



Tails
Resolution

File Number: 990140

Date Passed:

Resolution urging the Planning Department, Planning Commission, Arts Commission, Recreation and Parks Commission, and the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board to expeditiously designate Washington Square a landmark.

February 1, 1999 Board of Supervisors - SEVERED FROM FOR ADOPTION WITHHOLD COMMITTEE REFERENCE AGENDA

February 1, 1999 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED
Ayes: 10 - Ammons, Bierman, Becerra, Brown, Katz, Kaufman, Lewis, Neuman, Yaki, Yee
Absent: 1 - Teng

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1 [Landmarking of Washington Square]
2 URGING THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT, PLANNING COMMISSION, ARTS
3 COMMISSION, RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION, AND THE LANDMARKS
4 PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD TO EXPEDITIOUSLY DESIGNATE WASHINGTON
5 SQUARE A LANDMARK

6 WHEREAS, Washington Square is one of San Francisco's oldest and most beloved
7 parks, and,

8 WHEREAS, In 1847 Washington Square was one of 3 blocks identified as public
9 squares, and,

10 WHEREAS, Washington Square was subsequently set aside as public open space and has
11 remained that way for over 150 years, and,

12 WHEREAS, Washington Square is associated with important events in local and state
13 history, and,

14 WHEREAS, Washington Square is significant for its overall design, and also because it
15 contains historically significant public art, and,

16 WHEREAS, Washington Square makes an important contribution to the character of
17 the North Beach Neighborhood, and,

18 WHEREAS, SAN Francisco civic organizations have taken a keen interest in
19 improvement and protection of the park; now, therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors does hereby urge the Planning
21 Department, Planning Commission, Arts Commission, Recreation and Parks Commission,
22 and the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board to expeditiously designate Washington
23 Square a landmark.

24
25

Supervisors Yee, Becerra



SAN FRANCISCO

PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. 14879

ADOPTING FINDINGS RELATED TO AN APPROVAL OF LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF WASHINGTON SQUARE AS LANDMARK NO. 226.

1. **WHEREAS**, On October 21, 1998, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (Landmarks Board) established its landmark designation work program for fiscal year 1998-1999. Ten sites were chosen to have Landmark designation reports developed and brought to the Landmarks Board for consideration of landmark designation. Included on that list was Washington Square; and
2. On November 8, 1998 the Telegraph Hill Dwellers requested that the Landmarks Board consider initiating landmark designation of Washington Square Park; and
3. On February 1, 1999, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution 84-99 "urging the Planning Department, Planning Commission, Arts Commission, Recreation and Parks Commission, and the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board to expeditiously designate Washington Square a Landmark;" and
4. On March 15, 1999, the Civic Design Review Committee of the Art Commission adopted a motion in support of the landmark designation of Washington Square; and
5. On April 15, 1999, the Recreation and Park Commission adopted a motion in support of the landmark designation of Washington Square; and
6. On April 21, 1999, the Landmarks Board held a public hearing and adopted Landmarks Board Resolution No. 512 initiating landmark designation and recommending that the Planning Commission approve the designation of Washington Square as City Landmark No. 226; and
7. A draft Washington Square Landmark Designation Report, prepared by Kate Nichol, was reviewed by the Landmarks Board at its regular meeting of April 21, 1999, and such documentation was considered a final Washington Square Landmark Designation Report by the Landmarks Board; and
8. The Landmarks Board, in considering landmark designation of Washington Square, employed the "Kalman Methodology" rating criteria, modified for special application to landscape features. The Landmarks Board made the following rating determinations for Washington Square: Five of ten modified Kalman criteria received a rating of "Excellent" - Age, Relation to Historic Events, Relation to Historic Patterns, Character/Continuity/Setting, and Visual Significance. Four of ten modified Kalman criteria received a rating of "Very Good" - Use, Design, Designers, and Relation to Historic Persons. One of Ten modified Kalman criteria received a rating of "Good/Very Good" - Integrity; and
9. Concurrent with this proposed Washington Square landmark designation is proposed a text amendment to Article 10 that will provide for Certificate of Appropriateness approval of alterations to City-owned parks, squares, plazas or gardens on a landmark site, where the designating ordinance identifies the alterations that require such approval. This text amendment will enable the implementation of the "Procedures for Alterations to Washington Square" that are proposed for incorporation into the Washington Square designation ordinance; and

