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176TH ANNUAL COMMUNICATION

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

CALIFORNIA FREEMASON

FALL
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SNAPSHOT

08/14/2025 • 6:39 P.M.

647 Members and Counting

IT WAS A PARTY 60 YEARS in the making as members of Seven Hills No. 881 celebrated a major fraternal milestone this August. That month, the Grand Lodge of California confirmed that statewide membership was up by 647 people for the year. That marks the first positive membership year since 1965 (meaning more members joined the fraternity than left, either by suspension, death, or demit). Says Michael Roberts, senior membership advisor with the grand lodge, "This membership gain is proof that our work in welcoming new brothers, restoring past members, and creating new lodges is having a lasting impact." Over the past several years, the Grand Lodge has launched several new awareness programs, both online and in person, aimed at bringing new members into the fraternity. As a result of those efforts, there are now more than 4,000 active prospects in the statewide membership pipeline. —IAN A. STEWART

MEMBERS OF SEVEN HILLS No. 881 CELEBRATED A POSITIVE MEMBERSHIP YEAR FOR THE STATE FRATERNITY—ON HAWAIIAN SHIRT NIGHT, NO LESS. AMONG THOSE PRESENT WERE (FIRST ROW, FROM LEFT) MARK MCNEE, SCOTT ESTERS, CANDLER GIBSON, KEATON NGUYEN, MAZERATTI MITCHELL, AND JOSE CAMELLO.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN KLIMEK

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

OUR FRATERNAL HOME

San Francisco plays an important part in the history of California Masonry—and my own fraternal journey.



THIS ISSUE OF *California Freemason* is a celebration of our fraternal home, San Francisco. It’s here that the first California lodge meeting was held, in 1849, and it’s here that we gather each year for our Annual Communication. San Francisco is, as the article states (page 11), the city where the echoes of our history ring the loudest.

It’s the city where my Masonic journey began, as well. It was the early 2000s, and I was living out near S.F. State while my wife was finishing medical school. I’d just completed a

term on the board of a local nonprofit and felt I needed something else—*something more*—to invest myself in. That’s when a friend, Emmitt Jolly, who’d been a Prince Hall Mason in Alabama, encouraged me to look into the fraternity.

So I started at what felt like the most logical place: freemason.org. I called the first lodge on the list, but their number didn’t work. (I still remind them about that.) So I moved on to the next one and ended up speaking with the secretary at **San Francisco № 120**. The following Thursday, Emmitt accompanied me to my first stated meeting dinner.

I was only a San Francisco Mason for a couple of years before our family relocated to Orange County. But in that time, I began to understand the long and proud history of Freemasonry in the city. Beyond the connections to the city’s founders and builders—people like John W. Geary, the first mayor—I saw in San Francisco № 120 a true cross-section of the community I lived in. On that first visit, I was impressed with the diversity of cultures and generations I saw enjoying one another’s fellowship. I instantly I was in the right place.

It’s been more than 20 years since I walked into San Francisco № 120. But the welcome I received there, and the profound impact that the lodge—and the city—had on my life will always make it my fraternal home away from home.

Arthur L. Salazar Jr.

Grand Master of Masons in California

WHAT DO MASONS DO?

Masons are builders. Where once we built magnificent structures, today we build character. Steeped in tradition and ceremony, our values are based on a bedrock of friendship and philanthropy. We believe that harmony between diverse individuals is a powerful force for good. And just as ancient stonemasons perfected their craft, we employ timeless lessons that create meaningful change in ourselves, stronger communities around us, and a better world for all.

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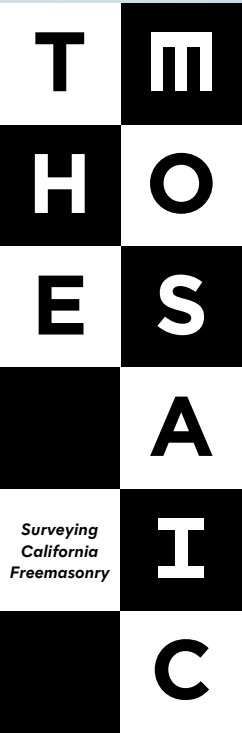
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ARCHIVES

Homecoming

ALMOST 70 YEARS AFTER HE DESIGNED ITS CROWNING ARTWORK, THE ARCHIVES OF EMILE NORMAN ARE MOVING TO THE HOME OF FREEMASONRY. BY SARAH HOTCHKISS

BEFORE ANYONE HAS EVEN ENTERED the California Masonic Memorial Temple, they’ve experienced the artwork of Emile Norman. First, visible from blocks away, they’re greeted by a dramatic bas-relief frieze on the California Street façade: four sturdy men, representing the branches of the armed forces, beside a struggle between good and evil. Then, even more dramatically, as they enter the building’s foyer: Norman’s stunning 48-by-38-foot

endomosaic window, a glowing rendering of Masonic history and symbolism.

That makes the temple a living testament, if also an unlikely one, to Norman’s singular artistic career. This summer, that connection was heightened as a collection of the late artist’s archives, sketches, maquettes, and other material was delivered to the temple, where it will be housed within the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WINNI WINTERMEYER

of Freemasonry. Norman’s collection will join Masonic aprons, medallions, and records—what archivist and collection manager Joe Evans describes as the “material culture of Masonry.”

It’s the first artist’s archive to join the museum’s collection. But given Norman’s close ties to the temple, it’s an addition that

“We feel really good about this being a first step in this process of sharing Emile’s legacy.”

makes sense. “It feels appropriate to us, because Emile and the Masons of California, their relationship goes so far back and was so mutually endearing and supportive,” says Heather Engen, executive director of the Emile Norman Arts Foundation. “So we feel really good about this being a first step in the process of sharing Emile’s legacy.”

