

[Planning Code - Landmark Designation - 2261 Fillmore Street (aka Clay Theatre)]

Ordinance amending the Planning Code to designate 2261 Fillmore Street (aka Clay Theatre), Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0630, Lot No. 002, as a Landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code; and affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; making public necessity, convenience, and welfare findings under Planning Code, Section 302; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

NOTE: **Unchanged Code text and uncodified text** are in plain Arial font.
Additions to Codes are in single-underline italics Times New Roman font.
Deletions to Codes are in ~~strikethrough italics Times New Roman font~~.
Board amendment additions are in double-underlined Arial font.
Board amendment deletions are in ~~strikethrough Arial font~~.
Asterisks (* * * *) indicate the omission of unchanged Code subsections or parts of tables.

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

Section 1. CEQA and Land Use Findings.

(a) The Planning Department has determined that the actions contemplated in this ordinance comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 *et seq.*). Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 220190 and is incorporated herein by reference. The Board affirms this determination.

(b) Pursuant to Planning Code Section 302, the Board of Supervisors finds that the proposed landmark designation of 2261 Fillmore Street (aka Clay Theatre) ("Clay Theatre"), Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0630, Lot No. 002, will serve the public necessity, convenience,

1 and welfare for the reasons set forth in Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No.
2 1224, recommending approval of the proposed designation, which is incorporated herein by
3 reference.

4 (c) On January 19, 2022, the Historic Preservation Commission, in Resolution No.
5 1224, adopted findings that the actions contemplated in this ordinance are consistent, on
6 balance, with the City's General Plan and eight priority policies of Planning Code Section
7 101.1. The Board adopts these findings as its own.

8 9 Section 2. General Findings.

10 (a) On July 27, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 383-21,
11 initiating landmark designation of the Clay Theatre as a San Francisco Landmark pursuant to
12 Section 1004.1 of the Planning Code, and extending the prescribed time within which the
13 Historic Preservation Commission may render its decision by 90 days, for a total of 180 days.
14 On August 4, 2021, the Mayor approved the resolution. Said resolution is on file with the Clerk
15 of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 210726.

16 (b) Pursuant to Charter Section 4.135, the Historic Preservation Commission has
17 authority "to recommend approval, disapproval, or modification of landmark designations and
18 historic district designations under the Planning Code to the Board of Supervisors."

19 (c) The Landmark Designation Fact Sheet was prepared by Planning Department
20 Preservation staff. All preparers meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification
21 Standards for historic preservation program staff, as set forth in Code of Federal Regulations
22 Title 36, Part 61, Appendix A. The report was reviewed for accuracy and conformance with
23 the purposes and standards of Article 10 of the Planning Code.

24 (d) The Historic Preservation Commission, at its regular meeting of January 19, 2022,
25 reviewed Planning Department staff's analysis of the historical significance of the Clay

1 eligible for local designation as it is associated with events that have made a significant
2 contribution to the broad patterns of San Francisco history (National Register Criterion A) and
3 as an example that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or
4 method of construction (National Register Criterion C). Specifically, designation of the Clay
5 Theatre, constructed in 1913 as a nickelodeon movie theater and one of the oldest single-
6 screen nickelodeon movie houses in San Francisco, is proper for its association with the initial
7 development of neighborhood theaters during the pioneering period of moving picture theaters
8 and the development of the film industry in San Francisco in the early 20th century. Further,
9 the Clay Theatre is significant as the first dedicated foreign film theater in San Francisco and
10 as an important exhibitor of foreign and independent art house films through the late 1980s.
11 Designation of Clay Theatre is also proper as it is architecturally significant as a building that
12 embodies the distinctive characteristics of both an early 20th century Nickelodeon and a
13 single-screen neighborhood movie theater, increasingly rare building types that are vibrant
14 features of the built environment and important and unique cultural institutions in San
15 Francisco.

16 (c) The particular features that shall be preserved or replaced in-kind as determined
17 necessary are those generally shown in photographs and described in the Landmark
18 Designation Fact Sheet, which can be found in Planning Department Record Case No. 2021-
19 009311DES, and which are incorporated in this designation by reference as though fully set
20 forth. Specifically, the following features shall be preserved or replaced in kind:

21 (1) The character-defining exterior features of 2261 Fillmore Street that express
22 the building's identity as a neighborhood theatre, including:

- 23 (A) Tall one-story form and massing;
- 24 (B) Recessed entryway and volume and location of the built-in box
- 25 office/ticket booth inclusive of its sheet-metal cladding;

1 (C) Shaped parapet, projecting cornice, and plaster ornamentation on the
2 primary façade;

3 (D) Projecting, curved soffit that extends across entryway with strands of
4 neon tube light fixtures affixed to underside and neon-lit, open face, metal letters, spelling out
5 C-L-A-Y, affixed to soffit;

6 (E) Projecting, metal, double-faced, neon-lit vertical sign, consisting of
7 inset curved panels lit by paired, curved bands of neon tube light fixtures at top and bottom of
8 sign and body with vertically stacked open-faced metal letters lit by neon tube lights, spelling
9 out C-L-A-Y; and

10 (F) Projecting, internally illuminated, double-faced, metal box sign for
11 coming attractions with neon tubes highlighting edges.

12 (2) The character-defining interior features of the building associated with areas
13 that have historically been accessible to the public, and depicted in the floor plans or photos in
14 the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet dated January 12, 2022, including:

15 (A) Regular rectangular plan divided into principal spaces of lobby and
16 auditorium;

17 (B) Lobby and auditorium volumes;

18 (C) Raked floor of the auditorium;

19 (D) Curved ceiling and egg-and-dart moldings in auditorium;

20 (E) Original proscenium arch; and

21 (F) Ceiling moldings at ceiling in second floor office.

22
23
24 Section 5. Effective Date.
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1 This ordinance shall become effective 30 days after enactment. Enactment occurs
2 when the Mayor signs the ordinance, the Mayor returns the ordinance unsigned or does not
3 sign the ordinance within ten days of receiving it, or the Board of Supervisors overrides the
4 Mayor's veto of the ordinance.

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6
7 APPROVED AS TO FORM:
8 DAVID CHIU, City Attorney

9 By: /s/ Victoria Wong
10 VICTORIA WONG
Deputy City Attorney

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City and County of San Francisco
Tails
Ordinance

City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

File Number: 220190

Date Passed: April 26, 2022

Ordinance amending the Planning Code to designate 2261 Fillmore Street (aka Clay Theatre), Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0630, Lot No. 002, as a Landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code; and affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; making public necessity, convenience, and welfare findings under Planning Code, Section 302; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

April 11, 2022 Land Use and Transportation Committee - RECOMMENDED

April 19, 2022 Board of Supervisors - PASSED ON FIRST READING

Ayes: 10 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

Excused: 1 - Melgar

April 26, 2022 Board of Supervisors - FINALLY PASSED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 220190

I hereby certify that the foregoing
Ordinance was **FINALLY PASSED** on
4/26/2022 by the Board of Supervisors of
the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

London N. Breed
Mayor

5/6/22

Date Approved



ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK DESIGNATION FACT SHEET



Clay Theatre, 2261 Fillmore Street (2021)
Source: Google streetview

Historic Name:	Clay Theatre; The Clay International; Regent Theater
Address:	2261 Fillmore Street (other addresses include 2241, 2251, 2257 Fillmore Street)
Block/ Lot(s):	0630/002

Parcel Area:	3,763 sq. ft.
Zoning:	Upper Fillmore NCD 40-X
Year Built:	1913
Architect:	A.F. (Arthur Frank) and O.M. (Oliver Marion) Rousseau
Prior Historic Studies/Other Designations:	<p>San Francisco Planning Department, 2261 Fillmore Street (Clay Theater) Historic Resource Evaluation Response, October 9, 2014 (Case No. 2014.0824E)</p> <p>Andrew Murray and Katie Tom, Office of the Legislative Analyst, SF Board of Supervisors, <i>San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District Context Statement</i> (Discussion Draft, April 27, 2006)</p>
Prior HPC Actions:	N/A
Significance Criteria:	<p><u>Events</u>: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. (National Register Criterion A)</p> <p><u>Architecture/Design</u>: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, and/or represents the work of a master. (National Register Criterion C)</p>
Period of Significance:	1913-late 1980s. The period of significance is 1913, when the building was constructed and began operation as a nickelodeon, to the late 1980s when change in operators shifted from local to national theater group and the Clay's importance as an outlet for foreign and art house films had declined.
Statement of Significance:	<p>Clay Theatre (2261 Fillmore Street), constructed in 1913 by the Mutual Amusement & Investment Company as a Nickelodeon movie theater, has been operated as a single-screen neighborhood theater from 1913 to 2020 by many well-known theater operators, including Herbert Rosener, Nasser Brothers, Mel Novikoff (Surf Theaters Group), and Landmark Theatres. The theater, which ceased operation in January 2020, has also been known as the Regent, The Clay-International, and The New Clay. One of the oldest single screen nickelodeon movie houses in San Francisco, Clay Theatre is historically significant for its association with the initial development of neighborhood theaters during the pioneering period of moving picture theaters and the development of the film industry in San Francisco in the early 20th century. Further, Clay Theatre is significant as the first dedicated foreign film theater in San Francisco and as an important exhibitor of foreign and independent art house films through the late 1980s. The theater was reconceived as The Clay-International by film distributor and exhibitor, Herbert Rosener, in 1935 and was an important destination for foreign and independent "art house" films through the late 1980s under the management of Mel Novikoff. Along with the adjacent commercial storefronts, the building was constructed as a Nickelodeon, strictly for showing of moving pictures with no backstage for other types of performances, based on design of architects A.F. (Arthur Frank) and O.M. (Oliver Marion) Rousseau. Although it was remodeled in 1946 by theater</p>