10. The Planning Department developed these procedures in consultation with Recreation and Park Department staff, Art Commission staff, and the Telegraph Hill Dwellers. The purpose of these procedures is to identify the types of work to Washington Square requiring Certificate of Appropriateness approval, prior to commencement of work, pursuant to Planning Code Section 1006. It is intended that the Certificate of Appropriateness review process be reserved for alterations that may significantly affect the special historic character of Washington Square, for the purposes of Article 10. It is not intended that work undertaken in the ordinary maintenance and management of Washington Square, or in the interest of public safety, be subject to review under Article 10; and
11. The Planning Commission reviewed this case and all supporting documents and heard testimony in a regularly scheduled, duly noticed public hearing on September 9, 1999; and
12. The Planning Commission concurs with the findings and recommendation of the Landmarks Board as set forth in Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board Resolution No. 512; and
13. The Planning Commission finds that the subject property met 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;" and
14. The Planning Commission finds that the Washington Square Landmark Designation Report describes the location and boundaries of the landmark site, describes the characteristics of the landmark or historic district which justify its designation, and describes the particular features that should be preserved meeting the requirements of Planning Code Section 1004(b). It is fully incorporated into this resolution by reference; and
15. The "Procedures for Review of Alterations to Washington Square" are proposed for incorporation into the designation ordinance pursuant to proposed, amended Planning Code, Section 1004(c)(3). Such procedures are fully incorporated into this resolution by reference.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Planning Commission hereby **approves** the landmark designation of Washington Square as Landmark No. 226, pursuant to Planning Code Section 1004.3, limited to and comprising all of Lots 1 and 2 in Assessor's Block 102; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution of Approval be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was **ADOPTED** by the Planning Commission on September 9, 1999.

Jonas Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Theoharis, Antenore, Chinchilla, Joe, Martin, Richardson

NOES: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Mills

ADOPTED: September 9, 1999

SAN FRANCISCO

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

RESOLUTION #512

ADOPTING FINDINGS RELATED TO AN INITIATION OF LANDMARK DESIGNATION AND A RECOMMENDATION OF APPROVAL OF THE LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF WASHINGTON SQUARE.

1. On October 21, 1998, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (Landmarks Board) established its Landmark Designation Work Program for fiscal year 1998-1999. Ten sites were chosen to have Landmark Designation Reports developed and brought to the Landmarks Board for review and comment, and consideration of initiation of landmark designation. Included on that list was Washington Square.
2. On November 8, 1997 the Telegraph Hill Dwellers requested that the Landmarks Board consider initiating landmark designation of Washington Square Park.
3. On February 1, 1999, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution 84-99 "urging the Planning Department, Planning Commission, Arts Commission, Recreation and Parks Commission, and the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board to expeditiously designate Washington Square a Landmark."
4. On March 15, 1999, the Civic Design Review Committee of the Art Commission adopted a motion in support of the landmark designation of Washington Square.
5. On April 15, 1999, the Recreation and Park Commission adopted a motion in support of the landmark designation of Washington Square.
6. A draft Washington Square Landmark Designation Report, prepared by Kate Nichol, was reviewed by the Landmarks Board at its regular meeting of April 21, 1999, and such documentation was considered a final Washington Square Landmark Designation Report by the Landmarks Board.
7. The Landmarks Board, in considering landmark designation of Washington Square employed the "Kalman Methodology" rating criteria, modified for special application to landscape features. After reviewing recommendations on the ratings for the modified criteria in the draft Washington Square Designation Report at its regular meeting on April 21, 1999, the Landmarks Board made the following rating determinations for Washington Square: Five of ten modified Kalman criteria received a rating of "Excellent" - Age, Relation to Historic Events, Relation to Historic Patterns, Character/Continuity/Setting, and Visual Significance. Four of ten modified Kalman criteria received a rating of "Very Good" - Use, Design, Designers, and Relation to Historic Persons. One of Ten modified Kalman criteria received a rating of "Good/Very Good" - Integrity.
8. A "Policy Regarding the Types of Alterations to Washington Square Requiring Certificate of Appropriateness Authorization" was reviewed and adopted by the Landmarks Board at its regular meeting of April 21, 1999, and is proposed for incorporation into the landmark designation. Such policy clarifies the types of alterations in Washington Square that would require a Landmarks

Board hearing and Certificate of Appropriateness authorization before commencement of the work. It is intended by this Policy that the Certificate of Appropriateness regulatory process be reserved only for major changes to the Square that may significantly affect its special historic character as described in the Washington Square Landmark Designation Report. It is not the intent of this policy to regulate work undertaken in the ordinary maintenance and management of the Square or its fixtures.

