



Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR

December 1, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager
Submitted by: Jordan Klein, Interim Director, Planning and Development Department
Subject: LPO NOD: 2136-2154 San Pablo Avenue/#LMIN2020-0004

INTRODUCTION

The attached Notice of Decision (NOD) for the Landmarks Designation is presented to the Mayor and City Council pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code/Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (BMC/LPO) Section 3.24.160, which requires that “a copy of the Notice of Decision shall be filed with the City Clerk and the City Clerk shall present said copy to the City Council at its next regular meeting.”

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Landmark Preservation Commission (LPO/Commission) has designated the subject property as a City Landmark.

BACKGROUND

BMC/LPO Section 3.24.190 allows the Council to review any action of the Commission in granting or denying Landmark, Structure of Merit or Historic District status. In order for Council to review the decision on its merits, Council must appeal the NOD. To do so, a Councilmember must move this Information Item to Action and then move to “certify” the decision. Such action must be taken within 15 days from the mailing of the NOD or by December 1, 2020. Such certification to Council shall stay all proceedings in the same manner as the filing of an appeal.

If the Council chooses to appeal the action of the Commission, then a public hearing will be set within 25 days pursuant to BMC/LPO Section 3.24.300. The Council must then rule on the designation within 30 days from the date that the public hearing is opened or the decision of the Commission is automatically deemed affirmed.

Unless the Council wishes to review the determination of the Commission and make its own decision, the attached NOD is deemed received and filed.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Landmark designation provides opportunities for the adaptive re-use and rehabilitation of historic resources within the City. The rehabilitation of these resources, rather than

their removal, achieves construction and demolition waste diversion, and promotes investment in existing urban centers.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

The Council may choose to certify or appeal the decision to grant designation status, setting the matter for public hearing at a future date.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

There are no known fiscal impacts associated with this designation action.

CONTACT PERSON

Fatema Crane, Landmarks Preservation Commission Secretary, Planning and Development, 510-981-7410

Attachments:

1: Notice of Decision – #LMIN2020-004



L A N D M A R K S
P R E S E R V A T I O N
C O M M I S S I O N

N O T I C E O F D E C I S I O N

DATE OF BOARD DECISION: October 6, 2020

DATE NOTICE MAILED: November 16, 2020

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: December 1, 2020

EFFECTIVE DATE OF PERMIT (Barring Appeal or Certification): December 2, 2020¹

2136-54 San Pablo Avenue - The Borg Building

Landmark application (#LMSAP2020-0004) for consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation status for a single-story commercial building constructed in 1923 – APN 056-1977-011-01.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley, after conducting a public hearing, **APPROVED** the following request:

- City Landmark designation status, pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code Section 3.24.110

APPLICANT: Fran Cappelletti/Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, P. O. Box 1137, Berkeley, CA

ZONING DISTRICT: West Berkeley Commercial (C-W)

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS: Categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15061 of the CEQA Guidelines for Review for Exemption.

The application materials for this project are available online at:

<http://www.cityofberkeley.info/zoningapplications>

¹ Pursuant to BMC Section 3.24190, the City Council may “certify” any decision of the LPC for review, which has the same effect as an appeal. In most cases, the Council must certify the LPC decision during the 15-day appeal period. However, pursuant to BMC Section 1.04.070, if any portion of the appeal period falls within a Council recess, the deadline for Council certification is suspended until the first Council meeting after the recess, plus the number of days of the appeal period that occurred during the recess, minus one day. If there is no appeal or certification, the Use Permit becomes effective the day after the certification deadline has passed.

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
NOTICE OF DECISION
City Landmark designation status - #LMIN2020-0004
2136-54 – The Borg Building
November 16, 2020
Page 2 of 4

FINDINGS, CONDITIONS AND APPROVED PLANS ARE ATTACHED TO THIS NOTICE

COMMISSION VOTE: 5-0-3-1

YES: ABRANCHES DA SILVA, ADAMS, ALLEN, ENCHILL, FINACOM

NO: None

ABSTAIN: JOHNSON, MONTGOMERY, SCHWARTZ

ABSENT: CRANDALL

Note New Methods for Submitting Appeals during Shelter-In-Place Order

TO APPEAL THIS DECISION (see Section 3.24.300 of the Berkeley Municipal Code):

To appeal a decision of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to the City Council during the 2020 City Council Shelter-In-Place Order, you must:

1. Mail a letter clearly and concisely setting forth the grounds for the appeal with a check or money order for required fees to the City Clerk, located at 2180 Milvia Street, 1st Floor, Berkeley, 94704. The City Clerk's telephone number is (510) 981-6900.

OR

Alternatively, you may email your complete appeal and all attachments to the Planning Department at planning@cityofberkeley.info and include a telephone number where you can be reached during the day. Planning Department staff will call you within three business days to obtain payment information for the required fees by credit card *only*.

- a. Pursuant to BMC Section 3.24.300.A, an appeal may be taken to the City Council by the application of the owners of the property or their authorized agents, or by the application of at least fifty residents of the City aggrieved or affected by any determination of the commission made under the provisions of Chapter 3.24.
2. Submit the required fee (checks and money orders must be payable to 'City of Berkeley'):
 - a. The basic fee for persons other than the applicant is \$500. This fee may be reduced to \$100 if the appeal is signed by persons who lease or own at least 50 percent of the parcels or dwelling units within 300 feet of the project site, or at least 25 such persons (not including dependent children), whichever is less. Signatures collected per the filing requirement in BMC Section 3.24.300.A may be counted towards qualifying for the reduced fee, so long as the signers are qualified. The individual

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
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filing the appeal must clearly denote which signatures are to be counted towards qualifying for the reduced fee.

- b. The fee for appeals of affordable housing projects (defined as projects which provide 50 percent or more affordable units for households earning 80% or less of Area Median Income) is \$500, which may not be reduced.
- c. The fee for all appeals by Applicants is \$2500.
3. The appeal must be received prior to 5:00 p.m. on the "APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION" date shown above (if the close of the appeal period falls on a weekend or holiday, then the appeal period expires the following business day).

If no appeal is received, the landmark designation will be final on the first business day following expiration of the appeal period.

NOTICE CONCERNING YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS:

If you object to this decision, the following requirements and restrictions apply:

1. If you challenge this decision in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Landmarks Preservation Commission at, or prior to, the public hearing.
2. You must appeal to the City Council within fifteen (15) days after the Notice of Decision of the action of the Landmarks Preservation Commission is mailed. It is your obligation to notify the Land Use Planning Division in writing of your desire to receive a Notice of Decision when it is completed.
3. Pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6(b) and Government Code Section 65009(c)(1), no lawsuit challenging a City Council decision, as defined by Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6(e), regarding a use permit, variance or other permit may be filed more than ninety (90) days after the date the decision becomes final, as defined in Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6(b). Any lawsuit not filed within that ninety (90) day period will be barred.
4. Pursuant to Government Code Section 66020(d)(1), notice is hereby given to the applicant that the 90-day protest period for any fees, dedications, reservations, or other exactions included in any permit approval begins upon final action by the City, and that any challenge must be filed within this 90-day period.
5. If you believe that this decision or any condition attached to it denies you any reasonable economic use of the subject property, was not sufficiently related to a legitimate public purpose, was not sufficiently proportional to any impact of the project, or for any other reason constitutes a "taking" of property for public use without just compensation under the California or United States Constitutions, your appeal of this decision must including the following information:
 - A. That this belief is a basis of your appeal.

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- B. Why you believe that the decision or condition constitutes a "taking" of property as set forth above.
- C. All evidence and argument in support of your belief that the decision or condition constitutes a "taking" as set forth above.