	<p>architect Vincent G. Raney, and again in 1958, the Clay Theatre, one of only four extant Nickelodeons remaining in the City, and one of two that remains as a single screen theater,¹ is architecturally significant as a building that embodies the distinctive characteristics of both an early 20th century Nickelodeon and a single-screen neighborhood movie theater, increasingly rare building types that are vibrant features of the built environment and important and unique cultural institutions in San Francisco.</p>
Assessment of Integrity:	<p>There have been several significant alterations to the subject building, including remodel of the vestibule and lobby and relocation of ticket booth for owners/operators Nasser Brothers by architect Vincent G. Raney (1946) and further remodeling of the vestibule, reconfiguration of lobby and restrooms, changing layout and seating of auditorium, and removing south storefront by designer Gale Santocono (1958). While the alterations to the vestibule have diminished aspects of the design, materials, and workmanship of the building, the building retains sufficient architectural integrity to convey its significance as rare example of an early nickelodeon and of a single-screen neighborhood movie theater. Further, the building retains integrity of location, design, feeling, association, and setting to convey its significance as an early 20th century theater and San Francisco's first dedicated house for foreign films.</p>
Character-Defining Features:	<p>The Planning Department finds that the following character-defining features express the building's historic significance. Specifically, the following features shall be preserved or replaced in kind:</p> <p>(1) The character-defining exterior features of 2261 Fillmore Street that express the building's identity as a neighborhood theatre, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) Tall one-story form and massing; (B) Recessed entryway and volume and location of the built-in box office/ticket booth inclusive of its sheet-metal cladding; (C) Shaped parapet, projecting cornice, and plaster ornamentation on the primary façade; (D) Projecting, curved soffit that extends across entryway with strands of neon tube light fixtures affixed to underside and neon-lit, open face, metal letters, spelling out C-L-A-Y, affixed to soffit face; (E) Projecting, metal, double-faced, neon-lit vertical sign, consisting of inset curved panels lit by paired, curved bands of neon tube light fixtures at top and bottom of sign and body with vertically stacked open-faced metal letters lit by neon tube lights, spelling out C-L-A-Y; and (F) Projecting, internally illuminated, double-faced, metal box sign for coming attractions with neon tubes highlighting edges. <p>(2) The character-defining interior features of the building associated with areas that have historically been accessible to the public, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) Regular rectangular plan divided into principal spaces of lobby and auditorium; (B) Lobby and auditorium volumes; (C) Raked floor of the auditorium;

¹ Andrew Murray and Katie Tom, Office of the Legislative Analyst, SF Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District Context Statement* (Discussion Draft, April 27, 2006).

	(C) Curved ceiling and egg-and-dart moldings in auditorium; (D) Original proscenium arch; and (E) Ceiling moldings in second floor office (originally exterior features).
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Statement of Significance Summary

Clay Theatre (2261 Fillmore Street), constructed in 1913 by the Mutual Amusement & Investment Company as a Nickelodeon movie theater, has been operated as a single-screen neighborhood theater from 1913 to 2020 by many well-known theater operators, including Herbert Rosener, Nasser Brothers, Mel Novikoff (Surf Theaters Group), and Landmark Theatres. The theater, which ceased operation in January 2020, has also been known as the Regent, The Clay-International, and The New Clay. One of the oldest single screen nickelodeon movie houses in San Francisco, Clay Theatre is historically significant for its association with the initial development of neighborhood theaters during the pioneering period of moving picture theaters and the development of the film industry in San Francisco in the early 20th century. Further, Clay Theatre is significant as the first dedicated foreign film theater in San Francisco and as an important exhibitor of foreign and independent art house films through the late 1980s. The theater was reconceived as The Clay-International by film distributor and exhibitor, Herbert Rosener, in 1935 and was an important destination for foreign and independent “art house” films through the late 1980s under the management of Mel Novikoff. Along with the adjacent commercial storefronts, the building was constructed as a Nickelodeon, strictly for showing of moving pictures with no backstage for other types of performances, based on design of architects A.F. (Arthur Frank) and O.M. (Oliver Marion) Rousseau. Although it was remodeled in 1946 by theater architect Vincent G. Raney, and again in 1958, the Clay Theatre, one of only four extant Nickelodeons remaining in the City, and one of two that remains as a single screen theater,² is architecturally significant as a building that embodies the distinctive characteristics of both an early 20th century Nickelodeon and a single-screen neighborhood movie theater, increasingly rare building types that are vibrant features of the built environment and important and unique cultural institutions in San Francisco.

Property Description and History

The former Clay Theatre (theatre closed in January 2020 and the building is currently vacant) is located on west side of Fillmore Street, between Clay and Sacramento streets, in the Pacific Heights neighborhood. The subject property is located near the north end of the Upper Fillmore neighborhood-serving commercial corridor that extends along Fillmore Street between Jackson and Bush streets. The surrounding commercial corridor is characterized by one- to three-story, residential-over-commercial buildings interspersed with buildings that are more residential in character. Commercial storefronts are generally built to the sidewalk and consist of raised bulkheads, large metal or wood-frame storefront windows and multi-light transoms.

² Andrew Murray and Katie Tom, Office of the Legislative Analyst, SF Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District Context Statement* (Discussion Draft, April 27, 2006).

The subject building occupies the entire underlying 32-foot by 118-foot parcel. The subject property is a tall one-story, former single-screen motion picture theater with a flat roof in front of a low-slung gable that pops up to provide additional height for the auditorium. The building is clad in smooth stucco and façade features decorative moldings and cornice and ends with a shaped parapet. The projecting cornice has painted face and egg-and-dart moldings. The shaped parapet is clad with vertical (T-111) paneling. At the ground floor is a recessed central entry consisting of several sets of clear anodized aluminum and glass doors and dark anodized aluminum storefront windows. A curved, built-in ticket booth with ticket counter and roofline clad in clear anodized aluminum or sheet metal is tucked into the south end of the recessed entry and projects on an angle within the entryway. A curved soffit clad with painted, pressed metal extends across the façade dividing the entry from upper portion of the façade. Individual metal letters outlined with neon, spelling out C-L-A-Y, are mounted atop the center point of the soffit. Neon tubes also outline the underside of the soffit. Metal framed glass display cases are built into the face and returns of the piers that delineate the theater storefront. Piers are highlighted with stucco corner boards and decorative moldings. The upper portion of the façade has a centered window with four casement sash windows within a projecting stucco-clad frame.

A double-faced, vertical projecting box sign with neon lit vertically stacked letters, spelling out C-L-A-Y, extends from a metal armature attached to roof and face of building. The vertical sign and armature extend above the roofline. On each sign face are vertically stacked neon lit metal letters that also spell at the name of the theater. Below the vertical sign is a double-faced horizontal projecting box sign with internally illuminated faces to advertise coming attractions. The outer edges of the horizontal sign are lit with neon tubes.

The interior consists of foyer, auditorium, and second floor with projection room and office. The foyer is a simple space with drop ceiling, plaster walls, and floor clad with linoleum and carpet. Restrooms are located along the south wall; an oblong counter, centered in the south wall, forms the concessions stand (no longer extant). At rear of the foyer a slightly curved wall contains two sets of double doors to access the auditorium. The auditorium floor is raked down toward the rear (west) of the building. The auditorium has two aisles, one running along the north wall and one running between the two sections of seats (not extant), that extend to a small stage that projects under the projection screen. The projection screen occupies most of the rear (west) wall and is installed in front of the original proscenium. Walls are clad with plaster and material with a tall chair rail and moldings at the intersection with the ceiling. The ceiling is slightly vaulted with rounded edges. Emergency exit doors leading are located near the screen at the north wall of the auditorium.

Originally a narrow storefront stood to the south of the theater entrance; the storefront was removed and filled in during a 1958 remodel. Currently, an unadorned, stucco-clad façade with undecorated parapet stands in this location (an interior remodel that relocated the theater's bathrooms filled this former storefront location). North of the former theater is a one-story commercial building with large storefront windows, topped with tall, multi-light wood sash transom windows, that extend along the façade along Clay Street. A bracketed cornice, which extends along the length of both street-facing façades, projects above the transom with a stepped parapet above. At rear of this building is a narrow passageway, opening onto Clay Street, that serves as the rear exit corridor from the former theater.

The former Clay Theatre building, as well as adjacent storefront bays, were constructed as a one-story building, measuring approximately 60-feet by 119-feet, housing a Nickelodeon theater and a store in 1913 by Mutual

Amusement and Investment Company at construction cost of \$12,000.³ The building was designed by architects A.F. and O.M. Rousseau and construction was undertaken by local contractor L. A. Rose.⁴ Various sources list the theater as opening in 1910, however, research undertaken for this report indicates that the building permit issued in 1913 for construction of the subject building was the first development on the property, at the southwest corner of Clay and Fillmore streets, after the destruction from the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. While it appears that the property consisted of two separate legal parcels at the time of the construction, the dimensions of the building indicate that it spanned both parcels. At some later date, the parcels were sold to different entities. No information has been found about Mutual Amusement and Investment Company.

The building is depicted on the 1913 Sanborn Map with small stores flanking a space used for “moving pictures”; the building’s addresses are 2251, 2253 (the moving pictures space), and 2255. It appears that each of these spaces have had various addresses until it settled at 2261 Fillmore in the late 1930s. The theater space has had the following addresses: 2253 Fillmore; 2241 Fillmore; 2251 Fillmore; 2261 Fillmore.

The property was in operation as the Regent Theater by December 1913, showing the motion picture “In the Bishop’s Carriage,” starring Mary Pickford.⁵ The Regent is listed in several 1914 newspaper advertisements of movie theater listings, including theaters showing Pathe films.⁶ Regent Theater does not show up in City Directories until 1918 when it is listed at 2251 Fillmore Street. Research did not uncover additional information about specific programming at the theater during its first two decades of operation, but an April 1930 advertisement for the property described the theater as “fully equipped for talkies.”⁷ The property continued to operate as the Regent Theater through at least 1933.⁸

Although various sources list the operators of the Regent Theater as Naify Brothers from its initial opening date, no research has substantiated this association, during this or any other period of the Clay’s history. While the Naify brothers, Michael A. Naify and James A. Naify, were important figures in San Francisco and Northern California movie theater development and operation, they do not appear to have become involved in this industry until the late 19-teens. The Naify’s, either individually or via their company, T & D Jr. Enterprises, Inc., worked in partnership or as part of various ownership groups with other notable theater developers and operators, including Samuel Levin and Nasser Brothers, but no direct association between the Naify’s or T & D Jr. Enterprises, Inc. with the subject property has been found during the research for this report.

A note in *The Moving Picture World* 1916 edition records “...the transfer of the Regent theater on Fillmore street, San Francisco, from J.P. Hughes to Leroy Blanchard and L.F. Salbach...”⁹ and a 1917 article identifies “G. M. McDonald, as proprietor of the Regent Theater...”¹⁰ No information about these individuals was found in the

³ San Francisco Building Permit #218097, issued March 21, 1913 (filed under 2257-59 Fillmore Street); “Building Contracts,” San Francisco Call, March 26, 1913, 19.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “The Clay Theater,” December 1913 advertisement (reproduction), published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/2019/09/clay-theatre.html>.

