

1 DESIGNATING THE BUSH STREET TEMPLE (SOTO MISSION) AS A LANDMARK
 2 PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY PLANNING CODE.
 3
 4 WHEREAS by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:
 5
 6 WHEREAS the Board of Supervisors hereby finds that the Bush
 7 Street Temple (Soto Mission), located at 1391 Bush Street, being Lot 1
 8 of Block 49, has a special character and special historical,
 9 architectural and aesthetic interest and value, and that its
 10 designation as a landmark will be in furtherance of and in conformance
 11 with the purposes of Article 10 of the City Planning Code and the
 12 provisions set forth therein.

13 WHEREAS, Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning
 14 Code, Chapter 21, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, the
 15 Bush Street Temple (Soto Mission) is hereby designated as a Landmark,
 16 such designation having been duly approved by Resolution No. 7451 of
 17 the City Planning Commission, which Resolution is on file with the
 18 Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under file No. 90-76-1.

19 WHEREAS, The descriptions of the location and
 20 characteristics of the Bush Street Temple (Soto Mission) and of the particular features that
 21 are of historic interest, and of the particular features that
 22 are of architectural interest, as included in the said Resolution, are hereby
 23 incorporated herein and made a part hereof as though fully set forth.

24 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

25 THOMAS M. HUNGER
26 CITY ATTORNEY

27 RECOMMENDED:

28 CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

29 By Edward J. Murphy
 30 Edward J. Murphy
 31 Acting Director of Planning

32 HEAD OF SUPERVISORS

33 Passed for Second Reading
34 Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

35 MARCH 19, 1970

36 Approved by the Board of Supervisors, San Francisco, on this 19th day of March, 1970, by the affirmative vote of _____ Supervisors, out of _____ Supervisors.

37 _____

38 Absent: Supervisors _____ PELLOS

39 John J. Sweeney Clerk
 40 _____

41 90-76-1
42 File No.

43 MAR 20 1970

44 Approved

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

47 Approved by the Board of Supervisors, San Francisco, on this 20th day of March, 1970, by the affirmative vote of _____ Supervisors, out of _____ Supervisors.

48 _____

49 Absent: Supervisors _____

50 _____
 51 _____

52 John J. Sweeney Clerk
 53 _____
 54 _____

File Copy

SAN FRANCISCO
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION NO.7431

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the Bush Street Temple (Soto Mission) at 1881 Bush 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 22, 1975 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 January 7, 1975 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, the proposal to designate the Bush Street Temple (Soto Mission) at 1881 Bush 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:

Beginning at a point on the southerly line of Bush Street, distant thereon 55 feet from the intersection of the easterly line of Laguna Street, thence easterly along the southerly line of Bush Street for a distance of 60 feet, thence at a right angle southerly for a distance of 137.5 feet, thence at a right angle westerly for a distance of 60 feet, thence at a right angle northerly for a distance of 137.5 feet to the point of beginning, Being Lot 13 in Assessor's Block 374.

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. 134 as adopted on October 22, 1975, 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 LM74.13.

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 of January 7, 1976.

Lynn E. Pio
Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Finn, Newman, Porter

NOES: Commissioners Fleishhacker, Mellon

ABSENT: Commissioners Ritchie, Rueda

PASSED: January 7, 1976

OWNERS: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

LOCATION: This lot has a frontage of 162.8 feet on the south side of Bush Street, between Laguna and Octavia Streets; being Lot 13 in Assessor's Block 674.

HISTORY: Until recently the headquarters for the Soto Mission of San Francisco, this structure was originally designed by Moses J. Lyon in 1895 to serve as a house of worship for the third congregation of San Francisco Jews. While commonly known as the Bush Street Temple, its Hebrew name was Ohabai Shalome, which translates into "Lovers of Peace".

The structure was actually the second home of the congregation which was organized by a group of about fifty dissenters from Congregation Emanu-El, who in the week preceding November 6, 1864, published the following in San Francisco newspapers:

NOTICE

All members of Congregation Emanu-El who are in favor to organizing a new Congregation are invited to meet at the MINERA HALL, corner Kearny and California Streets next Sunday morning, November 6th at 9 o'clock (sic)

The impetus for the meeting was the introduction of a revised ritual at Emanu-El; those who attended the meeting at Minerva Hall were opposed to the change. Apparently, the initial congregation attracted other sympathizers, for their first temple, consecrated September 16, 1865, to the site of the present Native Sons Hall at 414 Mason Street, had a seating capacity of 630. Contemporary newspaper accounts reveal it to have been well appointed.