If you do not do so, you will waive any legal right to claim that your property has been taken, both before the City Council and in court.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Communications to Berkeley boards, commissions or committees are public record and will become part of the City's electronic records, which are accessible through the City's website. **Please note: e-mail addresses, names, addresses, and other contact information are not required, but if included in any communication to a City board, commission or committee, will become part of the public record.** If you do not want your e-mail address or any other contact information to be made public, you may deliver communications via U.S. Postal Service or in person to the secretary of the relevant board, commission or committee. If you do not want your contact information included in the public record, please do not include that information in your communication. Please contact the secretary to the relevant board, commission or committee for further information.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Questions about the project should be directed to the project planner, Fatema Crane, at (510) 981-7410 or fcrane@cityofberkeley.info or lpc@cityofberkeley.info

ATTACHMENTS:

-
- 1. Findings and Conditions
 - 2. Landmark application



ATTEST: _____

Fatema Crane, Secretary
Landmarks Preservation Commission

Cc: City Clerk
Fran Cappelletti/Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, applicant
Cassandra Willis & Mary Blankstein, property owners
Justin Zucker/Reuben, Junius & Rose, LLP, property owners' representative

ATTACHMENT 1, PART 2

FINDINGS FOR DESIGNATION

OCTOBER 1, 2020

2136-2154 San Pablo Avenue – The Borg Building

Landmark application #LMIN2020-0004 for the consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation status for a single-story commercial building constructed in 1923 – APN 056-1977-011-01

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

City Landmark designation of the property at 2136-2154 San Pablo Avenue, The Borg Building

CEQA FINDINGS

1. The project is found to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Public Resources Code §21000, et seq.) pursuant to Section 15061.b.3 of the CEQA Guidelines (activities that can be seen with certainty to have no significant effect on the environment).

LANDMARK PRESERVATION ORDINANCE FINDINGS

2. Pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.110.A.1.b of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO), the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley (Commission) finds that the subject main building exhibits architectural merit as an example of the Classical Revival/Beaux-Arts architectural style during Berkeley's commercial development in the early decades of the 20th century. The extant building was constructed in 1923 and retains many of its character-defining features, including: horizontal massing; symmetrical façade; classical architectural forms and arrangements, such as pilasters featuring bases and Corinthian capitals, and a three-part decorative entablature spanning the length of the façade; ornamental building details, cast and crafted embellishments, and mosaic tile entryway floors, all reflective of classical design. The building is in fair condition and retains integrity of design, materials and workmanship.

FEATURES TO BE PRESERVED

This designation shall apply to the subject property and the following distinguishing feature of the main building shall be preserved, and missing features shall be restored to the extent possible:

1. Seven clerestory windows, six of them divided into 13 vertical rectangular panes surmounted by 13 square panes, and one divided into 7 vertical rectangular panes surmounted by 7 square panes.
2. Protruding and inset vertical and horizontal details on the front facade:
 - Nine square pilasters with Corinthian capitals and molded bases.
 - Architrave and frieze with shield motifs above the first and last pilasters and decorative festoons resembling garlands draped over rosettes above each interior pilaster.
 - Cornice element projecting across entire front of building.
3. Mosaic tile work in entryways, each with small white hexagonal tiles within a trapeze, or isosceles trapezoid-shaped, double green border containing square tiles in a Greek key pattern.
4. Storefronts 1 through 4 (2148-2154 San Pablo Avenue) should be preserved and remaining storefronts should be restored to the extent possible.

City of Berkeley Ordinance #4694 N.S.
LANDMARK APPLICATION

The Borg Building
2136-2154 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702



1. Street Address: 2136 to 2154 San Pablo Avenue
County: Alameda
City: Berkeley
Zip Code: 94702
2. Assessor's Parcel Number: 56-1977-11-1
Historically (Lots 13-19, Block 101)
Tract: Allston Tract
Dimensions: 175 x 133 feet
Cross Streets: Addison Street, Allston Way
3. Is property on the State Historic Resource Inventory? No
Is property on the Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey? Yes
Neighborhood Conservation Survey, Form # 20133

4. Application for Landmark includes: Building
 - a. Building(s): Yes Garden: No Other Feature(s): No
 - b. Landscape or Open Space: No
 - c. Historic Site: No
 - d. District: No
 - e. Other: Entire Property
5. Historic Name: None
6. Date of Construction: 1923
Factual: Yes
Source: Building Permit Application Number 13361, January 27, 1923.
7. Architect: Schirmer Bugbee and Company (William E. Schirmer and Arthur S. Bugbee)
8. Builder: Christian Texdahl
9. Style: 1920s one-story Commercial with Classic Revival features
10. Original Owner: Lawrence Borg
Original Use: Commercial
11. Present Owners: Cassandra Willis, Mary Blankstein
Present Occupants: West Wind Kung-Fu Karate and Boxing, TD Garage.
12. Present Use: Commercial
Current Zoning: C-W, West Berkeley Commercial
13. Present Condition of Property:
Exterior: Fair to Good, Interior: Fair to Good, Grounds: Good
Has the property's exterior been altered? Yes

14. DESCRIPTION

This one story reinforced concrete commercial building centers the west side of San Pablo Avenue, between Allston Way and Addison Street. The building is a 1920s one-story Commercial building with Classic Revival features, more elaborate than many storefront buildings in Berkeley and unique in design.

Seven of eight original storefronts are present, with the eighth, modified in 1935, housing TD Garage, a Subaru automotive and repair shop. West Wind Kung-Fu Karate and Boxing occupies four of the storefronts and two storefronts were vacated by the Sink Factory in 2020.

No original photos are available, but color slides from 1965 and 1967 are available for comparison to 2020 photos.



1967 Photo of Borg Building, Humphrey Slide Collection, BAHA



2020 Photo of Borg Building, BAHA

With the exception of the 1967 Mustang billboard, the front façade is easily recognizable over fifty years later.

Facing the building, from left to right, south to north, the storefronts appear as follows:

- Storefronts 1 and 2 have recessed entryways with mosaic tile on the ground and display windows on each side of the doors.



1967 view, Humphrey Slide Collection, BAHA



2020 view, Fran Cappelletti

- Storefront 3 is not recessed and has 2 doors with display windows on each side. The doors and windows are consistent in appearance from 1967 to 2020.



1967 view, Humphrey Slide Collection, BAHA



2020 view, Fran Cappelletti

- Storefront 4 has a recessed entryway with mosaic tile on the ground and display windows on each side of two doors.



1967 view, Humphrey Slide Collection, BAHA



2020 view, Fran Cappelletti

- Storefront 5 has a large garage door with vehicle access for an auto service and repair business. Windows above, present in 1967, are no longer present or are covered.
- Storefront 6 has a recessed entryway with mosaic tile on the ground and display windows on each side of two doors, each entering a different store.



1967 view, Humphrey Slide Collection, BAHA



2020 view, Fran Cappelletti

- Storefront 7 does not have a recessed entryway. There is a window set in a wood front. Mosaic tile is visible under the existing door, suggesting it was once recessed and a 1965 photo confirms this.
- Storefront 8 has a recessed entryway with mosaic tile on the ground and a wooden front covers display window space on each side of the single door. This is consistent with 1965 and 1967.



1965 view, Humphrey Slide Collection, BAHA



2020 view, Fran Cappelletti

Sets of symmetric clerestory windows, 13 vertical panes with tall and short panes for each of the eight storefronts are above the doorways for all but the auto service business. In that case, 7 of the 13 panes remain.



Window panes and storefronts 2 and 3, 2020, BAHA

Mosaic tile work is present in several doorways. Each has small white hexagonal tiles within a trapeze, or isosceles trapezoid-shaped, double green border containing square tiles in a Greek key pattern. Each entryway has a slightly different key pattern. This feature is found in a 1968 photo.



Entryway, Borg Building, 1968, Humphrey Collection, BAHA



Entryway detail, Borg Building, 2020, Fran Cappelletti



Entryway, Borg Building, 2020, Fran Cappelletti

The Borg Building has a symmetric façade. Nine pilasters appear as columns with Corinthian capitals and their traditional acanthus leaves. An entablature, consisting of architrave, frieze and cornice, tops the pilasters across the entire front. The architrave decorated with two horizontal bands. The frieze contains shield motifs above the first and last pilasters and decorative festoons resembling garlands draped over rosettes above each interior pilaster.



Pilaster, Garland and Shield on Borg Building, 2020, Fran Cappelletti

A cornice, projecting outward across the front, completes the classical theme. Such influences paid tribute to Ancient Rome, but perhaps other influences were at work, to be discussed later. Above the cornice is a simple, non-descript parapet surrounding the entire building.



Architrave and Parapet, Borg Building, 2020, Fran Cappelletti

The original building permit, number 13361, was submitted on January 27, 1923. The owner was L. Borg, architects are Schirmer and Bugbee and builder is C. Texdahl. Estimated cost was \$21,950.

Application for Building Permit.