⁶ *San Francisco Examiner*, February 24, 1914, 6; *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 10, 1914, 12.

⁷ *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 6, 1930, 84.

⁸ 1933 San Francisco City Directory. There is no indication in the research that this theater was ever identified as Avalon, although some sources use this name for the property in the early 1930s.

⁹ *The Moving Picture World*, “Former Exhibitor Sells Theaters,” September 16, 1916, 1870.

¹⁰ *San Francisco Chronicle*, “Theater Proprietor ‘Wanted’ in Wyoming,” December 9, 1917, 17.

research. No other operators for the Regent Theater or an association with any of the well-known film circuits of the period were identified. There are no sales records for the subject property during this period.

Where the following text is inset, the historical background information is from architectural historian Stacy Farr:¹¹

In March 1935, film distributor and exhibitor Herbert Rosener completed a deal to operate what was described in the press as “the existing Clay Theater” under a new name, the Clay-International, and show foreign-made films.¹² The Clay-International joined a small national circuit of similar-sized theaters showing foreign films, including the 55th Street Theater in New York City, the Europe Theater in Baltimore, the World in Minneapolis, the Little Theater in Newark, the Belasco in Washington DC, and the Filmarte in Hollywood.¹³ Although some sources describe the Clay-International as the first theater in San Francisco to show international films, it was preceded by the FilmArte Theater (Union Square Theater, 160 O’Farrell Street) which from 1931 through 1934 showed French and German films with English subtitles.¹⁴

The Clay-International opened on April 11, 1935 with the Swedish musical “Sangan till Henne (The Song to Her); showtimes were every day at 7pm, with additional showings at 1pm on Saturday and Sunday. Films showed on short runs; later that month the Clay showed the French musical “Adeiu Les Beaux Jours (Goodbye Happy Days), and several weeks later the Spanish film, “The Day You Loved Me.”¹⁵

Following months saw premiers of Russian, French, and British films, and newspaper advertisements prominently stated that all showings included “English titles,” making “knowledge of the [...] language unnecessary.” Modern projection equipment and updated carpet and chairs were installed at the Clay-International in July 1935, presumably related to the theater’s new management and general success.¹⁶ In July 1935, the theater started to show “midnight matinees,” prestigious second-run foreign language films that screened once a week, at midnight on Saturdays, although these showings did not become a permanent feature of the theater’s programming at that time.¹⁷ Herbert Rosener, the West Coast’s major exhibitor and distributor of art films at that time, described San Francisco as the “most important location in the country” for foreign film, as the city’s residents had an unmatched interest in the educational and cultural offerings these types of films offered.¹⁸ In 1938, the name of the theater shifted from the Clay-International to the Clay Theater, although it still showed a program of foreign films. By that year, the offerings at the Clay were successful to an extent that the management team took over the Larkin Theater (816 Larkin Street; extant but heavily altered) and began to show foreign films there as well.¹⁹

¹¹ Stacy Farr, “Memorandum outlining history of Clay Theater, 12-15-21,” submitted to Planning Department.

¹² “Foreign Made Films to be Screened Here,” *San Francisco Examiner*, March 28, 1935, 14.

¹³ “Foreign Language Theater Will Open,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 22, 1935, 11.

¹⁴ “The Union Square Theater,” published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/2017/12/union-square.html>

¹⁵ “French Picture at New Clay Theater,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 20, 1935, 14; “Spanish Picture Shown Tomorrow,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 26, 1935, 14.

¹⁶ “New Equipment for Clay International,” *San Francisco Examiner*, July 13, 1935, 16.

¹⁷ “Clay Will Review Famous Pictures,” *San Francisco Examiner*, July 19, 1935, 21.

¹⁸ “Foreign Pictures Important Here,” *San Francisco Examiner*, July 27, 1935, 15.

¹⁹ “Clay Management Takes Over Larkin,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 22, 1938, 10.

In 1940, the Clay Theater broadened its offerings but not its preference for prestige with the presentation of the American film, “Wuthering Heights,” selected as the best film of 1939 by the New York Film Critics Circle.²⁰ World War II affected many of the countries from which the Clay sourced its films, and the theater hosted Allied support fundraisers in the summer of 1940. In November 1940, recent German refugees were observed attending and emotionally enjoying the Yiddish-language film “Overture to Glory.”²¹ The theater was able to continue showing international films throughout World War II, relying largely on second runs.

In 1943, ownership of the property passed from an ownership group to Walter O. Preddy, Richard J. Nasser, and Henry W. Nasser.²² The Nasser Brothers were prominent theater owners responsible for the construction of the Castro and Alhambra theaters, among others in San Francisco and California. Under ownership by the Nasser Brothers, the Clay Theater was remodeled by prominent theater architect Vincent G. Raney, who reconfigured the front entrance and ticket booth and closed in the tall archway to create a mezzanine office.

Excerpts from Raney’s drawings suggest that only a portion of the changes depicted in the plans were completed.²³ The floor plans show that the depth of the original vestibule was reduced by half, and a lower ceiling installed over the entire vestibule to create a second-floor office. Ceiling ornament from the original vestibule, including egg-and-dart ceiling moldings and inset rosettes that probably once denoted locations for lightbulbs, are still extant within second floor office space that was created in Raney’s remodel. A new rounded ticket booth, with stainless steel cladding running around top edge and continuing along façade, was installed at the south wall of the vestibule, which appears to match the existing location, configuration, and design of this feature. At the façade, the arched opening was infilled and a rectangular window with band of wood casement sash installed. A projecting cornice that extended across the façade was added above the entryway and Raney’s plans depict three sets of double doors and terrazzo on base of façade and floor of the vestibule. No historic photographs have been found to confirm whether doors or terrazzo were installed as proposed, although a subsequent alteration drawing in 1958 notes “terrazzo to remain” at the base of the façade. Other alterations proposed in the plans for the façade, which would have led to the removal of original moldings, cornice, and shaped parapet and installation of a new cement plaster façade with Streamline details, does not appear to have been completed. There is no indication that the storefront or the small commercial space south of the theater was included in Raney’s scope of work; historic photographs support this as they show the storefront still intact in late 1940s. In January 1947, a permit was issued to install block letters, spelling out C-L-A-Y, lit by neon to the canopy.²⁴

A fire in June 1948 caused \$7,000 of damage and closed the theater for four weeks; the reopening film was a French adaptation of Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s “The Idiot.”²⁵ Later that year the theater showed its first explicitly art-focused film, “Dreams That Money Can Buy,” by experimental Surrealist filmmaker Hans

²⁰ “Clay Presents Best Film of ’39,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 17, 1940, 8.

²¹ Herb Caen, “These Foolish Things,” November 13, 1940, 11.

²² San Francisco Sales Ledgers, San Francisco Office of the Assessor-Recorder. Previous ownership group consisted of executors of the estate of J. F. Knights and B. H. Fottrell; W. G. and J. D. Preddey; and R. J. and A. Nasser.

²³ Building Permit #92763, issued November 4, 1946 to Owner: Nasser Bros. Arch: Alan F. Parker or Vincent G. Raney.

²⁴ Building Permit #94518, issued January 27, 1947.

²⁵ “Movie Patrons Flee Blaze in Clay Theater,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 28, 1948, 7.

Richter. Four years later, in February 1952, the Clay Theater partnered with the San Francisco Museum of Art to preview the film “Pictura: An Adventure in Art,” an American documentary film about art history and appreciation narrated by several major Hollywood stars.²⁶

In 1955 the property was sold to Bay Properties, Inc.²⁷ In May 1956, Cinemascope and wide screen projection was installed.²⁸ The Clay Theater continued to show foreign films in during this time, and was referred to as one of San Francisco’s leading “art film houses,” among which were included the Bridge Theater, the Larkin Theater, and the Rio.²⁹ Pushing further into the market of “arts” film, the Clay participated as an exhibitor in a 1958 symposium dedicated to the “study of the development of the weird & Supernatural Film [sic].”³⁰ The tenor of advertisements for foreign films shifted perceptively through the late 1950s and early 1960s as well, with the salacious nature of many films’ content, and the “sex appeal” of its stars, pushed to the forefront.

In May 1958, a permit to “Change toilet locations - Move entrance doors to front - Remove stairway and change to new location - Change in seating” at a construction cost of \$15000 by Larkin Theatre was issued.³¹ The alterations were designed by Gale Santocono. In this remodel, the vestibule and entry doors from the 1946 alterations were removed and a new metal and glass storefront with glass transom was installed closer to the sidewalk, in roughly the same configuration as current storefront. Although existing terrazzo at base of the façade was noted to remain, the plan also shows southern storefront and all projecting features, including decorative cornice, removed and replaced with a large display case and cement plaster cladding. At the interior, the original stairs and interior demising wall between theater foyer and adjacent commercial space were removed and replaced with men’s and women’s restrooms. Although the demising wall between the foyer and auditorium was not removed, the original openings were infilled, and new openings installed. Based on the relocated openings, it is likely that the aisles and seating within the auditorium were reconfigured at this time. Additional interior changes appear to have been the removal of a powder room at north side of the foyer, installation of a new stair from foyer to second floor, and expansion of the second-floor office southward into the former commercial space. The projection room and adjacent storage rooms may also have been reconfigured. In 1961, permits to relocate an existing vertical projecting sign and install a new double face horizontal projecting sign were issued to Wonderlite Neon Co.

The Clay Theater was still managed by Herbert Rosener in 1964, along with the Larkin Theater and a new theater called the Music Hall that opened that year (931 Larkin Street, extant).³² In 1965 the property was sold to an ownership group, with no discernible change in programming of foreign and otherwise prestigious films.³³ A 1966 advertisement calls the theater the “New Clay.” Rosener died in San Francisco

²⁶ No title, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 2, 1952, 6.

²⁷ San Francisco Sales Ledgers, San Francisco Office of the Assessor-Recorder, sale listed on June 8, 1955. Bay Properties may be a Nasser Brothers holding company – I noticed that the Castro (which is still owned by the Nasser family I believe) is also owned by Bay Properties.

²⁸ “Clay to Have Wide Screen Projection,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 2, 1956, 22.

²⁹ “New Foreign Films at 3 S. F. Houses,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 25, 1956, 18.

³⁰ “Unique Film Created Exclusively for Film Society,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 31, 1958, 53.

³¹ Building Permit #209882, issued 5/27/1958.

³² “At New Theater,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 19, 1962, 41.