The establishment of this congregation underscores the sizeable interest in conservative Judaism which made itself heard in late 19th Century San Francisco. In the decade preceding the founding of Congregation Ohabai Shalome, under the vigorous leadership of Rabbi Elkan Cohn, Congregation Emanu-El was pursuing a course of religious reform. Although the philosophy which underlay this national reform movement sought to adapt traditional worship and observances to the spirit of the times, there was considerable opposition from sectors of the local Jewish community to these changes.

The consecration of the Bush Street Temple was held on September 15, 1895 - 30 years to the day after the consecration of the first temple on Mason Street. It had a seating capacity of 1,000. The Congregation appears to have left its Mason Street structure prior to the erection of the new temple for the 1893 City Directory indicates that their services were being held at Golden Gate Hall on Sutter Street. Additionally, a newspaper item of September 15, 1895, notes that the newly selected rabbi of Congregation Ohabai Shalome (Rabbi Julius Fryer), preached in Golden Gate Hall; a subsequent item noted that he would be installed and the new temple dedicated on September 15, 1895.

HISTORY
(Continued)

For many years the temple was the center of great activity; it was one of the focal points for Zionist causes in the Bay Area. However, membership in the congregation began to wane and in 1934, the building was sold to Teruro Kasuga, a follower of Zen. According to one source, after the sale, the dwindling congregation continued to meet on Clement Street, but with the death of its rabbi in 1940, went out of existence.

Mr. Kasuga and about 20 others, mostly natives of Japan, were followers of the Zen priest Hosen Isobe. The building was held in Mr. Kasuga's name until 1939 when the Soto Mission was incorporated.

With the outbreak of World War II, the Japanese congregation of some 40 members was forced to vacate the building as a result of being interned in relocation camps for the duration of the war. During this interval, the building was used by a Christian group.

During the decade of the 1950's, the following of the Mission grew to 250 although it has since declined. For a brief spell in the 1960's, the Soto Mission shared its space with the Zen Center, a training center for Zen priests oriented to the non-Japanese.

The property was purchased by the Redevelopment Agency in January 1973; its re-sale to the Zen Center and the American Vistorian Museum was recently announced. The new location of the Soto Mission is the southwest corner of Laguna and Sutter Streets; the Zen Center is at 100 Page.

ARCHITECTURE:

As seen today, the most prominent feature of the Bush Street Temple is the delicate, and undeniably Venetian, tracery which screens a loggia occupying the central position of the facade. Further Venetian influence in the arrangement of facade design elements is its tripartite division, both vertically and horizontally. In this report, for purposes of nomenclature only, the vertical divisions and their arrangement are referred to as tower, nave, tower; the horizontal divisions or levels, beginning with the lowest, are ground, gallery and attic.

But it is not only Venetian influence which appears in the facade; the elements of the Romanesque and the Moorish are also introduced to create a lively ensemble, a feast for the eyes, about which more will be said later.

It should first be noted that although this is a frame structure, the facade elements were treated to simulate Siennese marble, an aspect which has been somewhat diminished by the effects of weathering over the years.

At ground level, below the tracery, principal entry to the temple is provided through a deeply-set, Romanesque arch which also encloses steps leading to the doors. At the springline, the vault is supported on each side by three piers. The surfaces of the piers, the mouldings forming the receding vault of the arch, and the spandrels are sculpted with a variety of rich ornamentation. On either side of the entry, in the space below the tracery and above the height of the springline of the entrance arch, are small, paired, arched windows separated by an engaged column. They are encompassed by a larger arch, with sculpted spandrels and other infill above the paired windows. Their sills are comprised of a sloping horizontal member below which are found rectangular paired windows.

ARCHITECTURE:
(Continued)

Doors located at the ground level of the towers provide secondary entrances to the temple. Consisting of simple rounded arches, they are reached by steps projecting forward from the facade. The arches are embellished by striated, imitation stonework forming a vault whose voussoirs increase in length from the springline to the keystone, thus adding a Moorish effect.

At gallery level, the inspiration for the Venetian Gothic tracery screening the loggia -- the width of the nave between towers and the full height between the ground and attic levels -- might have come directly from either the Ca d'Oro or the Ducal Palace. The most distinguished feature of the facade, the tracery is composed of six columns, with intricate floral capitals, about half the height of the opening. Their flamboyant vaults divide the opening into seven archways infilled at their bases with a delicate railing. Directly above the columns, in the space between the vaults of the arches and the architrave supporting the attic, are circles with openwork quatrefoils. These circles are tangential to the concave haunches which form the points of the arches, and to the architrave.

