

DESIGNATING THE SAN FRANCISCO WAR MEMORIAL 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 the San Francisco War Memorial located on the block surrounded by Van Ness Avenue, Grove, Franklin and McAllister Streets, being lot 1 in Assessor's Block 786A, 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.

(a) Designation. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code, Chapter 11, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, the San Francisco War Memorial is hereby designated as a landmark, this designation having been duly approved by Resolution No. 7273 of the City Planning Commission, which Resolution is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 90-74-17; provided that this designation shall in no way diminish the powers, rights and duties vested in the Trustees of the San Francisco War Memorial pursuant to Section 1.610 of the Charter and Chapter 27 of the Administrative Code of the City and County of San Francisco.

(b) Required Data. The location and boundaries of the landmark site and the characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation, described and included in the said Resolution, are 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 V. [Signature]

Deputy City Attorney

RECOMMENDED:

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

By Paul G. [Signature]

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Passed for Second Reading
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

NOV 22 1976

Ayes: Supervisors Barbagelata, Feinstein, Francisco, Gonzales, Kopp, Mendicino, Molinari, Neider, Pelosi, Tamaras, von Beroldingen.

Noes: Supervisors

Absent: Supervisors KINDELSON, PELOSI

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

NOV 24 1976

Ayes: Supervisors Barbagelata, Feinstein, Francisco, Gonzales, Kopp, Mendicino, Neider, Pelosi, Tamaras, von Beroldingen.

Noes: Supervisors

Absent: Supervisors KINDELSON, PELOSI

MOLINARI

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

90-74-17

File No.

DEC 10 1976

Approved

Mayor

SAN FRANCISCO

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. 7273

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the San Francisco War Memorial located on the block surrounded by Van Ness Avenue, Grove, Franklin, and McAllister 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 October 23, 1974, 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 December 5, 1974, to consider the proposed designation and the report of said Advisory Board; and

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

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, First, that the proposal to designate the San Francisco War Memorial located on the block surrounded by Van Ness Avenue, Grove, Franklin, and McAllister Streets as a Landmark pursuant to Article 10 of the City Planning Code is hereby APPROVED, the location and boundaries of the landmark site being as follows:

Beginning at a point on the westerly line of Van Ness Avenue at the intersection of the southerly line of McAllister Street, thence southerly along the westerly line of Van Ness Avenue for a distance of 618.75 feet, thence at a right angle westerly along the northerly line of Grove Street for a distance of 384.75 feet, thence at a right angle northerly along the easterly line of Franklin Street for a distance of 618.75 feet, thence at a right angle easterly along the southerly line of McAllister Street for a distance of 384.75 feet to the point of beginning; being Lot 1 in Assessor's Block 706A.

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. 117 as adopted on October 23, 1974, which resolution is incorporated herein and made a part hereof 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 LM74.12;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors not authorize review of alterations to major interior public spaces;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Planning Commission acknowledges the jurisdiction of the War Memorial Trustees as set forth in the City Charter and the Administrative Code.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of December 5, 1974.

Lynn E. Pio
Secretary

Ayes: Commissioners Elliott, Finn, Fleishhacker, Newman, Porter,
Ritchie, Rueda

Noes: None

Absent: None

Passed: December 5, 1974

OWNER: City and County of San Francisco

LOCATION: West side of Van Ness Avenue, between Grove and
McAllister Streets; All of Assessor's Block 786A.

INTRODUCTION: "Certainly this is one of the great opera houses of
the world."

So concluded the music critic of a national weekly magazine who visited the City some few years ago to attend several performances of the San Francisco Opera Company. Elsewhere in his review, the thrust of which was given over to acclaim the Company's legendary record of productions and employment of first-rate artists and other personnel, he noted that, "Their Opera House is a handsome one . . . forming part of a spacious civic center that was built at a time when monumental architecture was not demode, and there is an atmosphere of great elegance about the auditorium, as there is about its surroundings, which remind one of the central plaza of some Latin-American or European city and, as far as I am aware, are not matched in the United States."