³³ San Francisco Sales Ledgers, San Francisco Office of the Assessor-Recorder, November 9, 1965. Ownership group consisted of George J. and Katherine Couch, Melvin and Frances O. Dagovitz, and Sheva Diane Brandis.

in May 1968; at his death he operated (obituary says owned) the Clay, Larkin, and Music Hall theaters in San Francisco, and theaters in Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, and Oregon.³⁴

In January 1971 the Clay showed the subversive American comedy “Dynamite Chicken,” which drew a young and counterculture audience.³⁵ That year, the Clay also hosted retrospective film festivals for actresses Greta Garbo and Mae West.³⁶ Around July 1972 the Clay Theater closed for a year for renovations [no Building Permits or plans have been located to document this work], and reopened in October 1973 under the directorship of Mel Novikoff, who also operated the Surf Theater and had recently been appointed the film curator at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.³⁷ Novikoff pushed the programming at the Clay into further adventurous themes, hosting film series’ on the topics of the mass psychology of fascism, mental states and social disorder, “women emerging,” and radical psychiatry, alongside its traditional program of foreign and otherwise prestigious films. In 1979, the Clay showed the West Coast premiere of “Still Moving/Patti Smith,” a short film by Robert Mapplethorpe, on a bill including video tapes by punk rock musicians Dead Kennedys, Devo, Mutants, and others.³⁸ The spaghetti western “Lust in the Dust” was feted at the Clay Theater in February 1985; the film actually premiered at the Bridge Theater in January 1985 and then enjoyed a regular run not at the Clay, but at the Castro Theater and several other Bay Area theaters through the spring months of 1985.³⁹

Mel Novikoff died in 1987, and in 1988, operation of the theaters within the Surf Theater Group, including the Clay along with the Castro and Lumiere theaters, passed to Blumfield Enterprises, who vowed to retain the programming traditions of the theaters.⁴⁰ Ownership of the Clay Theater remained within the same ownership group through a restructuring sale in 1990, with no change in ownership through at least 1999.⁴¹ Assessor’s Office records indicate that the last sale of the property was in 2008 to the current property owners. In 1991 Landmark Theaters⁴² [assumed operation] of the Clay Theatre and operated the theater through its closure in January 2020.⁴³

Events: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (National Register Criterion A).

Clay Theatre (2261 Fillmore Street), constructed in 1913 by the Mutual Amusement & Investment Company as a Nickelodeon movie theater, has been operated as a single-screen neighborhood theater from 1913 to 2020 by

³⁴ “Herbert Rosener,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 6, 1968, 39.

³⁵ “An Infectious ‘Dynamite Chicken’ at the Clay,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 21, 1971, 42.

³⁶ “Garbo Festival,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 7, 1971, 49; “Mae West-erns Take Over for a Film Renaissance,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 4, 1971, 150.

³⁷ “‘Memories’ is More Poetic Than a Political Cuban Film,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 7, 1973, 199.

³⁸ No title, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 25, 1979, 215.r43

³⁹ No title, *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 11, 1985, 69; “Feet in the Clay,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 6, 1985, 57.

⁴⁰ Peter Stack, “Surf Theaters Sold to Regency Owner,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 29, 1988, 59.

⁴¹ San Francisco Sales Ledgers, San Francisco Office of the Assessor-Recorder, August 10, 1990. Ownership group consisted of Sheva Diane Brandis Trust, Couch Family Trust, and Melvin and Frances O. Dagovitz.

⁴² Founded in 1974, Landmark Theatres is the “largest specialized movie theatre chain in the United States dedicated to exhibiting and marketing independent and foreign films” with 38 theatres in 23 markets. Landmark Theatres website, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.landmarktheatres.com/about-us>.

⁴³ Amanda Bartlett, “Clay Theater Projectionist Recalls Celeb-Rich History of 110-Year-Old Theater,” SFGate, January 23, 2022, accessed December 3, 2021 at [Clay Theatre projectionist recalls celeb-rich history of 110-year-old SF theater set to close Sunday \(sfgate.com\)](https://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Clay-Theater-projectionist-recalls-celeb-rich-history-of-110-year-old-SF-theater-set-to-close-Sunday-14666666).

many well-known theater operators, including Herbert Rosener, Nasser Brothers, Mel Novikoff (Surf Theaters Group), and Landmark Theatres. The theater, which ceased operation in January 2020, has also been known as the Regent, The Clay-International, and The New Clay. One of the oldest single screen nickelodeon movie houses in San Francisco, Clay Theatre is historically significant for its association with the initial development of neighborhood theaters during the pioneering period of moving picture theaters and the development of the film industry in San Francisco in the early 20th century. Further, Clay Theatre is significant as the first dedicated foreign film theater in San Francisco and as an important exhibitor of foreign and independent art house films through the late 1980s. The theater was reconceived as The Clay-International by film distributor and exhibitor, Herbert Rosener, in 1935 and was an important destination for foreign and independent “art house” films through the late 1980s under the management of Mel Novikoff.

The following historic context on foreign and independent theaters and midnight movies is from Stacy Farr:⁴⁴

San Francisco’s Foreign and Independent Movie Theaters

While foreign language movies played to foreign language-speaking immigrant communities in San Francisco to a small degree in the first decades of the twentieth century, the first foreign language films for English-speaking audiences were shown in 1931 when the Union Square Theater (160 O’Farrell Street) renamed itself the FilmArte for three years and showed French and German films with English subtitles.⁴⁵ The city received its first dedicated foreign film house in 1935 when film distributor and exhibitor Herbert Rosener completed a deal to operate what was described in the press as “the existing Clay Theater” under a new name, the Clay-International, and show foreign-made films.⁴⁶ The programming was sufficiently successful that Rosener took over the Larkin Theater (816 Larkin Street; extant but heavily altered) in 1938 and also began to show foreign films there as well.⁴⁷ In 1939, the Princess Theater (1596 Church Street; no longer extant) and the Vogue Theater (3290 Sacramento Street) also joined the “growing group of moving picture houses specializing in foreign films.”⁴⁸

While World War II slowed the production of films from Europe, film historian Jack Tillmany observed that in the years immediately after World War II, “the movie-going public, bored with the Production Code-controlled domestic output, sought films closer in touch with real life, involving people and situations that Hollywood was forbidden to portray [...] and foreign films were the new rage.”⁴⁹ Rosener took over management of the Stage Door and Nob Hill theaters in 1947, and programmed these theaters with both foreign and American films.⁵⁰ The Presidio Theater switched to an all-foreign program that year as well, and foreign language theaters were listed in a separate section of the daily paper than standard first-run theaters showing American-made films.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Stacy Farr, “Memorandum outlining history of Clay Theater, 12-15-21,” submitted to Planning Department.

⁴⁵ “The Union Square Theater,” published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/2017/12/union-square.html>

⁴⁶ “Foreign Made Films to be Screened Here,” *San Francisco Examiner*, March 28, 1935, 14.

⁴⁷ “Clay Management Takes Over Larkin,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 22, 1938, 10.

⁴⁸ “Princess Theater to Show Foreign Films,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 25, 1939, 6; “Vogue to Specialize in Foreign Movies,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 23, 1939, 9.

⁴⁹ “The Larkin Theater,” published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search?q=foreign>.

⁵⁰ “Stage Door, Nob Hill Theaters are Sold,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 5, 1947, 11.

⁵¹ “Foreign Films,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 18, 1947, 11.

In 1957, a foreign-language film theater opened, called simply The Movie (1034 Kearny Street; extant but altered).⁵² In 1960, Novikoff took over control of a small neighborhood theater the Surf (4510 Irving Street, extant but significantly altered) and began showing foreign films; Novikoff would go on to assume control of the Clay, Bridge, Lumiere, and Castro theaters and was one of San Francisco's most influential foreign and independent film programmers and advocates. Other foreign language film houses that were established in San Francisco during this era included the Music Hall (931 Larkin Street, extant), another Herbert Rosener theater that opened in 1962; the Richelieu Cinema (1075 Geary Street, extant but significantly altered) which opened with a foreign-language film program in 1963 but shifted several years later to a broader independent film program; the Rio Theater (2240 Union Street, no longer extant), which rebranded in 1963 as a Japanese-language film house; and the Cento Cedar Theater (38 Cedar Street, extant but significantly altered), which opened in 1965 and benefitted from proximity to the city's more prominent foreign language film houses the Larkin and the Music Hall.

Novikoff closed the Surf Theater in 1985 and gave up the lease on another theater in Fisherman's Wharf in 1987, due to a reduction in the number of available foreign films to show, and competition from multiplex operations like the American Multi-Cinema (AMC) Kabuki 8, which opened in 1986.⁵³

Midnight Movies

Midnight movie showings in San Francisco date to at least 1911, when the Alcazar Theater (260 O'Farrell Street; no longer extant) showed what was described as a "'midnight matinee,' the first ever offered in San Francisco," a special program intended to enable members of the Moving Picture Operators' Union to see popular shows.⁵⁴ Theaters presented midnight showings of popular films that showed at capacity throughout the day, such as Cecil B. de Mille's "Don't Change Your Husband," which received a midnight run at the Imperial Theater (1077 Market Street, no longer extant) in 1919.⁵⁵ Midnight movies were also often offered as special events around the New Years' Eve holiday. The Clay Theater began to show midnight movies for several months in 1935, although these late showings did not become a regular feature at the theater during this time.⁵⁶ The Warfield Theater regularly showed midnight matinees by 1936, as did the Golden Gate Theater by 1937. By 1964, the Surf Theater was regularly showing midnight movies as part of their foreign film programming. In all of these examples, midnight movies were generally simply additional showings of the theaters' daytime content.

In 1953, the Screen Actors Guild agreed to a residuals payment plan that distributed inexpensive genre films movies to local television stations around the United States, who aired them at or after midnight to bypass existing content regulations.⁵⁷ These "midnight movies" jumped from the small screen to the big screen, as movie theaters strived to remain relevant in the face of increased television ownership. Fueled also by the coalescence of a youth-driven counterculture, particularly in urban markets, the showing of

⁵² "The North Beach Movie," published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search?q=foreign..>

⁵³ "Theater Chain Pulls Out at the Cannery," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 16, 1987, 75; David Armstrong, "The Latest Theater Trend: the Octoplex," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 30, 1986, 35,

⁵⁴ "Coronation Pictures Enter on Last Week," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 1911, 2.

⁵⁵ "Midnight Matinee Planned by Imperial," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 7, 1919, 11.

⁵⁶ "Clay Bills Historical Romance," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 9, 1935, 11.

