

FILE NO. 90-75-1

ORDINANCE NO. 292-75

DESIGNATING LOTTA'S FOUNTAIN AS A LANDMARK

PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY PLANNING CODE.

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

Section 1. The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that Lotta's Fountain, located on a pedestrian island at the intersection of Market, Geary, and Kearny Streets, has a special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value, and that its designation as a Landmark will be in furtherance of and in conformance with the purposes of Article 10 of the City Planning Code and the standards set forth therein.

(a) Designation. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code, Chapter II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, Lotta's Fountain is hereby designated as a Landmark, this designation having been duly approved by Resolution No. 7303 of the City Planning Commission, which Resolution is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under File No. 90-75-1.

(b) Required Data. The location and boundaries of the landmark site are those of the structure itself and as shown on a map on file in the Department of City Planning Booklet L473.1. The characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation, and the particular features that should be preserved, as described and included in the said Resolution, are hereby incorporated herein and made a part hereof as though fully set forth.

Passed for Second Reading  
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

JUN - 4 1975

Ayes: Supervisors Barboggain, Feinstein, Francois, Gonzalez, Kopp, Mendelsohn, Molinari, Nelder, Prieol, Tamara, von Beroldingen.

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

Absent: Supervisors FEINSTEIN GONZALES

MENDELSON

*W. Berman* Clerk

JUN 18 1975

Approved

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

JUN 4 1975

Ayes: Supervisors Barboggain, Feinstein, Francois, Gonzalez, Kopp, Mendelsohn, Molinari, Nelder, Prieol, Tamara, von Beroldingen.

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

Absent: Supervisors MENDELSON

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

*W. Berman* Clerk

*Joseph L. Alioto* Mayor

SAN FRANCISCO  
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. 7303

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate Lotta's Fountain located on a pedestrian island at the intersection of Market, Geary, and Kearny Streets as a Landmark pursuant to the provisions of Article 10 of the City Planning Code was initiated by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on February 5, 1975, and said Advisory Board, after due consideration, has recommended approval of this proposal; and

WHEREAS, The City Planning Commission, after due notice given, held a public hearing on March 13, 1975, to consider the proposed designation and the report of said Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, The Commission believes that the proposed Landmark has a special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value; and that the proposed designation would be in furtherance of and in conformance with the purposes and standards of the said Article 10;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, First, that the proposal to designate Lotta's Fountain as a Landmark pursuant to Article 10 of the City Planning Code is hereby APPROVED, the precise location and boundaries of the Landmark site being those of the structure itself; said structure being situated upon a pedestrian island bounded by the northwesterly curb line of Market Street, the southerly curb line of Geary Street and the easterly curb line of Kearny Street; a map of this location being on file in the Department of City Planning in Docket No. LM 75.1;

Second, That the special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value of the said Landmark justifying its designation are set forth in the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board Resolution No. 119 as adopted on February 5, 1975, which Resolution is incorporated herein and made a part thereof as though fully set forth;

Third, That the said Landmark should be preserved generally in all of its particular exterior features as existing on the date hereof and as described and depicted in the photographs, case report and other material on file in the Department of City Planning Docket Lm 75.1;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commission hereby directs its Secretary to transmit the proposal for designation, with a copy of this Resolution, to the Board of Supervisors for appropriate action.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of March 13, 1975.

Lynn E. Pfo  
Secretary

Ayes: Commissioners Fleishhacker, Mellon, Porter, Ritchie

Noes: None

Absent: Commissioners Crowley, Newman, Rueda

Passed: March 13, 1975

OWNER: City and County of San Francisco

LOCATION: Intersection of Market, Kearny and Geary Streets, on a pedestrian island in the street right-of-way; not a part of any Assessor's Block.

LOTTA

CRABTREE: She was the daughter of John A. and Mary Ann (Livesey) Crabtree, born on November 7, 1847, in New York City. Although her given name was Charlotte Mignon, after her mother's twin sister, from infancy on she was known simply as Lotta or Miss Lotta. Her father operated a bookstore on Nassau Street in New York and, as with most of his attempts to establish a livelihood, he was unsuccessful. Mrs. Crabtree, until her death, was the mainstay of the family. In New York, she worked as an upholsterer in her mother's shop and throughout her life provided the family income or managed the affairs of Lotta when her income, at an early age, became the support of the family.

