

1 [COLUMBUS SAVINGS BANK BUILDING, 700 MONTGOMERY STREET]  
2 RECOGNIZING THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORICAL VALUE AND INITIATING LANDMARK  
3 DESIGNATION OF THE COLUMBUS SAVINGS BANK BUILDING AT 700 MONTGOMERY  
4 STREET.

5  
6 WHEREAS, The Columbus Savings Bank Building at 700 Montgomery Street is a <sup>5212</sup>  
7 contributing structure to the Jackson Square Historic District; and,

8 WHEREAS, The Columbus Savings Bank Building is of the late classical revival style;  
9 and,

10 WHEREAS, The Columbus Savings Bank Building was built in 1905; and,

11 WHEREAS, The Columbus Savings Bank Building is one of a few buildings in the  
12 Jackson Square Historic District to survive the Great Earthquake of 1906; and,

13 WHEREAS, The Columbus Savings Bank Building is part of the Barbary Coast Trail;  
14 and,

15 WHEREAS, Under the Planning Code, Section 1004.1, the Board of Supervisors may  
16 initiate landmark designation; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors recognizes that the Columbus Savings  
18 Bank Building has historical and architectural value; and, be it

19 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors hereby initiates landmark  
20 designation of the Columbus Savings Bank Building at 700 Montgomery Street; and, be it

21 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the Board transmit a copy of this resolution  
22 to the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board in a timely manner.

23  
24  
25



City and County of San Francisco

City Hall  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Tails  
Resolution

File Number: 000402

Date Passed:

Resolution recognizing the architectural historical value and initiating landmark designation of the Columbus Savings Bank Building at 700 Montgomery Street.


March 13, 2000 Board of Supervisors — ADOPTED

Ayes: 6 - Ammiano, Brown, Leno, Newsom, Teng, Yee

Absent: 5 - Becerrii, Bierman, Katz, Kaufman, Yaki

File No. 000402

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on March 13, 2000 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

  
Gloria L. Young  
Clerk of the Board

MAR 24 2000

Date Approved

  
Mayor Willie L. Brown Jr.

**SAN FRANCISCO  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
RESOLUTION 15089**

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RELATED TO APPROVAL OF LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF 700 MONTGOMERY STREET, THE COLUMBUS SAVINGS BANK BUILDING, AS LANDMARK NO. 212.**

1. **WHEREAS**, On March 13, 2000, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution initiating landmark designation of the Columbus Savings Bank Building.
2. On April 5, 2000, the proposal for designation was referred to the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, pursuant to Planning Code Section 1004.2, for the Board's review and recommendation of approval, disapproval or modification of the proposal. The Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board reviewed the designation proposal and supporting documents and has heard testimony in a regularly scheduled, duly noticed public hearing on April 5, 2000 and recommended that the Planning Commission approve the designation proposal.
3. The Columbus Savings Bank Building is located at the northeast corner of Montgomery and Washington Streets and occupies the westernmost portion of Assessor's Block 196, Lot 8.
4. The Columbus Savings Bank Building is located in the Jackson Square Historic District and is designated a "Compatible" building in that district.
5. A Landmark Designation Report for 700 Montgomery Street was prepared by William Kostura. It employs the "Kalman Methodology" as an analytic framework for evaluating the building's historic and architectural significance. The report assigns the building a rating of "Excellent" to seven of the thirteen Kalman criteria: Construction Type/Use, Age, Architect, Design, Relation to Historic Patterns, Continuity, and Integrity. The Landmark Designation Report assigns a rating of "Very Good" to four of the thirteen Kalman criteria: Style, Interior, Relation to Persons, Setting. The Landmark Designation Report assigns a rating of "Good" to two of the thirteen Kalman criteria: Relation to Events and Visual Significance.
6. On June 1, 2000, the designation proposal was referred to the Planning Commission, pursuant to Planning Code Section 1004.3, for the Commission's review and approval, disapproval or modification of the proposal.
7. On June 1, 2000 the Planning Commission reviewed the designation proposal and supporting documents and heard testimony in a regularly scheduled, duly noticed public hearing.
8. The Planning Commission finds that the Columbus Savings Bank Building meets the criteria for landmark designation set forth in Planning Code Section 1004 (a)(1) having a "special character or special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest or value."
9. The Planning Commission finds that the Columbus Savings Bank Building Designation Report meets the requirements of Planning Code Section 1004(b) describing the characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation, and describing the particular features that should be