CLASS A-B AND C BUILDING

Application is hereby made to the Department of Buildings and Inspections of the City of Berkeley for permission to build a One story 5 room class C building, on the W side of San Pablo Ave street 118 feet N of Alston way street. Being Lot No. _____ Block _____ Tract _____.

According to plans and specifications herewith submitted. All provisions of the Building Law will be complied with in the erection, of said building whether specified herein or not.

Estimated entire cost of building \$ 21,950 Extremes height of building 22 ft. Size of Lot 179 by 133 feet. Size of proposed building 179 ft. by 65 ft. Building to be occupied as Store by (No.) _____ families.

	WALLS			PIERS OR COLUMNS		JOISTS			GIRDERS													
	HEIGHT	MATERIAL	THICKNESS INCH PER FT.	MATERIAL	SIZE	MATERIAL	SIZE	LONGEST SPAN	MATERIAL	SIZE	LONGEST SPAN											
Footings	as per Plans Consult																					
Foundations	.																					
Basement	.																					
1st story	According to plans and specifications																					
2nd story																2"x8		7 ft		4"x6		7 ft
3rd story																2"x12		18				
4th story																						
5th story																						
6th story																						
7th story																						
8th story																						

Light shaft wall covering to be of _____
 Roof covered with Asph & Shovel Pitch _____
 Chimneys of none lined with _____ any patent flues? none
 Gas grate flues to be patent chimney or brick? _____
 Any dumb waiters or chutes? none Any elevator (freight or passenger) _____
 Cove brackets will be sold.

Name of Owner of Ground L. Borg Res. Address _____
 Name of Owner of Building same Res. Address _____
 Name of Lessee of Building _____ Res. Address _____
 Name of Architect or Designer Schirmer & Bugbee Address _____
 Name of Builder C. Texdahl Bus Address 5375 Belgrave place

I hereby agree to save, indemnify and keep harmless the City of Berkeley against all liabilities, judgments, costs and expenses which may in any wise accrue against said City in consequence of the granting of this permit, or from the use or occupancy of any sidewalk, street or sub-sidewalk space by virtue thereof, and will in all things strictly comply with the conditions of this permit and Ordinances of the City of Berkeley.

1334-36-40-42-44-48-52-54 C. Texdahl
San Pablo Address _____
 Signature of Owner, Architect or Builder.

This Permit expires one year from date unless sooner revoked by the City Council.
 Date JAN 27 1923 Permit No. 13361

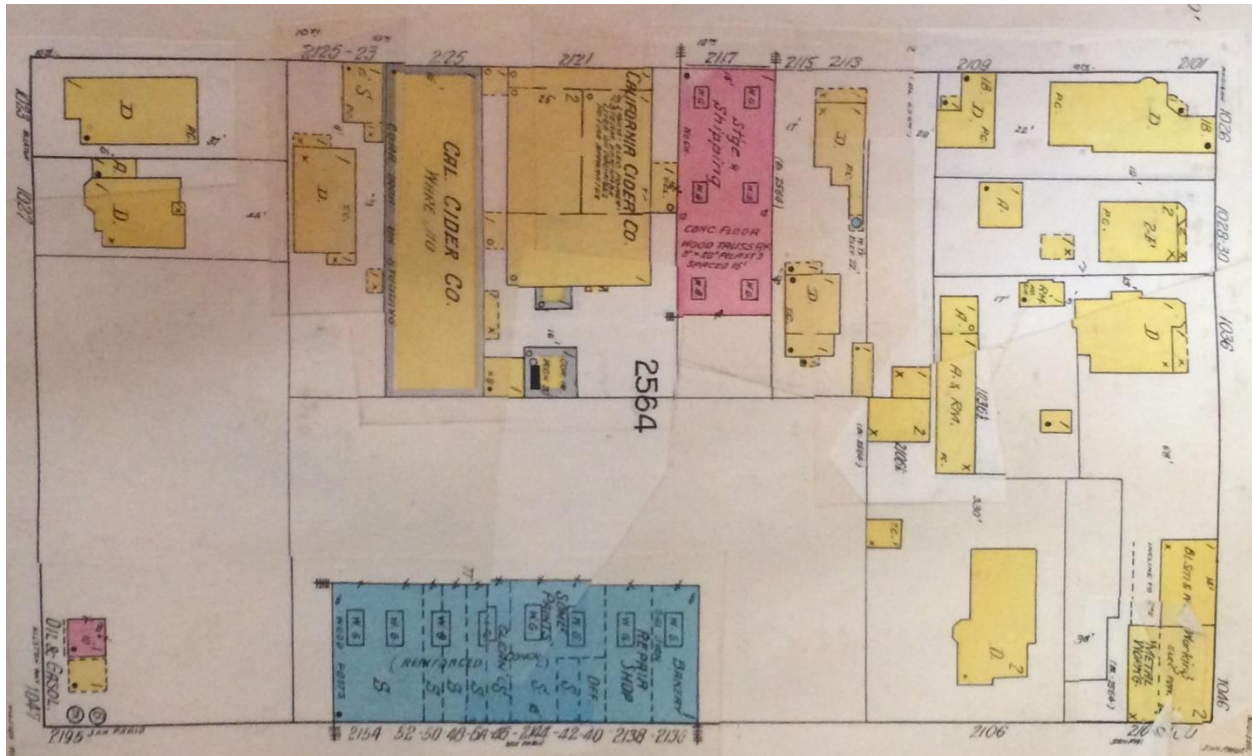
Building Permit Application for the Borg Building, BAHA

A 1923 announcement in Building and Engineering News provided more details.

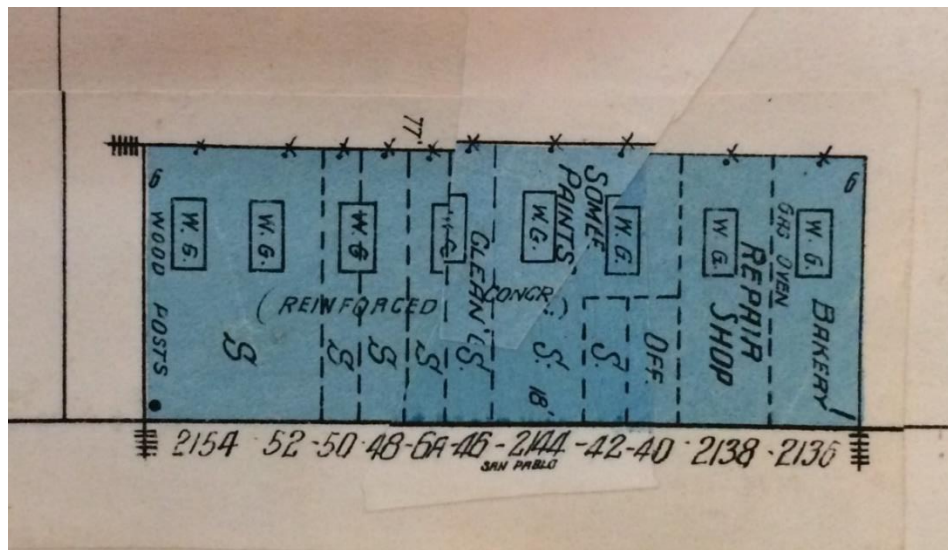
STORE BLDG.
(333) W SAN PABLO AVE 75 N All-
ton Way, Berkeley. All work for
one-story reinforced concrete (8)
store building.
Owner—Lawrence Borg, Berkeley.
Architect—Schirmer Bugbee & Co.,
Thayer Bldg., Oakland.
Contractor—C. Texdahl, 5375 Belgrave
Place, Oakland.
Filed Jan. 24, '23. Dated Jan. 17, '23.
Form up to ceiling joists....\$4115.75
Poured and joists set..... 4115.75
Plastered 4115.75
Completed and accepted..... 4115.75
Usual 35 days..... 5487.50
TOTAL COST, \$21,950.00
Bond, none. Limit, 100 days. Forfeit,
none.- Plans and specifications filed.

Building and Engineering News, January 27, 1923, 29.

Sanborn maps provide more history of the building and its block.