9. The Landmarks Board has reviewed documents and correspondence from the elected officials, other City departments, neighborhood residents, community organizations, and received oral testimony on matters relevant to the proposed landmark designation, in a duly noticed Public Hearing on April 21, 1999.

The Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board hereby initiates landmark designation of Washington Square, in Assessor's Block 102, Lots 1 and 2 as Landmark No. 226, pursuant to Article 10 of the Planning Code.

The Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board hereby recommends that the Planning Commission approve the landmark designation of Washington Square, in Assessor's Block 102, Lots 1 and 2 as Landmark No. 226, pursuant to Article 10 of the Planning Code.

The Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board hereby directs its Recording Secretary to transmit this Resolution, the Washington Square Landmark Designation Report, the "Policy Regarding the Types of Alterations to Washington Square Requiring Certificate of Appropriateness Authorization," and other pertinent materials in the Case file 98.270L to the Planning Commission.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on April 21, 1999.

Andrea Green
Recording Secretary

AYES: Members Dearman, Finwall, Kelly, Kotas, Levitt, Magrane, Reidy, Shatara
NOES: None
ABSENT: Member Ho-Belli
ADOPTED: April 21, 1999

**WASHINGTON SQUARE:
FINAL LANDMARK DESIGNATION CASE REPORT
CASE NO. 1998.270L**

APRIL 1999

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1. SUMMARY

1.1 Identifying Information/Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board Action

HISTORIC AND POPULAR NAME: Washington Square

OWNER: City and County of San Francisco

LOCATION: Block 102, bounded by Union, Filbert, Stockton, Powell Streets

ZONING: Public (Open Space)

ORIGINAL AND CURRENT USE: Public Park

DATE ESTABLISHED: January 3, 1850

LANDMARK NO: 226 **LPAB VOTE:** 8-0; 1 absent

1.2 Statement of Significance

Washington Square is one of San Francisco's oldest and most beloved parks. Dedicated as public open space even before the incorporation of the City of San Francisco, it remained a tranquil, natural oasis as the City sprang up around it. In pre-Gold Rush California, Juana Briones, one of California's noteworthy pioneers, grew vegetables on this land. In 1847, when Jasper O'Farrell was commissioned to lay out the city's streets, he identified three city blocks as public squares, including the city block which later became known as Washington Square. In 1849, William Eddy re-surveyed the City and published a widely distributed map showing the public squares. In 1850, the sites were set aside for the public by John W. Geary.

Washington Square is associated with important events in local and state history. The park was given its name during the fervently patriotic years leading up to the Civil War and was the site of Fourth of July ceremonies. In 1906-7, 600 earthquake refugees were sheltered in the park. As a public park, Washington Square has hosted many special events, such as Fourth of July and Columbus Day celebrations, the start of the annual Blessing of the Fishing Fleet procession, and the North Beach Festival. The park is home to historically significant public art which recalls facets of California history--a granite block placed in 1869 as a U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Station; the Ben Franklin Statue, moved to the park in 1904, originally erected on Market Street in 1879 as a water fountain by temperance activist Henry G. Cogswell; a bronze sculpture of a man drinking water, crouched next to an artificial pond, a gentle reminder of the streams which once ran nearby; and the Volunteer Firemen Memorial, in honor of the Volunteer Fire Department of 1849-1866.

San Francisco civic organizations have taken a keen interest in improvement and protection of the park. While the park's plantings and layout have undergone changes, neighborhood organizations have guarded the essential qualities of Washington Square. Thus, after almost 150 years, Washington Square is the only one of San Francisco's three original parks that has not been made into a roof top for an underground parking garage. As it has for well over a century, Washington Square continues to serve as a green oasis as well as a cultural focal

point for San Francisco's lively North Beach. Its continuing natural condition makes it highly significant as an historic resource within a densely urbanized area.

1.3 Kalman Methodology

The Planning Department and the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (Landmarks Board) apply the Kalman Methodology criteria, modified for use in San Francisco, in the identification and evaluation of cultural resources. This methodology is organized by four broad topics--architecture, historic context, physical context, and integrity--which are then further broken down into subcategories. This Designation Report contains ratings (noted in parentheses) based on the Kalman criteria. However, because this methodology was developed primarily for the evaluation of buildings, some interpretation was necessary for application to an outdoor landscaped space.

2. ARCHITECTURE

2.1. Use Category

Washington Square is significant as an urban park which has been in continuous public use since the mid 19th century (Rating: VG, Good Example.)