⁵⁷ Kevin Heffernan, *Ghoul, Gimmicks, and Gold: Horror Films and the American Movie Business, 1953-1968* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press) 161.

midnight movies which broke taboos and pushed previously held parameters of decorum began to be more common in the mid-1960s. In 1965, the Presidio Theater (2340 Chestnut Street) showed Andy Warhol's film "The Blow Job" at midnight to several sell-out crowds, as well as a midnight film series called "Underground Cinema 12" curated by Los Angeles art film impresario Mike Getz.⁵⁸ The Palace Theater (1741 Powell Street, also called the Pagoda Palace, no longer extant) showed the film "Messages, Messages" to a sell-out crowd of over 2,000 at a midnight run in 1968: the film's directors, recent San Francisco Art Institute graduates Michael Wiese and Steven Arnold, were then invited to develop ongoing midnight programming for the theater, which became the first sustained program of "midnight movies" in San Francisco.⁵⁹

In 1970, Alejandro Jodorowsky's film "El Topo" premiered with midnight-only showtimes at the Elgin Theatre in New York City. This film was immensely successful and ran for nine months, and is generally credited with starting the midnight movie phenomenon.⁶⁰ In San Francisco, by 1971 the Clay, Larkin and Music Hall theaters were all showing George Romero's horror film "Night of the Living Dead" at a midnight-only run, and the Times Theaters (1249 Stockton Street, extant but significantly altered) was showing "Invaders from Mars" on midnight-only weekend runs.⁶¹ Horror films were on the schedule at midnight at the Balboa Theater by 1972, and the release of "A Clockwork Orange" that year prompted many midnight showings of the film around San Francisco. The Surf Theater also began to show special midnight programming in 1972, as did the Vouge Theater (3290 Sacramento Street), the Alexandria Theater (5400 Geary Boulevard), and the Roxie Theater (3117 16th Street). Starting in May 1973, the Music Hall Theater was advertising special midnight showings of "Pink Flamingos" on Fridays and Saturdays. The film played at a midnight showing at the Presidio Theater in May 1974, and then a four-month run of midnight showings at the Clay Theater from July through November 1974. After a moderately unsuccessful first run in the early months of 1976, the "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" began a ten-month run of midnight showings at the Powell Theater (39 Powell Street, extant but altered) in November 1976.

While some sources suggest that the Clay Theatre was the location of the first-ever midnight movie screening with the premier of John Waters' Pink Flamingos," research by architectural historian Stacy Farr could not substantiate this claim:

Newspaper research indicates this is not true (...unless it really happened in secret). Pink Flamingos was released in March 1972. The Clay appears to have been closed from around July 1972 through October 1973 (it is not listed in the "San Francisco Movies" section of the Chronicle during these months, where all theaters, movies, and playing times for the whole city were listed, and an article in October 1973 describes the theater's reopening). A small article in the January 17, 1973 edition of the *Chronicle* says that the film is having its West Coast premiere at Canyon Cinemathique at the San Francisco Art institute

⁵⁸ "Bay City Beat," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 20, 1965, 17; "The Presidio Theater," published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Presidio%20Theatre%20-%20Chestnut%20St>.

⁵⁹ Jennifer M. Wood, "25 Reasons to Stay Up Late: Midnight Movie Madness," *MovieMaker*, No. 55, Summer 2004, accessed December 6, 2021 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20061128123217/http://www.moviemaker.com/magazine/editorial.php?id=47>.

⁶⁰ Consuelo Holtzer, "Brief History of the Midnight Movie in America," published at the Strasbourg European Fantastic Film Festival, accessed December 7, 2021 at <http://strasbourgfestival.com/midnight-movies-en/>.

⁶¹ "The Times Theater," published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Times%20Theatre>.

(800 Chestnut Street). Starting in May 1973, the Music Hall (931 Larkin Street) advertised midnight showings of *Pink Flamingos* on Fridays and Saturdays for several months. The film played at several midnight showings at the Presidio Theater in May 1974, and the first listing of a midnight showing of *Pink Flamingos* at the Clay Theatre was in July 1974. The run lasted four months with the last showing on November 9, 1974. An interview with John Waters in 2020 includes his remembrance that the Clay was the “first commercial theater I ever played in San Francisco that was part of an ‘above ground’ scene,” although he also says in the same interview that he basically does not remember the 1970s.⁶²

Architecture/Design: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values (National Register Criterion C).

Clay Theatre (2261 Fillmore Street), constructed in 1913 by the Mutual Amusement & Investment Company as a Nickelodeon movie theater, operated as a single-screen neighborhood theater from 1913 to 2020, and is one of the oldest single screen nickelodeon movie houses in San Francisco. Along with the adjacent commercial storefronts, the building was constructed as a Nickelodeon, strictly for showing of moving pictures with no backstage for other types of performances, based on design of architects A.F. (Arthur Frank) and O.M. (Oliver Marion) Rousseau. Although it was remodeled in 1946 by theater architect Vincent G. Raney, and again in 1958, the Clay Theatre, one of only four extant Nickelodeons remaining in the City, and one of two that remains as a single screen theater,⁶³ is architecturally significant as a building that embodies the distinctive characteristics of both an early 20th century Nickelodeon and a single-screen neighborhood movie theater, increasingly rare building types that are vibrant features of the built environment and important and unique cultural institutions in San Francisco.

Nickelodeon’s, which were prominent across the United States from roughly 1905 to 1914, evolved from arcade peepshows and storefront and saloon theatres, which had been the venues for the viewing of motion pictures in the United States since the debut of Thomas Edison’s Kinetoscope within a phonograph parlor in New York City in 1894. Prior to 1905, when nickelodeons developed, most moving pictures were shown on the walls of former commercial spaces or against a screen during a vaudeville show or through the “peepholes” of individual viewing machines at arcades or other amusement venues.

The following historical context on Nickelodeon theater is excerpted from the *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District Context Statement (Draft, April 27, 2006)*, which relies on background information from *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk* by architectural and film historian, Maggie Valentine:

In 1905, a new twist was added to motion picture exhibition. Two theater owners in Pittsburgh, including Harry Davis, a wealthy vaudeville theater owner, began showing movies continuously throughout the day from 8 AM until midnight in their storefront theater, a converted storeroom. Charging a low

⁶² <https://www.kqed.org/news/11797773/john-waters-on-clay-theatre-closure-a-real-era-for-me-is-shutting-down-in-sf>

⁶³ Andrew Murray and Katie Tom, Office of the Legislative Analyst, SF Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District Context Statement* (Discussion Draft, April 27, 2006).

admission price of five cents, enabled by the multiple screenings per day, they called the new format "nickelodeon" because a person could see an entire program of films, which lasted ten to thirty minutes, for a nickel. By 1906, large vaudeville organizations, including the Keith theaters, began converting their venues into "nickel" motion picture houses, and by 1908 there were an estimated eight thousand theaters located on side streets throughout America, showing programs that lasted up to one hour. In addition to their popularity (creating a "nickel craze"), and hence sizable revenues, nickelodeons were a profitable format because they were very economical to operate.

During the 1910s, as many as 26 million people a week attended nickelodeons. Filmmakers had begun to produce photoplays and story films - more developed narratives, as well records of news events. Motion picture production was also moving at this time away from its roots in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago to Los Angeles. This created a special relationship between the industry and California that persists today.

Nickelodeons flourished economically, then disappeared quite quickly, unable to keep up with a new grand, luxurious style of theater, the movie palaces built in the mid-1910s and 1920s, which outclassed nickelodeons. A confluence of many factors led to the creation of the movie palace. Increasing affluence and the country's emergence from World War I as a world power created an appetite for more luxurious goods, so tastes migrated away from storefront theaters. Also, customer expectations were elevated by an earlier transition in vaudeville to luxurious vaudeville theater palaces. Many of the vaudeville palaces were eventually converted to motion picture theaters, creating luxurious motion picture theaters by happenstance. Also, the motion picture industry was entering an era of better product. Feature length films were predominant after 1915 and resulted in higher quality productions. The industry began redefining the product to encompass not just the film, but the entire viewing experience, including the venue. In this regard, the nickelodeons and storefront theaters were woefully unprepared to compete with their successor, the lavish and comfortable palaces. Many nickelodeons were eventually converted back into restaurants, hardware stores, and other retail uses.⁶⁴

Simplicity of form and expediency of construction characterized the first permanent movie theaters, which were in many cases built by local contractors with materials at hand by converting retail storefronts (therefore referred to as "storefront theaters"). They seated fewer than 200 patrons in most cases. The single-story rectangular stone or brick structures with gabled or boomtown roofs fronted high traffic streets and abutted adjacent properties. Typically, a decorated pre-cast metal façade, often ordered from a catalog, with recessed entryway and projecting ticket booth concealed their simple structure. Lighting that outlined the structure or highlighted the façade was common. The interiors were purely functional, singular spaces with level floors, a screen affixed to the wall at one end and a projection booth above the entryway at the opposite. Sometimes a shallow stage protruded beneath the screen, and occasionally balconies were included on either side of the projection booth or simple opera boxes on the side walls near the screen. Fixed seating, which distinguished an establishment as a theater (opposed to an "amusement") and required a costlier license, was rare. Loud musical accompaniment was common, used to drown out the noise of the primitive projectors.

⁶⁴ Andrew Murray and Katie Tom, Office of the Legislative Analyst, SF Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District Context Statement* (Discussion Draft, April 27, 2006), 7.

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 became mainstays. The curious and distinctive facades promised entertainment and attracted customers. The recessed entry and the use of lighting to highlight the structure continued to be successful draws when applied to later theater types. 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.⁶⁵

As more of these buildings were constructed and as they became increasingly popular, typical design features began to emerge, including a recessed vestibule that contained the box office, with entrances and exits on either side, the box office often separated from the building, placing it in line with the sidewalk, and large, flamboyant electrical displays advertising the theatre.⁶⁶ These design innovations, which were widely adapted into the theater designs that came later, served to encourage spontaneous attendance and to draw patrons into the theatre.⁶⁷ The *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theaters Historic Context Statement (Draft)* identifies the following list of features as characteristic of Nickelodeons:

- Simplicity of form and expediency of construction;
- Single-story rectangular frame;
- Stone or brick structure with gabled or boomtown roof,
- Recessed entryway with projecting ticket booth;
- Prominent façade (often decorated pre-cast metal) with stylistic treatments;
- Lighting that outlined the structure or highlighted the façade; and
- Location in commercial area and abutting adjacent structures.
- Functional, level floor and singular spaces;
- Projection booth above the entryway;
- Screen affixed to the wall at the opposite end;
- Occasionally a shallow stage protruding beneath the screen;
- Occasionally balconies on either side of the projection booth or simple opera boxes on the sidewalls near the screen;
- No fixed seating; and

⁶⁵ Ibid, 13.

