

FILE NO. 90-77-18

ORDINANCE NO. 333-77

1 DESIGNATING THE SCHOENSTEIN ORGAN COMPANY AS A LANDMARK PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 10  
2 OF THE 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 Schoenstein Organ  
5 Company located at 3101 20th Street, being Lot 1 in Assessor's Block <sup>4084</sup>~~4804~~, has a  
6 special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and  
7 value, and that its designation as a Landmark will be in furtherance of and in con-  
8 formance with the purposes of Article 10 of the City Planning Code and the standards  
9 set forth therein.

10 (a) Designation. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code, Chapter  
11 II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, the Schoenstein Organ Company  
12 is hereby designated as a Landmark, this designation having been duly approved by  
13 Resolution No. 7725 of the City Planning Commission, which Resolution is on file  
14 with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under File No. 90-77-18.

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.

22 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

RECOMMENDED:

24 THOMAS M. O'CONNOR  
25 CITY ATTORNEY

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

27  
28 By Robert A. Kenealey  
29 Deputy City Attorney

By Rai Y. Okamoto  
Rai Y. Okamoto  
Director of Planning

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

LM # 99

Passed for Second Reading  
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

JUN 27 1977

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

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

Absent: Supervisors ... BARBAGELATA ... PELOSI

Margaret E. Maguire, ACTING Clerk

90-77-18  
File No.

JUL 14 1977  
Approved

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

JUL 5 - 1977

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

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

Absent: Supervisors ... FRANCOIS ... GONZALES

... MENDELSON ... NELDER

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

Margaret E. Maguire, ACTING Clerk

George P. Moscone  
Mayor

SAN FRANCISCO  
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
RESOLUTION NO. 7725

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the Schoenstein Organ Company at 3101 20th 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 April 6, 1977, 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 May 12, 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, that the proposal to designate the Schoenstein Organ Company at 3101 20th Street 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:

Lot 1 in Assessor's Block ~~4804~~. 4084

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. 162 as adopted on April 6, 1977, 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 LM77.5;

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 on May 12, 1977.

Lynn E. Pio  
Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Bierman, Carey, Dearman, Lau, Rosenblatt, Starbuck

NOES: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Boas

PASSED: May 12, 1977

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD  
Final Case Report - April 16, 1977

SCHOENSTEIN & CO. BUILDING  
3101 20th Street

OWNER: John M. Bethards

LOCATION: 3101 20th Street  
Assessor's Block 4084, Lot 001

STATEMENT OF  
SIGNIFICANCE:

The significance of the Schoenstein building is based on the following points: It is the place of business for one of the oldest organ firms in the country and one of the oldest industrial concerns in San Francisco. It is an attractive, unique building, designed for its purpose and constructed by Mager Brothers in 1928.

HISTORY:

The Schoenstein name has been connected with pipe organs through five generations--109 years in San Francisco, and before that in Germany, where Leo Schoenstein (1811-?) started organ building before 1850. His sons began the manufacture of orchestrions in 1864. (An orchestrion is a mechanically played organ similar to barrel organs.) In 1868, two of his sons, Felix F. and F. Berthold, came to San Francisco to install an instrument in a beer garden on Jackson Street, near Portsmouth Square. Soon after, Felix became associated with pioneer California organ builder Joseph Mayer, whom he served as foreman for eight years.

Felix Schoenstein left Mayer in 1877, establishing himself in business at 512 Birch Street on August 4. In the early days, he installed orchestrions for the Cliff House, Woodward's Gardens, Maier's Beer Garden and others, in addition to his service work in churches and residences. His early record books show many calls to the Nob Hill residences of Stanford and Hopkins among others. The firm built its first full-scale pipe organ in 1881 for St. Mary's church in Stockton. Since then, about 75 complete instruments have been designed and built by the firm, the last in 1967. It is worth noting that--save, after 1890, for the metal pipes--all components of the Schoenstein organs were actually built in the firm's own shops in comparison to many small "builders" who are really "assemblers" of components ordered from a catalogue.

Of Felix's ten children, three sons--Louis, Otto, and Erwin--became involved in the business, which was reorganized as Felix F. Schoenstein & Sons about 1909. A fourth son, Leo, was for many years a factor in the Robert-Morton Company, an important builder of theater organs. Louis' son, Lawrence, former vice-president of Aolian-Skinner, is a well-known figure in the organ trade; and Lawrence's son, Terrence, is in the business in Hawaii. On January 3, 1977, ownership of the firm passed to music entrepreneur Jack M. Bethards, with Lawrence and Terrence Schoenstein associated in technical and advisory capacities.

One of San Francisco's oldest industrial operations, the firm will observe its 100th anniversary this August. To commemorate this event, the firm will see published the memoirs of Louis Schoenstein. In this book of over 300 pages, Mr. Schoenstein deals with the firm and the organs they have designed, built and/or serviced.

For most of its 100 years, the firm has been the largest organ builder in the West. It is the third oldest builder in the nation; and the oldest west of Maryland. Most of the City's historic instruments are under its care, including those in Trinity Episcopal

**HISTORY:**  
(Continued) Church, Philadelphia Seventh Day Adventist Church, and Holy Cross Church; Congregations Sherith Israel and Emanu-El; and two municipal buildings: The California Palace of the Legion of Honor and Exposition (Civic) Auditorium. The firm has been associated with the last instrument, an Austin, from its original installation in Festival Hall at the PPIE, through its removal and re-erection downtown, right up to the present day. During the era of the theater organ, the firm acted as sales and service representative as well as doing installation work for large eastern concerns such as Wurlitzer.

**INTERIOR:** The public portions of the interior of offices on the second floor, the studio on the third floor, vestibules, and stairways. The walls throughout and the ceilings, in all but the studio, are of heavily textured plaster, painted tan with a finish of mottled shellac. The ceiling of the studio is the reflection of the roof, with all beams exposed. All the redwood woodwork is given a dark natural stain. Much of the hardware is custom-made wrought iron. While the treatment of these areas amplifies the Spanish tone of the exterior, it is much more powerful as an evocation of the 1920's.

In the studio is a small pipe organ built by the firm shortly after completion of the building. It may be played from a console or from rolls. When organs were used on radio, the studio was hired for broadcast use by stations KYA and KSAN. The organ may be rented for practice for a small hourly fee. All fixtures and furnishings in the studio are those supplied in 1928. Similarly, the offices have most of their original furnishings and appurtenances, including a key locker and a fascinating work scheduling board, both built in the plant. The company archives, dating to 1870, are complete from 1915 and have extensive material from 1928.

The plant areas consist of two heavy fabrication shops on the ground floor, a shop for lighter work on the second floor, and an erecting room. This last space begins on the second floor and extends to the roof, with a gallery accessible from the third floor. These areas are partially finished in tongue and groove and partially unfinished. Behind the studio is a work-room which is rented out to a German music society and does not now figure in the operation of the business.

In practice, the components are built in the various shops, then moved to the erecting room for assembly into a complete organ, which is set up, tested, and played before its removal to the job. Very large double doors connect shops on the same level, and a portion of the erecting room floor may be removed to allow the movement of bulky parts between floors.

The most striking aspect of the building is not any single feature, however, but rather the extraordinary state of its preservation. Save for the band room (so named because a German band has used the room for practice for many years), no detail of the building has ever been altered, and it is the intention of the new management to keep the building exactly as it is.

**SURROUNDING  
LAND USE  
AND ZONING:**

C-M Light--Industrial and Residential.