Washington Square was mapped as a public square in 1847 and developed to its current state over a hundred year period. Until the 1860's, the Square, adjacent to neighborhood cemeteries, lay neglected, an unofficial waste dump for the city. Although the Square was used for public events in the early 1860's, few physical improvements were made. By 1872, with the help of neighborhood boosters, the adjacent cemeteries were removed, the user-defined cross pattern of paths was improved with gravel, and some landscaping was planted. By the 1880's, Washington Square (il Giardino, the garden, as it was called) was the central social gathering place for the Italian community of North Beach. By the turn of the century, Washington Square was well-established as an informal, bucolic open space with scattered groves of trees. Ample seating could be found on the long benches placed on the sides of each major walkway.

A noteworthy aspect of Washington Square's use has been the active involvement of neighborhood groups in the park's improvement. In the 1950's, Washington Square was re-landscaped through a project initiated by the Committee for the Beautification of Washington Square, a coalition that included the Columbus Civic Club, Italian Federation of California, Italian Welfare Society, North Beach Merchants and Boosters, North Beach Lions, Church of Saints Peter and Paul, Salesian Boys Club, Telegraph Hill Dwellers, Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Association, and The Misses Marini. In the 1960's, neighborhood activists successfully protected the park from a proposal to transform it into the roof of an underground parking garage. In the early 1990's, the Committee for the Illumination of Washington Square ensured that the park had adequate and attractive lighting. Many individuals have initiated plantings, new benches, and fund-raising for needed repairs or improvements.

For almost 150 years, Washington Square has been used as a village green, the civic center of North Beach. The park's major recreational uses in the 19th century--strolling, enjoyment of the outdoors, informal play and socializing--continue today.

2.2 Age

Washington Square is one of San Francisco's oldest parks. (Rating: E, established before April 1906.)

Washington Square was identified in Jasper O'Farrell's survey of 1847 and William Eddy's resurvey of 1849. On January 3, 1850, it was deeded to the Town of San Francisco by the town's alcalde, John W. Geary. Its establishment as a public open space predated the formal incorporation of the City of San Francisco and the admission of California into the Union. When Washington Square was established, the setting aside of public open space was still a rarity in urban America. The major American parks movement did not begin until the second half of the 19th century and generally produced parks located on the outskirts rather than in the heart of the city. Thus, Washington Square represents a very early American era of urban public open space.

2.3 Design

Washington Square is significant not only for its overall design, but also because it contains historically significant public art. (Rating: VG, Very Good)

2.3.1 In terms of American park design, Washington Square Park represents a 19th century pattern and scale of public open space. Its overall dimensions (a rectangular city block), perimeter promenade, and landscaping are in the tradition of a 19th century American town square or village green. A symmetrical path system formed the park's overall design for its first one hundred years. The symmetrical pattern was established by pedestrians taking the most direct routes across the square. Later, the dirt and gravel paths were paved, resulting in the appearance of a formal Beaux-Arts design. The park featured several large lawn areas and informal groups of shade trees.

In 1957, at the request of the Committee for the Beautification of Washington Square (a coalition of neighborhood organizations), the park was redesigned by Lawrence Halprin and Douglas Baylis. The 1957 design featured a circuitous walking path, a large lawn area, tree clusters, and children's playgrounds. According to Halprin, this free-form design "encourages vigorous participation in a wide range of activities." (Halprin: *Choreography of Gardens*.) Clusters of evergreen and deciduous trees act as screens to wind and heat, while offering a soft transition to the surrounding buildings. The strategic arrangement of benches and expanse of pavement on the Filbert Street side of the park defined a plaza in front of the district's main architectural focal point, the Church of Saints Peter and Paul.

More than twenty years later, in the early 1990's, another group of neighbors, the Committee to Illuminate Washington Square, worked with a design team to create a new lighting plan for Washington Square. The lighting plan, which has been implemented, features "up-lights" that subtly illuminate the tree canopies from the ground below and replica lamp posts within the park that are similar to traditional street lamp posts on Filbert Street.

The small triangular area bounded by Columbus, Union, Filbert, and Powell was part of the original Public Square, but was cut off from the main park by the construction of Columbus Avenue (originally named Montgomery Avenue) in the 1870's. This part of Washington Square Park has featured the Drinking Man sculpture at the edge of a pond since 1905. The concrete bench on the Powell Street side is visible in photographs dating from the early 1920's. The triangle was dedicated as "Marini Plaza" in 1952. It features art works which honor the Italian presence in North Beach: a sculpture depicting Frank Marini, a well-known benefactor of the North Beach community, and a fountain bird bath, which was a gift to San Francisco from its sister city, Assisi, Italy. The triangle was not affected by the 1957 redesign of the main park.