⁶⁶ Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), 27.

⁶⁷ *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District Context Statement* (Discussion Draft, April 27, 2006), 13.

- Seating capacity of 200 or fewer.⁶⁸

At the end of the nickelodeon's dominant period, film production and distribution techniques morphed, with filmmakers increasing production of longer "story films" and newly organized film exchanges making distribution more efficient and less costly.⁶⁹ With greater availability of longer films, theater operators shifted their operations, establishing larger, more permanent theaters with better seating while also maintaining many of the design innovations from the nickelodeon period. These shifts led theater developers and operators into the period of movie palaces (1915-1930) and district or neighborhood theaters (1915-1945).

The following historical context on District (Neighborhood) Theaters is excerpted from the *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District Context Statement (Draft, April 27, 2006)*, which relies on background information from *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk* by architectural and film historian, Maggie Valentine:

After World War I motion picture houses took root not only in city centers, but also in the neighborhood commercial districts. In addition to neighborhood movie palaces, smaller neighborhood district theaters (sometimes called "pictureplay theatres") were built. Crude in comparison to luxury theaters, they nonetheless made up the majority of the nation's movie houses. Promoters did attempt to make them more competitive by dressing the area immediately in front of the screen and using better materials for the screen itself.

Even in their simplicity, district theaters tended to upstage their retail neighbors. By the 1920s, the force of the movie house had become so powerful in the public mind that the brightly-lit marquee was necessary to indicate that a main street or neighborhood shopping area had made it. Most patrons during that time did not see their first run at a movie palace, but rather waited until they were showing at the neighborhood second-run theaters. In an era when going downtown to a movie was time-consuming and more expensive, a large percentage of the population would catch films within walking distance of where they lived.

Although not as complex as movie palaces, district theaters and combination houses were more complex than their predecessor, the nickelodeon. They often maintained some physical resemblance, stone, brick, or concrete structures with flat or vaulted roofs sitting along prominent commercial avenues abutting other commercial structures. However, they were larger, more comfortable, and more elaborate, including somewhat more fanciful treatment, fixed seating, and spaces to house heating and ventilation systems and management offices. Combination houses had stages, whereas district theaters just had aprons surrounding the screens.

District theaters are significant as they expanded accessibility of motion pictures by providing a convenient and less expensive alternative to movie palaces. Practically every substantial neighborhood

⁶⁸ Ibid, 13-14.

⁶⁹ James Labosier, "From the Kinetoscope to the Nickelodeon: Motion Picture Presentation and Production in Portland, Oregon from 1894 to 1906," *Film History* (Volume 16, pp. 286-323, 2004), 316; Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), 24.

shopping area housed a district theater at one point, and therefore almost every neighborhood has an important social and economic tie to such a theater.⁷⁰

The *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theaters Historic Context Statement (Draft)* identifies the following list of features as characteristic of district (or neighborhood) theaters:

- Stone, brick, or concrete one to two-and-a-half story structure with flat or vaulted roof;
- Recessed entryway with projecting ticket booth;
- Projecting marquee;
- Façade that rises above the structure, frequently with brick, stone, or terra cotta sheathing, and with embellishments including stained glass, cast iron, statuary, and lighting;
- Location along prominent commercial avenue, frequently abutting other commercial structures;
- Interior rectangular plan divided into the principal spaces of lobby, projection booth, and auditorium;
- Sloped auditorium floors with fixed seating;
- Frequently, one or two balconies with a stage in combination houses, absence of balconies in district theaters;
- Decorative embellishments throughout the interior including penciling, plasterwork, carved beams, draperies, shaped wooden seats with ornamental cast iron standards, carpet runners in the aisles, and ornate lighting fixtures;
- A projection booth with fireproofing that accommodated additional equipment for sequencing films, lighting, and sound accompaniment;
- Spaces within the theater that housed heating and ventilation systems and management offices; and
- Seating capacity of 300 or more.⁷¹

Architectural and film historian, Maggie Valentines, notes in *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk* that the period in the early 1910s that bridges the nickelodeon and the [movie] palace has been little noticed but was an important transition from practical showiness to ostentatious showmanship in theater design...⁷² Although it was building as a nickelodeon in 1913, near the end of the period in which nickelodeon's were prominent, the Clay Theatre may be best considered a hybrid between the earlier, more utilitarian nickelodeons and the neighborhood movie theaters that came next. As such, the Clay Theatre exhibits distinctive characteristics of both the Nickelodeon and single-screen neighborhood theaters. With features such as its relatively small scale, prominent façade with stylistic treatments, and location in commercial area abutting adjacent structures the building reflects its age and origins as a nickelodeon. With features such as its recessed entryway with projecting ticket booth, interior rectangular plan divided into the principal spaces of lobby, projection booth, and auditorium; sloped auditorium floors with fixed seating the building reflects is evolution from a nickelodeon into a neighborhood movie theater. These are both increasingly rare building types that are vibrant features of the built environment and important and unique cultural institutions in San Francisco

Clay Theatre is also associated with Nasser Brothers, who took over the theater by the early 1940s, and hired theater architect Vincent G. Raney to remodel the building in 1946. While Nasser Brothers and architect Vincent

⁷⁰ *San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Non-Contiguous Multiple Property Historic District Context Statement* (Discussion Draft, April 27, 2006), 16-17.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 30.

G. Raney are well-known and important in development and operation of San Francisco and California theaters in the middle of the 20th century, their association with the Clay Theatre does not appear to have been historically significant.

The Nasser brothers were a pioneering family in San Francisco's film industry, who opened the Liberty Theater (no longer extant) at 18th and Collingwood in 1908, commissioned the current Castro Theater in 1922, and operated multiple theaters in San Francisco and California. During their management, the Clay Theater was remodeled including reconfiguring the front entrance and ticket booth, closing in the tall archway to create a mezzanine office, and filling in the storefront.

The following historic context on the Nasser family is from architectural historian Stacy Farr:⁷³

The Nasser Family

Abraham M. Nasser was born in Zahle, Lebanon (part of Syria when Nasser was born) in 1858. He married Emily Batal Nasser and the couple had seven children in Lebanon, including sons William, Elias, Richard, George, Henry, and James and daughter Anne, before immigrating to the United States in 1901.⁷⁴ The family settled in San Francisco and Nasser opened a grocery and candy store at the intersection of 18th and Collingwood streets and lived in the apartment above. Another son, Theodore was born in San Francisco in 1908.

In 1907, Nasser began to project moving pictures on a blank wall at the back of his shop. This amusement soon earned the family more than their grocery business, and in 1908 Nasser established one of the city's first dedicated nickelodeons, the Liberty Theater at 4200 18th Street (no longer extant).⁷⁵ With several of his sons he established Nasser Brothers, supplying nickelodeons to other theaters.⁷⁶ The family opened a theater at 485 Castro Street in 1910, and commissioned construction of the Castro Theater at 429 Castro Street in 1922.⁷⁷ In 1923, they joined with an ownership group to purchase the Royal Theater at 1527 Polk Street (extant, modified). They opened the Alhambra Theater at 2326 Polk Street in 1926 (extant, modified), and by 1930 had opened the Strand Theater in Alameda (no longer extant). In 1932 they purchased a group of existing theaters including the New Mission at 255 Mission Street (extant); the New Fillmore at 1329 Fillmore (no longer extant), and the American Theater at 1226 Fillmore Street (no longer extant).⁷⁸

Abraham Nasser died in 1952 at the age of 94. At the time of his death, George, James, Theodore, and Henry Nasser operated the family business, which included twelve Bay Area movie theaters and a Hollywood movie studio, valued at \$2.5 million.⁷⁹ The Nasser family took back operations of the Castro

⁷³ Stacy Farr, "Memorandum outlining history of Clay Theater, 12-15-21," submitted to Planning Department.

⁷⁴ 1920 U. S. Federal Census, Abraham M. Nasser.

⁷⁵ "The Liberty Theater," published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Liberty%20-%2018th%20St>.

⁷⁶ 1909 San Francisco City Directory.

⁷⁷ "The Castro Theater: History and Exterior Views," published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Castro%20Theatre%20-%20history%20and%20exterior%20views>.

⁷⁸ "Nasser Bros. Buy Three Theaters," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 13, 1932, 10.

⁷⁹ "Abraham Nasser," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 13, 1952, 11.

Theater in 2001, and third generation family members Diana, Elaine, Susanna, Steven and Donald Nasser retained ownership of the Castro theater through at least 2012 at its ninetieth anniversary.⁸⁰

The theater is also associated with noted theater architect Vincent Raney. In the mid-1940s, Raney designed alterations for the building many of which are still extant, including the projecting ticket booth and upper floor window. The following historic context on Vincent G. Raney is from architectural historian Stacy Farr:⁸¹

Vincent G. Raney

Architect Vincent G. Raney designed alterations to the property that were permitted in 1946.⁸² Vincent G. Raney was born in Loogootee, Indiana in 1905.⁸³ He received a degree in architectural engineering from the University of Illinois in 1929, and also attended the University of Indiana and the University of Arizona. Raney worked for H. G. Atherton in Indiana before moving to San Francisco in 1930. He worked for architects Frederick H. Reimers, Masten & Hurd, and William I. Garren before establishing his own independent practice in 1937. In the first two decades of his career Raney designed a mixture of commercial buildings, including many gas stations, and residential buildings, including the so-called Sunshine House which was exhibited at the Golden Gate Exposition on Treasure Island in 1939. Following World War II, he participated in the design of tract housing marketed to returning GIs.⁸⁴

In the 1940s Raney began to specialize in movie theater design. In San Francisco, he designed renovations to existing movie theaters including the Clay Theater and the Royal Theater.⁸⁵ Over the next several decades, Raney designed more than forty movie theatres, including neighborhood theatres, drive-ins, and multi-plexes. He designed the Bal theatre in San Leandro in 1946 (extant); the Kuhio Theater in Honolulu in 1946 (no longer extant); the El Rey theater in Vallejo in 1949 (extant, altered); the 49er Drive-In theatre in Sacramento in 1950 (no longer extant); and other drive-in theaters in Burlingame, San Jose, and Scottsdale, Arizona, all of which have been demolished.⁸⁶ In 1964 he designed the Century 21, 22, and 23 theaters in San Jose for the theater operating chain Syufy Enterprises; he replicated these theaters' unique domed form at projects throughout the west.⁸⁷ Work with Syufy Enterprises became the mainstay of Raney's practice, which he maintained through the mid-1990s, closing only after Ray Syufy's death in 1995.⁸⁸ Vincent G. Raney died in December 2001 at age 95.⁸⁹

⁸⁰ Alex Bevk, "The Epic History of the Castro Theater, a San Francisco and LGBTQ Landmark," published online at Curbed SF, June 22, 2016, accessed December 6, 2021 at <https://sf.curbed.com/2016/6/22/12004316/san-francisco-pride-castro-theater-history-pictures>.

