

FILE NO. 90-77-9

ORDINANCE NO. 213-77

1 DESIGNATING THE FERRY BUILDING 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 Ferry Building, the  
5 Embarcadero, Foot of Market Street, being Lots 000F and 000W in Assessor's Block  
6 9900 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  
8 of and in conformance with the purposes of Article 10 of the City Planning Code and  
9 the 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 Ferry Building is hereby desig-  
12 nated as a Landmark, this designation having been duly approved by Resolution No.  
13 7661 of the City Planning Commission, which Resolution is on file with the Clerk of  
14 the Board of Supervisors under File No. 90-77-9.

15 (b) Required Data. The descriptions of the location and boundaries of the  
16 landmark site; of the characteristics of the landmark which justify its 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.

21 APPROVED AS TO FORM

RECOMMENDED

23 THOMAS M. O'CONNOR  
24 CITY ATTORNEY

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

26  
27 By Robert A. Kennedy  
Deputy City Attorney

By Rai Y. Okamoto *RS*  
Rai Y. Okamoto  
Director of Planning

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29  
30  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

LM #90

Passed for Second Reading  
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

MAY 23 1977

Ayes: Supervisors Barbagelata, Feinstein, Francois, Gonzales, ~~Kopp~~, Mendelsohn, Molinari, Nelder, Pelosi, Tamaras, von Beroldingen.

~~Noes: Supervisors~~ .....

Absent: Supervisor ~~1~~ ..... KOPP .....

 Clerk

90-97-9  
File No.

JUN 9 1977  
Approved

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

MAY 31 1977

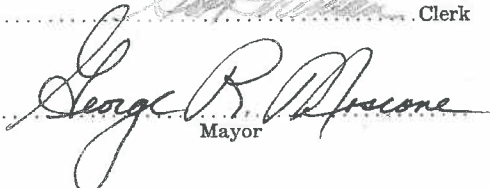
Ayes: Supervisors ~~Barbagelata~~, Feinstein, Francois, Gonzales, Kopp, ~~Mendelsohn~~, Molinari, Nelder, Pelosi, Tamaras, von Beroldingen.

~~Noes: Supervisors~~ .....

Absent: Supervisors .. BARBAGELATA ..... MENDELSONN

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

 Clerk

  
Mayor

SAN FRANCISCO

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. 7661

WHEREAS, a proposal to designate the Ferry Building at the Embarcadero foot of Market 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 December 1, 1976 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 February 10, 1977, 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 Ferry Building at the Embarcadero, foot of Market Street, as a Landmark pursuant to Article 10 of the City Planning Code is hereby APPROVED, the precise location and boundaries of the Landmark site being Lots 000F and 000W in Assessor's Block 9900.

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. 153 as adopted December 1, 1976, which Resolution is incorporated herein and made a part hereof as though fully set forth;

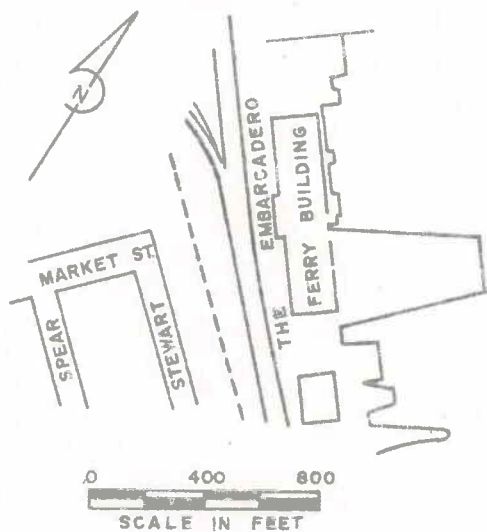
Third, That the said Landmark should be preserved generally in all of its particular exterior features as existing on the date hereof and as described and depicted in the photographs, case report and other material on file in the Department of City Planning Docket LM76.11.

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

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution has been ADOPTED by the City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of February 10, 1977.

  
Lynn E. Pio  
Secretary

- AYES: Commissioners Bierman, Dearman, Elliott, Finn, Lau, Rosenblatt, Starbuck.
- NOES: none
- ABSENT: none
- PASSED: February 10, 1977



Owner: Port of San Francisco

Location: The Embarcadero, Foot of Market Street, Being Lots 000F and 000W in Assessor's Block 9900.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Although other buildings lay claim to greater age and/or architectural integrity, the most readily identifiable building in San Francisco -- either by location or architectural form -- is the venerable Ferry Building. During its 78-year history, it has been viewed and used by more people than any other building in the history of the city.

**HISTORY:** Construction of the Ferry Building was authorized by the electorate of California in November 1892 by passage of a \$600,000 bond issue, to be repaid out of San Francisco Port revenues, for construction of a Union Ferry Depot or Union Passenger Depot in San Francisco.

The building was designed by A. Page Brown who died shortly after contracts for its construction were let on December 26, 1895. In February 1896, Edward R. Swain was engaged as Supervising Architect to see the building through to completion; in this he was ably assisted by H. C. Holmes, Chief Engineer for the Port.

From the outset there were delays:

-The Supreme Court of California was required to rule upon the legality of the method of financing.

-A discrepancy in the plans, caused by a draftsman's transposing the figure "3" into a "5", resulted in the first steel for the superstructure not fitting with the already-in-place foundation piers.

-A major delay, riddled with litigation, ensued over the exterior stone to be used. It was not resolved until after the steel skeleton had been erected whether Oregon gray stone (initially contracted for) or Colusa stone from the Sites quarry would surface the building. Eventually, the Colusa stone prevailed.