San Franciscans would be inclined to agree, accepting the foregoing, however, as only one of many reasons for pointing with a touch of justifiable pride to the Opera House and its twin, the Veterans Building. Ranking among the most readily identifiable buildings in the City, they have served it well, not only for intended uses but also as appropriate settings for international proceedings such as the birthplace of the United Nations and the signing of the Japanese Peace Treaty following World War II. And in a certain measure, the War Memorial takes on a special character which is found in the struggle, now faded into history, to see the two buildings erected. Moreover, the Memorial was the product of deeply-rooted "citizen participation" long before that phrase became the watch-word in a civic undertaking. For thirteen unrelenting years, San Franciscans of all socio-economic levels and with persuasions focused on cultural aspirations and/or patriotic pride, were involved. Though initially united, the proponents were later divided; nevertheless, even in disunity they were determined to see the War Memorial through to completion.

HISTORY: In April 1918, twelve years after the City had experienced the loss of its major theaters, halls and opera houses, a group of prominent San Franciscans, members of the Musical Association, met to consider construction of a hall for performing arts. A previous attempt in 1911 and 1912 by the group had been thwarted by a state Supreme Court decision that the City could not contribute the land for what was to be essentially a privately owned building. Although new theaters and the Civic Auditorium had been constructed after 1906, none provided the facilities or setting deemed appropriate by the local citizenry which had given opera and other cultural events widespread and enthusiastic support since the City's first operatic performance in 1851.

The 1918 meeting was the genesis of what was to become the War Memorial.

Leadership from the Musical Association was provided by W.H. Crocker, Templeton Crocker, Milton Esberg, Herbert Fleishhacker, W.S. Heller, Walter Martin, John D. McKee, with John Drum serving as Chairman. Five of these each pledged \$25,000 outright towards a goal of \$2,000,000.

November of 1918 saw the cessation of World War I, and in the succeeding months, the return of servicemen to their homes. Among those returning to San Francisco was Major Charles H. Kendrick, who, on becoming aware of the Association's proposal and its financial concerns, conceived the idea of combining the performing hall with the growing demand throughout the nation for memorials commemorating the war heroes. His idea was enthusiastically accepted by the Association and shortly thereafter, the block bounded by Van Ness, Grove, Franklin and Hayes (which prior to 1906 had been occupied by St. Ignatius Church and College) was purchased as a site for the complex.

A city-wide drive for funds was proposed and from the veterans groups a War Memorial Committee was formed of 46 members, based pro-rata on the membership of the various Legion posts within the City. Major Kendrick was appointed Chairman and Frank F. Kilsby, Secretary of the Conference Committee.

By May 1920, \$1,000,000 was on hand, and a mass meeting that month in the Civic Auditorium with 10,000 in attendance brought in another \$600,000. Ground breaking ceremonies were held shortly thereafter and the campaign for funds continued so intensively that within another 30 days cash and pledges totaled \$2,150,000.

Trustees for the public subscription were the University of California Regents, who, upon completion of the pledge drive, determined that the pledges were not legally binding and refused further involvement until the issue could be corrected. New pledge forms were drawn up to the Regents' approval and those who had pledged previously were again contacted. This action required nearly two years and, as might well have been expected, some of the pledges were not renewed.

In October 1922, a distinguished Architectural Advisory Committee was appointed; chaired by Bernard Maybeck, it also included Willis Polk, John Galen Howard, Ernest Coxhead, G. Albert Lansburgh, John Reid, Jr., Fred Meyer and Arthur Brown, Jr. -- a veritable Pantheon of Bay Area architects. In January 1923, the War Memorial Trustees, who by who by this time had replaced the Regents, announced that they would erect the following buildings: Opera House, American Legion Building and Art Museum. The architects eventually selected were Arthur Brown, Jr. and G. Albert Lansburgh who had achieved recognition for his theater design.

With the enlarged scope of the proposal, it was evident that it could not be accommodated on the site already purchased. Moreover, about this time a storage company announced that it would build a large warehouse directly across Van Ness Avenue from City Hall. While City authorities were greatly concerned over the probable resultant clash of a warehouse with the classic architecture of the emerging Civic Center, the War Memorial Trustees saw the opportunity of obtaining an appropriate site for the War Memorial. So with financial aid from the Trustees, and the cooperation of the U.C. Regents ~~with financial aid from the Trustees, and the cooperation of the U.C. Regents~~ (who owned part of the site), the City began acquiring the present two-block site.