⁸¹ Stacy Farr, "Memorandum outlining history of Clay Theater, 12-15-21," submitted to Planning Department.

⁸² San Francisco Building Permit #92763, issued November 4, 1946.

⁸³ "Vincent G. Raney, FCSI," published online at the Fellows of the Construction Specifications Institute, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://www.fcsinet.org/bios/RaneyV.pdf>.

⁸⁴ "Vincent G. Raney, FCSI."

⁸⁵ "The Clay Theater," and "The Royal Theater," published online at San Francisco Theaters, accessed December 3, 2021 at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search?q=Raney>.

⁸⁶ "The Historic Bal Theater," published online at the Bal Theater, accessed December 3, 2021 at <https://www.baltheatre.com/history/>.

⁸⁷ Eric Moore, "Architect Highlight: Vincent Raney," published online at Form, Function, Art, accessed December 2, 2021 at <https://formfunctionart.com/vincent-raney/>; "The History of our Theater," published online at Stargazers Theater Colorado Springs, accessed December 3, 2021 at <https://stargazerstheatre.com/our-history/>.

⁸⁸ "The Historic Bal Theater."

⁸⁹ "Vincent G. Raney, FCSI."

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Photos



Clay Theatre, 2020
Source: Architect David Marlatt



Firemen on roof of the Clay Theater, October 7, 1940.

Source: San Francisco Public Library, Historic Photograph Collection (AAA-8623)

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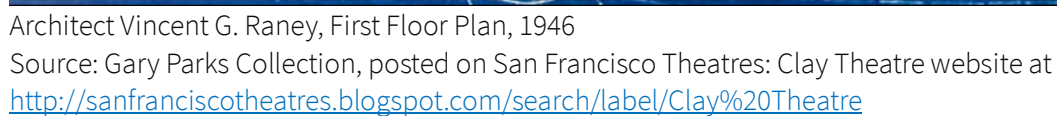
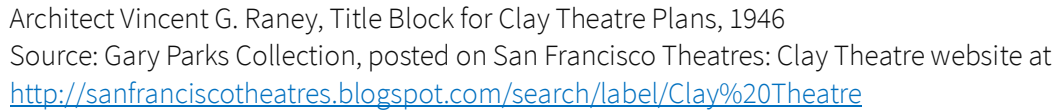


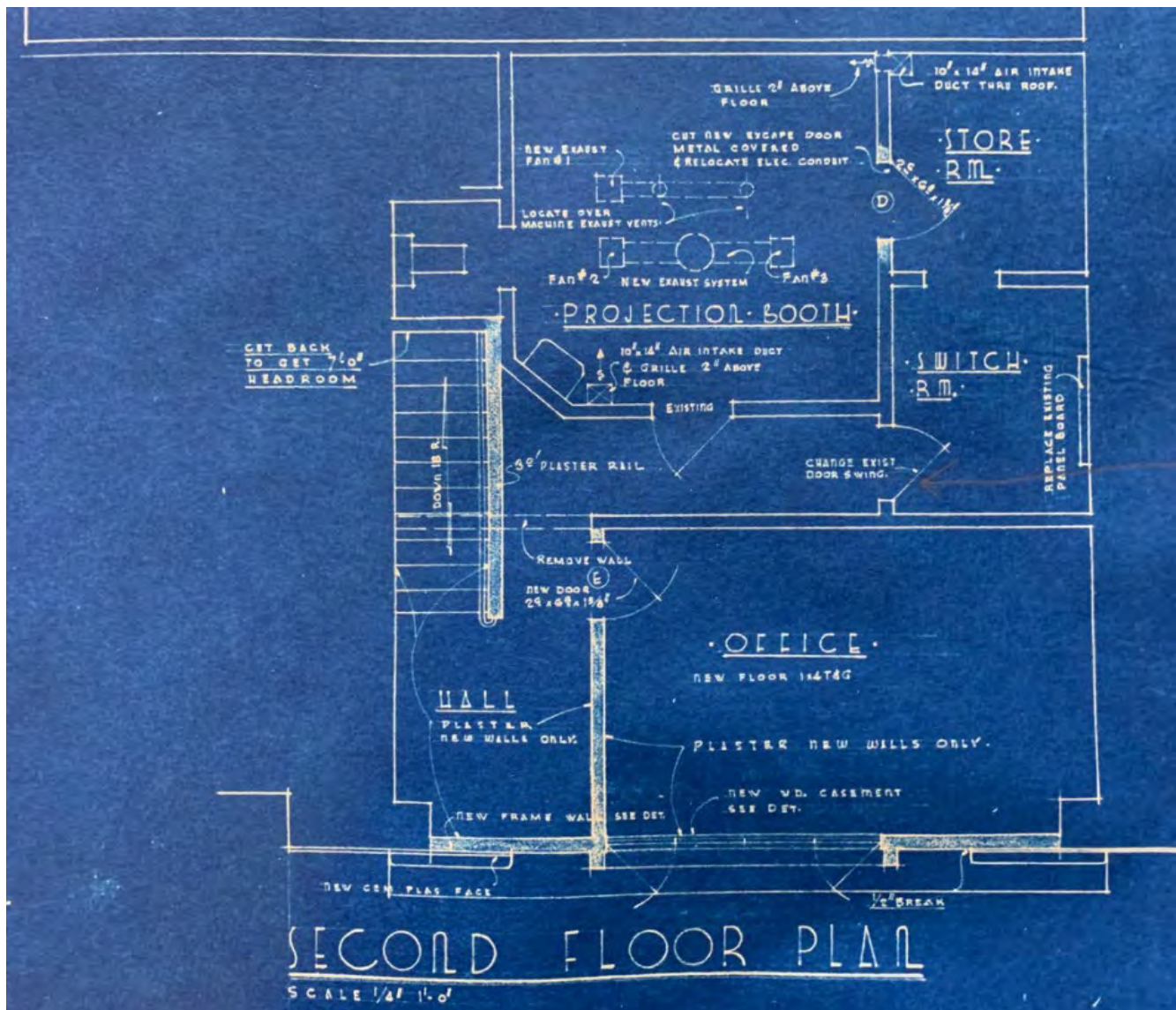
Circa 1940 from SF Gate January 27, 2020 'The last, last, last screening': Scenes from the final night of San Francisco's Clay Theater, Montse Reyes. Credits photo to SFPL
<https://www.sfgate.com/movies/article/clay-theatre-sf-closing-fillmore-movie-theater-15008701.php#photo-18925842>



A look at the entrance at the premiere of the documentary "Kukan," 1941

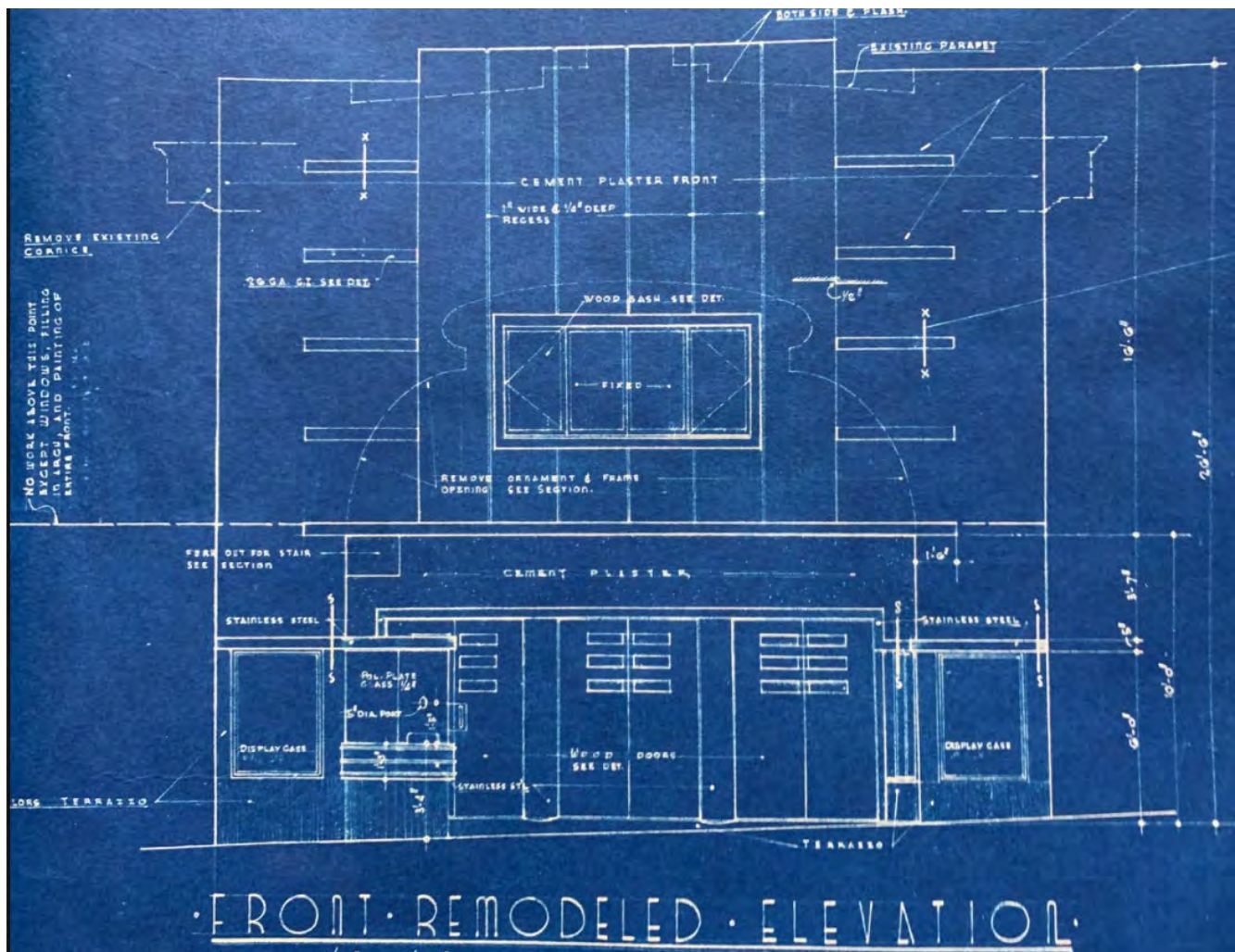
Source: San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at
<http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>





