

PHD

FILE NO. 90-79-8

ORDINANCE NO. 125-79

1 DESIGNATING THE CHAMBORD APARTMENTS AS A LANDMARK PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY
2 PLANNING CODE.

3 Be It Ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

4 Section 1. The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that the Chambord Apartments
5 located at 1298 Sacramento Street, being a portion of Lot 89 in Assessor's Block
6 221, has a special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic
7 interest and value, and that its designation as a Landmark will be in furtherance of
8 and in conformance with the purposes of Article 10 of the City Planning Code and the
9 standards set forth therein.

10 (a) Designation. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code, Chapter
11 II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, the Chambord Apartments is hereby
12 designated as a Landmark, this designation having been duly approved by Resolution
13 No. 8039 of the City Planning Commission, which Resolution is on file with the
14 Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under File No. 90-79-8.

15 (b) Required Data. The descriptions of the location and boundaries of the
16 landmark site; of the characteristics of the landmark which justify the designation;
17 and of the particular features that should be preserved; as included in the said
18 Resolution, are hereby incorporated herein and made a part hereof as though fully
19 set forth.

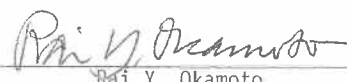
22 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

RECOMMENDED:

23 GEORGE AGNOST
24 CITY ATTORNEY

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

25
26 By 
Deputy City Attorney

25
26 By 
Rai Y. Okamoto
27 Director of Planning

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29
30
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

LM#106

Passed for Second Reading
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

MAR 5 1979

Ayes: Supervisors Britt, Dolson, Gonzales, Horanzy, Hutch, ~~Kopp~~, Lau, Molinari, Pelosi, Renne, Silver

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

Absent: Supervisors ~~KOPP~~ SILVER

[Signature] Clerk

90-79-8
File No.

MAR 2 1979
Approved

Read Second Time and Finally Passed
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

MAR 12 1979

Ayes: Supervisors Britt, Dolson, ~~Gonzales~~, Horanzy, Hutch, ~~Kopp~~, Lau, Molinari, Pelosi, Renne, Silver

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

Absent: Supervisors ~~GONZALES~~ ~~KOPP~~

I hereby certify that the foregoing ordinance was finally passed by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

[Signature] Clerk

[Signature]
Mayor

SAN FRANCISCO
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION NO. 8039

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the Chambord Apartments at 1298 Sacramento Street as a Landmark pursuant to the provisions of Article 10 of the City Planning Code was initiated by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on October 5, 1977, and said Advisory Board, after due consideration, has recommended approval of this proposal; and

WHEREAS, The City Planning Commission, after due notice given, held a public hearing on August 10, 1978 to consider the proposed designation and the report of said Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, The Commission believes that the proposed Landmark has a special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value; and that the proposed designation would be in furtherance of and in conformance with the purposes and standards of the said Article 10;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, First, that the proposal to designate the Chambord Apartments at 1298 Sacramento Street as a Landmark pursuant to Article 10 of the City Planning Code is hereby APPROVED, the location and boundaries of the landmark site being as follows:

That portion of Lot 89 in Assessor's Block 221,
which occupies a frontage 37 feet on Jones Street
and 68 feet on Sacramento Street.

SECOND, That the special character and special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of the said Landmark justifying its designation are set forth in the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board Resolution No. 167 as adopted on October 5, 1977, which resolution is incorporated herein and made a part hereof as though fully set forth;

THIRD, That the said Landmark should be preserved generally in all of its particular exterior features as existing on the date hereof and as described and depicted in the photographs, case report and other material on file in the Department of City Planning Docket LM77.10;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commission hereby directs* its Secretary to transmit the proposal for designation, with a copy of this Resolution, to the Board of Supervisors for appropriate action.

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the City Planning Commission at its Regular Meeting August 10, 1978.

Lee Woods
Secretary

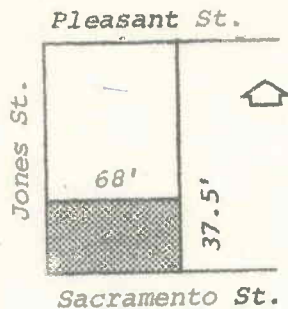
AYES: Commissioners Bierman, Dearman, Matoff, Mignola, Nakashima, Rosenblatt, Starbuck.

NOES: None.

AYES: None.

PASSED: August 10, 1978.

DOCKET COPY
DO NOT REMOVE



OWNER: 1st Title Insurance Company

LOCATION: 1298 Sacramento Street,
Northeast corner of Jones
Street, Being a portion of
Lot 83 in Assessor's Block
221.

