

State of California — The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
NRHP Status Code _____

Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

Page 1 of 3 *Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder) 227 Church St.

P1. Other Identifier: Electric Theater

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted *a. County: San Francisco

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: San Francisco North, Calif. Date: 1956 (rev. 1973)

*c. Address: 227 Church St. City: San Francisco Zip: 94114

d. UTM: Zone: 10 mE/ _____ mN (G.P.S.)

e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number (Map, Block, Lot): 3544-062

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries.)

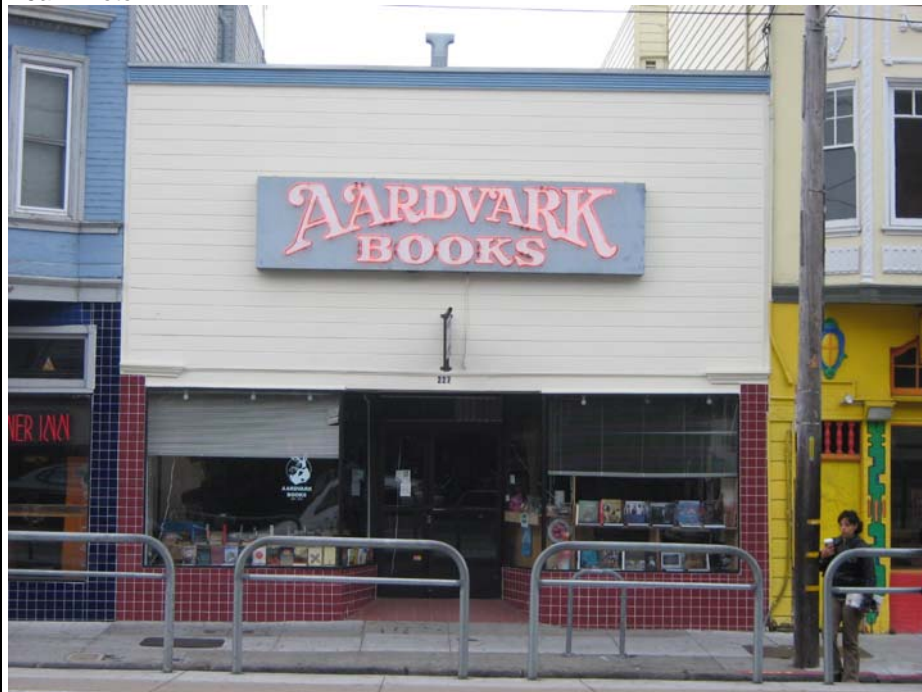
227 Church St. is located on a 25' x 125' lot on the east side of Church Street, between Market and 15th Streets. Built in 1907, 227 Church Street is a one-story plus mezzanine, wood frame commercial building, originally built as a Nickelodeon. The rectangular-plan building, clad in wood shiplap siding and ceramic tile, is capped by a flat roof. The foundation is not visible from the street. The primary façade faces west and is three bays wide. The first story is clad in glazed ceramic tile and contains metal-frame plate glass picture windows in the outer bays and a recessed entrance in the center bay. The entrance features double-leaf, aluminum frame glazed doors with transoms. Small vestiges of cornice remain at each end of the first story level. The mezzanine story is clad in wood shiplap siding and features a centered neon box sign with the business name. The primary façade terminates in a reeded cornice.

The building appears to be in good condition.

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (list attributes and codes) HP6: 1-3 story commercial building

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other

P5a. Photo



P5b. Photo: (view and date)

View from west
8/23/2006

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources: Historic
1907
SF Assessors Office

*P7. Owner and Address:
John J Hadreas, Anne Ageson
3687 Wyndemere Cir
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

*P8. Recorded by:
Page & Turnbull, Inc. (CM)
724 Pine Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

*P9. Date Recorded:
8/23/2006

*P10. Survey Type:
Reconnaissance

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none") None

*Attachments: None Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (list)

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*NRHP Status Code 5D3

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*Resource Name or # (assigned by recorder) 227 Church Street

___ B1. Historic name: Electric Theatre
 ___ B2. Common name: Aardvark Books
 ___ B3. Original Use: Movie Theatre
 ___ B4. Present use: Retail space
 ___ *B5. Architectural Style: None, altered

***B6. Construction History:** (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

This building was constructed in 1907. In 1908, a cantilevered awning was added to the front of the building. The front doors were replaced and interior partitions were removed in 1910. In 1915, a 30' wood-frame addition with a concrete foundation was constructed at the rear of the building. In 1953, the foundation was reinforced, and in 1958, the floor in the original (continued)

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features: None

B9a. Architect: Unknown b. Builder: Unknown

*B10. Significance: Theme Commercial Development Area: Castro/Eureka Valley, San Francisco

