tall windows flanked by fluted pilasters of warm grey ceramic veneer and blue spandrels not only allowed a great deal of light to the showrooms interiors but displayed the company's fine wares. The Windsor shingle tiles on the roof, the lions heads in the spandrels, even the classical urns with Greek bas-relief figures were all products of the company's designers. Gladding, McBean continues to be a source for terra cotta ornament and has made numerous restoration efforts possible.

35] 1440 Harrison Street, Harrison School, 1920/1929, John Reid, Jr.

Now sadly neglected, the Harrison School was designed by the most important school architect of the 1910s and 1920s—John Reid, Jr. It is in a Romanesque Revival style with a three-story central block pierced by a large arched window and flanked by two-story wings with arched windows on the ground floor. The central entrance with terra cotta swan's neck pediment and urn is particularly fine. A three-story brick addition was appended to the west side of the building in 1929. More recently, the interiors were partitioned and largely destroyed.
36] 7 Heron Street, Metropolitan Laundry Company Power House, c. 1907, Frederick H. Meyer.

The facade of this industrial building features giant triple arches with keystones and round medallions. A fire-proof building with 12-inch thick brick walls, it originally contained underground fuel oil tanks. Six very large water tanks on the roof connected to a centrifugal power pump. Although the classical treatment of the facade clashed with the utilitarian water tanks and original chimney, it represented the ideal of the City Beautiful movement to fit industrial structures into the fabric of the city.

37] 335 Howard Street, Home Telephone Company Building/Dettmer's Printing House, 1907, Coxhead and Coxhead.

This grey-green Colusa sandstone building is a sophisticated and almost entirely unaltered design by an important early twentieth century San Francisco architectural firm. Coxhead and Coxhead also designed the Home Telephone Company's main building at 333 Grant Street the same year. As with that building, they incorporated oversized elements—particularly the volute over the storefront, the wide third story windows and cornice—in a classical Renaissance design. These give an air of monumentality to what would otherwise have been a modest commercial building.

38] 1035 Howard Street, Eng-Skell Co. Building, 1930, A.C. Griewank, engineer.

The Eng-Skell extracts and soda fountain company constructed this reinforced concrete industrial-style building with dramatic Art Deco pylons in 1930. Notable details include the central pediment and door frame.


From 1907 to his death in 1937, James H. Hjul designed many South of Market industrial buildings. He variously described himself as civil engineer, contractor, structural engineer, and builder. His work was characterized by careful attention to detail, an emphasis on delicacy of line and lightening of structural members for refinement of proportions. 1049 Howard Street is an excellent example of his skills with its attenuated piers, large areas of glass, classical details and elegant proportions.

40] 1097 Howard Street, San Francisco Association for the Blind, 1925, Henry H. Meyers.

Originally called the Blindcroft Building, 1097 Howard was constructed by the Cowell Estate and given to the San Francisco Association for the Blind. A reinforced concrete building in a Gothic style with industrial sash windows, it is distinguished by an elaborate terra cotta entry framed.

41] 1126 Howard Street, Harband Building, 1930, A.C. Griswold, engineer.

A typical South of Market industrial form, this building has a highly unusual Art Deco facade. Without intruding on the almost entirely glass facade, the design gives depth, texture, and decorative interest, all of which is achieved with ordinary materials and workmanship. The Harband Building is a late and very interesting example of industrial building design in San Francisco.

42] 1234 Howard Street, Guilfoyl Cornice Works, 1924.

The Guilfoyl Cornice Works has produced architectural elements for many San Francisco buildings in the century since its founding in 1887. Logically, the company's headquarters displays its products on the building's facade: giant fluted pilasters, Renaissance panels, egg-and-dart molding, dentils and parapet, all in galvanized iron.

43] 1380 Howard Street, George W. Haus and Sons Candy Factory, 1927, Willis G. Thennes.

This reinforced concrete building features some very fine classical details, particularly around the arched entries and above the cornice at the corners.

44] 1401 Howard Street, St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, 1913, John J. Foley.

St. Joseph's Church is an important architectural, cultural and historical landmark in its South of Market area. The parish was founded in 1861 and parish schools were established on the site in 1867. The church has provided educational facilities since. The church served the predominately Irish and working class neighborhood well into the twentieth century when a new wave of Catholic immigrants, Filipinos, took the place of the older European immigrants. St. Joseph's, like the Greek Church of the Holy Trinity, is a microcosm of the traditional function of South of Market in assimilating immigrants into the fabric of American culture.