In the towers at this level are paired arched windows repeating the Moorish embellishment given the entrances below.

At attic level the towers are square in plan and between them there is a sloping roof which recedes from the tracery of the loggia. The towers are surfaced with striations thinner in their vertical dimensions than those found below. Centered in each tower is a rounded arched window whose overhead facade treatment reflects a variation of the Moorish theme in the arches below.

At the springline of the window the square plan of the tower evolves into an octagonal plan with a decorative course atop the arch. Above this course, a cornice encribes the octagon and supports a shallow dome.

A curious feature -- a remnant of the original design of the temple -- is found between the towers of the attic. This appears to be a platform, extending between the octagons, which is supported by trusswork rising from the sloping roof. When originally constructed, this feature was not visible as it served only as bracing for an intricate display of Judaic symbols, including tablets representing the Ten Commandments, which occupied the attic space between the towers and gave a more solid appearance to the facade at this level.

Examples of the Moorish influence in the towers have been cited, but those features which contributed most significantly to that aspect of the temple have long since disappeared, possibly as long as 60 years ago.

These were the spires, now shrunken to small domes, which originally rose high above the towers. Minaret-like in appearance when seen on the horizon, they lent the temple its most exotic expression. And when seen as a unit with the facade below, they created a vertical thrust so powerful as to render the horizontal divisions, now prevalent, almost unnoticeable.

ARCHITECTURAL
HISTORY:

Although in its present state the underlying Venetian influence of the building is most apparent, photographs of the structure with the towers intact place primary emphasis on the Moorish characteristics noted above.

From a local point of view, the Moorish influence seen here is heighten by virtue of its being part of a national movement which could be said to have had both its origin and demise in San Francisco. The source cited for this information is a book by Rachel Wischnitzer entitled Synagogue Architecture in the United States. Miss Wischnitzer cites Temple Kenseth Israel in Philadelphia completed in mid-1864, as the first in which an oriental motif was recognized in a synagogue, and in that temple only to a very minor degree by virtue of its having small bulbous cupolas at the extremities of an "attenuated Romanesque" facade. However, she credits the impetus for what became a wave of Moorish influence in American synagogue design to one begun later that same year.

That synagogue was the second home of Temple Emanu-El, which stood where the Four-Fifty Sutter Building now stands and whose cornerstone was laid on October 25, 1864, only twelve days prior to the meeting at Minerva Hall which resulted in the establishment of Congregation Ohabai Shalome. Miss Wischnitzer also notes that the introduction of oriental -- which includes the Moorish -- influence into synagogue architecture was part of a wider movement which found its way into all types of buildings in the United States. She further notes the underlying German composition of Emanu-El membership and the likelihood that some members were familiar with the already-existing oriental synagogue in Germany.

Regarding Temple Emanu-El, she states:

The "golden globes" of the San Francisco Temple Emanu-El inaugurated a new era in American Architecture.

... the minaret-like finials of the buttresses pointed ... to Saracenic ideas.

Never before was such lavish use made of Jewish symbols in the exterior of a synagogue.

The last structure cited in Miss Wischnitzer's book as representative of the Moorish trend was erected in 1891. There undoubtedly were later ones (including Ohabai Shalome) which are not cited; nevertheless, the Bush Street Temple constructed in 1895 may have been the last.

Finally, an overview of Mr. Lyon's design. Looking back over eight decades, it appears that the design may have been a compromise -- unrealized or not. Congregation Ohabai Shalome was conservative in its outlook and it is not unlikely that it would have selected a "tried-and-true" design for its new temple. In the United States, in 1895, that would have been one of Moorish character even though that style was declining or even no longer in vogue. Concurrently, the architectural world had just witnessed the Columbian Exposition in Chicago with its grandiose display of neo-classic forms which set off an architectural revolution producing structures running the full gamut of eclectic style and degrees of quality. In that same city, and with less flamboyance, the Romanesque had been making in-roads; this movement reached San Francisco in 1891 with the

ARCHITECTURAL
HISTORY:
(Continued)

construction of the Mills Building with its still admired Romanesque entrance. Lyon's Venetian Gothic tracery does not appear to be attributable to any influence other than a then-prevailing backward look at eclectic style. One might say, however, that Mr. Lyon's design for the Bush Street Temple was truly a product of its time and place, and this adds to its significance.