

DESIGNATING THE ATHERTON HOUSE AS A LANDMARK PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY PLANNING CODE.

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

Section 1. The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that the Atherton House building located at 1990 California Street, being Lot 10 in Assessor's Block 640, 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 herein.

(a) Designation. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code, Chapter II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, the Atherton House is hereby designated as a Landmark; this designation enacted after the Board of Supervisors, on appeal of an organization with a recognized interest in historical preservation, voted to overrule the recommendation for disapproval contained in Resolution No. 7262 of the City Planning Commission, which Resolution, along with Resolution No. 103 of the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board initiating designation is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under File No. 90-74-15.2

(b) Required Data:

1. The location and boundaries of the landmark site are as follows:

Beginning at a point on the northerly line of California Street at the point of intersection of the easterly line of Octavia Street; thence easterly along the northerly line of California Street for a distance of 68.75 feet; thence at a right angle northerly for a distance of 137.5 feet; thence at a right angle westerly for a distance of 68.75 feet; thence at a right angle southerly, along the easterly line of Octavia Street, for a distance of 137.5 feet to the point of beginning; Being Lot 10 in Assessor's Block 640.

2. The characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation, and the particular features that should be preserved are described and included in the said Resolution No. 103 of the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board hereby incorporated herein and made a part hereof as though fully set forth.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

THOMAS M. O'CONNOR
CITY ATTORNEY

By *James H. Downey*
Deputy City Attorney

Passed for Second Reading
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco
JAN - 6 1975

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

Noes: Supervisors _____

Absent: Supervisor GONZALES

Robert J. Glavin Clerk

90-74-15.2
File No.

JAN 20 1975
Approved

Read Second Time and Finally Passed
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco
JAN 13 1975

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

Noes: Supervisors _____

Absent: Supervisor FRANCIS MENDELSON

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

Joseph L. Alton Clerk
Major

SAN FRANCISCO
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION NO. 7262

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the Atherton House at 1990 California Street as a Landmark pursuant to the provisions of Article 10 of the City Planning Code was initiated by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on March 20, 1974, and said Advisory Board, after due consideration, recommended approval of this proposal; and

WHEREAS, The City Planning Commission, after due notice given, held a public hearing on October 3, 1974 and November 7, 1974 to consider the proposed designation and the report of said Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, The Commission has determined that the Atherton House is not a particularly fine example of either the Queen Anne or Stick-Eastlake styles, and that the many shapes and forms do not appear to have a sense of unity; and

WHEREAS, The Commission notes that there are many other residences in the City that are more representative of this style and era; and

WHEREAS, It does not appear that this house played a unique role in the history of San Francisco;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Planning Commission determines that the Atherton House does not have sufficient merit or significance to conform with the purposes and standards of Article 10 of the City Planning Code, and the Commission hereby DISAPPROVES the proposal to designate the Atherton House at 1990 California Street as a Landmark.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of November 7, 1974.

Lynn E. Pio
Secretary

On a motion to approve, the roll call was as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Newman, Porter, Ritchie

NOES: Commissioners Finn, Mellon, Rueda

ABSENT: Commissioner Fleishhacker

PASSED: November 7, 1974

As provided in the Rules and Regulations of the City Planning Commission, "A tie vote on any matter before the Commission shall be deemed to be a disapproval thereof."

File Copy

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
Revised Case Report - March 10, 1974

ATHERTON HOUSE

OWNER: Carrie B. Rousseau.

LOCATION: 1990 California Street, northeast corner of Octavia with 68.9 feet of frontage along California Street and 137.6 feet of depth along Octavia, being Lot 10 in Assessor's Block 640.

HISTORY: The house was built in 1881 for Mrs. Dominga de Goni Atherton after the death of her husband Faxon Dean Atherton. Previously the family had lived at the country estate known as Valparaiso Park in San Mateo County (named in honor of Mrs. Atherton's birth place in Chile) where Faxon Dean Atherton had established his permanent California residence in 1860.

A native of Dedham, Massachusetts, Faxon Dean Atherton played a significant role in the commercial history of early California. Trading primarily in hides and tallow between Valparaiso, Chile and the eastern seaboard in the 1830's, he was lured to California by tales of business opportunities. His diary of the years 1836-1839 recounts the travails of life in Mexican-ruled California and records his foresight as to the future value of San Francisco Bay.

In succeeding years, Atherton based himself principally in Valparaiso where he married into the wealthy de Goni family. He continued varied trading activities in Boston, Chile and California, but by the late 1840's, with the discovery of gold in California, he began to concentrate on supplying food stuffs and commodities to the fast-growing San Francisco region. With the aid of United States consul Thomas O. Larkin, Atherton made substantial investments in California real estate. In 1859-60, Atherton secured U.S. citizenship for his wife and six children and moved to San Francisco, settling temporarily on Rincon Hill. Thereafter, the family moved to Fair Oaks, which is today known as Atherton. Until his death, Atherton continued to expand his already profitable holdings.

Prominent members of the San Francisco social and business communities, the Atherton family received additional public acclaim due to the writings of Gertrude Atherton, Faxon and Dominga de Goni Atherton's daughter-in-law. Widowed in 1887, after 11 years of marriage to George Atherton, Gertrude became even more dedicated to writing and travelled extensively to New York, London, Paris and Washington seeking both ideas and publishers for her novels. Although her mother-in-law continued to occupy the house on California Street from 1881 until her death in 1890, and even cared for Gertrude's children there for a time, all indications are that the prolific authoress never actually resided there herself.