2.3.2 Washington Square is home to several historically significant pieces of public art.

A simple granite block was placed as a **Survey Marker** in 1869 by Dr. George Davidson (the surveyor and prominent natural scientist for whom Mount Davidson is named) of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. Latitude and longitude were carved on the survey monument in 1937. The monument reads: "U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey, Astronomical & Telegraphic Longitude Station, Washington Square, 1869-1880; Latitude: 37.47'59"n, Longitude: 122.24'37" W."

The **Benjamin Franklin Statue** was erected in 1879 on Market and Kearny Streets by temperance activist Henry Cogswell and moved to the park in 1904. The statue originally was a drinking fountain intended to provide an alternative to San Francisco's many bars. Instead, the fountain was used by earthquake refugees in 1906. A time capsule was placed in the statue in 1879 and opened by North Beach neighbors in the park in 1979; participants in the 1979 event placed objects in another time capsule in the statue, to be opened in the year 2079.

The **Drinking Man** statue, a bronze figure of a man crouching on large granite boulders next to a pond, was donated to the City by the artist, Park Commissioner M. Earl Cummings, in 1905. The San Francisco Chronicle announced, "Sculptor's Art to Adorn Square--Park Commissioners to Give Work of Art to Breathing Space in City's North End" and described the crouched figure with "head bent forward...eagerly drinking of water from his firmly clasped and scooped hands." The model who posed in Paris for "the Drinking Man" was the same person who posed for the famed "St. John the Baptist" by Rodin.

The **Volunteer Firemen Memorial**, created by Haig Patigian in 1932, is a tribute to San Francisco's Volunteer Fire Department of 1849-1866. The sculpture, which stands 14 feet tall in the northwest section of the Square, depicts three firemen, one holding a supine woman, one kneeling with a hose and one pointing with an outstretched arm. While the monument was originally intended to be erected on Telegraph Hill, next to Coit Tower, Patigian, in a letter to the President of the Art Commission, said that an "appropriate location from the start was to have the monument erected in that section of the city which embraced the early settlement so frequently ravaged by fire." The Memorial evokes images of North Beach during the City's early eras of fire-prone wooden buildings.

2.4 Designers

Washington Square is associated with prominent designers and artists. (Rating: VG, of considerable importance.)

Landscape architects **Lawrence Halprin** and **Douglas Baylis** redesigned Washington Square in 1957. Lawrence Halprin, a landscape architect in San Francisco since 1945, was nominated in 1953 by Time Magazine and San Francisco Chamber of Commerce as "One of San Francisco's leaders of Tomorrow," and became nationally and internationally renowned for his "choreography of gardens" theory, designing places to "determine the movement of the people in them." Washington Square is an early predecessor to Halprin's numerous works, including Levi's Plaza, Embarcadero Plaza and Fountain, Ghirardelli Square, and Hallidie Plaza, in San Francisco, as well as his works outside of San Francisco, including Seattle Freeway Park, Washington; FDR Memorial, Washington D.C.; Lovejoy Plaza, Oregon; and parks in Italy and Jerusalem.

Haig Patigian, sculptor of the Volunteer Firemen Memorial, was a member of the San Francisco community from 1899 until his death in 1950 and was a prominent figure nationally in

the arts. Within San Francisco, his works include the General Pershing Statue in Golden Gate Park, the "Liberty" bas relief on the Security Pacific National Bank's main Grant Avenue facade, decorative panels on the Bohemian Club, and interior art work at 300 Montgomery Street (originally American National Bank).

3. HISTORIC CONTEXT

3.1 Persons

Washington Square has been associated with people who have made significant contributions to the community, state, and nation. (Rating: VG, person of primary importance loosely connected or person of secondary importance intimately connected.)

Juana Briones (1802-1889), a pioneer and humanitarian who was one of the most noteworthy figures in pre-Gold Rush San Francisco (Yerba Buena), built an adobe house in 1836 on the Northeast corner of Powell and Filbert Streets. Here she had a small farm that included the land which later became known as Washington Square. Briones grew vegetables, raised cattle and sold produce and milk to ship crews in the harbor. Indications are that she lived in North Beach from 1836 to 1847. Aside from her marketing skills, Briones was revered for her skills as a healer, mid-wife and long-term provider of care. Briones also offered assistance to sick and deserting sailors, hiding them in her loft and transporting them to the East Bay. Briones purchased a ranch in Santa Clara in 1844, but did not sell her North Beach home until 1858. The **Juana Briones California State Historical Marker** was placed in Washington Square in 1997 to honor this pioneer settler. Although the connection of Juana Briones to Washington Square is significant, the exact location of the plaque is not particularly significant, especially since there is no evidence that she used the location of the plaque for her vegetable garden.