With the completion of the steel frame, the architects were called upon to justify the cant of the tower with reference to the alignment of Market Street on which it was centered. It was explained that it could not be otherwise for the main facade of the building was designed to rest upon, and be supported by, the seawall underneath. Furthermore, the architects held that it was really a happy set of circumstances, for a tower is best viewed from a slight angle.

HISTORY: That explanation failed to satisfy a writer in the Overland  
(Continued) Monthly of February 1897; he noted that:

"... the building possesses a square skeleton tower ... above the roof of the main structure, and set at such an irregular angle as to cause people with straight eyes to squirm as they approached down Market Street, and to ache with a desire to lay hold of that tower with strong hands and give it a twist to the northeast and southwest that would square it with Market Street."

On July 13, 1898, the building opened for public use. What had been completed had been built according to Brown's design; however, its length had been shortened from 840 feet to 659 feet. With this diminution in size, the intended monumental entrances at both ends, facing Market Street and similar to the main entrance at the base of the tower, were not erected. At the time, it was assumed that the building would be lengthened when the need for more ferry slips arose.

The building's most prominent feature was the much discussed tower rising 235 feet and visible for much of the length of Market Street. It was noted with pride that the tower was modeled after the Giralda of the Cathedral of Seville and that there was only one other like it in the United States -- that at Madison Square Garden (the original 1890 Garden) in New York. The Garden was designed by McKim, Mead, and White, in which firm A. Page Brown had been employed prior to his coming to San Francisco.

The clock faces on the tower were the largest in the United States at the time. They were 22 feet in diameter, with an eleven-foot minute hand and a seven and one-half-foot hour hand whose seven-day mechanism was powered by a 900 pound weight. For some time the clock was the subject of much derision for, dependent on the direction of strong winds and the face of the clock, it would gain or lose time -- as much as 15 minutes in an hour.

Surmounting the tower was a flagstaff with a time ball four-feet in diameter. Until completion of the Ferry Building, the time ball had been located at the observatory on Telegraph Hill where every day at noon it dropped the length of the pole; this operation was observed by ships and their chronometers were checked for accuracy. Originally gilded for the Ferry Building, the ball was soon painted black because there was a problem of seeing the gold against the bright sky. (The ball remained in operation at this location until it was moved to the Fairmont Hotel in 1909. It ceased operating there on June 30, 1937.)

The function of the building for its users was, of course, identical with that of a railroad station. For the reader unfamiliar with transportation modes in San Francisco and the Bay Area prior to the wide-spread use of the automobile and the airplane and the construction of the bridges, it is noted that, excepting the peninsula and cities to the south on the coast railroad route, arrivals in or departures from San Francisco to all points - whether Sausalito or Seattle, East Bay or East Orange, New Jersey, Milpitas or Miami - were made by boat from the Ferry Building.

Relative to the above, the area in front of the Ferry Building was also the hub of the local transportation system with cable car and streetcar lines from all parts of the city terminating there. The confusion of the cars could be avoided by taking a footbridge from the second floor level just north of the main entrance, across the Embarcadero to its west side.

**HISTORY:**  
(Continued)

The ground floor was given over to the usual passenger accommodation of a railroad station with spaces assigned for the facilities of the various railway companies whose rails terminated across the bay. Waiting rooms at this level were smoking rooms for men only and connected by stairway with the main waiting rooms on the upper level.

The second floor had as its main element a "promenade" or "nave", as it was referred to. Running the full length of the building, it was 48 feet wide and 42 feet high with skylights overhead. On its bay side were the main waiting rooms; on the Embarcadero side, offices. Departing passengers boarded the ferries at this level simultaneously while arriving passengers exited at street level.

The decline of the building as a passenger terminal began with the completion of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge in 1936. Commuters from East Bay no longer used the ferries, rather they crossed the Bay by automobile or by trains on the lower level of the Bridge. The terminal for the latter was at First and Mission Street and it was connected with the extensive Key system (rail) in the East Bay which served public transportation needs for that area.

For a time following the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939-1940, the "nave" housed a three-dimensional diorama of the state of California, viewed from the ocean side, which had been displayed at the Exposition. It occupied virtually the full length of the "nave".

By 1956 declining passenger service had rendered the upper floor unnecessary for waiting rooms and it was remodeled into office space by William G. Merchant. Rail passengers for points north, east and south continued to be transported by ferry to the Oakland mole until 1958, when bus service took over this function.

On September 16, 1974, transportation across the Bay, had, in a sense come full circle. Originally passage across the Bay was made on the water, then above the water, but on the aforementioned date, passage was made under the water with the service between East Bay and San Francisco by BART trains entering the city proper under the south wing of the Ferry Building.

It is doubtful that any other building in the city evokes so much nostalgia for a San Franciscan, of middle-age or older, as the Ferry Building. In the hey-day of rail travel, visitors to the city, frequently as not, said their initial hellos and final goodbyes to their San Francisco hosts at the Oakland Mole for if time and circumstances permitted, the visitor was accompanied by his host across the Bay. As it were, the San Franciscan literally began or ended the friend's journey in his company.

Most of the Ferry Building is now used for office space, housing the World Trade Centers and offices of the Port. Perhaps, however, some of the nostalgia of by-gone days will be revived upon the reconstruction of ferry terminal facilities for the benefit of passengers between San Francisco and Marin County.

**SURROUNDING  
LAND USE  
AND ZONING:**

The property is zoned C-2 and is in an 84-J height and bulk district. The Embarcadero Freeway runs directly in front of the building with M. Justin Herman Park on the southwesterly side of it. The BART platform on the Bay side of the building will be developed as a restaurant and open space. To the north are piers and to the south, the immediately adjacent piers are being removed.