The construction of a major opera house, then as now, transcends local interest and Gaetano Merola, who lived in the East but had been involved in the production of opera in the City with touring companies as early as 1906, developed an interest in the San Francisco undertaking. From his visits he had observed that the City appreciated and would financially support opera, and thus it was that in the fall of 1921 he transferred his residence here. While the drive for construction funds was being pursued, Merola's efforts were channeled into organizing an opera company. In April 1923, the San Francisco Opera Association was formally organized and the first season of the company opened on September 26, 1923 in the Civic Auditorium which had been temporarily revamped to suggest the "feel" of an opera house. By 1924, the Association had over 2,000 founders pledged to underwrite any future production deficits.

Early in 1926, it was apparent that the funds subscribed for the structures (about \$2,000,000 remained) would be totally inadequate for the vastly enlarged proposal. In February 1927, the Trustees met with the publishers of the five San Francisco newspapers who unanimously agreed that the proposal should not be curtailed and also agreed to support a bond issue for the \$4,000,000 necessary to see the proposal completed as planned.

Fearful that legal complications experienced in the 1912 attempt by the Musical Association might again arise, the resolution of the Board of Supervisors placing the issue on the ballot called for construction of " ... permanent buildings in or adjacent to the Civic Center to be used as a Memorial Hall for War Veterans and for education, recreational, entertainment and other municipal purposes." Outright mention of an opera house was avoided although the Supervisors were fully aware of the proposals and the newspaper were clear to point out the breadth of facilities to be included.

A special election was held on June 14, 1927 and although the bond issue passed by a substantial majority, there were to be further delays. The Veterans' building was to include office space and other facilities, not only for the Legion posts, but for all veterans groups then existing in the City. Disputes arose over the space allocations for the veterans and also for their representation on the Board of Trustees. Once again the voters were to be called upon: this time to determine the com-

position of the Board of Trustees. The issue appeared as a charter amendment on the November 1928 ballot and, despite vigorous organized opposition, passed. Nevertheless, even with Mayor Rolph's best efforts, continuing related difficulties prevented the sale of the bonds until 1930.

Construction of the foundation work commenced on January 28, 1931; the cornerstones were laid on Armistice Day, 1931 and the dedication of the structures, on Admission Day, September 9, 1932.

HISTORY:
(cont'd)

The Opera House opened on Saturday evening, October 15, 1932, with a performance of Puccini's La Tosca, with Mr. Merola conducting and the great Claudia Muzio in the title role. Notwithstanding the fact that the nation was in the depths of a severe depression (which was to curtail the performance of opera elsewhere), anticipation of the opening season in the new house was so intense that the original schedule of nine performances quickly sold out and three additional ones were added. For weeks ahead of the opening, local papers featured stories and photographs of the arrival of stars and preparations underway.

The anticipation was not only local. On opening day, the New York Times, in its radio guide, noted that among the outstanding programs for that day was the broadcast, (nation-wide) of the first act of La Tosca from the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House. The following day, the paper carried an account of the opening.

Time magazine, in its issue of October 17, 1932, featured a cover story on the "San Francisco Memorial" and noted that "The new Opera House, to be dedicated this week, is easily the most attractive and practical building of its kind in the U.S." and "... this year, when Chicago's and Philadelphia's opera houses are dark, the lights will go on in a house made possible by all the people of San Francisco."

Indeed, it was the first municipally owned opera house in the world.

The Veterans' Building was officially opened on Armistice Day that same year. There was so special fanfare such as that which accompanied the Opera House inaugural and, except for brief ceremonies that evening at the War Memorial, the day's events are best described only as typical of an Armistice Day observance of the times.