John White Geary, who was the Town of San Francisco's alcalde (which means magistrate or mayor, in Spanish), set aside the land for Portsmouth, Union and Washington Squares in 1850, months before the City's incorporation. Shortly after, he became the City of San Francisco's first mayor. Later, he served terms as governor of Kansas and Pennsylvania.

In the 1850's **Dr. Henry Cogswell** settled in San Francisco and established his dentistry practice. His dentistry practice and real estate dealings Cogswell a prosperous man. As a strong advocate of the temperance movement in a city full of bars, When Cogswell donated the Ben Franklin Fountain to San Francisco in 1879, it was Cogswell's intention to "supply San Francisco with one fountain for every 100 saloons." In 1904 the Ben Franklin Fountain was relocated to Washington Square from its original site at Market and Kearny Streets. Of all the statues Cogswell donated to San Francisco, Ben Franklin is the only one that remains today. In addition to being active in the temperance movement, Cogswell founded a college that bears his name.

Lillie Hitchcock Coit, an unconventional but beloved socialite, was made an honorary member of her favorite Knickerbocker Volunteer Fire Company No. 5 in 1863 for her help in fighting a fire on Telegraph Hill. Upon her death in 1929, Lillie Coit donated two-thirds of her fortune to the Universities of California and Maryland, and the remaining \$118,000 for the beautification of the city she loved so much. Her gift's effect on the City's landscape was dramatic, resulting in construction of Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill and the Volunteer Fire Department monument in Washington Square.

3.2 Events

Washington Square is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the community, state, and nation. (Rating: E, patterns of primary importance intimately connected with the resource.)

During the Civil War era, San Francisco gave names to Washington and Union Squares that expressed the City's loyalty to the North and the prevailing patriotic fervor. Washington Square was the location of enthusiastic Fourth of July celebrations.

Washington Square provided essential refuge for those made homeless by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. For a year after the catastrophe, over 600 refugees lived in Washington Square Park.

Washington Square has been the traditional location for many community events, festivals, political rallies, concerts and other social and cultural activities. The procession for the Blessing of the Fishing Fleet, on the first Sunday after October 1, commences in Church of Saints Peter and Paul and proceeds down Columbus Avenue, past reviewing stands in Washington Square. During the Columbus Day parade and pageant, thousands of people follow the procession from the Civic Center into Washington Square, where they receive High Mass. In addition, the North Beach Festival and the San Francisco Mime Troupe performances are annual events held in the park. The Square has been used as a "village green" by residents of the North Beach neighborhood for many years.

In 1979, hundreds of citizens turned out to Washington Square to witness the opening of a time capsule planted in the base of Ben Franklin during its construction in 1879. An inscription on the Ben Franklin statue reads "P.O. Box with mementos for the historical society in 1979. From H.D.C." The 1979 crowd placed mementos of their own into two plastic tubes and sealed them back into Ben Franklin for the citizens of San Francisco 2079, when the next time capsule will be opened in Washington Square.

3.3 Patterns

(Rating: E, Patterns of primary importance intimately connected with the resource.)

Washington Square is associated with and illustrative of broad patterns of the City's cultural, socio-political, and physical development. The Square represents a land use transition unique to 19th century California, in which garden plots and corrals of early Spanish and Mexican settlers became logical sites for public open space under American rule. It was reserved as unbuilt land in the 1840's, probably because the water drainage from surrounding hills made it more suitable for use as a garden than as a building site. In pre-Gold Rush California, the site was part of a natural swale, draining water from the surrounding hills into streams which ran north to the Bay. The natural irrigation may explain why Juana Briones, one of California's noteworthy pioneers, grew vegetables on this land.

When Washington Square was set aside as public open space in the mid-19th century, it was a far-sighted civic decision that predated San Francisco's rise to national prominence and the building boom that was to occur in the second half of the 19th century.

The Square is a setting for recreational and civic activities by the many different ethnic groups--from annual Columbus Day events to daily Tai Chi practice. Thus, Washington Square has been central to the City's cultural development.