HISTORY:
(Continued)

After the senior Mrs. Atherton's death in 1890, this residence was purchased by Edgar Mills, the brother of D. O. Mills of the Bank of California, for whom the town of Millbrae is named. Edgar Mills, a native of New York, had come to California during the Gold Rush and soon became associated with his brother in various mercantile endeavors including the National Bank of D. O. Mills and Co. of which Edgar later became President. He also served as President of the Eureka and Palisades Railroad.

In 1900, the address of the residence was changed from 1950 to 1990 California.

In 1905, the house was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Marior Leventritt, long time residents of the Palace Hotel. Upon his arrival in San Francisco in 1863, Mr. Leventritt associated with the firm of Rosenstock and Company, manufacturers, importers and wholesalers of boots and shoes. He became President of the company in 1872, continuing in that capacity until the firm's demise in 1892. Mr. Leventritt was also a prominent member of Temple Emanu-El and the Argonaut Club.

In 1908, the residence was purchased by George Chauncey Boardman, prominent in real estate matters, whose brick mansion at the southeast corner of Franklin and Sacramento Streets had been destroyed in the 1906 fire. In the 1860's, Mr. Boardman was president of San Francisco Fire Insurance, an early San Francisco insurance company, and later represented Aetna Insurance in California. In 1913-14, when the Boardman's granddaughter, Cora Winn, (later Mrs. Lovell Langstroth), became the first president of the Junior League of San Francisco, their residence became an early headquarters and meeting place for the fledgling organization. After her husband's death Mrs. Boardman continued to live in the house until her death on November 6, 1921. Other members of the family then resided here until the property was sold in 1923.

In 1923, the property was purchased by architect Charles J. Rousseau who continued to reside across the street at 1991 California. Under his direction, however, the house was carefully divided into thirteen dwelling units. Today, the property is owned and occupied by Mr. Rousseau's heirs and continues to be a rooming house.

ARCHITECTURE:

Eclectic and even bizarre in conception, the building's dominant architectural styles are Queen Anne and Stick-Eastlake. The Victorian structure occupies a substantial portion of the entire lot, rendering an appearance of solidity and bulk. The house has two facades: a principal facade facing California Street, and a western facade facing Octavia Street. The eastern side of the house is barely visible, standing close to the neighboring house on California Street. Although the principal facade on California Street is not symmetrical, it is basically balanced. The dominant features of the building include a round Queen Anne corner tower to the west, balanced on the east by a two story, strongly projecting gable. The tower supports a conical or "witch's hat" roof, upon

which rests a small "cap" at the peak. The curvilinear bargeboards below the gable compliment the conical formations of the western tower.

ARCHITECTURE: Two dormer windows, one on the first and one on the second floor of the principal facade, occupy the space between the tower and the gable. The dormers are wide, with low round heads. A low transverse-pitched roof surmounts the first floor dormer, located above the front entrance. The double doors of the entrance are housed within a columned porch, recessed beneath the high curved roof containing the small projecting room and first floor dormer.

The principal facade is broken by excrescences, or wings, on either side of the entrance. A sloping roof below the central dormer, and a similar small sloping roof under the large eastern projecting gable shelter main story windows. On the west side, under the prominent round tower, an extension of the porch roof slopes and shelters a small projecting wing.

The conical roof of the tower rests upon a range of consoles. The base of the tower, at the main level, is shaped in a polygon. The polygonal base contains two windows, one immediately above the other, which illuminates the stairway in the tower. Narrow horizontal sheathing covers the main story walls of the tower, with wooden quoins distinguishing the corners of the polygon. Stretching around the tower wall and Octavia Street facade is a band of carved moulding of foliate decorative motifs with shields. The large gable on the principal facade has the same frieze or carved moulding and supporting brackets. In addition, centered between the two large windows in the gable is a carved wooden urn. The columns supporting the front porch have ornately carved Corinthian capitals. Both the small dormer over the entrance and the curved pedimental head over the central paired window facing Octavia Street contain ornamental foliate designs. The date 1881 appears over the paired window.

The roof of the Octavia Street facade is supported by consoles. Slightly projecting window pediments on the upper story rise above the eaves and break the roof line along this facade. The sheathing of the Octavia Street facade is varied: vertical board and batten on the lower portions of each story and horizontal shiplap timber along the upper portions. A horizontal band of dentillation separates the main floor from the second story. A triangular pediment between the tower and the main building facing Octavia Street shelters a small dormer at the attic story level.

The fenestration is rectangular; the size and placement of the windows is irregular from the exterior for it depends upon the internal requirements of the enclosed space.

ARCHITECTURE: The house is approached by a double flight of steps,
(Continued) divided by a simple iron rail. A retaining wall of
approximately eight to ten feet encloses the front
garden.

ZONING AND SURROUNDING LAND USE: Zoning of the parcel and surrounding lots is current-
ly R-5. An application to rezone the lot to R-2,
filed by the Pacific Heights Association, in 1972, is
under consideration. The height limit is 40 feet.

Surrounding lots are of mixed residential uses, rang-
ing from single family dwellings to apartment houses
of 2, 3, 4 and 6 stories, including a boarding house
along the rear of the parcel.