1929 Sanborn map, 2100 blocks of San Pablo Avenue and 10th Street, Berkeley, CA



1929 Sanborn, 2136-2154 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA

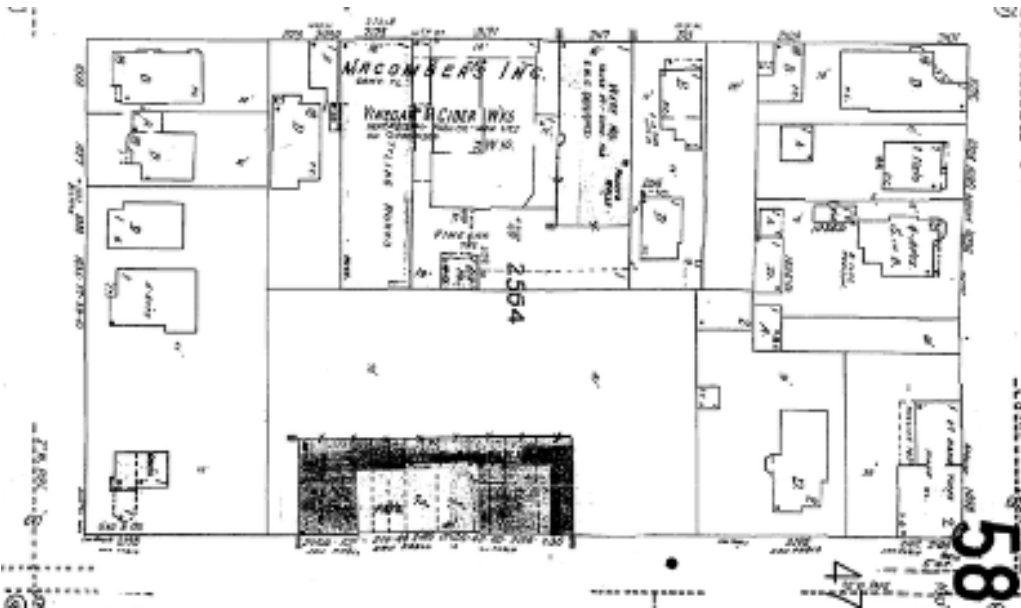
Uses included a bakery, office, repair shop and cleaners.

A 1947 aerial view shows the two blocks south of University Avenue.



Aerial photo of 2100 Block of San Pablo Avenue, Key System Transit Lines (Calif.), Clyde H. Sunderland Institute of Transportation Studies Library (Harmer E. Davis Transportation Library) at the University of California, Berkeley.

By 1950, little had changed on the block.



1950 Sanborn, 2100 blocks of San Pablo Avenue and 10th Street, Berkeley, CA

Today, the Cider Works site is George Florence Park and the corners on both sides of the Borg Building are slated for development with the demolition of a vacant U Haul location and the still-operating convenience store and family business, the St. Helena Wine Company.

Features to be Preserved

The significant features to be preserved are the following, as described below:

- Seven clerestory windows, six of them divided into 13 vertical rectangular panes surmounted by 13 square panes, and one divided into into 7 vertical rectangular panes surmounted by 7 square panes.
- Protruding and inset vertical and horizontal details on the front facade:
 - Nine square pilasters with Corinthian capitals and molded bases.
 - Architrave and frieze with shield motifs above the first and last pilasters and decorative festoons resembling garlands draped over rosettes above each interior pilaster.
 - Cornice element projecting across entire front of building.
- Mosaic tile work in entryways, each with small white hexagonal tiles within a trapeze, or isosceles trapezoid-shaped, double green border containing square tiles in a Greek key pattern.
- Storefronts 1 through 4 should be preserved and remaining storefronts should be restored to the extent possible.

15. History

The Ohlone Period

Before the arrival of Europeans, the Native Americans living in today's Berkeley and the East Bay were part of a larger group that lived for thousands of years from the San Francisco Bay to Monterey. The Spanish referred to them as Costanoan or 'Indians of the coast' and they were later termed Ohlone, the name accepted by most today. Made up of distinct groups, they had similar languages and cultures. Physical evidence of their presence in Berkeley remains in shellmounds and burial sites that range from the coast to the hills.

European arrival brought disease and displacement, with much of the population pulled into the local Missions by the early 1800s. Despite the many hardships and being labelled extinct, descendants remain throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, active in preserving their name, culture, and history.

Rancho San Antonio

According to M.W. Wood's History of Alameda County, California, the Rancho San Antonio, a nearly 45-thousand-acre Spanish land grant, was made to Luis María Peralta by Spanish governor Pablo Vicente de Sol on August 16, 1820. Peralta had served forty years in the Spanish military. The grant included present-day Albany, Berkeley, Oakland, and northern San Leandro. In 1842, he divided the land among his four sons. One of them, Domingo, would receive all of what is present-day Albany and Berkeley and a small portion of northern Oakland. He built an adobe house in 1841 at the present-day site of 1304 Albina and it is a California point of historic interest.

According to the Peralta Family History at <http://www.peraltahacienda.org>, annexation of California by the United States in 1848 and the Gold Rush of 1849 brought significant change. While the Peraltas and their fellow Californios were promised recognition and protection of their property rights, squatters on the land and theft of cattle became a problem as new settlers arrived from around the world. A further burden came with the 1851 U.S. Federal Land, which required the Californios to prove their land titles in court, requiring much time and expense.

In 1852-1853, Domingo started selling parcels of his land, mostly to pay off debts. The parcels were defined on a map surveyed by Julius Kellersberger, hired to survey the northern part of Rancho San Antonio. Surveyed in 1853, the map covers Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, and part of Oakland. This view of the parcels shows the site of the building in the upper center of No. 62.



Map of the Ranchos of Vicente & Domingo Peralta. Containing 16970.68 Acres. Surveyed by Julius Kellersberger, 1853. Courtesy of Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc. <http://www.raremaps.com>

Ocean View

In 1850, early settlement included James Jacobs with his boat landing and Captain William Bowen's Inn. There soon followed Everding and Rammelsburg's Mill and Heywood's lumber yard. Residents moved in, primarily foreign-born immigrants and second-generation Americans. Growth was not dramatic until the 1873 establishment of the new campus of the University of California.

In 1874, the area was part of the Berkeley Land and Town Improvement Association. This was organized by neighborhood leaders to facilitate the further development of Ocean View, with wharf and ferry services and industrial growth. This development, along with the University, led to new factories and a ten-fold increase in population.

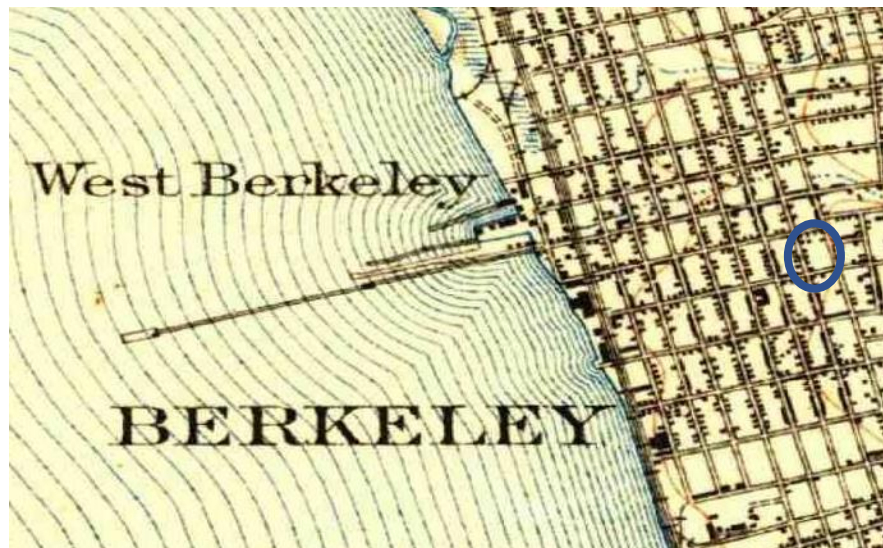
For a comprehensive history of Ocean View, see *Victorian Berkeley: The Community of Ocean View*, Karen Jorgensen-Esmaili and The Berkeley Historical Society, 1981.

With the joining of the two distinct communities as Berkeley in 1878, further growth followed, but the differences remained, and today's common label of West Berkeley was already established. By the 1890s, the Borg Building site was in the Allston Tract, Block 101.



Map of Oakland and vicinity, Showing Real Estate & Electric Railways, Dingee, William J., 1891.

In 1915, West Berkeley was filling in, but with room to grow.