4. PHYSICAL CONTEXT

4.1 . Character/Continuity/Setting

Washington Square makes important contributions to the character of the North Beach Neighborhood. (Rating: E, Of particular importance in establishing the character of a distinguished area)

Washington Square is nestled within a hollow between Telegraph and Russian Hills, a green valley which serves as a visual counterpoint to the hilltops. The park offers panoramic views of Coit Tower, downtown buildings (notably the Transamerica Building) and the residences on the hills.

The park is central to the North Beach neighborhood and is often called the “heart” of North Beach. Three-story buildings, with two floors of living quarters or office over ground floor restaurants and shops, predominate on the park’s periphery. Placid, flat, and green, the park serves as the front yard for the Church of Saints Peter and Paul (constructed 1922-24). With its solid Italianesque design and its twin spires rising 190 feet from ground level, the church both anchors the park and provides a dramatic architectural focus for the North Beach District.

4.2 Visual Significance

Washington Square is significant as a visual landmark to the neighborhood, city, and region. (Rating: E, A place which may be taken as a symbol for the city or region as a whole.)

Washington Square is very visible from public viewing points and private residences on Telegraph and Russian Hills and from many downtown buildings. It is a soft space, a lush green lawn protected by peripheral clusters of trees, which provides visual relief from the densely built surroundings.

Washington Square is a place that expresses the identity of San Francisco. It is the quintessential urban park: a lush green square, set against a backdrop of small to medium-scale historic buildings, in a thriving multi-cultural community. Pictures of the Square, especially with backgrounds featuring Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill, the downtown Transamerica Pyramid building, or the twin towers of Saints Peter and Paul, are instantly recognizable as San Francisco.

5. INTEGRITY

Although Washington Square has undergone design changes throughout its 150 year history, for at least the last century it has maintained the character-defining features which have made it the tranquil, green oasis treasured by San Franciscans. (Rating: G/VG, Alterations which do not destroy overall character.)

5.1 Overall Park Design

The primary features that make Washington Square a “green oasis” are its high ratio of “soft” area (plantings/landscape) to “hard” area (paving/structures), its generous lawns, and its large scale shade trees.

Section 8.3 of this report contains site plans and photographs which show how the park's overall design has changed over time. (The sidewalks are considered to be part of the park, since they form a perimeter "promenade" and are integral to the park's functioning.) The 1849 survey map designated the entire rectangular city block as a "public square." In the 1870's, the construction of Columbus (originally Montgomery) Avenue separated a small triangle (now known as "Marini Plaza") from the main part of the park.

The layout of the Marini Plaza's landscaped area has changed little since the installation of the Drinking Man sculpture in 1905. However, the construction of diagonal parking spaces on the Powell Street side has resulted in the sidewalk being narrowed to 5' wide, with an effective width of less than 3' due to telephone poles and other obstructions.

The earliest available site plan showing the main part of Washington Square dates from 1949. The 1949 site plan shows a symmetrical path layout which had been the park's overall design for many years. Fortunately for Washington Square, the use of nearby North Beach Playground (constructed in 1910) for active recreation had satisfied the demand for paved play areas in the neighborhood. In 1949, the landscaped area was approximately 67% of the total area bounded by the roadways of Columbus Avenue, Filbert, Stockton, and Union Streets. The park was divided into several large grassy areas.

The 1957 redesign reduced the landscaped area to approximately 59% of the total area. Although the 1957 redesign transformed the layout of the main part of Washington Square, and the planted area was somewhat reduced, important qualities of the park were preserved and enhanced. The designers changed the path system, but retained a high ratio of planted area, a generous central lawn, and large scale trees. The park's perimeter sidewalk continued to function as a "promenade" much as it did at the turn of the century. The designers also preserved or planted large scale perimeter trees which buffer the lawn area from the street and accentuate the park's position in the bowl-shaped valley between Telegraph and Russian Hills.

In the 1960's, a major political battle was fought over the integrity of Washington Square, when neighborhood activists rebuffed an attempt to transform Washington Square into a roof for an underground parking garage. In an article in Cry California Quarterly (Winter 1966-67), Mel Wax expressed how the garage proposal would damage the park, writing: "Parks and garages do not mix well...Trees--big trees--can't grow...on a garage roof. Underground garages need extensive ventilation systems that protrude above park surfaces. They demand massive entrances and exits. They breed traffic and smells, not tranquility." Although the Board of Supervisors narrowly approved the 535-car garage, Mayor John F. Shelley vetoed the ordinance in October 1966. A second proposal for an underground garage was defeated two years later. Of San Francisco's original three public squares, today Washington Square is the only one which has not been transformed into a roof for underground parking. It retains an authenticity of place which adds to its significance.