In 1851, John Crabtree joined the gold rush to California and located in Grass Valley. He eventually sent for his family who arrived in San Francisco, via Panama, on the steam packet "Oregon" in early winter of 1853. The following spring, after locating Mr. Crabtree, they joined him in Grass Valley where they operated a boarding house.

At that time, Grass Valley had a population of about 3,500 people among whom it was estimated there were about 300 women and not more than 15 children of school age. As with most mining towns or camps, it was frequently visited by traveling theatrical troupes or individuals. But the town had its own cultural institutions; it was the home of a resident minstrel troupe and also a dancing school located in an annex to a saloon under the proprietorship of a Mr. Bowers.

Although accounts of Mrs. Crabtree indicate that she was somewhat "straight-laced", she enrolled Lotta in the dancing school and, somewhat more remarkably for a woman of her character, she befriended Lola Montez, the actress of notoriety, lately arrived from San Francisco with her fifth husband. Miss Montez recognized the talent of Lotta and the child spend much time with her while in Grass Valley.

The Crabtrees moved to Rabbit Creek (now La Porte) in the fall of 1854 and there again resumed the operation of a boarding house. Lotta resumed her dancing lessons under the tutelage of Mart Taylor whose operation was similar to that in Grass Valley - - an annex to a bar.

In the summer of 1855, under Taylor's auspices and in his establishment, Lotta gave her first public performance. As a singer and dancer, she outdrew another established child actress playing across the street the same evening.

Lotta's success as an entertainer - most certainly in her childhood - might well be credited to a mid-Nineteenth Century American phenomenon in the theater on which Mrs. Crabtree was to capitalize. This was the enthusiastic reception given to child

actors and entertainers who were known as "Fairy Stars". A typical Fairy Star was not limited to performing within the usually thought-of capabilities of a child but, in many cases, exhibited their talents by playing adult roles, including Shakespeare. California was particularly indulgent of these children, due, no doubt, to the overwhelming number of males who were not only separated from their own families but also existed in societies where both women and children were a decided minority, if not altogether non-existent. Denied the sight of their own children, they longed for the sight of any child and the engaging, fair-complexioned, red haired Lotta must have indeed represented an ideal to them.

Mart Taylor proposed a tour of the mining camps, with Lotta as star, to Mrs. Crabtree. The mother, undoubtedly smitten by the gold coins and nuggets thrown onstage following Lotta's performances, readily agreed. In the fall of 1855, Taylor's troupe toured Quincy, Rich Bar, Port Wine, Gibsonville, Forest City, Oroville and other mining centers.

In 1856, the Crabtrees moved to San Francisco, and other California tours followed between local appearances. Lotta's first San Francisco performance in a major theater was at the American in 1856, and in 1857, she appeared at the Gaities on the Long Wharf. 1859-60 found her playing at Tom Maguire's Opera House, the Eureka Theater, the Bella Union and the melodeons, which were the vaudeville houses of the times. By 1862, she had firmly established herself and was billed simply as Miss Lotta. As such she was accorded the supreme accolade of San Francisco theater -- playing benefits for the volunteer fire companies.

In that era, the volunteer fire companies were organized on the basis of geographic origin of the members. Not only were local actors involved in the benefits, but whenever an actor or actress of note visited the city, they were invariably requested to play a benefit for the company which had the same geographic origin as the star. Invitations were not only tendered, they were expected to be accepted, for the proceeds were used to buy equipment for the company. The performances were widely supported and usually began with great fanfare, frequently a parade with the star, from the firehouse to the theater. Although she played benefits for many companies (there were 19), Lotta, being a New Yorker by birth, had a special attachment for the famed Knickerbocker Engine Company Number 5 and played a benefit for them at the Metropolitan Theater in March 1862.

Her success continued and she became the best-known singer, dancer and comedienne in the city. By the time she reached the age of 16, she and her mother had formed many associations with visiting theatrical personalities and it was decided that she was ready for a career outside California. At the time, she was playing as a regular with "The Great Combination Company" of the New Idea Theater on Commercial Street above Kearny.

On April 18, 1864, she "took" a benefit farewell performance for herself (a common practice of the time) at the Metropolitan Theater in which she appeared in several roles along with many other entertainers. Newspaper accounts of the event reveal the theater to have been "densely packed".