preserved. It is fully incorporated into this resolution by reference.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Planning Commission hereby approves the landmark designation of The Columbus Savings Bank Building as Landmark No. 212, pursuant to Planning Code Section 1004.3, limited to and comprising that portion of Block 196, Lot 8 occupied by the subject building and described in Exhibit A (attached).

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the Planning Commission on June 1, 2000.

Linda Avery  
Commission Secretary

AYES: Antenore, Joe, Martin, Theoharis, Mills, Richardson

NOES: None

ABSENT: Chinchilla

ADOPTED: June 1, 2000

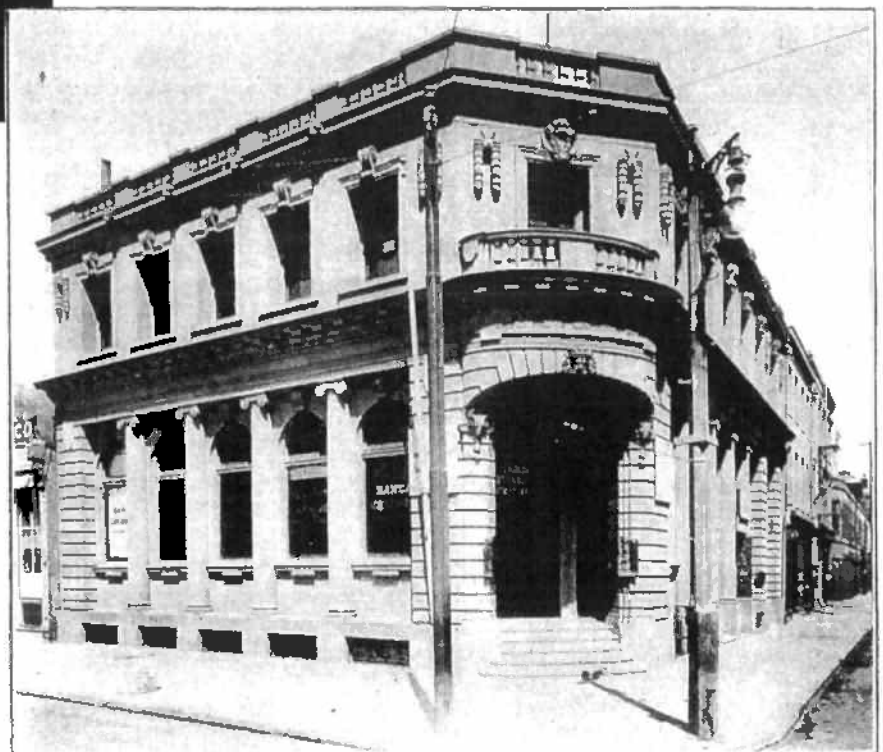
# LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD CASE REPORT

## THE COLUMBUS SAVINGS BANK, 700 Montgomery Street



At left: A detail of the entrance.

Below: The Columbus Savings Bank in 1909. *From Architect and Engineer, October 1909.*



HISTORIC BUILDING NAME: Columbus Savings Bank

ADDRESS: 700 Montgomery Street

POPULAR BUILDING NAME:

ORIGINAL USE: Bank

CURRENT USE: Law offices

STYLE: Classical Revival (modified banking temple)

NUMBER OF STORIES: 3 stories plus basement

OWNER:

BLOCK/LOT:

ZONING:

ARCHITECT: Meyer and O'Brien

CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1904-1905

EXTERIOR MATERIALS: gray Colusa sandstone

LANDMARK NO: 212 LPAB VOTE:

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Columbus Savings Bank was the first of four banking institutions in San Francisco that were founded by Italians to serve the Italian community. These banks were responsible, more than any other factor, in stimulating the economy of San Francisco's Italian community and in overcoming the regionalism that divided that community. This bank building, built in 1904-1905, is the oldest of several in San Francisco that illustrate this pattern of history. The Columbus Bank's founder, John Fugazi, was a recognized leader of the community, and this is also the oldest building in San Francisco associated with him.