STATEMENT OF
SIGNIFICANCE:

The Chambord apartment house is a first-rate architectural enigma which intrigues the casual passer-by and confounds the architectural historian. No mean structure, its intrinsic integrity is so boldly stated that despite the removal of some of its original external embellishments, the building catches the eye and heightens the air of opulence on Nob Hill.

HISTORY:

The Chambord Apartment house at 1298 Sacramento Street, commissioned in 1921 by James Witt Dougherty and designed by James Francis Dunn, was among the earliest luxury apartment houses built in that area of Nob Hill. Its construction may well have triggered the wave of other similar, though generally larger, buildings erected nearby in the 1920's.

James Witt Dougherty was the grandson and namesake of James W. (Witt) Dougherty, an Alameda County pioneer who was born in Tennessee about 1813 and arrived in San Francisco aboard the Humboldt on August 31, 1849. His only scion, Charles Medley Dougherty, was the father of four children, the third of whom was James Witt Dougherty, born in 1876. In October 1879, the Alta California noted the death of James W. and observed that he was "a very wealthy man, probably a millionaire"; indeed, he owned the Don Jose Maria Amador ranch which reportedly encompassed more than 10,000 acres. Other sources disclose that he acquired his wealth by trading in the mines and that he established the first bank in Sacramento. (Both may be correct, however, a comprehensive history of banking in Sacramento does not reveal his name among the founders of any of the early banks or banking-type establishments.)

At the time of James W. Dougherty's death there were three generations of the family living in the ranch home in Murray Township, near Dublin, California. The magnitude of the operation can be realized from the fact that in addition to the Doughertys, there were 23 other people -- cooks, housekeepers ranch hands, etc., -- who were employed on the ranch. The Alameda County census records of 1880 indicate that the young James Witt was one of those living on the ranch. Other than an occasional listing in the San Francisco Blue Book, there is virtually no other documented reference about him until he erected the apartments in 1921.

An acquaintance of James Witt Dougherty (still living at the time of this writing) has stated that there is very little to recall about his personal life for he was almost retiring in manner. The fact most clearly remembered was that he spent most of his time traveling about the world and was very interested in architecture. The acquaintance also stated that Dougherty's preoccupation with traveling would have precluded any activity in the business or professional worlds. In that connection, in the various years he appears in the City Directories, only in 1929 is he listed with an occupation - real estate.

(Continued)

ARCHITECTURE:

Regarding his interest in buildings or architecture, one notes that from his three places of residence in San Francisco, he viewed either the imposing, although still uncompleted Grace Cathedral, or the Palace of Fine Arts.

Available evidence would suggest that the Doughertys, James Witt, his parents and others, resided in Alameda County until the Chambord Apartments were constructed. Following completion of the structure, James Witt and parents occupied the top floor which consisted of a single apartment; the other floors each contained two apartments, one or two of which were occupied by other family members. Dougherty sold the building in 1926 to Herbert E. Law who added the 6th floor penthouse.

From the Chambord, the Doughertys apparently returned to Oakland -- probably to await completion of a new residence in San Francisco on the east side of Baker Street overlooking the lagoon and the Palace of Fine Arts beyond. Dougherty's next known place of residence was the apartment building he purchased at 1242 Sacramento Street, some few doors east of the Chambord, and whose architectural style it repeated. Dougherty was apparently living there at the time of his death on March 31, 1945. A bachelor, he was survived by a sister, a niece and three nephews.

The Herbert E. Law family resided at the Chambord for many years. As did Dougherty, Law apparently had a consuming interest in architecture. He owned the Lauriston Investment Company and he built the Monadnock Building at 681 Market Street. On April 6, 1906, he and his brother acquired the Fairmont Hotel. In 1911, Law considered constructing a residential penthouse on the roof of the Monadnock; this plan was abandoned in 1912 when he commissioned George A. Schastey, a New York architect, to design a residence at 1021 California Street. The structure still stands and is widely acclaimed as San Francisco's most urbane townhouse.

James F. (Francis) Dunn, who was responsible for the design of many San Francisco apartment houses, did not live to see the completion of the Chambord, perhaps his most interesting work. The permit for the structure was taken out in April 1921 and Dunn died in October of that year. Although the brief newspaper accounts of his death declare him to have been a well-known architect, information regarding him is as lacking as for James Witt Dougherty. By combining information about him from a variety of sources, it is possible to determine circumstantially, at least, some of his other works which grace San Francisco.

A newspaper obituary reveals that he was a native San Francisco, the son of Martin and Julia Dunn. The Architect and Engineer for November 1921 states:

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HISTORY:

On October 20, Mr. James F. Dunn died at St. Francis hospital after an illness of less than one month. Mr. Dunn practiced architecture in San Francisco for 15 years and at one time was a member of the firm of Dunn and Kearns which designed a number of large apartment houses of a distinct type of architecture. One of these buildings, the Alhambra Apartments at 860 Geary Street ... has been very fully illustrated in buildings journals through the United States.