Unquestionably, since its construction, the history of the War Memorial complex transcends purely local significance and makes it a truly international landmark as well -- most fitting in this cosmopolitan city. For in April, May and June of 1945, with the world well into its sixth year of global war, the two buildings of the War Memorial served as the birthplace of the United Nations. Most of the meetings and ceremonies of the Conference took place in the Veterans Building, but it was on the great stage of the Opera House that President Truman and other heads of state and dignitaries signed the United Nations Charter at a plenary session on June 26, 1945. Commemorative

meetings of the signing, with official United Nations sessions, took place in the Opera House in 1955 with President Dwight D. Eisenhower and former President Harry S. Truman in attendance, and in 1965 with President Lyndon B. Johnson present. A Twenty-fifth Anniversary celebration with United Nations dignitaries in attendance occurred on the 25th and 26th of June 1970.

The War Memorial is further distinguished in that the Japanese Peace Treaty was drawn up in 1951 in the Veterans Building and signed in the Opera House.

The twin buildings of the War Memorial have been used principally as their names would imply. The Opera House has been the permanent home of the Opera and Symphony since its opening and it also serves the Ballet and other theatrical arts. The Veterans Building was designed for and has been devoted to veterans' organizations, except for the fourth floor (and of recent years, the third floor) which was given over to what is now the San Francisco Museum of Art.

The Opera House and Veterans Building, together with the Court between them, form an integral project, brilliantly conceived to complement and enhance the City Hall opposite which was, in fact, designed by Brown (with Bakewell). Moreover, they further and enlarge the concept of the Civic Center for which plans were initially formulated in 1911. The War Memorial represents a major contribution to the development of this grand scheme of all American civic complexes which started with the Civic Auditorium and City Hall and also includes the Public Library, State and Federal Buildings and the central Plaza.

ARCHITECTURE:

The War Memorial complex is composed of two substantially identical structures -- Opera House and Veterans Building -- separated, yet linked, by a formal court. The architectural description which follows will serve for both and reflects only the major characteristics of the structures. In this connection, three major exterior differences are noted between the two structures and these are stated in terms of the Opera House: a stage loft at the rear; a large arched opening in the rear facade provided for transporting scenery directly to and from the stage; and, because of a slight difference in ground elevation between the two structures, a short flight of steps leading to the main entrance was required to maintain horizontal continuity of identical architectural elements in the two buildings. A close inspection of the buildings will frequently reveal minor, intentional discrepancies between similar elements. This applies to the structures when viewed individually as well as when the two structures are compared. Nevertheless, the principal elements and their detailing are so boldly stated, and the subordinate, varying, details within these elements so skillfully handled, that, from the exterior, the structures are generally thought of as twins, save for the three major differences noted above.

The buildings are basically rectangular, steel-frame structures with granite foundations and faces of terra cotta simulating rusticated granite blocks. Exterior dimensions of each are 282 feet in length and 180 feet in width (for the main body) which, through lateral projections, increases to 231 feet near the front.

The height is 92 feet with the stage loft rising to 146 feet. Each building has four principal stories with basement, and a mansard-type roof. The architectural style of the War Memorial, like that of the more ornate City Hall opposite on Van Ness Avenue, is French Renaissance.

The principal facade, at main floor level, has seven arches flanked by decorative bronze lamps. The five central arches are glazed and contain double doors opening into the lobby. The end arches serve as windows or as secondary entrances to non-public areas. The major feature of the facade is the high colonnade at second and third stories composed of eight pairs of Doric columns which are positioned in front of a wall with seven arched openings between the paired columns. A low balustrade occurs between the pairs at second story level with the center and end balustrades brought slightly forward to suggest balconies. A two-story loggia is revealed behind all seven arched openings of the Veterans Building; however, in the Opera House the loggia is found only behind the five center openings -- the space behind those at either end being more appropriately described as shallow recesses or niches. The rear walls of the loggias feature two-story arched, windows, each centered on its arched opening opposite in the front wall. The colonnade supports a heavy architrave, itself surmounted by a cornice. The lateral projections referred to previously begin at the ends of the colonnade and achieve architectural significance through a series of staggered setbacks both on their front and rear.

The side facades continue the general appearance of the front: ten arched openings, equal in scale and elevation to those on the front, are present in each of two tiers. In the Veterans Building, these arches serve as windows with only two exceptions on the ground floor. In the Opera House, half of the lower tier on each side serve as carriage entrances to the main floor level. The rear of the Veterans Building is treated similarly to the sides with seven openings in each tier. The same treatment is partially present on the rear of the Opera House, however, the large, centered, arched opening for transporting scenery in and out is the most prominent feature.

