

FILE NO. 90-77-7ORDINANCE NO. 211-77

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1 DESIGNATING THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS AS A LANDMARK PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 10 OF THE
2 CITY PLANNING CODE

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

4 Section 1. The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that the Palace of Fine
5 Arts, east side of Baker Street between Bay and Jefferson Streets, being Lot 2 in
6 Assessor's Block 916, has a special character and special historical, architectural
7 and aesthetic interest and value, and that its designation as a Landmark will be
8 in furtherance of and in conformance with the purposes of Article 10 of the City
9 Planning Code and the standards set forth therein.

10 (a) Designation. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code,
11 Chapter II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, the Palace of Fine Arts
12 is hereby designated as a Landmark, this designation having been duly approved
13 by Resolution No. 7660 of the City Planning Commission, which Resolution is on
14 file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under File No. 90-77-7.

15 (b) Required Data. The descriptions of the location and boundaries of the
16 landmark site; of the characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation;
17 and of the particular features that should be preserved; as included in the said
18 Resolution, are hereby incorporated herein and made a part hereof as though fully
19 set forth.

Passed for Second Reading
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

MAY 23 1977

Ayes: Supervisors Barbagelata, Feinstein, Fran-
cois, Gonzales, Kopp, Mendelsohn, Molinari, Nel-
der, Pelosi, Tamaras, von Beroldingen.

Neen Supervisors

Absent: Supervisor KOPP

W. L. Bowman Clerk

90-77-7
File No.

JUN 9 1977
Approved

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

MAY 31 1977

Ayes: Supervisors Barbagelata, Feinstein, Fran-
cois, Gonzales, Kopp, Mendelsohn, Molinari, Nel-
der, Pelosi, Tamaras, von Beroldingen.

Neen Supervisors

Absent: Supervisors BARBAGELATA MENDLSOHN

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

W. L. Bowman Clerk

George B. McGuire Mayor

SAN FRANCISCO
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. 7660

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the Palace of Fine Arts at 3301 Lyon 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 October 3, 1976 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 February 10, 1977, 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, the proposal to designate the Palace of Fine Arts at 3301 Lyon Street 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 Lot 2 in Assessor's Block 916.

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. 150 as adopted October 20, 1976, 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 LM76.3.

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 has been ADOPTED by the City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of February 10, 1977.

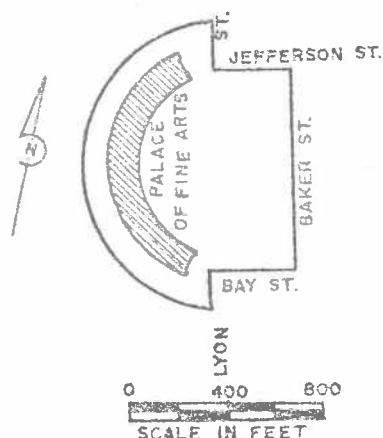
Lynn E. Pio
Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Bierman, Dearman, Elliott, Finn, Lau, Rosenblatt, Starbuck.

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

PASSED: February 10, 1977



OWNER: City and County of San Francis

LOCATION: East side of Baker Street,
between Bay and Jefferson Stre

STATEMENT OF
SIGNIFICANCE:

The Palace of Fine Arts holds a special place in the hearts of San Franciscans. Originally erected as a temporary building in 1914, its viewers were immediately captivated by its beauty and began efforts to have it reconstructed of permanent materials, but it was to be half a century before this was realized.

It is to San Francisco what the Crystal Palace of the Great Exposition of London in 1851 became for that city and also what the Eiffel Tower became for Paris following its 1889 Exposition. However, both of those structures were erected of permanent materials with intended post-exposition uses. In San Francisco, however, even at the time of its reconstruction in 1964, the use to which the Palace of Fine Arts would be put upon completion, was unknown. The citizens knew only that they were reconstructing a structure of singular beauty.

HISTORY:

At 6:30 a.m., on Saturday, February 20, 1915, San Franciscans were awakened by a cacaphony of bells, whistles and sirens which sounded for one hour to signal the opening day of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

Long planned, and the battle to locate it in San Francisco hard fought, the Exposition had its inception at a meeting held in the Union League Club on November 22, 1906 - barely eight months after the April disaster of that same year. So great was the enthusiasm for a world's fair that in December 1906, the Pacific Ocean Exposition Company was incorporated to plan an international fair which would celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal and the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Pacific Ocean by Balboa. It was these two objectives which ultimately gave the exposition its name, "Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

For a time, San Diego competed with San Francisco for the privilege of being the host city, however, it later withdrew and held a scaled-down affair. As the time neared for a decision by the Federal Congress to select the official site, a New Orleans delegation (representing the largest major U.S. city near the canal) competed intensely with one from San Francisco in the halls of Congress itself for the honor. San Francisco won, of course, when President Taft signed a bill on February 11, 1911 selecting it as the site.