Only a year or so ago Mr. Dunn wrote for the Architect and Engineer, an interesting article on modern apartment house construction. At the time of his death he was preparing plans for three large apartment houses. His unfinished work will be taken up and completed by Albert Schroepfer. Mr. Dunn was a member of the San Francisco Chapter American Institute of Architects and the Union League Club.

Dunn's youth was apparently spent South of Market, for City Directories from about 1880 to the time of his death reveal that his mother, Julia Dunn, a widow, resided at 747 (formerly 727) Minna Street. One ought be entitled to presume that following the fire of 1906, Dunn would have been responsible for the design of her new residence on the same site. The extant building on that location is of immediate post-fire vintage and although small in size and scale, is embellished with classical elements.

Dunn is believed responsible for the design of other structures in San Francisco exemplifying the Beaux Arts school of design which flourished in the early part of the 20th Century. In this connection, it has been established that prior to 1906, Dunn owned the building at 1679-81 Haight Street (which is Beaux Arts in style) and thus, one might logically conclude that he also designed it. Other known works of Dunn include the buildings at 625 Hyde Street, 1250 Pine Street and 798 Post Street. There are undoubtedly many, many more according to the Architect and Engineer however, the variety represented by the foregoing, constitute a fair sampling of his talents.

ARCHITECTURE:

The apartment building at 1298 Sacramento Street, is an architectural curiosity of the first rank in San Francisco. It is a building so different and original, and so interesting to the general public, that it has earned constant mis-attribution. This unique design of billowing poured concrete has attracted to itself the legend that this is a building by the Barcelona architect Antonio Gaudi. It is not; it owes more to an extreme mannerist interpretation of French Beaux Arts architecture by San Francisco architect James F. Dunn than to the singular genius of Gaudi.

(Continued)

ARCHITECTURE:

The billowing balconies and bay windows of the animated exterior reflect the building's unique floor plan. Each unit in the building has a perfectly complete oval living room 15' by 20'. The ends and sides of these oval-shaped rooms stacked in the southwest and southeast corners of the building account for the curved balconies and bays.

As originally designed, the typical floor had two units serviced by a central elevator and staircase. Each unit consisted of the oval living room, a bedroom with a bay window, a dining room (some with bays, some without), a kitchen and a bath. All the rooms branched off a foyer. All the rooms are well proportioned. Though the apartments are small, they are designed for hospitality.

The fifth, or top, floor was originally a single unit laid out around an open court that faced south to catch the sun. Around this tile-paved garden with its wall fountain was a C-shaped arrangement of rooms with an oval living room. This unit had a maid's room. In 1926 this floor was altered, the garden room walled in, and a penthouse was built above on the northwest corner of the building. This penthouse is stepped back from the building on three sides.

The building's balconies were originally highly ornamented with rich Beaux Arts decoration. This was stripped away for seismic consideration.

Today the chief architectural effect of the building is the bold billowing out of the balconies and large bays. Walking up the Sacramento Street hill the passer-by sees a vigorously repeated pattern of strongly molded balconies supported by sculpture brackets that merge with the balconies. The balconies seem to leap from the wall like spinmakers.

The ground floor of the building is treated as a heavily rusticated base giving the appearance of masonry. All the windows on the ground floor are round-headed and with French windows. Each window is marked by an elaborate wrought iron balcony which seems to billow away from the wall. The rustication of the base is handled in such a way that the supporting brackets for the balconies of the first floor appear to be cut from enormous, gravity-defying blocks of stone. The second through fifth floors have balconies which reflect segments of the oval rooms within. The French windows have a simple fenestration but reach from floor to ceiling. The cornice and parapet repeat the outline of the building.

The base and the first floor ironwork are painted grey and the rest of the building is a light gray-white. This conservative color scheme enhances the sculptured quality of the building and makes the eye see the building as a whole, not as parts picked out in different colors.