THE ARTIST & THE MASONS

The story of how Norman, who died in 2009, received the commission from the Masons to execute his endomosaic is a fantastic part of that legacy. Norman had no special connection to Freemasonry. He was a gay man in his late 30s, living with his partner, Brooks Clement, in their custom-built home on Big Sur’s remote and scenic Pfeiffer Ridge, overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

His first endomosaic—an artistic approach of his own invention, which involved sandwiching glass, seashells, foliage, and other materials between layers of acrylic—was spotted by the modernist architect Albert F. Roller at a hotel in Monterey. Roller, a member of **Excelsior № 166**, had been hired in 1952 to design the headquarters for the state fraternity. Impressed by the artworks, he commissioned Norman to

develop a pair of monumental pieces for the new temple.

The frieze and endomosaic are Norman’s crowning achievements and his most visible contributions to art history. They were also a massive undertaking. To create the 45 panels of the endomosaic, each weighing 250 pounds, Norman had to add an entire lower-level studio to his home. “It literally formed the shape of his house,” Engen says.

Over the past two years, as archivist Jason Christian and the Emile Norman Arts Foundation have catalogued the home’s contents, they kept discovering items connected to the temple, Engen says. Among them: a letter from Norman to an Italian stonemason, trying to locate the blocks of marble that would become part of the frieze; photos of Norman and Brooks in a marble quarry; curious stereoscopic images of the building’s exterior; and 25 leftover jars of soil that went into the endomosaic, including samples from each of California’s 58 counties and the Hawaiian Islands.

All these items, along with boxes of correspondence, newspaper clippings, scale models of the temple, sketches of the

endomosaic, and a broken panel that shows how Norman assembled its layers, will go into the temple museum’s collection.

Norman and Clement’s Big Sur home, itself a work of art, still contains decades of the artist’s work and thousands of items. Even after moving so much material to San Francisco, fragments from his commission will still remain in the house. Its kitchen, for instance, is covered with the same gold tiles that form the background of the temple’s frieze.

THE ARTWORK LIVES ON

Norman’s collection is significant not just because of its relationship

BELOW: SOIL SAMPLES USED FOR THE ENDOMOSAIC BEING BOXED UP FOR TRANSIT.

BOTTOM: A MAQUETTE FOR THE BAS RELIEF ON THE FAÇADE OF THE CALIFORNIA MASONIC MEMORIAL TEMPLE. NORMAN USED SEVERAL OF HIS NEIGHBORS AS MODELS.



to the temple’s construction. The material also tells a story about mid-century artmaking and California art history that hasn’t been fully told before. Once the collection is entered into the museum’s catalog records, Evans will upload them to the Online Archive of California, where researchers can learn, for the first time, that these materials exist.

Currently, Evans says, many of the researchers contacting him are genealogists interested in family records. Others are historians or anthropologists looking at Freemasonry and fraternalism in American society. “I actually learn more about the collection by people asking me questions about it,” Evans says. “I’m like, ‘Oh, here’s this. I didn’t know we had this kind of thing.’”

Evans points out that moving the Norman collection to the temple will help ensure its survival. The Big Sur home is 15 minutes up a winding road off Highway 1 in an area prone to extreme temperature shifts, wildfires, and mudslides. Given these environmental conditions, Engen says, “We’re so fortunate that this is here. Shifting part of the collection to the temple aligns with the Emile Norman Arts Foundation’s efforts to preserve and share Norman’s legacy.”

Eventually, Engen says, the goal is to create a permanent public display of Norman’s Masonic-related archives at the temple. There might even be room in the future to show some of Norman’s other art on a rotating basis. “Emile’s story is one that really embodies West Coast idealism,” Engen says. “It’s the dream of California, of reinventing oneself to live a life of freedom and creativity while finding kinship and community.” That isn’t so far off from the Masonic narrative depicted in the endomosaic, she suggests—a scene of brotherhood rooted in the state’s soil. ♦

RIGHT: COURTESY OF THE SAN DIMAS ROTARY FOUNDATION



PHILANTHROPY

Serving Those Who Serve

IN THE SAN GABRIEL VALLEY, ONE LODGE IS TACKLING FOOD INSECURITY FOR MILITARY FAMILIES.

ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES another—and in the case of **San Dimas № 428**, another and another. Over the past few years, the lodge has become an enthusiastic supporter of local military families, particularly at the Twentynine Palms Marine Corps base. But it all started with a modest ask—and a lodge ready to answer the call.

In 2021, San Dimas № 428 was approached by the Diamond Bar Women’s Club in Pomona about supporting its Christmas toy drive for kids of enlisted personnel. That led the lodge to host a special USMC dinner, with local elected officials in attendance. It was there that Raymond Foster, a past master, first learned about the issue of food insecurity among military families.

Research shows that one in five military families face food insecurity—including one in four active-duty families. That’s due to frequent relocation, unemployment rates among military spouses, and the high cost of living in certain areas.

In response, the lodge has worked to ease the burden. Teaming up with the local Rotary Club (of which Foster is also a member, and now a liaison), the lodge launched an online food drive, using the lodge hall as its headquarters. To date, the effort has attracted dozens of volunteer organizations, including **Arcadia № 278**, **Fresno № 247**, **Hornitos № 98**, **Lancaster № 437**, **Mariposa № 24**, **Simi Valley № 806**, **South Valley № 187**, and **Naval № 87**; as well as chapters of the Eastern Star, Rainbow Girls, VFW, American Legion, and Kiwanis; and local businesses. The coalition has already delivered 33 tons of food and essential supplies to military bases at Twentynine Palms, Camp Pendleton, Fort Irwin, and Los Angeles Air Force Base. Additionally, the groups have raised more than \$30,000 to fill pantry shelves, purchase holiday gifts, and provide emergency assistance funds.