HISTORY:
(Continued)

Unofficially, but only in a sense, by 1915 San Francisco was also celebrating the rebuilding of the City from nearly total devastation nine years earlier. That cost was measured by the hundreds of millions of dollars, yet, it was found possible to expend another \$16,000,000 on the Exposition. Of that figure, five million was in the form of state bonds; another five million came from San Francisco taxes and, incredibly, the remaining six million was in the form of pledged contributions, \$4,089,000 of which had been raised in two hours at a mass meeting of civic leaders held in the Merchants Exchange on April 28, 1910.

Once official selection as the host city had been achieved, there were but three years to complete all preparations. Towards this end

President C. C. Moore of the Exposition first appointed an Advisory Architectural Board, in the fall of 1911, consisting of Messrs. Willis Polk, Clarence R. Ward, John Galen Howard, Albert Pisses and William Curlett. This Advisory Board was succeeded by an Architectural Commission, consisting of Messrs. Willis Polk, Chairman, Clarence R. Ward, W. B. Faville, George W. Kelham, Louis Christian Mullgardt (all of San Francisco), Robert D. Farquhar of Los Angeles, McKim, Mead, and White, Carrere and Hastings, and Henry Bacon (all of New York); Messrs. Bakewell and Brown and Bernard R. Maybeck were subsequently commissioned as Exposition Architects. The first-named nine architects constituted the permanent Architectural Commission which recommended to the Board of Directors the General Plan of the Exposition, which was substantially followed as a guide to the results accomplished.

A Berkeley architect, Maybeck (1852-1957) was assigned to the task of designing the Palace of Fine Arts. His concept of the exposition and the Palace is best explained in his own words:

There is a succession of impressions produced as one walks through the different parts of the grounds that play on the feeling and the mind, each part having its own peculiar influence on the sentiment.

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The Fine Arts Palace suggests the romantic of the period after the classic Renaissance, and the keynote is one of sadness modified by the feeling that beauty has a soothing influence.

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To make a Fine Arts composition that will fit this modified melancholy, we must use those forms in architecture and gardening that will affect the emotions in such a way as to produce on the individual the same modified sadness as the galleries do. Suppose you were to put a Greek temple in the middle of a small mountain lake surrounded by dark, deep rocky cliffs, with the white foam dashing over the marble temple floor, you would have a sense of mysterious fear and even terror, as of something uncanny. If the same temple, pure and beautiful in lines and color, were placed on the face of a placid lake, surrounded by high trees and lit up by a glorious full moon, you would recall the days when your mother pressed you to her bosom and your final sob was hushed by a protecting spirit hovering over you, warm and large. You have there the point of transition from sadness to content, which comes pretty near to the total impression that galleries have and that the Fine Arts Palace and Lake are supposed to have.

HISTORY: The Palace of Fine Arts was the last of the major buildings of
(Continued) the Exposition to be started; construction began December 8, 1913. The original columns and rotunda were framed in wood, and covered with "staff," a mixture of plaster and burlap-type fiber. It was the largest building ever to be made of that material. For purposes of an exposition, in which buildings were supposed to last a year and then collapse readily, staff was ideal, but durability was one quality it totally lacked.

William Merchant, from Maybeck's office, designed many of the Palace's decorative elements. He also spent the last ten years of his life until 1962 planning the Palace's restoration.

"The rotunda and the colonnades were for transition," Maybeck said, "between the world of reality and the world of art." The galleries themselves were in the great arc of a building behind the colonnade. Under its roof were five acres of ground, divided into 120 separate gallery rooms.

A Fine Arts Preservation Day brought crowds to the Palace in October 1915, and a move to preserve the Palace, which was built on Presidio land, was well underway. Ben Macomber of the CHRONICLE echoed popular feeling when he wrote "To duplicate it in lasting materials would cost much, but it would be worthwhile. San Francisco owes it to itself and its love for art to see that this greatest of Western works of art does not pass away." The Fine Arts Preservation League gathered 33,000 signatures and \$350,000.

When the debris of the Exposition were cleared, all that was left was the Palace of Fine Arts. It was maintained first by the San Francisco Art Association who attempted to raise additional funds for the preservation. After the war, the Palace became part of the city park system. During the WPA, federal funds were used to repair and replace some of the Palace's decorations, and in 1934 the Park and Recreation Department installed eighteen lighted tennis courts that operated until 1942. During the Second World War, the Palace was used by the Army as a motor pool as the building and rotunda slowly crumbled from the ravages of the weather and ill-use. In 1947, the Army returned the building to the city.