The Columbus Savings Bank is located in Jackson Square at the intersection of Montgomery Street, Washington Street, and Columbus Avenue. This intersection is one of the most important in the city from an urban design viewpoint, for it marks the place where the Financial District, Jackson Square, North Beach and Chinatown all meet. To the south of this intersection are the skyscrapers of the Financial District, and to the north, east, and west, in Jackson Square, North Beach, and Chinatown, are brick buildings of four stories or less. The Columbus Savings Bank is a two story building of sandstone and brick, with a boldly classical design; it works with the Columbo Building (at the gore of Columbus and Washington) and the Italian Popular Bank (at the gore of Columbus and Montgomery) to define this intersection very effectively. It was designed by the firm of Meyer and O'Brien, and is one of the very few buildings by this extremely important firm that pre-date the earthquake and fire of 1906.

4. ARCHITECT: Designed or built by an Architect or Builder Who Has Made a Significant Contribution to the Community, State or Nation: E Of particular importance to the history of the community, state or nation; VG Of considerable importance; G Architect or builder known, but not of particular importance; F/P Unidentified or unknown (E)

Frederick H. Meyer was born in San Francisco in 1876 to a cabinetmaker, and learned the building trades by working for his father and in a planing mill. At age seventeen he began working as a draftsman for architects, and in 1899 he became the junior partner of Samuel Newsom. This was an unusual pairing, for Newsom had been, with his brother Joseph Cather Newsom, the designer of some of the most elaborately ornamented Victorian-era residences in the state, while Meyer went on to design some of the most important tall office buildings in the early twentieth century.

In 1902 Meyer and Smith O'Brien formed a partnership, known as Meyer and O'Brien. Although this partnership lasted only seven years, it was very productive, and produced several of the steel-frame office buildings for which Meyer is best known today. One of their first commissions was the Rialto Building, at New Montgomery and Mission (1902). With its wide bands of rectangular windows, it reflects the influence of the "Chicago School" of architecture on Meyer, and helped to influence the post-1906 rebuilding of San Francisco's financial district. This building, Meyer and O'Brien's Humboldt Bank Building at 783-785 Market (1906), and their Monadnock Building at 673-687 Market (1906) are among the most important tall office buildings of the period in San Francisco. Other important, surviving works by this firm include the Hastings Building at 180 Post Street (1908), the Columbia Stables at 45-47 Page Street (1908), and the Cadillac Hotel, at 380 Eddy (1909).

After the breakup of his partnership with O'Brien, Frederick Meyer went on to produce, on his own and in partnership with Albin Johnson in the 1920s (as Meyer and Johnson), an extraordinary array of office buildings, club buildings, industrial buildings, power substations, civic buildings, residences, and buildings of other types. A high percentage of Meyer's work survives to the present day. Among the most notable are the Kohler and Chase Building at 20-26 O'Farrell (1909), the Physician's Building at 500 Sutter (1914), the PG&E Building at 445 Sutter (1916), the Union Iron Works' Administration Building at 20<sup>th</sup> and Illinois (1917), and the Financial Center Building at 405 Montgomery (with Johnson, 1927), all office buildings. Civic commissions include Civic Auditorium (with John Galen Howard and John Reid, Jr., 1915), two fire stations, North End Police Station (1915), Raphael Weill School (1926, altered), and West Portal Library (1936). Notable club buildings include California Hall, for the German community, at 601-625 Polk (1913) and the Elks' Club, 450-460 Post (with Johnson, 1924). These latter employ German Baroque and Spanish Gothic ornamentation, respectively, and are quite dissimilar to Meyer's Chicago School office buildings with classical ornament.