Beyond its impact on affected families, the initiative has also elevated the lodge’s profile locally. “We’ve broken barriers and are more connected with the community than ever,” Foster says. “They know that Masons are men of substance and action, and that they can rely on us for service.” ♦ —JUSTIN JAPITANA

► For more, visit FeedingMilitaryFamilies.org



LODGE PROFILE

The Givers

A YEAR OF SERVICE PAYS OFF FOR SAN FERNANDO LODGE.

WHEN HE WAS FIRST looking ahead to his year as master of **San Fernando № 343**, Benedict Tanjutco wanted what many lodges strive for but not all achieve: “To be more than just that big building everyone drives by” on MacLay Avenue, he says.

But sometimes breaking out of the box people put you in is tough.

Tanjutco, committed to kicking off a year of public service, started by reaching out to a nearby elementary school to gauge interest in coordinating a supply drive for teachers. The response?

Who are you again?

Not a great start. “So I had to spend the first 10 minutes of the conversation with the principal convincing him that we were serious,” Tanjutco says. Things clicked when Tanjutco brought up the

lodge hall. *Oh, you’re that group in that big building!*

With introductions out of the way, the lodge was able to organize a successful first event, which yielded a truckload of supplies for the school. That, in turn, helped the group get its charitable footing.

During the L.A. wildfires in early 2025, the lodge partnered with the Filipino American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Los Angeles and became a center for the organization’s donations and relief efforts. It reached out to other nearby lodges and, with their help, distributed supplies throughout the region. Following the fire, the lodge hosted the local fire-station staff for a stated meeting dinner. To cap it off, members



gave a sizable contribution to the Grand Lodge’s fire relief drive.

Those efforts helped establish a reputation for benevolence in the area. And unlike that first phone call with the

school, groups now know that they can come directly to the lodge for help. Recently, that included the local police department reaching out to help organize a holiday toy drive.

Tanjutco says the increased visibility is a good thing for the lodge, but that isn’t the primary goal of its altruism. Rather, it’s about living up to their Masonic ideals. “Freemasonry isn’t something we just attend each month,” he says. “It’s something we live each day.” —TONY PIERUCCI

ABOVE: MEMBERS OF SAN FERNANDO № 343 INCLUDING MASTER BENEDICT TANJUTCO (CENTER) GATHERED BEFORE A STATED MEETING IN AUGUST.

HISTORY

Digging Up the Past

RESEARCHERS HOPE TO UNCOVER LOCAL HISTORY AT A GOLD RUSH-ERA MASONIC CEMETERY.

THE BRICK-AND-MARBLE mausoleum at the top of the gently sloping Jamestown Masonic Cemetery bears the name Pereira. Though he may not attract much attention these days, for many years, John Pereira was one of the town’s leading figures. An early miner in the area, he later distinguished himself as an orchard owner, winemaker, and a real estate magnate. He built the Jamestown Hotel, where President McKinley once stayed, and helped establish the Sierra Railway depot, transforming Jamestown into a proper little city.

In essence, a fairly complete history of the town’s first half-century can be told through that one gravesite. And “that’s just the tip of the iceberg,” says researcher Noël Siver.

This year, the Grand Lodge of California is working to uncover more local history contained within the small Jamestown Masonic Cemetery. Built in 1854, it served the membership of **St. James № 54** until 1875, when the lodge disbanded. Today it’s one of two Gold Rush-era cemeteries owned by the Grand Lodge of California, which has set out to clean up and make repairs to the site,

HEADSTONES AT THE MASONIC CEMETERY IN JAMESTOWN MARK THE BURIAL PLOTS OF FRANCIS SEVERIO AND HIS WIFE, MARY. SEVERIO WAS A MEMBER OF ST. JAMES № 54 FROM 1856-73 AND SERVED AS LODGE TILER FOR MANY YEARS.

and to catalogue all known and unknown remains there.

So far, the effort has included using a canine forensic team to locate unmarked burials, developing boundary and topographical reports, and engaging a team of researchers to dig up the stories behind those burials.

Today, only a few headstones remain intact at Jamestown—the others may have been made of



wood and disintegrated, or else were dislodged, stolen, or vandalized. Then there’s the Pereira mausoleum, which contains John (1814-1902); his first wife, Hannah “Annie” Morgan Pereira (1819-71); and their son-in-law Thomas Jefferson Evans (1836-93). The research team, which includes Siver, Sonora city historian Patricia Perry, and volunteers from the Tuolumne County Genealogical Society, found references to two other burials without headstones. One was former miner James Fraser, 82, originally from North Carolina; the other was Lee Ashby Lowry, the infant son of a senior deacon of the lodge, John Lowry. “Some of this [work] is to be able to honor families’ ancestry,” says Katharine Untch, who as conservator is leading the research effort. “It’s not just the name of the person buried there. As you find more details, you’re kind of regenerating the stories of people who otherwise got lost.”

Now, Untch says, they’re asking families in Tuolumne County for help filling in the final puzzle pieces. “People may have old family Bibles or correspondence, old photographs—things that may not be publicly accessible,” she says. “So if people have this sort of information, we want to ask that they come forward and help us complete our research.” —IAS

► To get in touch, contact Khalil Sweidy at ksweidy@freemason.org.

A LODGE BOOM IN CALIFORNIA

IN JUNE 2025, the Grand Lodge issued a dispensation for **Danville U.D.**, making it the 40th lodge launched in California over the past decade, along with four research lodges. That’s the most new lodges it’s formed in a lifetime in California, which went decades between the 1960s and 2000s in which only a handful of new lodges were started. It’s also an echo of what happened a century ago, when, between 1920 and 1927, a whopping 190 new lodges got their start—meaning there’s still room to grow! —IAS



* UNDER DISPENSATION



MEMBER PROFILE

Jeffery Mendez

Member since
2013

San Jose № 10

Licensed
vocational
nurse,
Oceanside
VA Clinic

California Freemason: You operate a nonprofit organization called Cookouts and Camaraderie. How did you start that work?

