

FILE NO. 90-79-11

ORDINANCE NO. 82-80

1 DESIGNATING A. BOREL AND COMPANY BUILDING AS A LANDMARK TO
2 ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY PLANNING CODE.

3 Be It Ordained by the People of the City and County of
4 San Francisco:

5 Section 1. The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that the
6 A. Borel and Company Building located at 440 Montgomery Street,
7 being a portion of Lot 12 in Assessor's Block 239, has a special
8 character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest
9 value, and that its designation as a Landmark will be in furtherance
10 of and in conformance with the purposes of Article 10 of the City
11 Planning Code and the standards set forth therein.

12 (a) Designation. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning
13 Code, Chapter II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, the
14 A. Borel and Company Building is hereby designated as a Landmark, this
15 designation having been duly approved by Resolution No. 8418 of the
16 City Planning Commission, which Resolution is on file with the
17 Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under File No. 90-79-11.

18 (b) Required Data. The descriptions of the location and
19 boundaries of the landmark site; of the characteristics of the
20 landmark which justify the designation; and of the particular
21 features that should be preserved; as included in the said Resolution,
22 are hereby incorporated herein and made a part hereof as though fully
23 set forth.

25 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

26 GEORGE AGNOST
27 CITY ATTORNEY

28 By 
29 Deputy City Attorney

RECOMMENDED:

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

By 
Rai Y. Okamoto
Director of Planning

30

Passed for Second Reading
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

FEB 25 1980

Ayes: Supervisors Bardis, Britt, Horanzy, Hutch,
Kopp, Lawson, Molinari, Renne, Silver, Walker,
~~Ward.~~

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

Absent: Supervisors **WARD**

[Signature] Clerk

90-79-11
File No.

MAR 07 1980
Approved

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

MAR 8 1980

Ayes: Supervisors Bardis, Britt, Horanzy, Hutch,
Kopp, Lawson, Molinari, Renne, Silver, Walker,
Ward.

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

~~Absent: Supervisors~~

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

[Signature] Clerk

[Signature]
Mayor

SAN FRANCISCO
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION NO. 8418

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the A. Borel & Company Building at 440 Montgomery Street as a Landmark pursuant to the provisions of Article 10 of the City Planning Code was initiated by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, and said Advisory Board, after due consideration, has recommended approval of this proposal under Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board Resolution No. 179; and

WHEREAS, The City Planning Commission, after due notice given, held a public hearing on November 15, 1979 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 said Article 10;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, First, That the proposal to designate the A. Borel & Company Building at 440 Montgomery 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 only that portion of Lot 12 in Assessor's Block 239 on which the A. Borel & Company Building, 440 Montgomery is located; and

Second, That the special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value are described and depicted in the photographs and other materials on file in the Department of City Planning in Docket No. LM78.12 and as more fully set forth in the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board's case report titled "A. Borel & Company Building, Final Case Report - 440 Montgomery Street, approved October 18, 1978"; and

Third, That the particular features of said Landmark which should be preserved are those shown on the said photographs and described in said case report under the heading "ARCHITECTURE".

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 November 1, 1979.

Lee Woods, Jr.
Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Bierman, Dearman, Nakashima, Rosenblatt
and Starbuck.

NOES: None.

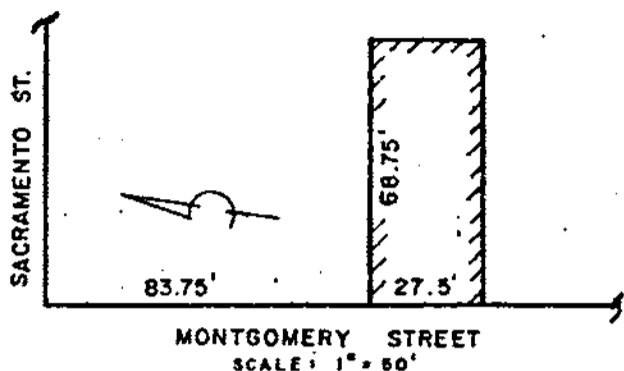
ABSTAINED: None.

ABSENT: Commissioners Christensen and Mignola.

PASSED: November 15, 1979.

This is a true and exact copy of the Resolution approved by the City Planning Commission and any changes on its face were made by me in my hand and initialed.

Lee Woods, Jr.
Secretary



Owner: Kam Chan Overseas,
Incorporated

Location: East side, Montgomery Street,
83.75 feet south of
Sacramento Street; Lot 12
in Assessor's Block 239

STATEMENT OF
SIGNIFICANCE:

A fine Corinthian bank building by one of the city's most important and prolific designers of monumental banks, this building begins the colonnaded parade of temple banks that runs northward along Montgomery Street almost without interruption to Columbus Avenue. In this small commercial building--its facade only 27.5 feet wide--the genius of Albert Pissis shines forth no less brilliantly than in his major works. While the design of a facade for a building of this size would, in a sense, offer less opportunity for innovation than would a larger street frontage, paradoxically, it also demands even greater innovation to achieve architectural excellence, and in this Pissis was eminently successful. The physical character of the building, its distinguished architect, and the place in the city's history which the owner and founder occupied all contribute to the uniqueness of this building.