The thousand-seat church is a fine late example of the Romanesque style with certain elements derived from the Spanish Missions. Twin towers capped by gleaming gold domes flank a triple-arched entrance and large rose windows. The interior follows the usual cruciform plan with arcaded aisles, vaulted ceilings, coffered apse, organ loft, oak pews and stained glass.

45] 1415 Howard Street, St. Joseph's Rectory, 1924.

The rectory is a symmetrical, classical building with pediment over the central door. The open space and greenery provided by the adjoining garden is important in the streetscape.


When constructed, the San Francisco Chronicle proclaimed this dairy processing building "one of the finest and best equipped in the West." Constructed in the hygienic streamlined Modernist style of the 1930s with tower, horizontal and vertical strips of glass blocks, and curved parapet above the main entrance, the building was owned and operated by Marin County farmers.
Historical context and architectural significance of buildings in the South of Market area of San Francisco.

**47) 1 McOppin Street, Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Exchange Building, 1935.**

Designed by the building department of Pacific Telephone and Telegraph, this good example of the Art Deco style of the mid-1930s uses traditional materials—brick and terra cotta. It attempts modernity in the strong verticality of the piers and the ahistorical ornamentation.

**48) 322-26 Ritch Street, Morgan Oyster Co. Stables, 1906, Edward J. Vogel.**

Oyster growing was once a profitable industry in San Francisco Bay and the Morgan Oyster Company, established in the 1850s, was one of the most important companies in the business. Increased oil in the Bay, dumped by the growing number of ships, doomed the industry. In 1921 the company was forced to suspend operations. This substantial brick building with pilasters and corbelled cornice was originally used as stables, then as a feed mill in the 1920s, and by 1980 for industrial purposes.

**49) 1 South Park, Tobacco Company of California Building, 1912, William H. Crim, Jr.**

Although South Park began as a well-to-do residential area, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it had become an industrial district. 1 South Park, originally constructed for the Tobacco Company of California, is representative. The building has a Santa Cruz white cement exterior, galvanized iron cornice, and industrial sand windows. Because of its style and distinctive design, the structure functions as a visual anchor to the Second and Brannan Streets area.

**50) 166-78 Townsend Street, California Electric Light Company, 1888, Percy and Hamilton.**

This extremely rare remaining example of South of Market industrial architecture dating from the 1880s was constructed as a plant for the California Electric Light Company. Designed by the prominent nineteenth century architectural firm of Percy and Hamilton, the front half of this brick building was originally three stories and the rear half one to two-stories high. A 150-foot octagonal brick smoke stack dominates the design and serves as a visual landmark in the area. The interior originally contained boilers in the rear section and thirteenth dynamics in the front half.

**51) 180 Townsend Street, California Wine Association Building, 1906/1921, Frederick H. Meyer.**

Originally a two-story building constructed early in 1906, the California Wine Association warehouse survived the earthquake and fire which destroyed or badly damaged most of the surrounding structures as well as the Association's other cellars. This building was then used as both the organization's headquarters and bottling plant.

**52) 310 Townsend Street, Crocker Warehouse, 1901, Frank S. Van Trees.**

This handsome brick building, originally constructed by Charles and Jennie Crocker for WJ Sloane, survived the earthquake and fire of 1906. Its only decoration is the corbelled brickwork at the cornice and the segmentally arched windows. The ground floor on Townsend Street has been remediated, but probably has round arched openings similar to those still existing on the Bluxome Street facade. It has recently been converted to offices.

**53) 340-60 Townsend Street, W.P. Fuller and Company Warehouse, 1905, Wright, Beachfort and Cahill.**

The W.P. Fuller Co., parent of Fuller O'Brien Paints, played a leading role in the provision of paint, oils, mirror and glass beginning in the 1860s, eventually becoming the preeminent such firm on the West Coast. When the San Francisco-based company constructed this building in 1906, the San Francisco Chronicle noted that the architects provided "for the largest possible floor area, unusual strength, economy in cost and the most rapid construction." The two-story building had a total of 60,000 square feet, with a gallery on both floors. Although of standard brick construction reinforced with steel and iron tie rods, the architects incorporated modern features such as concrete floors on the first story, a sauceth roof covered with tin, and wired glass in metal frames. Traditional elements include the rusticated pilasters, belt course and simple cornicé.

**54) 310 Townsend Street, California Wine Association Building, 1906/1921, Frederick H. Meyer.**

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by the late 1860s, Second Street had been cut through Rincon Hill and the earth used to fill Mission Bay. First Street then contained a mixture of boarding houses for sailors, Irish saloons, gas works, boiler works, and saloons. Its character in that era is reflected in the works of Jack London, born a few blocks from Rincon Hill on Third Street in 1876. "South of the Slot," he wrote, consisted of "factories, slums, laundries, machine shops, boiler works and the abodes of the working class."