Portion of Map of Berkeley, 1915

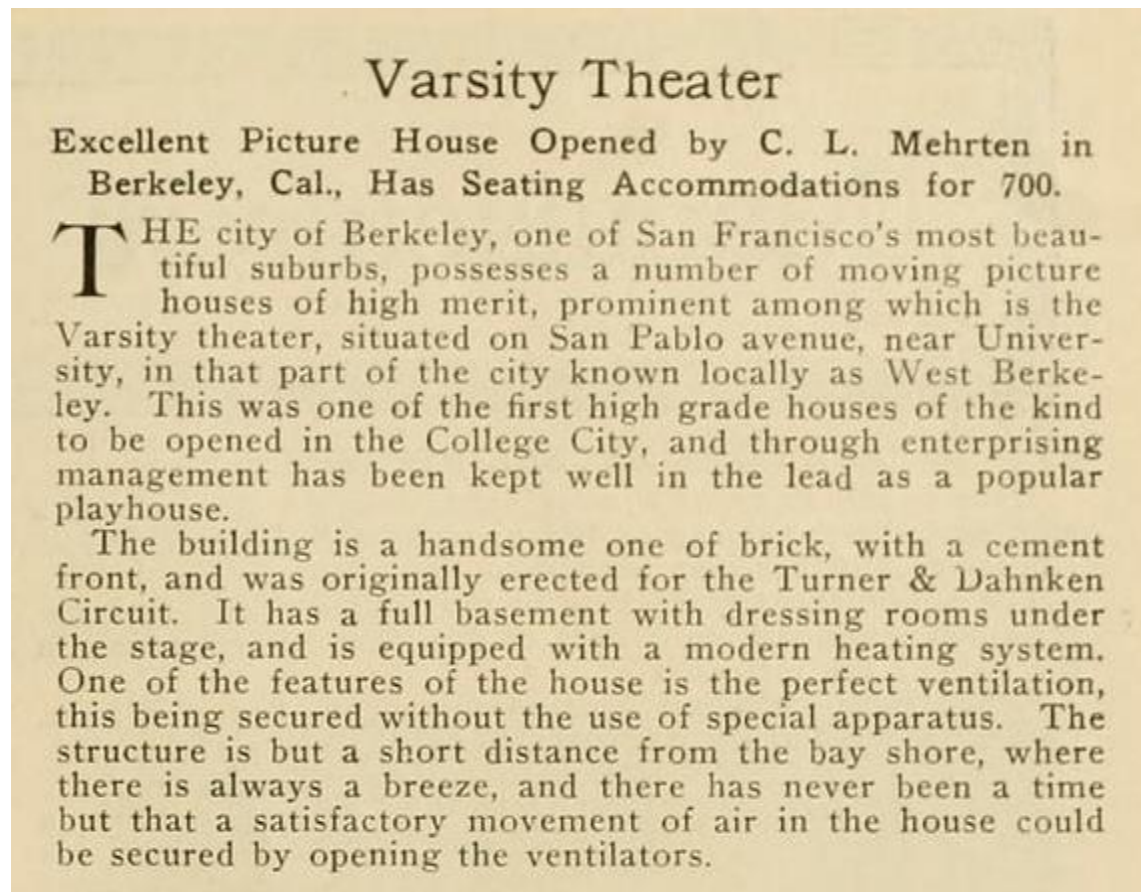
The Original Owner: Lawrence Borg

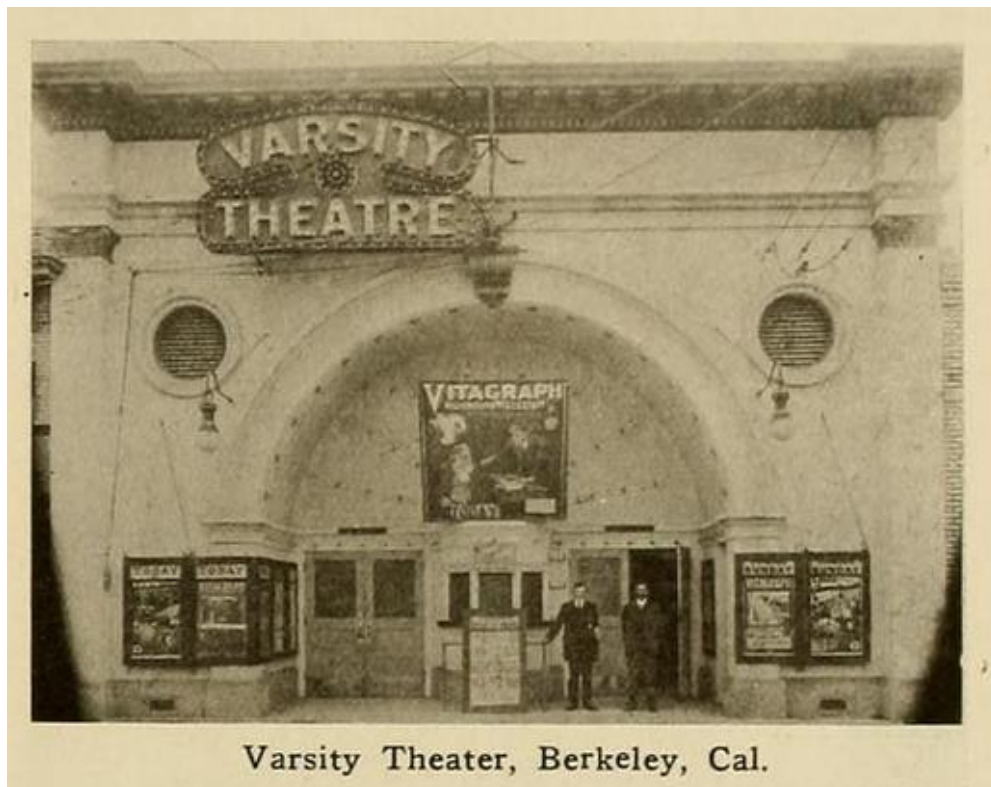
The story of Lawrence Borg is one of an immigrant arriving, working and achieving success. Born in Malta in 1890, he immigrated via Sydney, Australia, to San Francisco, California in 1916 at the age of 26. In his declaration of intention to become a U.S. citizen, he noted his occupation as a cabinet maker. Five years later he submitted his petition for naturalization, then living at 1039 Bancroft Way in Berkeley and employed in a Moving Picture House.

The U.S. Census indicates this career in moving picture showings, from listing as an exhibitor in 1920 to theatre owner by 1930. In the early 1920s, Lawrence Borg was manager of the Varsity Theatre at 2064 San Pablo Avenue. According to the publication Moving Picture World of November 6, 1920,

Lawrence Borg has taken over the Varsity Theatre at Berkeley, California, located at 2024 San Pablo street.

The Varsity has a long history in Berkeley. The Moving Picture World, an industry publication, reported on it in their September 5, 1914 issue:





Varsity Theater, Berkeley, Cal.

The Varsity theater is conducted by C. L. Mehrten, a pioneer in the moving picture business in California. That the programs are always appreciated may be judged from the fact that an addition is now being made to the rear of the building, which, when completed, will increase the seating capacity to over 700.

Fine projection and an excellent selection of pictures are two of the features that have made this house popular with amusement lovers. Mr. Mehrten is an expert operator and attends personally to this important work. The music is in charge of a splendid pianist and is one of the attractions of the place. The prices are 10 cents for adults and 5 cents for children, with occasionally a feature at 15 and 10 cents.

Mr. Mehrten enjoys the distinction of having been in the moving picture business in the State before there was a theater in either San Francisco or Los Angeles devoted exclusively to pictures. Conditions have rapidly changed during the past few years, but this exhibitor has kept pace with them and is one of the best informed men in the business. He has a wide acquaintance in the trade and his popularity is such that he has been called upon to fill the position of treasurer of the Motion Picture Exhibitors' League of California, in the work of which organization he takes a keen interest.

The Moving Picture World, September 5, 1914, 1385.

Borg was active in the West Berkeley Merchant's Association, promoting local growth in West Berkeley. Managing the theatre had its risks, as noted in a 1924 Berkeley Daily Gazette article noting that he was beaten by three youths and sent to the hospital after ejecting one from the business for creating a disturbance.