From the 1940s until his death in 1961 Meyer changed with the times and designed downtown office buildings along modernist lines. These mark a different kind of departure from his Chicago School buildings of a half-century earlier. They also

6. INTERIOR: Interior Arrangement, Finish, Craftsmanship, and/or Use Detail is/are Particularly Attractive or Unique: E Excellent; VG Very Good; G Good; F/P Fair or Poor (VG)

The original entrance lobby of 1905 survives to a large degree, with moldings in the classical style. This was the only part of the interior that was inspected for this report.

## B. HISTORIC CONTEXT

7. PERSONS: Associated with the Life or Activities of a Person, Group or Institution that has Made a Significant Contribution to the Community, State or Nation: E Person of primary importance intimately connected with the building; VG Person of primary importance loosely connected or person of secondary importance intimately connected; G Person of secondary importance loosely connected or person of tertiary importance intimately connected; F/P No known connection with person of importance (VG)

The Columbus Bank is one of several buildings in San Francisco that are associated with John Fugazi, one of the most influential leaders of the Italian community in San Francisco from the 1870s through the 1910s. He was an immigrant from Milan who founded a travel agency, Agenzia Fugazi, in San Francisco in 1876. This agency represented steamship and railroad lines, and made travel arrangements for Italian immigrants to San Francisco as well as Italians returning to Italy from this city. Fugazi also handled the sending of cash by Italians in San Francisco to relatives in Italy. As owner of one of the few safes in North Beach, Fugazi was also trusted to accept savings deposits by his countrymen, and made occasional loans. By such gradual steps, Fugazi increased his financial activities to the point that he and others opened the Columbus Savings and Loan Society, in 1893. He divested himself of his interest in this bank in 1905, only to open a second bank, the Banca Popolare Operaia Italiano (Italian Popular Bank, or Fugazi Bank) in November, 1906. Its building at 4 Columbus Avenue (1909) is City Landmark #52. In 1912 Fugazi commissioned the construction of Fugazi Hall, at 678 Green Street. This was Fugazi's gift to the Italian community, and became home to numerous organizations.

Fugazi's connection with 700 Montgomery was brief, for he severed his connection with the Columbus Savings and Loan Society soon after it was completed. The fact that it was built under his direction is significant, however; it is also the oldest of the buildings in San Francisco that are associated with Fugazi.

8. EVENTS: Associated with Events that Have Made a Significant Contribution to the Community, State or Nation: E Event of primary importance intimately connected with the resource; VG Event of primary importance loosely connected or event of secondary importance intimately connected; G Event of secondary importance loosely connected; F/P No known connection with event of importance. (G)

The Columbus Savings Bank, 700 Montgomery, was built in 1904-1905 as a direct result of the founding of the Bank of Italy by A. P. Giannini. Giannini was an industrious businessman whose father-in-law, Joseph Cuneo, was a board member of

the Columbus Savings and Loan Society. Upon Cuneo's death in 1902 Giannini inherited this seat. For two years he attempted to persuade John Fugazi and other board members to liberalize their lending policy and to serve Italians of modest means. Frustrated in his attempts, Giannini left the board of the Columbus in 1904 to found his own bank, the Bank of Italy. He selected as the location of his bank a former saloon at 1-3 Columbus Avenue in the Drexler Building (where the Columbo Building is today). This storefront was next door to the one at 614 Washington Street/5 Columbus Avenue, where the Columbus Savings and Loan and Agenzia Fugazi were located. Next, Giannini went to his landlady, Elise Drexler, and obtained a lease for the entire building, becoming in effect the landlord of the Columbus Savings and Loan. As the San Francisco Bulletin reported in 1904, "Finding themselves thus placed in a humiliating position, the directors of the old institution with indignation voted to move out." The Columbus Savings directors purchased two old buildings at the northeast corner of Washington and Montgomery and hired architects Meyer and O'Brien to erect a new banking hall in their place.

The new bank building was saved from destruction in 1906 when Oliver P. Stidger, an attorney at the Montgomery Block (southeast corner of Washington and Montgomery) was successful in saving that building from destruction. With the Montgomery Block as a buffer, soldiers then dynamited all buildings on the south side of Washington Street between Montgomery and Van Ness Avenue, in a briefly successful attempt at creating a fire break. At Van Ness, however, the attention of firefighters was diverted, and the fire jumped to the north side and began working its way east. It could not be stopped until it reached Montgomery Street. Here, the Drexler building and all buildings on the west side of Montgomery were destroyed, but those on the east side of Montgomery, in what is now called Jackson Square, were saved. The Montgomery Block has since been demolished, but two blocks of buildings east of Montgomery and north of Washington survive to this day.