The affection that she was to demonstrate for the city eleven years later by the donation of the fountain was already established. The depth of her feelings for California and the success it had already accorded her is evident in a letter which she wrote the day following her own benefit to Mr. E. C. Bert, proprietor of the New Idea. The letter appeared in an ad for the Metropolitan Theater in the Daily Evening Bulletin of April 22, 1864.

San Francisco  
April 19, '64

Mr. E. G. Bert

My dear, kind friend,

In a few days I shall leave California, endeared to me by very many, kind, true hearted friends, to journey to a foreign land, but ere I go I would like to make some return for the many acts of kindness I have received at your hands, and if you would accept a night's professional services, it would be a source of delightful pleasure when far away and thinking of the dear ones I leave behind me, to know that my last night in California was devoted to the interests of one of my truest and dearest friends. Hoping for a speedy reply and acceptance,

I remain yours, sincerely.

MISS LOTTA

The invitation was accepted and Lotta, along with other entertainers from the New Idea and Metropolitan Theaters, spent her last evening in San Francisco as she had wished. The same edition of the above newspaper carried a listing of cabin passengers who were to sail the next day on the steamship "St. Louis" for Panama. Among them were:

J. A. Crabtree & wife.  
Miss Lotta.

Lotta's first appearance outside California was in New York on June 18, 1864. It was not a success. However, that same year she appeared in Chicago where she established herself as a first-rate entertainer and for the next 28 years she toured the major cities of the nation. Her career was distinguished and although she had her occasional failures, she is believed to have been the wealthiest stage personality of her era.

After leaving San Francisco in 1864, it was five years before she returned in August 1869 to play with the stock company of the California Theater in several productions over a six week period. Throughout the remainder of her career, and even in retirement, her visits to San Francisco were rare; she was not present when her fountain was formally presented to the city.

Lotta retired from the stage at the age of 45 in 1892 and divided her time between her New Jersey home, "Attol Tryst", and New York City. Her mother, to whom she was extremely

devoted, died at the age of 85 in 1905, and in 1909 Lotta purchased the Brewster Hotel in Boston and took up residence there. Her financial acumen apparently was the equal of her mother's for following Lotta's death at the Brewster Hotel on September 24, 1924, her estate was revealed to exceed \$4,000,000. Her will was bitterly contested, not by family members, but rather by outsiders claiming relationship. Nevertheless, the bulk of it was divided among various specified charities, some of which were of her own founding.

HISTORY  
OF THE  
FOUNTAIN:

On September 9, 1875, on the 25th Anniversary of California statehood, this elaborate public drinking fountain was formally presented to the city. The presentation was fully covered by the local newspapers, one of which noted that an hour before the 3:00 p.m. ceremonies were scheduled to begin, a large crowd, composed, it appeared, of "idle hoodlums to whom the water would be a precious boon", was milling about the fountain. Also noted, however, were the women and children who were in danger of being suffocated or crushed because the militia which had been scheduled to assist in maintaining order did not arrive until 3:15 p.m.

The account also noted that the oratory of the presentation ceremonies was "appropriately" brief. At the request of Miss Lotta who was appearing in Salt Lake City at the time, the presentation speech was made by a friend, Mr. Harry Edwards of the California Theater.

In his address, Mr. Edwards stressed the mutual affection the donor felt between herself and the citizenry and that the fountain was given as an expression of gratitude for the kindness shown her in this city where her talents were first recognized. Additionally, she hoped that she would be remembered by those pausing to drink as she in turn would always remember them.

Mayor James Otis gave a short acceptance speech following which Mrs. Charlotte Vernon, Miss Lotta's aunt, was the first to drink, using one of four "Henderson block-tin drinking cups that look like a Bonanza ... and (are) confined by chain to the stonework above the basins". The Mayor, members of the Board of Supervisors and soldiers then retired to the Grand Hotel for stronger libations and "for the rest of the day and evening (the fountain) was surrounded by a gaping and thirsty group of admirers."

Although the fountain has been the scene of many gatherings, both large and small, the event of greatest significance occurred on Christmas Eve, 1910 when Mme. Luisa Tetrazzini sang two selections, Flotow's "The Last Rose of Summer" and Gounod's Waltz from "Romeo and Juliet", before a crowd estimated at 250,000 strong. Whatever the number, photographs of the event reveal the crowd to have been of immense size. Although no amplification was used locally, the program was carried by wire to a gathering of some members of the Bohemian Club assembled in Los Angeles.