Jeffery Mendez: During the pandemic, I was part of a clinical deployment team at the VA, so I met some brothers and veterans at Camp Pendleton. That was where I started learning about some of the struggles that active-duty military personnel were experiencing. So last year, we started doing presentations to the VFW, the American Legion, and multiple Masonic lodges, and we raised enough funds to host our first event, which was on Thanksgiving. Since then, we've hosted four other

potlucks, one homecoming event, and collectively handed out 750 turkeys and supported more than 1,000 active-duty military families. We've also helped provide resources for other special needs. What's great is that thanks to our collaborations with these other organizations, we have a lot of volunteers who love to get involved.

CFM: What's the response been like to these efforts?

JM: We want to show up for our military and their families and remind them they're not alone. A lot of people in the military face isolation or go through their own silent struggles, and these cookouts can make all the difference for them.

CFM: How did you get involved in Masonry?

JM: My entire adult life, I've always had friends who were Masons. I joined after I caught up with a friend who is a Marine Corps recruiter and a Freemason. I was doing my nursing program in San Jose, so he referred me to **San Jose № 10**. When I did my first degree there, he actually flew in and surprised me.

CFM: What role does Masonry play in this effort?

JM: We have many Masons in the military, and we should be doing all we can to support them—in fact, our past grand master, Sean Metroka, was a Marine. We've basically created something similar through Cookouts and Camaraderie to what we have in lodge. If you look at our website, you'll see that it links up with so many other organizations. People come together from all walks of life, religions, and backgrounds to connect and strive for the same goal. We provide support the same way a lodge supports its brothers. In the end, we're just trying to share the light. ♦ —JUSTIN JAPITANA

► For more information, visit CookoutsAndCamaraderie.org

WE BUILT THIS CITY



FROM THE CITY'S EARLIEST DAYS, FREEMASONRY HAS HELPED SHAPE SAN FRANCISCO.

THERE IS A PERSISTENT, IF UNFOUNDED, myth that San Francisco's street grid is based on Masonic symbology, with its two great diagonals (Columbus and Market) forming a triangle with Van Ness Avenue. For innumerable reasons, that seems deeply unlikely. But to anyone familiar with the history of San Francisco Masonry, you can see the appeal of such a crackpot theory. ¶ Because while Masons almost certainly can't claim credit for the city's streetscape, what's true is that Masonry has played a crucial role in almost every other facet of San Francisco's development. Consider: Just a decade after the Gold Rush began, there were nearly 1,000 Masons working under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of California in the "instant

city." In that way, Masonry has had a massive influence on San Francisco, from its attitudes to its laws to—sure, in a sense—its physical layout. ¶ Fast-forward 170-something years, and in many ways San Francisco remains the center of California Masonry. While it's no longer the fraternity's population center (in sheer numbers, Los Angeles is; per capita, it's San Diego), the city is still home to the Grand Lodge headquarters, and it's here that Masons gather each fall for the Annual Communication. This is the city where the echoes of Masonic history ring loudest. ¶ So, triangular street grid or no, it's safe to say San Francisco is a town that has been profoundly shaped by Masonry—and one that continues, to this day, to shape the fraternity that calls it home.



THE INVISIBLE HAND

WITH HIS JAZZ AGE FLAIR, ARCHITECT TIMOTHY PFLUEGER BROUGHT HIS SIGNATURE STYLE TO SAN FRANCISCO'S SKYLINE.

BY THERESE POLETTI

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO this December, more than 2,500 people lined up outside 140 New Montgomery Street to get their first look inside the new skyscraper jutting above downtown San Francisco. At 26 stories and 435 feet high, the building, designed for the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Co., was the tallest in the city, a stepped tower of granite terra-cotta topped by flourishes of lotus flowers and eight eagles, each 13 feet tall, perched along the parapet. Inside, the black marble floors and walls contrasted with a colorful plaster ceiling patterned with Chinese mythical motifs. One of the earliest Art Deco buildings in the fast-growing city, the *San Francisco Examiner* called it a “shimmery, gleaming monument to Talk.”

That tower, better known as the Telephone Building, was the crowning achievement of one of the Bay Area's most important architects, Timothy Pflueger—a San Francisco Mason and one of the figures most responsible for ushering Jazz Age designs into the City by the Bay. While the Telephone Building has since been dwarfed by newer steel-and-glass skyscrapers, a century later Pflueger's structures are reminders of a swankier era of architectural style.

From his 1920s towers and neon-drenched movie theaters to glittering cocktail lounges, Pflueger was San Francisco's first Art Deco master. But he also worked across a range of styles, from stately Beaux-Arts forms to Spanish Colonial revivals, and, near the end of his career, a pared-back modernism. Eclectic, artistic, and often spectacular, Pflueger brought a sense of artistry to the city's emerging skyline.

Yet, Pflueger was relatively unknown outside California during his lifetime. In recent years, that's begun to change: His image is cast in bronze above the façade of 235 Pine Street, along with 15 other important San Franciscans. But even those who don't recognize his name likely know his most celebrated designs. His fingerprints are all over town.



TOP RIGHT: Pflueger and Miller's 1925 Telephone Building, then the tallest tower in the city.

RIGHT: The “neo-Mayan” lobby of Pflueger's 450 Sutter building.

AN UNLIKELY STAR

Born in 1892 to German parents, Pflueger was the second son in a large family. His father, August, was a tailor whose shop was on the ground floor of their Guerrero Street home. “He was basically self-taught,” says Chris VerPlanck, a San Francisco architectural historian and preservation consultant. “That's something that has always interested me about him.”