HISTORY:

The A. Borel & Company Building was commissioned by Antoine Borel, banker and diplomat, in 1908. Although generally thought of as a commercial bank, the type of service offered by the Borel Company was actually more closely related to investment services.

The firm was established in 1863 by Alfred Borel, a Swiss immigrant and older brother of Antoine Borel, who joined the firm on his arrival in San Francisco in about 1862. Although Alfred continued to be associated with the firm, he apparently returned to Switzerland in about 1870.

Antoine was born in Neuchatel in 1840, and was educated in the local schools. He later attended Swiss and German universities studying agriculture and industrial management. As a financier in the United States, he held directorates in the California-Oregon Power Company, the Los Angeles Railroad, The Spring Valley Water Company and the Bank of California.

In 1884, he organized a syndicate to purchase the California Street Cable Car line, which had been in operation since April 9, 1878. It was largely through Borel's efforts that the company expanded its operations by construction of the Hyde Street line. Borel put together the financing of this expansion and the line began operations on February 9, 1891. Although bonds for the new line were turned over to a local investment house for sale, Borel also secured many investors in Switzerland. Initially, the line was not the success hoped for, and it was many years before revenues were sufficient to meet operating costs.

HISTORY Borel was the acknowledged leader of the local Swiss colony.
(Continued): Early after his arrival in San Francisco, at the age of 28, he was appointed by the Swiss government as honorary vice-consul in the city. He was elevated to honorary consul in 1885, in which capacity he served until 1913, the year he returned to Switzerland. Within two years, at the age of 75, he died in the city of Lausanne.

Albert Pissis, the architect, was born in 1852 in Guaymas, Mexico, the son of Dr. and Mrs. J. H. Pissis. At the age of six, he was brought to San Francisco by his parents and here he received most of his early education. Records of the extent of this are unclear, but his formal architectural education was under Gaudet at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Typical of students of that time and place, he also did extensive traveling throughout the continent to further his professional skills. On his return to San Francisco, he entered the office of William Mooser, Sr. Pissis is said to have been the first Beaux Arts-trained architect in San Francisco. His professional reputation was well established before the fire and earthquake.

His important known works include the first increment of the Anglo & London Paris National Bank (now Crocker National Bank) at One Sansome Street; the Hibernia Bank at One Jones Street; The Emporium (formerly the Parrott Building); the White House Department Store; the Mechanics Institute; and the Flood Building.

Pissis was one of the architects selected to serve as an advisory committee for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and he was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. He died on July 5, 1914, in his apartment in the St. Francis Hotel, and was buried from Notre Dame de Victoires.

The quality of his work was widely recognized; an account of his death in a local newspaper noted:

A history of San Francisco architecture would not be complete without mention of the name of Albert Pissis. Before the fire, as well as since, he had been actively engaged in his profession, designing some of the city's greatest edifices.

ARCHITECTURE: This small two story granite-faced steel frame building echoes the Beaux Arts-inspired "commercial classicism" so strongly evident in the reconstruction of downtown San Francisco following the fire and earthquake of 1906. Pissis' concern for massing, proportion and details is plainly evident here. The facade, a temple front without a pediment, is sensitively proportioned for its narrow lot. Four evenly-spaced unfluted Corinthian columns on low pedestals support a dentilated entablature, which is surmounted by a balustrade. In the three bays, metal and glass curtain walls are set slightly behind the monolithic granite engaged columns. The granite acts as jambs for the two story curtain wall.

A. BOREL & CO. BUILDING
440 Montgomery Street
Page 3

ARCHITECTURE (Continued): At the street level, entrance to the second floor is gained through the left, or northerly bay. The center bay provides access to the ground floor commercial space, and in the right, or southerly bay is a fixed display window. All openings appear to have their original fittings, including the bronze transom grilles, except for the ground floor center. Other changes, which appear to be reversible, are metal awnings on the outer bays, the installation of a projecting sign, and the apparent removal of letters (whose outlines are faintly visible) in the frieze, which proclaimed the name of the first owner:

ANT. BOREL & CO.

SURROUNDING LAND USE & ZONING: This property is zoned C-3-0 and is located in a 450-I height limit district. The immediate area to the north on Montgomery Street is improved with low buildings, with the exception of the TransAmerica Pyramid and the 601 Montgomery Street Building. To the south and east there are many high-rise office buildings.

RECOGNITION IN OTHER SURVEYS: This building received a rating of A, which is the highest rating given, in the Heritage Downtown Inventory. The Architectural Survey of the Department of City Planning, done in July of 1976, gives the building a rating of 4.