Employment opportunities were concentrated in low-skill manual and industrial work. Industry was located in several well-defined areas, with warehouses particularly prominent on the waterfront. These were crucial to the prosperous city of a century that saw 1900 processed 99% of all merchandize imported into the Pacific states and 83% of all exports. The largest warehousing company and employer was the Haslett Company. Several of the Company's warehouses survive.

The 1870s saw the proliferation of inexpensive lodging houses, especially on Mission between Third and Nineth. At that time, South of Market contained one-quarter of the City's boarding houses, and fully one-half of its 655 lodging houses.

Because of the relatively large number of working men and unemployed, South of Market was the scene of repeated labor demonstrations. The year after Jack London was born a small group of employed men gathered at Fifth and Mission in an anti-Chinese and anti-capitalist demonstration. Union Hall on Howard between Third and Fourth was frequently the site of mass meetings by the Workmen's Party of California during the depression of the late 1870s.

South of Market has continued to be the location of numerous labor and charitable organizations. For example, the first Salvation Army Institute was established at Howard and New Montgomery, a block from the emerging "skid row" between Third and Fourth. Their Industrial and Social Department followed on Harrison between Fourth and Fifth. The Industrial Workers of the World maintained their headquarters in the area between 1912 and the mid-1920s, and the Sailors' Union constructed a modern building at 450 Harrison even later in 1950.

In both good times and bad, church parishes in the area performed an important role. The oldest remaining is St. Patrick's, the largest of four Roman Catholic churches constructed to serve the needs of the predominantly Irish area. In addition, there were five German Protestant churches, four Swedish, two
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The development of transportation South of Market has also been a significant influence in creating what we see in the area today. The 1860s and 1870s saw the completion of the Southern Pacific railroad network with a terminal at Third and Townsend. To avoid a Southern Pacific monopoly of transportation facilities at the port, construction began on the publicly-owned Belt Line railroad in 1890. By the time it was completed after the turn of the century, it linked piers from China Basin to Fort Mason. Surviving portions of the line can be found at Townsend and the Babcock-Wheeler. Work on a seawall, begun in 1878, continued until completed in 1929. Further additions to the transportation network occurred in the 1910s and 1920s when spur tracks were laid in response to increased heavy industrial development.

"To avoid an SP monopoly . . . at the Port, construction began on the publicly owned Belt Line Railroad . . ."

As with other areas of San Francisco, the 1906 earthquake and fire had a dramatic effect. However, here damage from the tremor was more severe because so much of the area was built upon unstable fill. What the earthquake spared was destroyed in the fires that ignited among the crowded wood shanties that filled the small lots between the industrial buildings.

Efforts to stop the blaze were concentrated north of Market with the exception of the Mint and the Post Office. Few other structures, most of them warehouses on the waterfront and buildings below Townsend Street, survived south of Market. After the disaster, the area was quickly cleared and the debris dumped behind the new section of the seawall at the foot of King and Townsend Streets.

The fire not only destroyed nearly all of the buildings south of Market, it also led to an irreversible change in the area's character. At the time of the earthquake, housing and industry were still mixed throughout the area, as they had been from the 1850s. After the fire, the district was reconstructed primarily as an industrial area with residential development largely limited to lodging houses west of Fifth Street serving the increasingly single, male and transient population. From 1900 to 1910, population declined from 62,000 to 24,000, and by 1920, 80% were male.

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The 1905 Burnham Plan had recommended a system of warehouses next to the piers and wharves linked by railroad tracks and broad roadways to the adjacent manufacturing district, thence to the wholesale and, finally, the retail districts. It also proposed an Outer Boulevard along the seawall where all residents, especially those of moderate means who lived in the area, could find "renewal and benefit." In the rebuilding, however, this portion of the plan was not implemented. Eighty years later in 1985, the Department of City Planning has made the same recommendation.

South of Market became increasingly industrial in the 1920s. Rincon Hill was razed to create fifteen additional blocks for industrial use. Spur rails were laid and large developers boosted the area as the most logical for jobbing, warehousing and light manufacturing. Simultaneously, the remaining earlier Irish and northern European immigrant population largely deserted the area.

The defeat of the Redevelopment Agency plan to demolish the Willia Polk-designed Jessie Street Substation was the first major victory for The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage. More recently, Heritage, working with other community organizations, appears to have been successful in also saving the William Building at 3rd and Mission and the Jessie Hotel, both within the redevelopment area. During the 1980s, Heritage will continue to work to preserve other significant structures identified by our surveys.

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