Pflueger began working for the firm Miller & Colmesnil shortly after finishing middle school. He appears to have taken high school classes at night, in addition to courses from the San Francisco Architectural Club, but he never went to formal college. Mostly, he learned on the job, where his stellar drawing skills and congenial personality helped him rise quickly.

One of his first major projects was designing an addition to the 1909 Metropolitan Life Insurance Company building. Today the Beaux-Arts structure on Stockton and California is the Ritz-Carlton hotel, with a temple front and large sculpted figures in the pediment, including an angelic figure representing insurance he commissioned from artist Haig Patigian.

In fact collaborating with artists would be a trademark of Pflueger's career. He worked closely with Diego Rivera, inviting him twice to San Francisco to produce artwork for his designs; he also partnered with the influential local sculptor Ralph Stackpole on several projects. In 1932, Pflueger was named president of the San Francisco Art Association, the group that would spearhead the opening of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

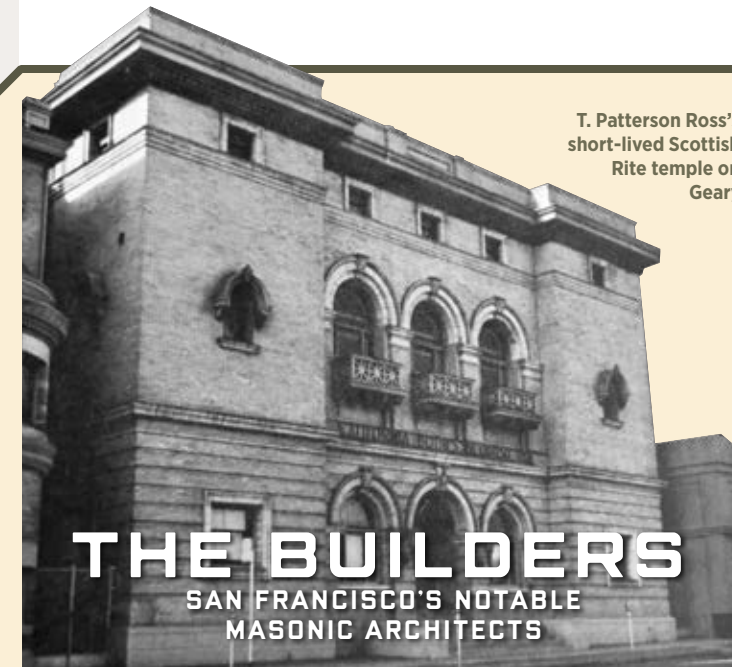
As an architect, Pflueger's career really took off in 1923, when he was named James R. Miller's junior partner. Just months later, the pair won the commission for the \$4 million Telephone Building, completed in 1925. After that project's overwhelmingly positive reception, Miller and Pflueger became one of the most in-demand firms in town. They designed the San Francisco Stock Exchange Tower on Sansome Street and its adjacent trading floor, plus several smaller buildings and private residences. In 1929, they completed another skyscraper, at 450 Sutter—a medical-dental building that immediately registered as one of the city's most unforgettable structures. The 26-floor high-rise is instantly recognizable for its Maya designs, including the patterning on the exterior terra-cotta and in the temple-like lobby. The building was among the first to embrace Mesoamerican motifs—and one of the last skyscrapers built before the Great Depression.

PFLUEGER THE MASON

Never straying far from home, Pflueger was raised as a Master Mason in 1922 in **Amity No 370**, which met at the Mission Masonic Temple at 2668 Mission Street, just a few blocks from the Pflueger home. Through

ABOVE LEFT: COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY; BELOW LEFT: BROKENSPHERE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; RIGHT: HENRY W. COIL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM OF FREEMASONRY

T. Patterson Ross's short-lived Scottish Rite temple on Geary.



THE BUILDERS

SAN FRANCISCO'S NOTABLE MASONIC ARCHITECTS

CARL WERNER (1874-1943)

Werner, both in solo practice and in partnership with Matthew O'Brien, left an indelible mark on the Bay Area. Originally, Werner (a member of **Tehama No 3**) specialized in the design of theaters, including the Orpheum 2 (1906-07), the Valencia, and the Tivoli. He also designed the Labor Temple on 16th and Capp streets (1914). Within Masonry, he found even greater success, designing the Knights Templar Commandery No 16 in the Western Addition (1906-07), plus Scottish Rite temples in Oakland, San Jose, and Fresno, and lodge halls throughout the state.

T. PATTERSON ROSS (1872-1957)

One of the city's most colorful architects, Ross helped popularize the “pagoda” style associated with Chinatown through his work on the Sing Fat and Sing Chong buildings (1907-08). In all, he worked on more than 200 structures in the Bay Area. With Masonry, Ross, a member of **Oriental No 144**, was responsible for the old Alfred Pike Memorial Scottish Rite temple on Geary Avenue (seen above; 1905) and the Islam Temple (now the Alcazar Theatre), an Exotic Revival-style, Moorish-inspired mosque for the Shrine. Ever the showman, he famously inscribed above the doors, “Great is Allah and Great is Ross the Architect!”

ALBERT ROLLER (1891-1981)

Roller, a member of **Excelsior No 166**, designed or redesigned several notable Bay Area icons, including the Art Deco-style “Radio City” offices of NBC at O'Farrell and Taylor streets and the Breuner Furniture Building in Oakland. His name will always be synonymous with Masonry, though, for his work on the California Masonic Memorial Temple (1958) and the Scottish Rite Masonic Center (1963), both imposing midcentury edifices visited by countless patrons both within the fraternity and outside it.