Period of Significance 1907- c.1950 Property Type Commercial Applicable Criteria A, C

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity) According to building permits, 227 Church Street was constructed as single-story commercial space in 1907 for an estimated cost of \$2,500. The building was part of a pattern of commercial development along Church Street around the turn of the century. The building was first used as a popular nickelodeon movie theatre called the Electric Theatre, which was enlarged in 1915 by architect Edward E. Young to increase the seating capacity to 350 patrons. In the 1950s, the building was used as a printing shop. San Francisco City Directories and building permits list a number of different printing companies at the address, including Sierra Press in 1954, Argonaut Printing Co. in 1958, Poor Richard's Press Printers in 1960, and Waller Press in 1962. Subsequent tenants included a restaurant supply company and a drapery store. The building is currently occupied by a bookstore.

227 Church Street retains integrity of location and setting, remaining part of the commercial corridor of Church Street in the Castro neighborhood. The property also retains a fair degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, as the alterations to the façade are superficial and could be removed to reveal the near-original condition of the building. (continued)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) _____

***B12. References:**

- Building Permits #6070, #20425, #83035, #66008, #154260, #207968, and #264119
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
- San Francisco City Directories
- San Francisco Assessor's Records
- Correspondence from Dennis Richards, 12/26/06.

B13. Remarks: Market & Octavia Survey

*B14. Evaluator: Rebecca Fogel, Caitlin Harvey; Page & Turnbull

*Date of Evaluation: March 2007

(This space reserved for official comments.)



State of California & The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
CONTINUATION SHEET

Primary# _____

HRI # _____

Trinomial _____

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*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 227 Church Street

*Recorded by: Page & Turnbull

*Date March 2007

Continuation

Update

***B6. Construction History (cont.):**

portion of the building was lowered two feet to be level with the concrete floor of the rear addition. In 1962, the entire concrete floor was repaired, as was dry-rot with new moisture-proofed wood. The primary façade appears to have been re-clad, and the storefront windows also appear to have been replaced.

***B10. Significance (cont.):**

The interior features a high degree of integrity as one of the finer surviving examples of an early nickelodeon in San Francisco. As is typical of nickelodeons, the interior features a large space that was used as an auditorium. The ceiling is coved and clad in pressed tin, and the front of the building includes a large barrel-vaulted space over the entry that may have originally functioned as a portion of the projection room. Portions of the original façade are also visible from the interior, including the arch of electric light sockets that gave the Electric Theatre its name.

While alterations have compromised the building's integrity of feeling, restoration of the façade would reverse that loss to some extent and improve the building's overall integrity as an example of an early twentieth century nickelodeon. However, because the building has undergone changes in use, it no longer retains integrity of association with the movie theatre context.

227 Church Street does not appear individually eligible for listing on the National or California Registers. The property is not associated with any persons significant to the history of the State of California or the City of San Francisco. However, the building does appear eligible for local listing under Criterion A (Events) and Criterion C (Architecture) as a contributor to a locally significant district—the potential San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District.

This potential district was identified in April 2006 by Andrew Murray and Katie Tom of the Office of the Legislative Analyst for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. It discusses the history and significance of the development of neighborhood theaters in San Francisco, as well as their distinctive architectural plans. According to the report:

The nickelodeon is closely associated with the development of film entertainment in San Francisco from 1900-1915. Built exclusively to exhibit moving pictures, the nickelodeon served to test and promote the entertainment form. The simplicity of design and operation of the theaters contributed to the nationwide boom in their construction and exposed film to a vast number of consumers. Owners frequently provided up to 18 performances a day, seven days a week.

In addition to its vital role in promoting film entertainment, the nickelodeon, with its flashy exterior and functional interior, pioneered elements of theater design that become mainstays ... the small size of nickelodeons limited their continued use as the popularity of films grew, so those that remained theaters did so by expanding their capacity to accommodate larger audiences and projection equipment and enhanced their interior ornamentation. The survival rate of these short-lived theaters is not high, although they are of unusual historical value. Of those remaining, all have been altered.

227 Church Street appears to retain several of the character-defining exterior and interior features identified in the report, including the simplicity of form and expediency of construction; single story rectangular frame construction; location in a commercial area and abutting adjacent structures; and a functional, level floor plan with limited seating capacity. In addition to being a rare survivor of its type, the building may also be a particularly early example of a Nickelodeon as well. The draft context statement identifies only four San Francisco Nickelodeons—three with construction dates after 1910, and the fourth with an unknown construction date.

The status code of 5D3 assigned to this property means that it appears to be a contributor to a district that appears eligible for local listing or designation—the potential San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District. This property was not fully assessed for its potential to yield information important in prehistory or history, per National Register Criterion D.