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CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. 6197

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the Bank of California as a Landmark pursuant to the provisions of Article 10 in the City Planning Code was initiated by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on January 3, 1968, and said Advisory Board, after due consideration, recommended approval of this proposal;

WHEREAS, The City Planning Commission, after due notice given, held a public hearing on March 14, 1968 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 Bank of California 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 the point of intersection of the northerly line of California Street with the westerly line of Sansome Street; running thence northerly 124 feet along the said line of Sansome Street to the southerly line of Halleck Street; thence westerly along said line of Halleck Street 87.5 feet; thence at a right angle southerly 124 feet to the northerly line of California Street; thence at a right angle easterly along said line of California Street 87.5 feet to the point of beginning; being Lot 3 in Assessor's Block 239.

Second, That the special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value of the said Landmark justifying its designation are as follows:

The oldest incorporated commercial bank in California, founded 1864 by D. O. Mills and William Chanman Ralston; instrumental in financing the Southern Pacific Railroad, the Comstock Mines in Nevada, and steamship lines to the Atlantic Coast; Consistent exemplar of classical form and style in architecture, demonstrated by retention of the present headquarters building, built in 1906-08, while constructing a new functional building alongside;

Third, That the said Landmark should be preserved generally in all 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 in Docket No. LM67.4; the summary description being as follows:

Classical style, massive Roman Temple, colonnaded on three sides of the building, with columns in Corinthian style; constructed of grey granite and Tennessee marble. Colossal main banking room, 54 feet in height, with continuous windows on three sides.

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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.

Lynn Pio
Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Brinton, Elliott, Fleishhacker, Kearney, Porter
NOES: None
ABSENT: Commissioners Carr, Newman
PASSED: March 14, 1968

LOCATION AND
BOUNDARY OF SITE

Bank of California, northwest corner of California Street at Sansome Street. Commencing at the intersection of the northerly line of California Street with the westerly line of Sansome Street, running thence northerly 124 feet along the said line of Sansome Street to the point of intersection with Halleck Street; thence westerly along the southerly line of Halleck Street 87.5 feet; thence at a right angle southerly 124 feet to the line of California Street; thence easterly along the northern line of California Street to the point of commencement; being lot 3 in Assessor's Block 239.

NATURE AND HISTORY

Oldest incorporated commercial bank in California. The bank was founded in 1864 (opened July 5), a milestone in the financial history of the West; founders were Darius Ogden Mills, a Sacramento banker, and Wm. Chapman Ralston, steamship clerk, later a banker, and called the "Man who built San Francisco". The bank aided in financing the Southern Pacific, steamship lines, and especially the Comstock Mines in Nevada. It is the only national bank federally chartered, operating in all the Pacific Coast States. The bank's original Head Office, 1867, was at the present site; and a handsome two story structure, Roman arched, pilastered, surmounted by classic balustrade. In 1906 (before the fire) this building was demolished, and plans drawn by Bliss and Faville to replace it. The present building, built 1906-8, was modelled after the bank of the Knickerbocker Trust Company on Fifth Avenue in New York, by McKim, Mead, and White. The Bank of California, somewhat modified from the model, displays the value of good architectural precedents, and also demonstrates the good taste of the present generation of bank management, which has chosen to retain it while constructing a new skyscraper headquarters adjoining in 1965, using air rights of the lot on which the old building stands.

STRUCTURAL
DESCRIPTION

A colossal classical temple, three story, with a central main banking room rising to the roof; and unbroken space some fifty feet in height. It is surrounded on three sides by a colossal colonnade, enclosing the main banking room. Six fluted columns face California Street, three on each side of the main entrance. There are six each on Sansome and on Halleck Streets. Once dwarfing its environment, the building is now itself dwarfed by its neighbors. It is Corinthian in style, florid in ornamentation. Piers on the Sansome Street facade have been added to the model's form. There is an absence of decorative patterns and elements on the frieze, which bears the name of the bank on California Street. There are windows continuous on all facades, without the blank ones which existed on the model. There is a large cornice, dentillated. It is a most distinguished representative of the era when banks exhaled an air of elegance, dignity and opulence. The interior is in the course of complete remodelling at present.

SURROUNDING LAND
USE AND ZONING

Near the center of the present financial district, this location has been at the heart of San Francisco's money markets for a century. Zoning is now C-3; proposed C-3-0. The lot on which this building stands has substantially reached the full scope of its potential development inasmuch as the rights of development have been utilized in the new building by transfer.

LM 67.4
file copy

NOTICE OF FINAL PASSAGE
FILE NO. 344-68 ORD. NO. 227-68
DESIGNATING THE BANK OF CALI-
FORNIA AS A LANDMARK PURSU-
ANT TO ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY
PLANNING CODE.

I hereby certify that the foregoing ordinance was read for the second time and finally passed by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco at its meeting of July 29, 1968.

PHILIP P. ENGLER, Acting Clerk
Approved: July 31, 1968
JAMES MAILLIARD, Acting Mayor
Aug. 3, 1968—11

FILE NO. 344-68 ORD. NO. 227-68
DESIGNATING THE BANK OF CALI-
FORNIA AS A LANDMARK PUR-
SUANT TO ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY
PLANNING CODE.

Be it Ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that THE BANK OF CALIFORNIA has a special character and special historical architectural and aesthetic interest and value and that its designation as a Landmark will be in furtherance of and in conformance with the purposes of Article 10 of the City Planning Code and the standards set forth therein.

(a) Designation. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code, Chapter II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, THE BANK OF CALIFORNIA is hereby designated as a Landmark, this designation having been duly approved by resolution of the City Planning Commission.

(b) Location and Boundaries. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code, Chapter II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, a landmark site is hereby designated for the said Landmark, located and bounded as follows:

Beginning at the point of intersection of the northerly line of California Street with the westerly line of Sansome Street; running thence northerly 124 feet along the said line of Sansome Street to the southerly line of Halleck Street; thence westerly along said line of Halleck Street 87.5 feet; thence at a right angle southerly 124 feet to the northerly line of California Street; thence at a right angle easterly along said line of California Street 87.5 feet to the point of beginning; being Lot 3 in Assessor's Block 239.

(c) Justification. The special character and special historical architectural and aesthetic interest and value of the said Landmark justifying its designation are as follows:

The oldest incorporated commercial bank in California, founded 1864 by D. O. Mills and William Chapman Kinsion; instrumental in financing the Southern Pacific Railroad, the Comstock Mines in Nevada, and steamship lines to the Atlantic Coast; consistent exemplar of classical form and style in architecture, demonstrated by retention of the present headquarters building, built in 1906-08, while constructing a new functional building alongside.

(d) Features. 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 in Docket No. LM67.4; the summary description being as follows:

Classical style, massive Roman Temple, colonnaded on three sides of the building, with columns in Corinthian style; constructed of grey granite and Tennessee marble. Colossal main banking room, 54 feet in height, with continuous windows on three sides.

I hereby certify that the foregoing ordinance was passed for second reading by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco at its meeting of July 22, 1968.

PHILIP P. ENGLER, Acting Clerk
July 27, 1968—11.