CHARLES AND AXEL F. LINDGREN (CHARLES: 1862-1913; AXEL: 1865-1929)

The Fairmont Hotel. The Olympic Club. The Legion of Honor. 450 Sutter. The Telephone Building. All were built by the contracting firm of Lindgren & Swinerton, today known as Swinerton Builders. Pioneers in the use of steel-reinforced concrete, the firm practically exploded in post-earthquake San Francisco. The men behind it were Charles and Fred Lindgren, Swedish immigrants and members of **Burlingame No 400** and of **Parnassus No 388**, respectively. Together with estimator Alfred Swinerton, they're among the most influential figures in the city's architectural history. ♦

closures and consolidations, that lodge is today part of **Columbia-Brotherhood № 370**.

Not much is known about Pflueger's Masonic career, though he was a member of the Scottish Rite of San Francisco and the Islam Temple of the Shrine. A quintessential man about town, Pflueger also belonged to the Olympic Club, the Bohemian Club, and the Family, the latter an offshoot of the Bohemian Club. In fact, Pflueger's first solo commission was the Our Lady of the Wayside Church in Portola Valley, designed on behalf of the Family.

That said, there wasn't much about his memberships that suggested an abiding interest in esotericism, VerPlanck says. "I just think he was a very social guy. It also served another purpose—of constantly being in the same room with the movers and shakers," he says. "When he wanted to be appointed to something... he had the contacts."

Pflueger doesn't appear to have worked on any Masonic temples, but one of his buildings nearly became one. In 1952, the Grand Lodge of California, seeking a new site for its headquarters, identified Pflueger's Stock Exchange Tower and the adjoining trading floor at 301 Pine Street as promising candidates. Negotiations over the \$3 million sale fell through, however. Shortly after, the Masons purchased a site on Nob Hill for their new temple.

The Stock Exchange Tower, now home to the privately run City Club, still retains much of Pflueger's original design, with a rare intact Art Deco interior. One of two San Francisco murals Pflueger commissioned from Diego Rivera can be seen on the stairway wall of the Luncheon Club, on the building's top floors. The highlight of the tower's exterior is Ralph Stackpole's heroic Moderne sculpture of a male figure carved in granite above the front door.



Timothy Pflueger, a member of Amity № 370, designed many of San Francisco's most iconic buildings.

Around the corner, in front of the stock exchange's trading floor, two more massive Stackpole-designed figures bookend the temple front.

Pflueger certainly relied on symbolism, especially in his interiors—everything from mythical Chinese birds and esoteric Maya glyphs to dancing Egyptian women. However, he doesn't appear to have leaned heavily into Masonic iconography. VerPlanck points to one possibly Masonic symbol in Pflueger's portfolio of work. It can be seen on the north façade of George Washington High, a Streamlined Moderne-style school he designed in 1935 in the Outer Richmond. There, in a lintel above a door, is a triangular form enclosing what is quite possibly a square and compass.

Masonic or no, the school itself is practically a work of art, a bastion of Works Progress Administration-era murals from the Ukrainian artist Victor Arnautoff and French-born painter Lucien Labaut. It also features an athletic frieze by Sargent Johnson and sculpted bas-relief imagery by Robert Boardman Howard. Even in a simple school building, Pflueger's commitment to artistry was front and center.

LEAVING A LEGACY

Pflueger and the draftsmen in his office, including architect Michael Goodman, who went on to design many modern homes in Berkeley, were among the earliest Art Deco and Moderne practitioners in the Bay Area. As far back as the 1920s, when other firms were working in older styles, Pflueger and his team stood out for their creativity and international flair.

Robert Cherny, a professor emeritus of history at San Francisco State University, draws a distinction between Pflueger and the Bay Area's other early-20th-century architectural icons, like the Craftsman pioneers Bernard Maybeck and Julia Morgan. Those artists, Cherny says, "were still very conscious of the Beaux Arts style," whereas Pflueger's design sensibility "was essentially operating outside of that entirely."

Cherny points to several later projects as emblematic of Pflueger's eclectic inspirations: For instance, Roosevelt Middle School, built in 1935 in the Richmond District, borrows from the Dutch Expressionists, with its imposing brick façade. And Pflueger's contributions to the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition were, at the time, among the most modern structures on display.

Following the 1937 retirement of his partner Miller, Pflueger remained busy with several schools, public works, and, at the end of Prohibition, cocktail lounges including the Top of the Mark, at the Mark Hopkins Hotel, and Bal Tabarin club in North Beach. Pflueger's imprint can be discerned in a few other notable structures around town, including the Bay Bridge, which he consulted on for the design of the suspension towers. (Pflueger's larger vision for art was nixed by engineers because of cost constraints, but he did succeed in bringing about a more streamlined look.) He was also responsible for designing the first parking lot beneath a public park—the Union Square garage, built in 1942—an approach that was mimicked elsewhere, including Los Angeles's Pershing Square. One of his final buildings, the comparatively scaled-back, marble-clad I. Magnin flagship on Geary and Stockton, is indicative of the direction he was headed at the time of his death in 1946, at age 54.

Had he lived longer, San Francisco's downtown might have taken on a very different look. As it stands, we have what Pflueger's left us: Buildings that make you look up, take notice, and smile. ♦ —IAS



FORGED IN FIRE



FROM THE RUINS OF THE GRAND LODGE TEMPLE. REMINDERS OF THE CITY'S DARKEST DAYS.

WRITING A YEAR AFTER the 1906 earthquake and fire—after more than 3,000 San Franciscans had perished and more than 200,000 had been left homeless, R.W. Meek, president of the Oakland Masonic Board of Relief, recalled the morning's eerie silence. "The day had dawned as calm and peaceful as a summer's dream," he wrote. "Yet there was an oppression, a feeling of unrest, a horror of something that was about to happen but could not be foretold."