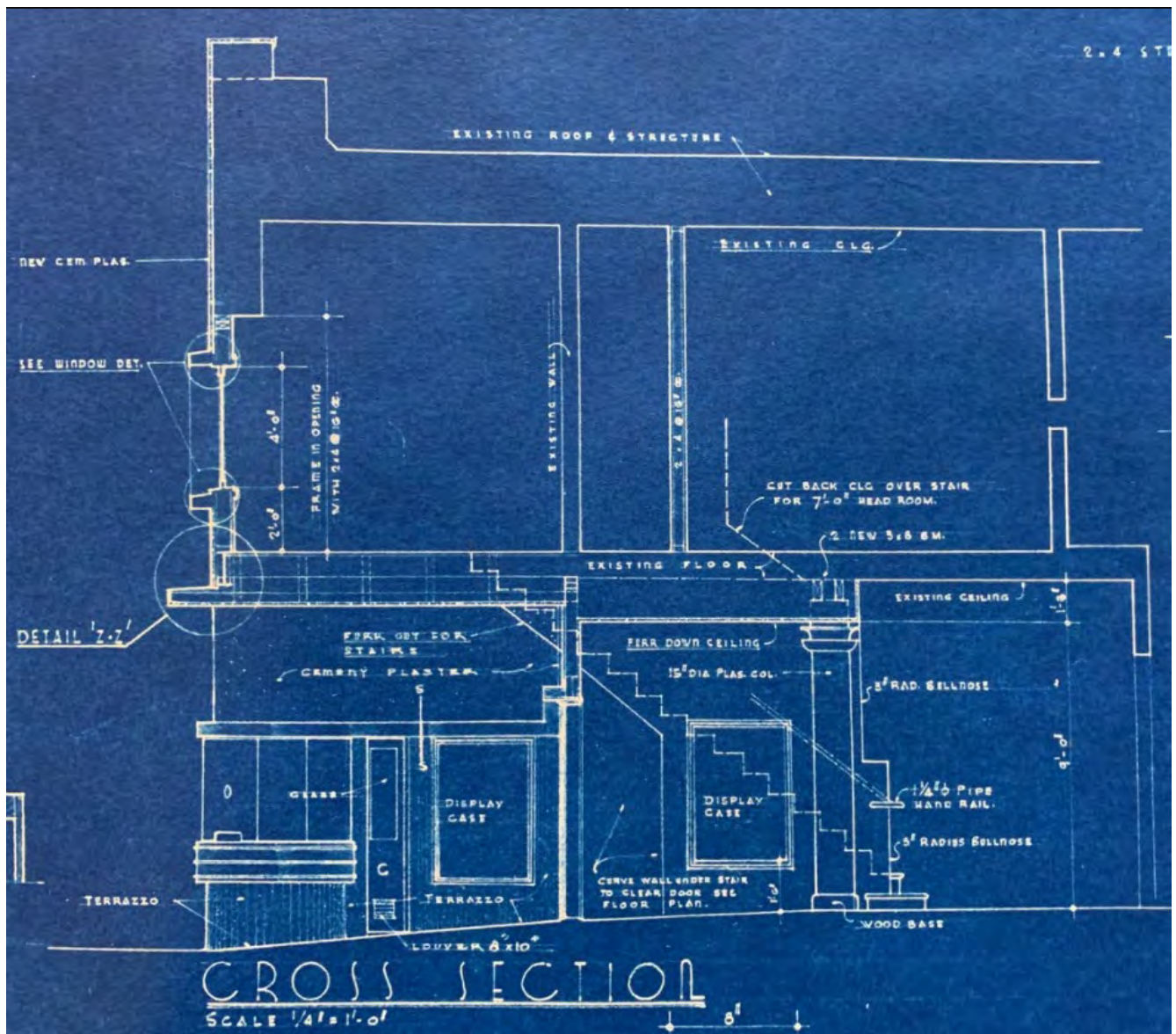
Architect Vincent G. Raney, Second Floor Plan, 1946

Source: Gary Parks Collection, posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



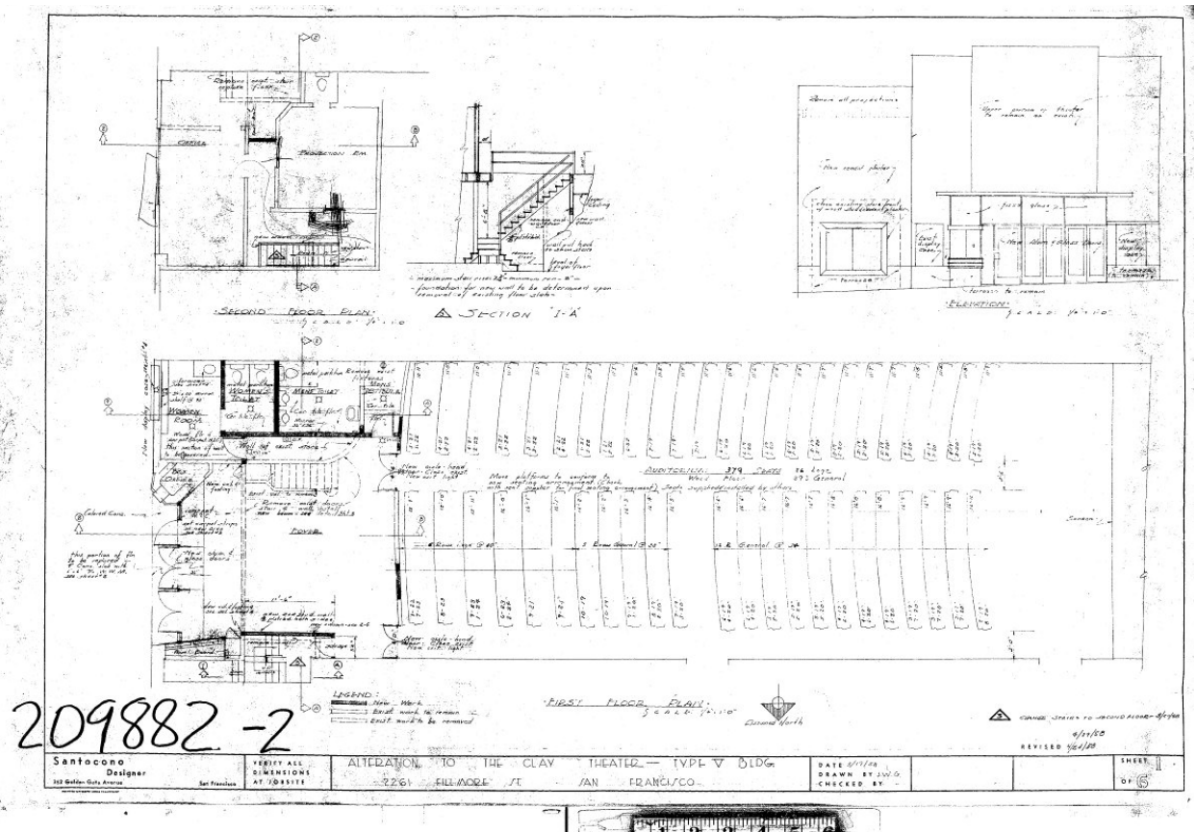
Architect Vincent G. Raney, Façade Plan, 1946

Source: Gary Parks Collection, posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



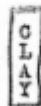
Architect Vincent G. Raney, Section Drawing, 1946

Source: Gary Parks Collection, posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at
<http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



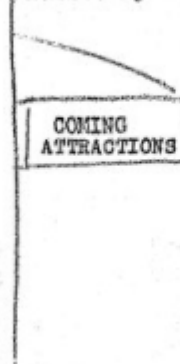
Building Permit #209882, Plans, 1958
Source: San Francisco Department of Building Inspection, Records Center

To move existing vertical sign across face of building .
No changes to sign or structure, some plans submitted.



PLOT PLAN AND ELEVATION

Indicate exactly the location of sign or billboard horizontally and vertically



Descriptions of proposed signs on two Sign Permits,
1961
Source: San Francisco Department of Building
Inspection, Records Center



Clay Theater, 1964. Photographer: Alan J. Canterbury
Source: San Francisco Public Library, Historic Photograph Collection (AAA-8622)
<http://sflib1.sfpl.org:82/record=b1003695>



Clay Theatre, 1967. Photo by Jack Tillmany.
Source: Posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at
<http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



Clay Theatre during the West Coast premiere engagement of "Pumping Iron," 1977. Photo by Paul Lawrence, the Surf Theatres Archives.
Source: Posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at
<http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



2007 photo appearing with a 2014 KQED article "[The Best Movie Theaters of the Bay Area](#)."

Source: Posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at

<http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



Clay Theatre, Auditorium, 2014. Photo by Franck Bohbot. Source: Posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



Clay Theatre, Auditorium, seats removed, 2020. Photo by Nick Otto in Sam Whiting, "SF supervisor hopes a law will save historic Clay Theatre, other single screens," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 9, 2020.

Source: Posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



Clay Theatre, Auditorium, seats removed, view toward lobby (south), 2021.
Source: San Francisco Planning Department



Clay Theatre, rear wall of auditorium, view northeast, 2021.
Source: San Francisco Planning Department



Clay Theatre, Lobby, south wall, 2015. Source: Posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



Clay Theatre, Lobby, west and north walls, doors to auditorium, 2010. Source: Posted on San Francisco Theatres: Clay Theatre website at <http://sanfranciscotheatres.blogspot.com/search/label/Clay%20Theatre>



Clay Theatre, Second Floor, Projection Room, 2020.
Source: Architect David Marlatt



Clay Theatre, Second Floor office, room was created in 1946 remodel so ceiling moldings may date from original construction, 2020
Source: Architect David Marlatt



Clay Theatre, second floor office, south wall, 2021.
Room was created in 1946 remodel so ceiling moldings and tile mural may date from earlier construction.
Source: San Francisco Planning Department



Clay Theatre, ticket booth, view south, 2021.
Source: San Francisco Planning Department



Clay Theater, view north, 2021.

Source: San Francisco Planning Department



Clay Theater, view south, 2021.

Source: San Francisco Planning Department