As of this writing, the building that housed the Varsity Theatre, now 2072 San Pablo Avenue, is vacant, but future development is expected. It was established in 1912 and has a storied history. Its listing in the California State Historic Resources Inventory codes the building as "Appears eligible for [listing in the] National Register of Historic Places as an individual property through survey evaluation."

Beyond managing the Varsity, Borg had designs on a theatre of his own making. That was a motivation for constructing the Borg Building, numbered 2136 to 2154 San Pablo Avenue, along with hosting other retail business.

Looking at the Varsity Theatre then and now, observe the Classical features of the two columns, likely an influence on Borg's new building.



Varsity Theatre, Early 20th Century, BAHA Block Files



Varsity Theatre, 1978, BAHA Block Files



Varsity Theatre, July 2020, Fran Cappelletti

Borg only owned his newly constructed building for a short time, selling it in late 1924 to the Walter Hardman Realty Company for \$41,500. As noted earlier, the cost of construction was approximately \$22,000. Borg abandoned plans for a theatre in part of the building, instead considered enlarging and upgrading the Varsity Theatre. An even bigger opportunity came when he invested with the Golden State Theatre Corporation in the new Rivoli Theatre two blocks north at 1931 San Pablo Avenue where he was manager and part owner.

The old Varsity Theatre in West Berkeley, for years conducted by Charles Mehrten, but more recently owned by Lawrence Borg, will shortly close its doors and will be replaced by the 1,500-seat Rivoli Theatre, nearing completion at a cost of about \$250,000. This house will be conducted by Lawrence Borg and the Golden State Theatre and Realty Corp. and will be managed by Mr. Borg personally. The location is at San Pablo and University avenues.

Closing Varsity and Opening Rivoli, The Moving Picture World, October 30, 1926, 555.

Today, the Rivoli is a 99 Cents Only store, but the original ceiling and walls are still visible above the non-descript main floor of this budget-friendly retail operation. It's life as a theatre was relatively brief as it was converted to a supermarket in the 1950s.

Beyond operating theatres, Borg invested in property throughout California. He eventually moved to the San Francisco Peninsula. He died in 1954, leaving his wife, Marjorie, and many relatives.



Consider that the Borg Building provided through its sale the start of an expansion in Borg's career as he later opened many theatres in Oakland, Richmond, San Jose, Salinas and Napa. From a small island nation in the Mediterranean to a modest house on Bancroft way in Berkeley, to San Francisco and retirement on the Peninsula, his life and career presents a true example of the "American Dream" that too often is a myth.

Lawrence and Marjorie Borg, Courtesy of Andrew DeBorgia

The Present Owners: The Pagonis Family

In 1943, the Borg Building was acquired by the Pagonis family. Headed by Miltiades, also known as Peter, and wife Katherine. Born in Greece, they moved to the United States near the turn of the 20th Century. Miltiades worked for the Southern Pacific, building and repairing train cars in the West Oakland shops. They lived on University Avenue for several years and later moved to a house in Oakland's Fruitvale District. They had three children, five grandchildren and at least eight great grandchildren.

BAHA records first show their daughter Mary listed in ownership records and she was directly involved with the San Pablo Avenue building until at least 2011 and family members still own the property at the present time.

The Architects

Schirmer and Bugbee were based in Oakland. The Borg Building is one of only a few Schirmer-Bugbee commercial buildings in Berkeley, but it was designed during a productive period for the partners, William E. Schirmer and A.S. Bugbee. Highly regarded for their residential and commercial work in the teens and twenties. Sweet's Ballroom is credited to them in the same year.

Oakland credits from 1920 to 1929 include the following buildings, courtesy of the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey:

Schirmer-Bugbee Co

415 Euclid Ave	1920	Arthur Tucker and Edward & Pearl Nelson apt
432-50 Euclid Ave	1921	Dr. J.L. Hobbs, Neill apartments
3901-11 Piedmont Ave	1923-24	L. Jensen, apartments and stores
105-25 12 th Street	1923-24	Merguire-Ritchie Chevrolet showroom
1921-33 Broadway	1923-24	J.F. Hassler-J.J. Newberry Building
1437-45 Franklin St	1924	William Cranston-Mark Brownell Building
2343 Broadway	1924-25	Arthur Kiel auto showroom

William E. Schirmer

363-69 13 th St	1929	Central Building & Loan Association Building
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SWEET'S BALLROOM BEAUTIFUL AND BROWNLOW'S RESTAURANT



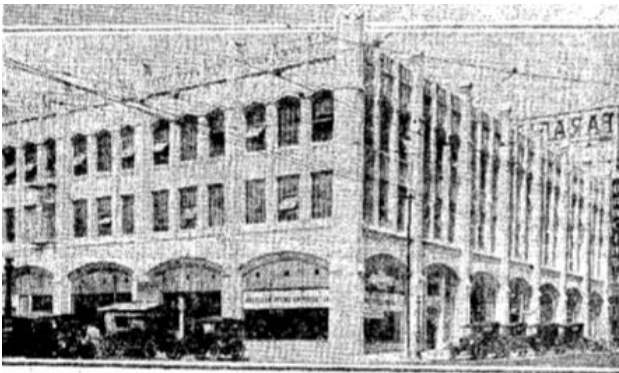
Upper Broadway Scores Again Another Splendid Addition To Oakland's New Shopping Center

BY W. E. SCHIRMER—THE ARCHITECT

Upper Broadway may well be proud of this splendid new edifice; Sweet's Ballroom Beautiful—an aesthetic monument to dancing. The following salient features are caught by even a cursory glimpse. The thick heavy rugs and draperies; the rich old tapestries, adorning the walls; the luxurious furnishings; the mirror-like floor; the indirect even lighting, flooding the rooms from above, with a businessy success effect; enriched by the deep subdued tones from the wall and center parchment shades; the long and spacious promenade and foyer; the cozy alcove—all typically French, of the Louis 14th period. The tea room and refreshery are a delightful retreat. Brownlow's restaurant downstairs, finished in Spanish effect, offers an unusual and refreshing contrast—all strictly fire-proof throughout. Sweet's Ball-Room Beautiful not unreservedly by claim to being the Finest Ball-Room in the West.

SCHIRMER-BUGBEE CO. WERE THE ARCHITECTS

The Merguire-Ritchie building at 12th and Oak Streets, also known as the M.F. Smith Building, opened in 1924. It was a Chevrolet showroom and had the Paradise ballroom upstairs. It is now the Alameda County Law Library.



New Building and Ballroom, Oakland Tribune, June 8, 1924

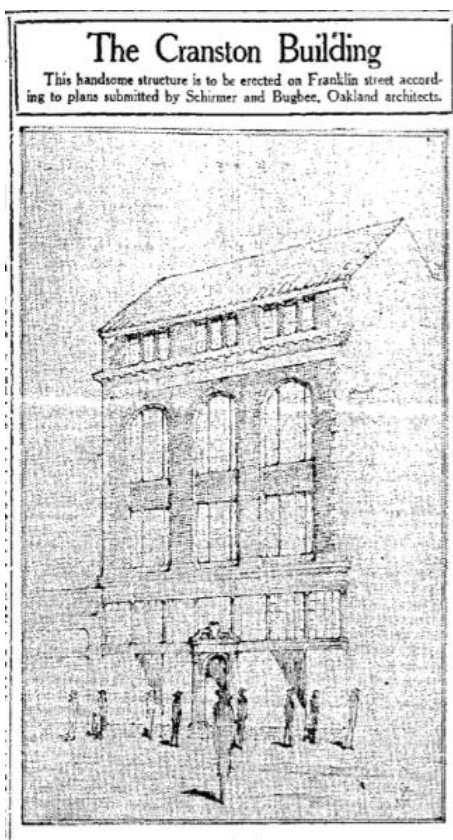


Fran Cappelletti, 2020

Two of the listed buildings are noted in the Downtown Oakland Historic District nomination document, the Cranston Building and the Central Building and Loan Building.

From 1924, 1437-45 Franklin Street is the Cranston Building. Described as a Beaux Arts derivative commercial building, this four-story store and office building of reinforced concrete construction with a somewhat Venetian façade is designed in a three-part vertical composition with a two-story shaft and a fourth-floor capital. The ground floor has two tall recessed storefront bays flanking a recessed upper floor entry. The three upper floors are clad in variegated red pressed brick with mottled terra cotta quoins and other trim. The shaft has three two-story semicircular arched bays with tripartite Chicago-type windows and diamond pattern brickwork on the spandrels. The top floor has three group of three arched windows separated by twisted engaged columns, and a dark red tile roof. Occupants of this speculative building included the Press Club and the Fifty-Fifty Club. A distinguished design of polychrome brick and terra cotta, the building harmonizes well with the arcaded Oakland Title Insurance Building next door.