The event has been commemorated by appearance of other artists at the fountain and on each April 18, a group of San Franciscans meet at the fountain at 5:18 a.m. to conduct a memorial service for victims of the 1906 disaster.

Undoubtedly, Lotta viewed the fountain in her visits to the city following its erection in 1875; however, the singular event of her direct association with the fountain occurred on Saturday evening, November 6, 1915, which was the eve of her 68th birthday and in the sixtieth year which followed her local debut. She had arrived that day by train from Boston to be present on November 9, at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition for "Lotta Crabtree Day". That evening she was escorted from her hotel to the fountain "in an old fashioned barouche, drawn by four white horses, with a driver of the olden time, outrider and all". Before the assembled throng, musical selections by band and chorus were presented as well as a solo rendition of "Home, Sweet Home", by a visiting artist. Short speeches of welcome and reminiscence were given. Lotta's response was emotion-filled and very brief:

I can only say to you my friends, how beautiful this is. This is the most unique and magnificent tribute that was ever given any woman in the world.

She was escorted back to the hotel in the barouche, via Kearny Street and Portsmouth Plaza - the neighborhood of so very many of her early San Francisco appearances.

THE  
FOUNTAIN:

The Municipal Report of 1875-76 observed:

The fountain rests upon a granite base eight feet square and three feet thick. The height (sic) is twenty-four feet, and may be described as being built in sections. That resting on the base is four feet broad by three or four feet high, has a drinking basin on each face, and is ornamented on each corner with a lion's head.

On each basin is a griffin's head, the water flowing from the mouth.

The section above, which is a little smaller, has a brass medallion on each face. That looking eastward bears the inscription, "Presented to the Citizens of San Francisco by Lotta". The others represent, respectively, mining, agriculture and commerce -- the three leading industries of California.

(Note: At the bottom of the medallion bearing the aforementioned inscription the date, 1875, also appears).

Further observed was:

The contract for placing the Lotta Fountain in position and performing the necessary stone work, plumbing, paving, etc., was let to M. Cronin, contractor, on July 23, 1875, Messrs. Wyneken and Townsend being the architects, and E. P. Hutchins, Esq., being at that time agent for Miss Crabtree.

The cost of the fountain, complete, was as follows:

Cost of castings in Philadelphia . . . . .	\$5,775.00
Freight and cartage. . . . .	875.00
M. Cronin's contract for erection. . . . .	1,550.00
Architect's charges. . . . .	275.00
Total cost . . . . .	<u>\$8,475.00</u>

Messrs. Wyneken and Townsend, the architects, were a San Francisco firm located at 515 California Street.

A contemporary newspaper account described the cast-iron work as painted in imitation of bronze with the smaller ornaments and projections gilded. To obtain water, handles shaped similarly to door knobs were drawn outward. As protection from vehicles -- which evidently has been a problem from the beginning -- two stone posts were erected at each corner of the granite base.

The most significant change in the appearance of the fountain occurred at the time of the erection of the "Path of Gold Lamps" for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915 when an eight-foot section was added beneath the solitary lamp atop the structure in order to bring the height of the lamp into conformity with the new lighting system.

Other changes include the addition of a plaque, by Haig Patigian facing the northeast which is mounted on the lowest section of the column shaft and carries a bas-relief of Mme. Tetrzzini with the inscription

TO  
REMEMBER  
CHRISTMAS EVE 1910  
WHEN  
LUISA TETRAZZINI  
SANG TO THE PEOPLE OF SAN FRANCISCO  
ON THIS SPOT.

The medallion representing agriculture is no longer extant and in its place there now reads:

RECONSTRUCTED  
BY  
THE-PATH-OF-GOLD  
FESTIVAL COMMITTEE  
OCTOBER  
4-5-1916

The fountain has been moved slightly several times in attempts to abate its interference with the flow of vehicular traffic. The most recent move occurred in the summer of 1974 when it was moved some ten feet easterly as part of the Market Street Development Project. The cost of the move, including rehabilitation, was \$25,000, almost exactly three times the original cost of the fountain. Once more the water flows from the mouths of the griffins; however, the Henderson block-tin chain-cups have long since been removed and the flow is now constant

into the basins. The water is not intended to quench a thirst; for that purpose a drinking fountain is to be installed nearby.

SPECIAL

RECOGNITION: Lotta's Fountain has recently been placed on the National Register of Historic Places which is maintained by the United States Department of the Interior.