9. PATTERNS: Associated with or Illustrative of Broad Patterns of City's Cultural, Social, Political or Economic History or Development: E Patterns of primary importance intimately connected with the resource; VG Patterns of primary importance loosely connected or patterns of secondary importance intimately connected; G Patterns of secondary importance loosely connected; F/P No known connection with patterns of importance (E)

The Columbus Savings Bank represents the origin of financial institutions among the Italian community in San Francisco. Prior to 1893 Italians in this city, most of whom were recent immigrants, generally avoided banks, or else chose to deposit their savings in a French bank that was located close to North Beach. Italians seeking loans had even fewer options, for, as the Italian newspaper *L'Italia* noted in 1893, "American banks seem to have serious misgivings about the reliability of Italians in financial matters." Italians in this city were also reluctant to join forces with each other for economic purposes, for they represented numerous regions of Italy, and tended to avoid dealings with Italians from regions other than their own. The Italian community in San Francisco, then, was a fractured one, and was isolated from the major financial institutions in the city. As a result, its members generally lacked economic opportunities.

The establishment of four Italian-owned banks during the period 1893-1906 did much to change this state of affairs. Dinol Cinel, in his important study *From Italy to San Francisco: The Immigrant Experience* (Stanford University Press, 1982, pp. 233-234) states that "the creation of the Italian banks was probably the most important step in the growth of the Italian community in San Francisco and the decline of regionalism." The first of these banks was the Columbus Savings and Loan Society, founded in 1893 by John F. Fugazi as an outgrowth of his long-established travel agency. Although the great majority of its directors were Italian businessmen, one was I. W. Hellman, an extremely influential banker with whom Fugazi had been associated. The Columbus was a conservative institution whose deposits came from Italians but which made few loans to Italians of modest means. It thus left a niche for competitors, including Andrea Sbarboro's Italian-American Bank (founded 1899) and A. P. Giannini's Bank of Italy (founded 1904). The latter, particularly, had a liberal lending policy toward poorer Italians, who were the foundation of its success. In a sense, the Bank of Italy had its roots in Fugazi's Columbus Savings and Loan, for Giannini's experience as a banker derived from his position on the board of Fugazi's bank.

Initially, the Columbus Savings and Loan rented quarters in the Drexler Building at 614 Washington Street, where the Columbo Building is today. (This storefront ran through the building to 5 Columbus Avenue, where Fugazi's travel agency was located.) Upon the establishment of the Bank of Italy in the adjacent storefront in 1904 (see "Events," above) the board of the Columbus elected to erect their own bank building nearby, at the northeast corner of Washington and Montgomery. This location was just north of the Montgomery Block, once the most prestigious address for attorneys in the city, and at this time midway between San Francisco's financial district and the city's Italian quarter, North Beach. In 1905, soon after the bank was completed, Fugazi sold his interest in the bank to I. W. Hellman. In November 1906 Fugazi founded the fourth and last of the city's Italian banks, the Italian Popular Bank (or Fugazi Bank).

The Columbus Savings and Loan Society remained at 700 Montgomery Street until 1923, when it merged with Sbarboro's Italian-American Bank. This, in turn, merged with Giannini's Bank of Italy in 1927, whereupon 700 Montgomery became, for two years, the "Columbus Branch" of the Bank of Italy. Occupants of the building over the subsequent decade are unknown. From 1939 to 1953 the ground floor was occupied by the Pisani Printing and Publishing Company, owned by Gioachino Pisani and Mrs. Concetta Ceuni. The upper floor was occupied by a variety of attorneys, importers, and organizations, including the Italian consulate (1948-1951), the Indonesian consulate (1954-1956), and the District Attorney's Bureau of Family Relations and Aid to Needy Children.