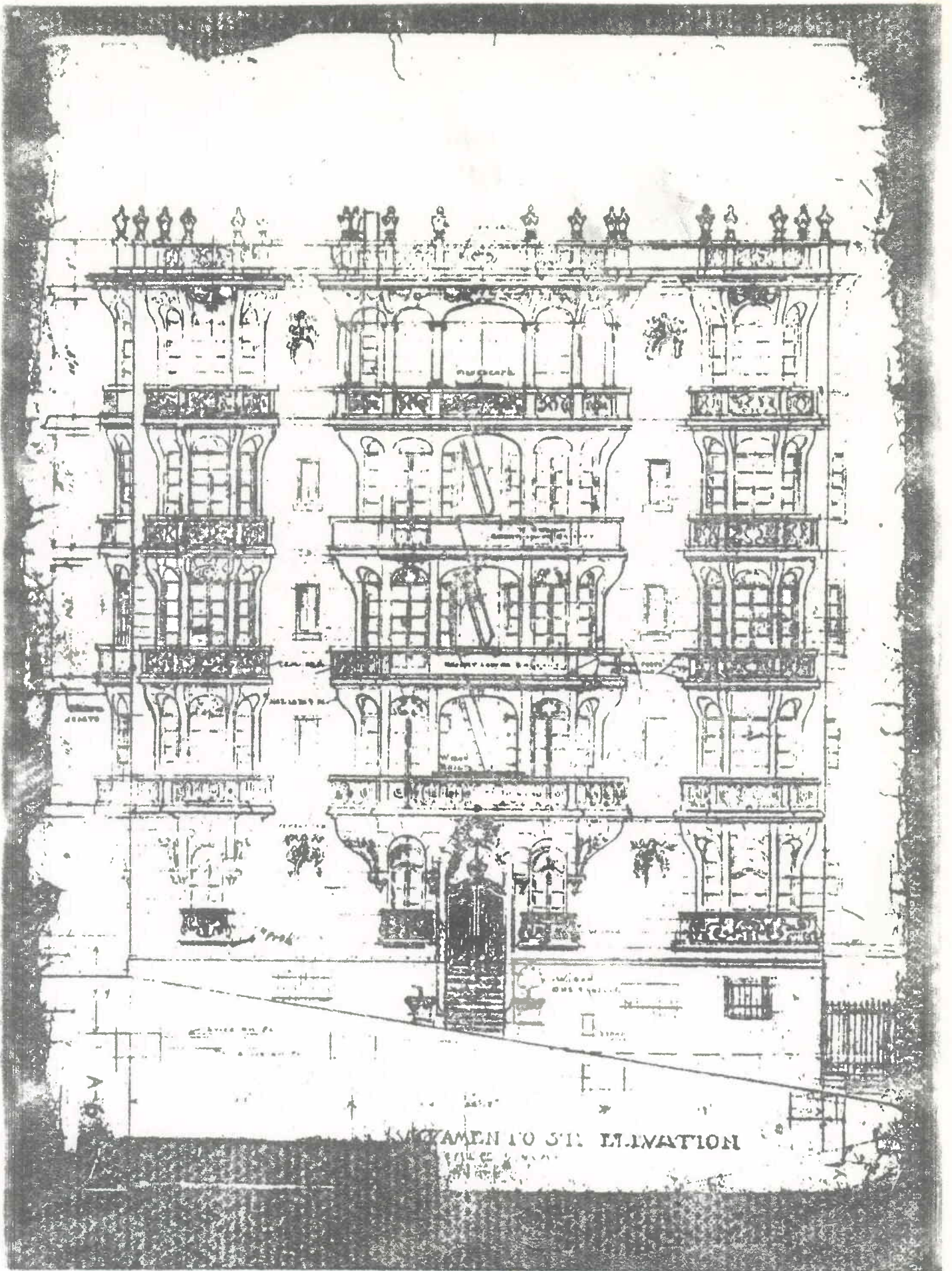
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ARCHITECTURE: In the 1200 block of Sacramento are two other Beaux Arts style apartment houses, 1230 and 1242 Sacramento, which show the style as it was usually used. The curved lines in the windows and balconies are the keynotes of the style. San Francisco has very few of them and they always make a pleasing counterpoint to the more sober geometric shapes of most San Francisco buildings. These Beaux Arts facades nearly always succeed in conveying a feeling of elegance and opulence. This cluster of Beaux Arts buildings is unique in San Francisco

This particular rhythmically articulated block front is especially important because the masterplan for Grace Cathedral's block foresees the development of a landscaped open space with underground parking on the site of the parking lot north of the Cathedral. When this plan is completed the north side of the 1200 block of Sacramento will serve as the north "wall" of what could become one of the most urbane open spaces in the city.

The Cathedral School for Boys across the street from 1298 Sacramento was designed by Rockrise & Watson in 1965. This modern building pays subtle tribute to its balconied neighbor across the street. The curve of its parapet echoes the rising force of the balconies of 1298 Sacramento Street.

The architectural section of this report was prepared by Randolph Delehanty, Architectural and Urban Historian.



CHAMBORD APARTMENTS - 1298 Sacramento Street, San Francisco

Sacramento Street Elevation. Above drawing was taken from plans which accompanied original building permit application in 1921.