At the present time, the first-floor façade has lost its original appearance due to remodeling, but the upper floors retain several original features.



Oakland Tribune, May 4, 1924



Fran Cappelletti, 2020

363-69 13th street, the Central Building and Loan Building, is a tall, narrow one-story steel-frame reinforced concrete Art Deco bank building. Designed by Schirmer in 1929, the façade is designed as a massive vault, penetrated by a tall deeply recessed entry with a semicircular compound arched top. Surface materials are cast concrete slabs with a polished black granite base. The stepped top has at its center a large square bas-relief panel depicting heroic male figures trading or doing business, and a vertically grooved frieze.

Central Building and Loan was an Alameda-based firm, founded in 1909. Its Oakland branch building, by an important Oakland architect of the Period Revival and Art Deco era, is an outstanding example of Deco design adapted to a financial institution. It is similar in size and vocabulary to the Income Securities Building a block away at 360-64 14th Street.



Fran Cappelletti, 2020

At the present time, the original Art Deco entry doors and tall multi-paned window in the arch have been replaced with an aluminum window and new entry doors. “Central Building and Loan Association” in incised Deco letters below the frieze has been plastered over.

Dave Weinstein devoted one of his many Signature Style articles in the San Francisco Chronicle to Schirmer on August 2, 2008. Titled Serious craftsmanship, it tells of Schirmer’s work and life. <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Serious-craftsmanship-3201625.php#photo-2342216>

Schirmer designed several magnificent residences in Oakland and Piedmont. Berkeley has two fine examples, 118 Alvarado Road and 3005 Garber Road, that have been featured on past BAHA Spring House tours. Schirmer was later part of the design team for the Alameda County Courthouse.

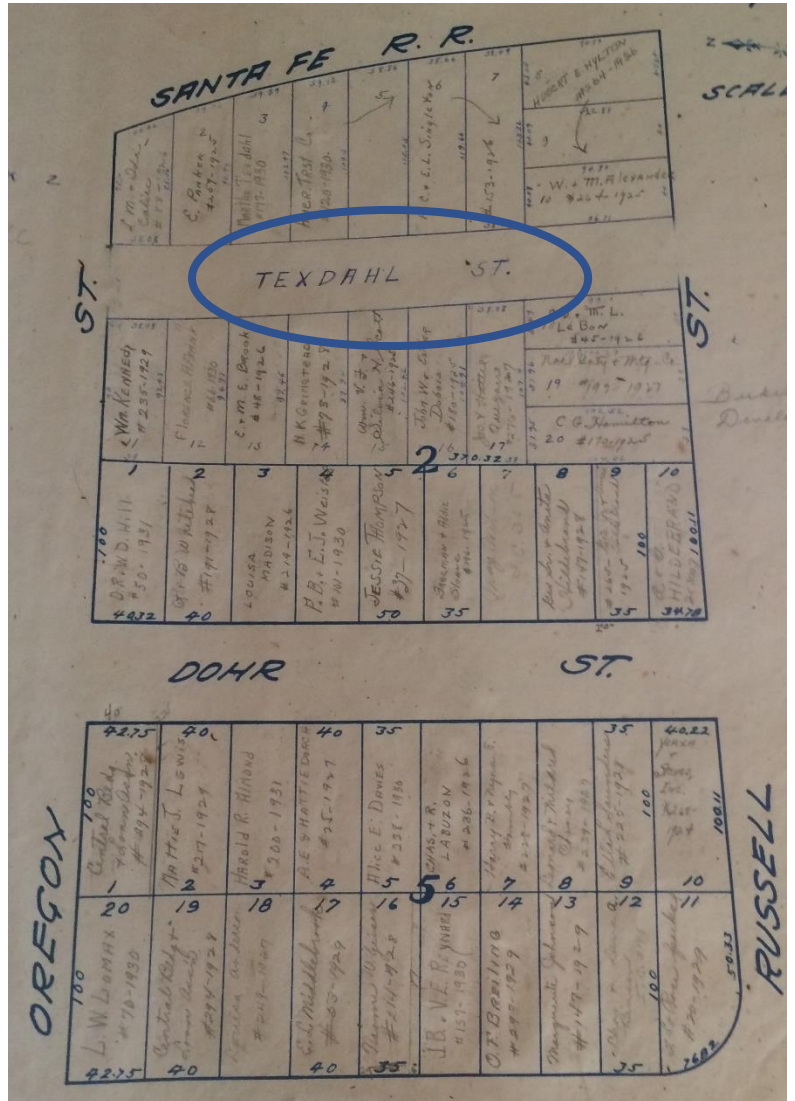
The Builder

Christian Texdahl was the builder. Born in Norway, he came to the United States. He married Martha and raised four children.

According to BAHA permit files, he built a number of houses in South Berkeley on Stanton Street, though the street was originally named Texdahl Street. Modest bungalows, they remain in place today.

Texdahl worked on larger commercial projects, too.

He built the Borg Building on San Pablo in 1923. When he died in 1924 at age 58, his son Clarence took over the business for a few years.



BAHA Block Books

The Many Tenants

After completion in 1923, businesses immediately moved in.

In 1924 Varsity Bakery was at 2136. It did make it into the Berkeley Daily Gazette in 1927 with a reported robbery in which \$8, eight pies, two cakes and a dozen doughnuts were taken. Frederick Grattan's Cleaners was at 2146.

In 1925, new businesses include the California Radio Service at 2142, Household Hardware at 2144, a branch store for the Mutual Creamery at 2152 and the Western Grocery Company, run by Frank and Joseph Ciraulo, was at 2154.

Berkeley Daily Gazette Ads, 1940s



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Mike's Hungarian Restaurant opened at 2138 in 1940, touted as West Berkeley's first Hungarian restaurant in the February 14, 1940 Berkeley Daily Gazette. Mike was Michael Hirt, a native of Vienna.

The Steppenwolf

Author Tom Dalzell noted in his Berkeley e-Plaque designation on San Pablo Avenue Folk Music Clubs, <https://berkeleyplaques.org/e-plaque/san-pablo-avenue-folk-music-clubs/> :

In 1958 Max Scherr purchased and operated a local hangout, the *Steppenwolf*, a club that dabbled in both folk music and theatre. Scherr later sold it to launch an underground newspaper, the *Berkeley Barb*.

A 1965 photo shows Casa Moreno and The Steppenwolf



Borg Building, 1965, Humphrey Slide Collection, BAHA

In 1967, Casa Moreno is gone, but The Steppenwolf is still open for business.



Borg Building, 1967, Humphrey Slide Collection, BAHA

As Nathan Spooner writes on the Berkeley E-plaque web site, <https://berkeleyplaques.org/e-plaque/steppenwolf-bar-and-music-club/> provides his first person recollection:

On the west side of San Pablo Ave., a few blocks south of University Ave., there is a one-story, nondescript building of storefronts, including the Sink Factory, now relocating a few blocks north. In the 1960s it was home of the Steppenwolf bar, a well-known night spot run by local activist [Max Scherr](#). Students, professors, chess players and whomever else wandered in were served on tables made from wood planks over barrels. Beer was \$1.25, lighting was dim, the air smoky and the classical music, loud. One night, I walked in to the emotional pleading of a Shostakovich violin concerto at full blast.

Painted on the north side of the exterior wall of the building were lines from Hermann Hesse's, *Der Steppenwolf*, referring to the sign over a door in the novel that protagonist, Henry Haller, sees during a walk in the old quarter of his town: "Magic Theatre – For Madmen Only – Price of Admission – Your Mind." The words aptly express the essence of this off-beat club which was a part of the energy of the time.

Max Scherr was best known for his *Berkeley Barb*, a counter-cultural New Left voice of everything from politics to sex to rock music that circulated both locally and nationally. [Bill Miller](#) proprietor of a Telegraph Avenue head shop, The General Store, and one-time Berkeley mayoral candidate, later managed the business.