In deciding what use to now make of the Palace, the city was faced with the problem that, save for the curvilinear building, (the galleries), the colonnades, (the peristyle), and rotunda were unsafe. This area was then cordoned off from a public which henceforth was to observe the slow disintegration of these features from a distance. The curvilinear building, with entrances on the rear, continued, however, to be used for a variety of uses in the 1950's among which was the annual Art Festival.

A Citizen's Committee for the Preservation of the Palace of Fine Arts was formed in 1952. In 1957, the State agreed to give two million dollars toward restoration -- providing matching funds were raised.

The Palace of Fine Arts League pushed a bond issue in 1958 which fell just short of approval. On May 25, 1959, Walter S. Johnson, a corporate owner and executive, offered the City two million dollars for the restoration of the Palace. Later that year, the citizens voted to bond themselves for \$1,800,000 -- giving a total of 5.8 million dollars to recreate Maybeck's masterpiece.

HISTORY: The project was then found to cost 13 million dollars. Mr. Johnson put up additional funds, as did the City, and the problems of how to tackle a 13-million-dollar project with \$7.4 million were confronted.

(Continued)

Finally, the contract was awarded on July 20, 1964, demolition began, and the rotunda and columns came down after careful removal of original design elements from which molds were to be made. In September, 1967, work was completed of a stripped-down version of Maybeck's original. The addition of the remaining original colonnades was completed in January, 1975, as a gift from Walter Johnson to the city and people of San Francisco.

The gallery area now houses the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre and the Exploratorium.

ARCHITECTURE: The exceptional architecture of the Palace of Fine Arts was evident from the time of its completion. In "Architecture & Landscape Gardening of the Exposition" by Louis Christian Mullgardt, September 1915, it is noted that

The Palace of Fine Arts is, in reality, not one complete building, but four separate and distinct elements. The rotunda, an octagonal structure, forms the center of the composition. On either side is a detached peristyle which follows the curve of the gallery itself, as it describes an arc about the western shore of the Laguna, yet so successfully are they all bound together by the encircling green wall and by the other landscape elements, that an impression of satisfying unity results.

The architecture, as a whole, is early Roman, with traces of the finer Greek influences. In general treatment, there is a suggestion of the Temple of the Sun at Athens, while much of the detail was inspired by the Choragic monument of Lysicrates, also at Athens.

The rotunda is Roman in conception, Greek in decorative treatment. By its sheer nobility of form and of proportion, and by its enchantment of color and sculptured ornament, it dominates the entire landscape.

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The conception of the rotunda is said to have been suggested to the architect by Bocklin's painting "The Island of the Dead" and that of the peristyle by Gerome's "Chariot Race".

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At each extremity of the colonnade and at intervals throughout its length are groups of four larger columns, in ochre, each group surmounted by a great box, designed to hold flowers and vines.

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The immense flower urns, banded with classic figures in deep relief, bearing heavy swinging garlands, are by Ulric H. Ellerhuesn. Alternating with the massed green of shrubs and plants against the wall are niphes holding sculptured groups. The Roman urns which crown the square pillars marking the doors and which, in varying size, are repeated here and there about the building, are by William G. Merchant.

ARCHITECTURE:
(Continued)

Between the Palace of Fine Arts itself and its bordering colonnade of massive Corinthian columns runs a broad promenade which, while binding the two together, receives a sense of freedom and serenity from the open sky above. The wall of the gallery is interrupted only by the simple entrances at intervals. It is low and intimate in comparison with the great proportions of the other exhibit palaces and its height is further broken by a terrace midway, set with growing plants and shrubs. The whole effect desired by the architect is of an ancient ruin, overgrown through the centuries with vegetation. Along the edge of the roof runs a latticed Pompeian pergola, hung with trailing vines, and the wall of the building is colored a deep Pompeian red.

The reconstruction of the Palace of Fine Arts necessitated its total demolition save for the steel framing of the galleries, the curvilinear building to the rear of the colonnades. While the rotunda and colonnades are virtual reproductions of the original, the architectural treatment of the galleries (which never possessed the lavish sculptural detail accorded other elements of the Palace) was simplified for economic reasons.

The succession of architects for the original structure through its reconstruction bears noting. Maybeck's own firm became Maybeck & White in which William G. Merchant was principal architect. That firm was succeeded by a partnership of White and Merchant with Hans U. Gerson as principal architect. The project of reconstruction was begun just prior to Maybeck's death and was carried forward initially by William G. Merchant, who upon becoming ill, was succeeded by Hans U. Gerson.

SURROUNDING
LAND USE
AND ZONING:

The property is zoned P (Public Use District) and is in an OS (Open Space) District. The Presidio lies to the west and immediately adjacent are single family houses.