Built in 1904-1905, 700 Montgomery is the oldest of several buildings that represent the beginnings of Italian banking in San Francisco. The others are the Italian-American Bank at 460 Montgomery (1907, City Landmark #110, interior demolished in the 1980s by erection of a skyscraper), the Bank of Italy at 552 Montgomery (1908), and the Italian Popular Bank at 4 Columbus Avenue (1909, City Landmark #52).

C. PHYSICAL CONTEXT

10. CONTINUITY: Contributes to the Continuity or Character of the Street, Neighborhood or Area: E Of particular importance in establishing the character of a distinguished area; VG Of importance in establishing or maintaining the character of a distinguished area; G Compatible with the character of a distinguished area; F/P Incompatible with the character of an area (E)

To the north, east, and west of 700 Montgomery are collections of two, three, and four story brick buildings in the Jackson Square, North Beach, and Chinatown neighborhoods. All of these were built during the 1850s-1910s. To the south is the "Transamerica Pyramid" and other skyscrapers of the financial district. It is 700 Montgomery, in combination with the Columbo Building (gore of Columbus Avenue and Washington) and the Italian Popular Bank (gore of Columbus Avenue and Montgomery Street), that marks the transition from the financial district to these low-rise neighborhoods. All three of these buildings are exceptionally well designed and boldly ornamented, and they form an effective gateway to these neighborhoods, which are among the most popular and important in San Francisco.

11. SETTING: Setting and/or Landscape Contributes to the Continuity or Character of the Street, Neighborhood or Area: E Of particular importance in establishing the character of an area; VG Of importance in establishing or maintaining the dominant character of an area; G Compatible with the dominant character of an area; F/P Incompatible with the dominant character of an area or unimportant (VG)

Like its Jackson Square neighbors, 700 Montgomery fully occupies its lot, helping to establish the urban character of the neighborhood.

12. VISUAL SIGNIFICANCE: Significant as a Visual Landmark to the Neighborhood, City, Region or Nation as a Whole: E A structure which may be taken as symbol for the city or region as a whole; VG A conspicuous and familiar structure in the context of the city or region; G A conspicuous and familiar structure in the context of the neighborhood; F/P Not particularly conspicuous or familiar (G)

700 Montgomery is a conspicuous and familiar structure in the context of its neighborhood, Jackson Square. It is more boldly ornamented than most of its neighbors, as befits a banking temple, but is slightly lower in height than many of them. It is a visual landmark in the neighborhood, but lacks prominence in the context of the city or region.

D. INTEGRITY

13. ALTERATIONS: The Degree to Which the Property Has Retained Original Materials from which its Significance is Derived or which Characterize its Period: E No changes or very minor changes; VG Ground floor remodeled cornice removed or minor alterations which do not destroy the overall character; G Overall character changed but recognizable through removal of major

cornice/parapet alteration of upper floors or gross alteration of any major element; F/P Altered beyond recognition (E)

Alterations to the exterior of 700 Montgomery are very few in number, and are minimal in their impact. Both doors in the Washington Street side of the building have modern metal frames, and one wood-framed window has been replaced by a window with a metal frame. Some of the sandstone ornament has eroded, but most of it is in good condition. Comparison of the building today with a photograph of the building taken in 1909 reveals no noticeable differences.

On the interior, one floor was divided to become two stories, thus adding a story to the building without changing the original building envelope.

THREATS TO SITE: NONE ( ) DEVELOPMENT ( X ) ZONING ( X ) VANDALISM  
( ) PUBLIC WORKS ( ) OTHER ( )

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS:

CALIFORNIA STATE REGISTER: HERE TODAY:

HERITAGE SURVEYS: DCP 1976 SURVEY:

DCP AREA PLANS:

OTHER: contributor to Jackson Square City Landmark Historic District

SUBMITTED TO LANDMARKS BOARD BY:

NAME: William Kostura

ADDRESS: P. O. Box 27365, San Francisco, CA 94127

TELEPHONE: (510) 286-5611

DATE SUBMITTED: April, 2000

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Above: Recent photo of Columbus Savings Bank.  
Below: details of entrance and first story window.