When I worked at the Steppenwolf, Bill was the owner. [Mario Savio](#) worked there too. Mario and I had an undergraduate philosophy class together before he dropped out to become the eloquent spokesperson for the Free Speech Movement that was so much a part of the 60s paradigm shift in cultural awareness.

Over time the Steppenwolf morphed from a place to hear Shostakovich to a well-regarded popular West Coast venue for country, folk, rhythm and blues and rock—one of a number of such [clubs](#) along San Pablo Avenue. One night when I was working the door to collect a couple of dollars admission for the Loading Zone, a Berkeley rock-soul band, and jazz, whom I had unwittingly charged.

The doors of the Steppenwolf were closed by the time I left for Alaska in 1975. When I returned, I could still make out the faded letters of Hesse's works, but just barely.

At BAHA, a collection of color slides displays the 1967 interior of the Steppenwolf, further noting the atmosphere of the times.



Interior of The Steppenwolf, 1967, Humphrey Slide Collection, BAHA

The 'Room where it happened', History of the Magic Theatre, 1967

John Lion, a Graduate student at U.C. Berkeley working under the tutelage of Professor Jan Kott, directed Ionesco's *THE LESSON* at the Steppenwolf Bar.

The company named itself "Magic Theatre" from the scene in Herman Hesse's novel, *STEPPENWOLF*, where the central character Harry Haller is invited to attend an "Anarchist Evening at the Magic Theatre, For Madmen Only, Price of Admission Your Mind"

As the Finding Aid to the Magic Theatre records at the Bancroft Library notes:

The Magic Theatre was founded in 1967 in Berkeley, Calif., with a production of Eugene Ionesco's, *The Lesson*, by a group of University of California, Berkeley graduate students, headed by John Lion, who had an interest in the newly emerging, avant-garde European playwrights, including Ionesco, Genet, and Beckett. They had no intention of starting a theatre, but with the success of *The Lesson*, the company moved into the Steppenwolf Bar on San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley, and began producing plays as the Magic Theatre, a name adopted from Hesse's novel, *Steppenwolf*.

European playwrights dominated the Magic Theatre's early productions, but these were soon augmented by American authors emerging from the political, social, and artistic ferment of the 1960s, including Leroi Jones, Michael McClure, and Sam Shepard. The work of the Magic Theatre reflected the social upheaval of the time, with the intention of presenting different aspects of a chaotic world without becoming polarized to one point of view. Magic Theatre's goal was to concentrate its efforts on newly scripted works, with the purpose of developing new playwrights and giving an alternative, experimental forum to established writers. They drew not only from the theatrical community but from the talents of people in many areas of the arts -- painters, sculptors, film makers, poets, musicians, and dancers, and deliberately represented no particular political point of view except that of free expression.

Over the past twenty-five years, the Magic Theatre was housed in some ten locations, not including touring bookings. There were several stints each at Steppenwolf and Mandrake's Bars in Berkeley. They also performed at the University Art Museum, and in a theatre the staff built in an old building at the corner of University and Shattuck Avenues until 1972, when the company moved permanently to San Francisco. It was located briefly in the Firehouse Theatre (now the Lumier Cinema), the Museum of Erotic Art (now defunct), the Intersection Theatre, and the Rose and Thistle Pub on California and Polk Streets. In 1977, the Magic Theatre finally moved to a permanent home at Fort Mason, and eventually built two playhouses of its own.

From the very beginning, John Lion assumed the role of general and artistic director, and brought the theatre from a group of college students with no base and no funding to become the Bay Area's leading producer of new plays. In 1976, Lion recruited the British theatre critic and essayist, Martin Esslin, as dramaturg. His early books on Brecht, the theatre of the absurd, and avant-garde European plays had been the strongest guidelines to the originators of the Magic Theatre.



1968 Advertisement



Further changes would come in the 1950s and 1960s. The rest of the block in 1967 had the Lucky Dog Pet Shop, Zodiac, Cooper-Hawkins Refrigeration and a Barber Shop. While most would not stay, Lucky Dog would remain in place for decades, well into the 21st Century. The shop made the news in 2011 with an eviction dispute.

1957 Phone Directory Advertisement

Another venerable tenant was the Sink Factory. Founded in 1979, they were a fixture in the building for four decades.



North side of Borg Building, Fran Cappelletti, July 2020

Owner Ragnar Boreson started as an employee and became the owner in 1989. From a showroom with a range of antique and modern parts to a workshop for repair, restoration and fabrication of plumbing parts they have become a lasting part of Berkeley. A visit with Philip Maldewin at the old showroom provided a glimpse of the past with some art still on the walls. Despite the need to leave during a pandemic, they reopened 3 blocks north at 1826 San Pablo Avenue, continuing their long history in West Berkeley.

West Wind Schools, occupying several of the original storefronts, has been active in Bay Area martial arts education for over 48 years. Services include fitness, self-discipline, self-defense, whole health, boxing, weight loss, karate, balance for all ages. Their space is open and well-maintained, providing a shining example of the great potential for the building in use and appearance.

16. Significance

From Chapter 3.24 of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance:

3.24.110 A. Landmarks and historic districts. General criteria which the commission shall use when considering structures, sites and areas for landmark or historic district designation are:

1. Architectural merit:
 - b. Properties that are prototypes of or outstanding examples of periods, styles, architectural movements or construction, or examples of the more notable works of the best surviving work in a region of an architect, designer or master builder; or
 - c. Architectural examples worth preserving for the exceptional values they add as part of the neighborhood fabric.
2. Cultural value: Structures, sites and areas associated with the movement or evolution of religious, cultural, governmental, social and economic developments of the City;
3. Educational value: Structures worth preserving for their usefulness as an educational force;
4. Historic value: Preservation and enhancement of structures, sites and areas that embody and express the history of Berkeley/Alameda County/California/United States.
5. Any property which is listed on the National Register described in Section 470A of Title 16 of the United States Code.

Under both **3.24.110 A.1.b.**, and **3.24.110 A.1.c.**, the Borg Building qualifies as a significant and meaningful example of a one-story Commercial building with Classic Revival features, designed by William Schirmer and Arthur Bugbee in their early period of work. In addition to their successful and lasting collaborations, Schirmer became famous for his residential work in Oakland, Piedmont, and Berkeley. The Borg Building exhibits several classical elements found in other Berkeley business districts and is one of a few intact examples left on an ever-changing San Pablo Avenue. While examples of their commercial work survive in Oakland, important features of two of their notable buildings in that city have been lost.

In addition to this application, the Historical Resources Inventory Form (DPR Form 523) prepared by Mark Hulbert in 2019 indicated significance under California Register criterion 3 for architecture embodying distinctive characteristics of its type and period.

While the author determined no other significance for the building, contrary to our findings of significance, we do agree with this finding.

Under **3.24.110 A.2**, the Borg Building qualifies for its cultural value and under **3.24.110 A.4** for its historic value. Culturally and historically, hosted several businesses serving local residents, the counterculture of the sixties and seventies. Built by Christian Texdahl, it was a relatively late project for a prolific Berkeley contractor. In contrast, building owner Lawrence Borg, was a young owner and manager of the well-established Varsity Theatre one block north with dreams of locating a new theatre in the structure. However, the building instead served as a wise investment, fetching nearly double the cost of the building within two years and leading to further development of West Berkeley with the Rivoli Theatre, which he owned in partnership with the Golden State chain. Many businesses came and went, including pets, paint, baked goods, and Hungarian food. From a post Free Speech Movement Mario Savio tending bar to the origination of the Magic Theatre, the Steppenwolf was one of several venues popular along the Avenue in the 1960s and 1970s for music and drama. Most recently the same space was the long-time home of the Sink Factory, relocated a few blocks north. West Wind Kung-Fu Karate and Boxing presently occupies a large portion of the building and TD Garage is still operating an essential business in a time of pandemic.

While the building has seen updates over time, the overall appearance has changed little and the building continues to provide valuable service to residents of Berkeley and the East Bay.

Period of Significance: 1923 – Present, location of several significant tenants in succession.

17. Is the property endangered? Yes

18. Photographs:

Dates: 1965, 1967, 1968, 2020

Repository: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association (BAHA)

Photographer: Various (BAHA, Fran Cappelletti)

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20. Recorder: Fran Cappelletti Date: August 13, 2020

Organization: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association (BAHA)