The magnitude 7.9 earthquake struck the city like a jolt, collapsing entire neighborhoods south of Market Street. The fires that followed leveled other areas, including practically the entire eastern half of the city. The Army corps, hoping to create a firebreak, dynamited buildings downtown, leading to further fires. Caught up in the blazes was the Grand Lodge temple at the corner of Post, Montgomery, and Market streets. The building was damaged during the early-morning quake but still standing. And indeed, many members of the Grand Chapter of the Royal Arch gathered there as part of their annual convocation, only to evacuate as the building was engulfed in flames.

Almost everything inside was destroyed, including the records of the 14 lodges that met there. According to John Whitsell's history of Masonry in California, a janitor named H.G. Frederickson, who lived at the temple, rescued what he could. "With rare presence of mind," Whitsell writes, "he secured the charters and jewels of his lodge, **Mount Moriah № 44**, and the charter and jewels of **Golden Gate Lodge № 30**, wrapped them in a blanket with his personal belongings, and took them to a safe place.... Almost a year later, the same brother was watching the workmen cleaning up the lot on which the temple stood and, there in the rubbish, he saw the partially smashed and blackened plumb, level and 24-inch gauge of his lodge."

Today, the Henry W. Coil Museum and Library of Freemasonry contains some of the jewels and other remains from the temple in its archive—a reminder of the city's darkest days, and the ashes from which it would eventually rebuild and reinvent itself. ♦ —IAS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY J.R. SHEETZ
COURTESY OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY, UC BERKELEY
COURTESY OF HENRY W. COIL MUSEUM AND LIBRARY OF FREEMASONRY



FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, FIDELITY Nº 120 WAS HOME TO A ROBUST JEWISH MEMBERSHIP. BY JACKIE KRENTZMAN

OF ALL THE GROUPS of fortune-seekers that rushed to San Francisco in the 1850s, perhaps none can be said to have thrived as much as the city's Jewish immigrants. There, they were accepted into the political and cultural fabric of the city to a greater degree than perhaps anywhere else in the United States, helping to establish an influential community that flourished throughout the 19th and early 20th century. Nowhere was that more visible than in the city's Masonic lodges—and in particular, the lodge room of **Fidelity Nº 120**.

Today, Fidelity Lodge is long gone. (It's now part of **San Francisco Nº 120**, the result of a consolidation in 2008). As a result, the lodge's local history, and particularly its role in the rise of San Francisco's Jewish community during the city's Gilded Age, has largely

been obscured. However, as the center of Jewish Freemasonry at that time, Fidelity Nº 120 should be remembered as one of the important institutions of San Francisco's Jewish life. In that way, the lodge played a big part in setting the course of the city's religious and cultural history.

A WELCOME HOME

From the start, the city's Jewish population forged a distinct path. Rather than set out for the mining camps of the Sierra foothills, the first wave of Jewish arrivals—many hailing from the German region of Hesse and the state of Bavaria—instead launched businesses to serve the influx of prospectors with the goods and tools they needed to mine for gold. In short order, a thriving community of

Bavarian-Jewish entrepreneurs had established itself as integral to the young city's business class.

That was reflected in the city's early Masonic lodges, in which Jewish members were particularly well-represented. Among the prominent Jewish Masons of the first decade were Benjamin D. Hyam, founding master of **Benicia Nº 5** and the state's third grand master; Adolphus Hollub, a successful dry goods supplier and, fraternally, grand lecturer and senior grand warden

"BOTH [MASONRY AND JUDAISM] HOLD THE BASIC BELIEF IN ... THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CHARITABLE TO ONE'S NEIGHBORS, AND DOING GOOD WORKS IN THE COMMUNITY."

in 1852; and William Schuyler Moses, a charter member of **Golden Gate Nº 30** in 1853. Other notable Jewish members included Joel Noah, a well-known clothier, founding member of **California Nº 1**, and longtime tiler of the lodge; and Rabbi Abraham Labatt, the first president of Temple Emanu-El and master of **Davy Crockett Nº 7** in 1850.

It's not necessarily surprising those figures would be welcomed into lodge; Freemasonry, as an ecumenical tradition, has always been open to men of all faiths. In fact, across the country, at least 24 Jewish Masons served as state-level grand masters in the U.S. during the 19th century. What's more surprising, in the case of San Francisco, is how significant the Jewish influence on the local fraternity was, says Fred Rosenbaum, author of *Cosmopolitans: A Social & Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area*, considered the definitive history of San Francisco Jewish history. "It shows the open atmosphere and relative lack of anti-Semitism at that time in San Francisco," he says.

According to Anthony Fels, professor emeritus of history at the University of San Francisco, out of 13 English-speaking lodges in San Francisco in the late 19th century, at least six had significant Jewish memberships. (Another lodge, the French-speaking **La Parfaite Union Nº 17**, also included several Jewish members, likely immigrants from the Alsace region.) He further estimates that 12 percent of San Francisco's Masons of the era were Jewish—almost double their share of the city's overall population at the time. "The extent of Jewish inclusion seems very substantial indeed," he writes.

Another reason the prosperous Jewish middle class joined San Francisco's Masonic lodges was that it was still often excluded from other organizations, such as the venerable Bohemian Club. And unlike the B'nai B'rith—a Jewish men's fraternity, which launched its first San Francisco chapter in 1855—Masonry provided the opportunity to intermingle with the city's mostly Protestant establishment. Generally, most San Francisco Masons, including its

OVERALL PERCENTAGE OF JEWISH POPULATION IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1870-1900

MISSION Nº 169

ORIENTAL Nº 144

OCCIDENTAL Nº 22

EXCELSIOR Nº 166

CROCKETT Nº 139

GOLDEN GATE Nº 30

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO Nº 212

CALIFORNIA Nº 1

KING SOLOMON Nº 260

PACIFIC Nº 136

MT. MORIAH Nº 44

DORIC Nº 216

FIDELITY Nº 120

SCHMOOZING IN LODGE

According to research by Professor Tony Fels of the University of San Francisco, nearly half of 19th-century lodges in San Francisco had a significant Jewish membership—while the others had at least some nominal Jewish contingent. —IAS

Jewish members, were in similar mercantile occupations—insurance brokers, factory owners, dry-goods importers, and so on. "Belonging to a Masonic lodge was a step to assimilation," Fels says.