OPERA HOUSE
INTERIOR:

Five entrances in the main facade give direct access to the Lobby which is separated from a Foyer by five arched openings with glazed partitions and doorways in their lower portions. The Lobby, with walls of cast stone has a vaulted and coffered ceiling and marble floors. The Foyer is lined with fluted Doric columns supporting an architrave and a dentillated cornice above which is a magnificent coffered ceiling. Lighting is provided by bronze lamps rising from the floor as well as complementary lamps suspended from the ceiling. Access to the orchestra level is provided via five slightly elevated doorways, each of which is reached via steps flanked by ornate metal railings. Above the doorways, dentillated triangular pediments continue the classical motif. At each end of the Foyer are areas, subordinated in their architectural detailing, which provide access to stairways and elevators. At orchestra level, they also serve as connectors between the Foyer and the wide promenades or carriage entrances which flank the orchestra level. At Box level, these areas are treated as balustrated mezzanines overlooking the Foyer. Secondary stairways are located at the westerly ends of the promenades.

OPERA HOUSE
INTERIOR:
(cont'd)

The architectural treatment and arrangement of the auditorium is simple and direct. Except for Box level, the multi-tiered horseshoe seating traditionally found in opera houses was abandoned and the arrangement employed more typically reflects that of a theater.

The auditorium has a breadth of 113 feet, height of 74 feet, and a depth varying from 116 feet at Orchestra level to 161 feet at the Balcony level. The seating capacity is 3,285 persons with 300 standee positions.

Twenty-five boxes, immediately above the Orchestra level, are each provided with a private vestibule approached from a broad promenade. The Grand Tier, Dress Circle, Balcony Circle and Balcony are also reached from various promenade levels and have their own conveniences. At basement level another promenade is now largely given over to seating for the adjacent bar and buffet. A hospital room is also found at this level.

The stage measurements, still generous, were unusual for their time: 134 feet in width, 84 feet in depth and 140 feet in total height. The orchestra pit, while accommodating 65 musicians comfortable, can seat 75, but only with crowding. The proscenium arch has a coffered frame whose opening measures 52 feet wide and 51 feet high at its center. Figures in relief, above and extending somewhat beyond the arch, further embellish this wall.

In the auditorium, the side walls reveal classical treatment reflective of the exterior in that the lower walls are rusticated and serve as a base for gridded arched openings with balustrades and pilasters. Space behind these openings is intended to house the pipes for an organ but no organ has ever been installed. The principal feature of the ceiling is a large elliptical surface from which is closely suspended a metal lighting fixture composed of shaped, metal troughs of varying lengths, radiating, sunburst fashion, from a central point.

VETERANS
BUILDING
INTERIOR:

On the main floor, the Lobby and Foyer areas lead to an auditorium surrounded by a corridor off of which are located offices of various organizations, principally those of veterans. The auditorium will seat about 1100 persons; it has a small stage and its floor can be either leveled for dancing or raised into tiers for stage performances. The hall is adorned by the Brangwyn murals, brought from the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, which portray the four elements, Air, Earth, Fire and Water, in their service to the welfare of mankind. The first floor also contains a Memorial Hall with military mementoes of the two World Wars. On the second floor, the front of the building is devoted to a Library and Reading Room, known as the Green Room, opening out onto the loggia. The remainder of the second floor is used for meeting rooms, lounges and other conveniences. As mentioned above, the San Francisco Museum of Art is installed on the third and fourth floors, the latter given over to galleries.

ZONING AND
SURROUND -
ING LAND
USE:

This site and the entire Civic Center is located in a P District (land that is owned by a governmental agency and is some form of public use). The courtyard is designated OS (Open Space) and the applicable height and bulk district is 96-X.

East across Van Ness Avenue is the City Hall; south across Grove Street is a parking lot occupying a full block and owned by the city; to the north and west are mixed uses, largely commercial and residential. The Central Freeway cuts a diagonal path through the blocks to the west of Franklin Street.