The park changed very little between 1957 and 1971, the date of the most recent overall site plan for Washington Square. Between 1971 and the present, there also have been few modifications. The modifications to the paved areas have consisted of paving around the Volunteer Firemen Memorial, construction of stairs at the corner of Columbus Avenue and Filbert Streets, and the installation of the Juana Briones bench and an additional asphalt pad for a park bench on the Stockton Street side.

Overall, "the present landscape...is so sympathetic to its surroundings and to the activities of the square that it seems as though it had always existed" (noted by Sally and John Woodbridge in their book, San Francisco Architecture).

5.1 Public Art

Major pieces of public art have been an enduring feature of Washington Square; they have stayed in their original locations as the park underwent transformations. The Ben Franklin has characteristic of San Francisco Franklin Statue and Volunteer Firemen Monument in their original locations, and did not touch the small triangular park space known as "Marini Plaza."

- 6. THREATS TO SITE:** NONE () DEVELOPMENT () ZONING () VANDALISM (X)
PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT (X) OTHER ()

7. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS:

Representation in Existing Surveys indicated by "X" or "Yes" below: National: () State: (X) Local: (X) California State Register: Yes Here Today: Heritage Surveys: DCP 1976 Survey: Yes Other:
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8. FIGURES (pages 10 - 26)

- 8.1 Property Maps
- 8.2 Historical Photographs
- 8.3 Overall Park Design - site plans and photographs
- 8.4 Current Photographs

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9.3 Dates submitted

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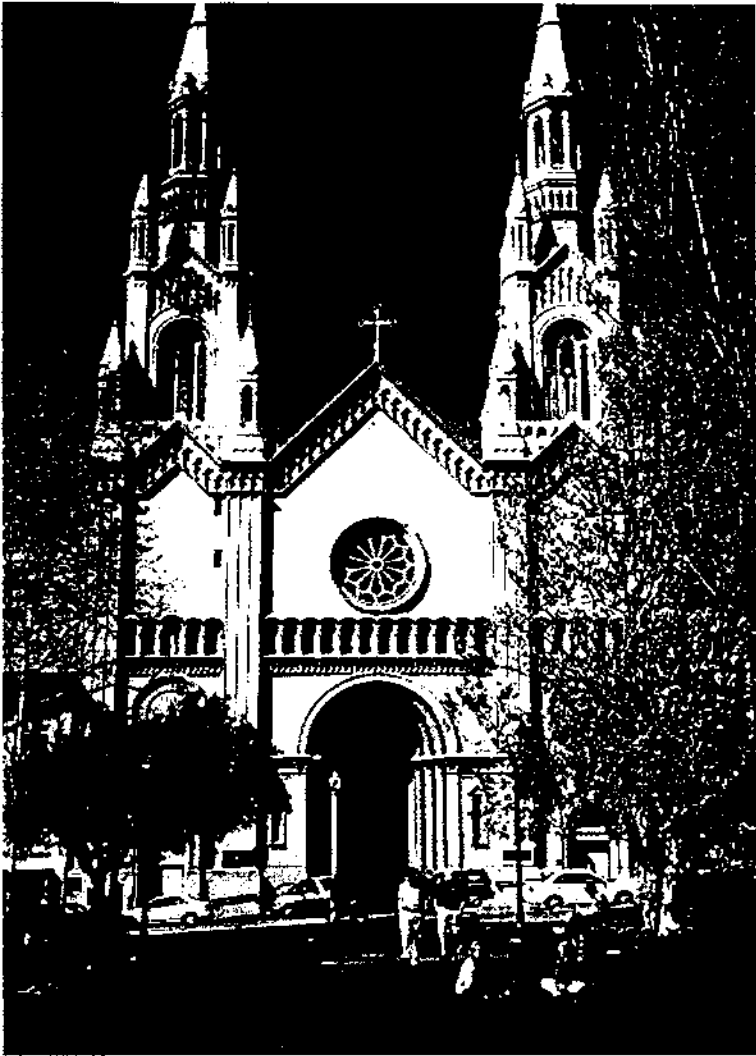
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8.4 Current Photographs



Washington Square, 1999:
View north towards Church of
Saints Peter and Paul.



Washington
Square,
1999: View
east towards
Telegraph
Hill.