THE JEWISH LODGE

While nearly all of San Francisco's lodges had at least some Jewish members, it wasn't until 1858 that there could be said to be a truly "Jewish lodge." That was when a group of members split away from **Lebanon Nº 49** to form **Fidelity Nº 120**. Its first master was Louis Cohn; Fred A. Benjamin was its inaugural senior warden and Seixas Solomons the first junior warden. All three were prominent San Francisco Jewish businessmen and, at least in the case of Solomons, part of the city's pioneer generation. (In fact,

Solomons belonged to a truly impressive family: His grandfather had been a rabbi and leader in the American Revolution; his son, Theodore, was one of the first explorers of the Sierra Nevada mountains; and his daughter, Selina, was one of San Francisco's leading suffragettes in the early 1900s.)

The driving force behind the lodge, however, was Moses Heller, who was master in 1867. The Bavarian-born Heller, who ran one of the largest dry-goods businesses on the West Coast, created the lodge's widows and orphan's fund and served as grand treasurer for nine years.

Fidelity grew rapidly, from its original 33 members to 130 just a decade later, eventually peaking at 551 in 1950. Unfortunately, Fidelity was one of the many San Francisco lodges that lost its records in the earthquake and fire of 1906. As a result, its early rolls have been lost, making a full accounting of its history impossible.

However, obituaries and other historical sources paint a tantalizing picture of Fidelity Lodge's membership. Among its early members were Julius Platshek, a wealthy real estate mogul who lived at the Palace Hotel; Mendel Esberg, a cigar merchant and manufacturer who served a term as master of the lodge; and Julius Jacobs, a merchant who helped lead the free kindergarten movement on the West Coast

and who was later appointed by President McKinley as assistant U.S. treasurer. There was also Michael Goldwater, founder of the Goldwater's Department Stores. (Goldwater's son, Morris, would eventually become Grand Master of Arizona. Michael was also the grandfather of Sen. Barry Goldwater.) In later years, members included Isaac Strasburger, the financier, oil tycoon, and charter member of the San Francisco Stock Exchange.

Other known members point to how closely related the lodge was to the city's preeminent synagogues. For instance, Elkan Cohn, who succeeded Abraham Labatt as the second rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, the influential German-Jewish reform synagogue, was a member of Fidelity No. 120. So too was Jacob Voorsanger, the

nationally renowned rabbi who took over from Cohn. In fact, Voorsanger served as grand orator for the Grand Lodge of California in 1885 and as grand chaplain in 1889. Two other members of the lodge, Henry A. Henry and Jacob Nieto, were rabbis with the city's other main synagogue, Sherith Israel, which was originally an Orthodox congregation comprised of mostly Polish Jews.

A FRATERNAL MATCH

Beyond the business, political, and social connections offered to Jewish Masons through the lodge, Rosenbaum and Fels note how the tenets of Reform Judaism, which was fast taking hold in San Francisco at the time, dovetailed with the principles of Freemasonry. Both Masonry and the reform Jewish movement in the 19th century "emphasized monotheism, the Old Testament, and Enlightenment ideals such as logic and reason," Fels says.

One of San Francisco's early Jewish newspapers, *The Hebrew*, published a column in 1865 exploring similarities between Judaism and Freemasonry. It noted the resemblance in forms of worship, rites, and ceremonies, their focus on monotheism, and even the construction and orientation of lodges and synagogues.

Perhaps the most significant commonality between the two traditions, however, was their focus on service to others—represented by the concept of *Tikkun olam*, or repairing the world. "Both [Masonry and Judaism] hold the basic belief in the goodness of humanity under God's guidance," Fels says, "the importance of being charitable to one's neighbors, and doing good works in the community." In that light, he says, the connection between San Francisco's Jewish and Masonic cultures isn't just a historical curiosity. Instead, "It made a lot of sense." ♦



RIGHT: Louis Cohn, the first master of Fidelity No. 120.

BELOW: Members of the Myers family, all members of Fidelity No. 120. Patriarch Mitchell J. Myers served 41 years as lodge tiler (1875–1915); he was succeeded in that office by his son George Henry Myers, who served for 19 years. He, in turn, was succeeded in 1934 by his brother Isadore Bernard Myers.



JOSEPH
Raised May 26, 1904
GEORGE H.
Raised Feb. 16, 1893

ROBERT
Raised Oct. 22, 1903
MITCHELL J.
Raised October 1856

ISADOR B.
Raised June 19, 1902
LOUIS R.
Raised June 19, 1902

POINTS OF INTEREST

A WHIRLWIND TOUR OF
SAN FRANCISCO'S
MASONIC LANDMARKS.
PAST AND PRESENT.

ALCAZAR THEATRE
ISLAM TEMPLE, NOW THE ALCAZAR
THEATRE, AT 650 GEARY STREET.
TURN FOR MORE



THEN AND NOW

FOUR MASONIC LANDMARKS OF YESTERYEAR
GET A NEW LEASE ON LIFE.

THE ISLAM
TEMPLE'S
FANTASTICAL
EXTERIOR.
CONSTRUCTED
IN 1917.

ISLAM TEMPLE (ALCAZAR THEATRE) 650 GEARY STREET

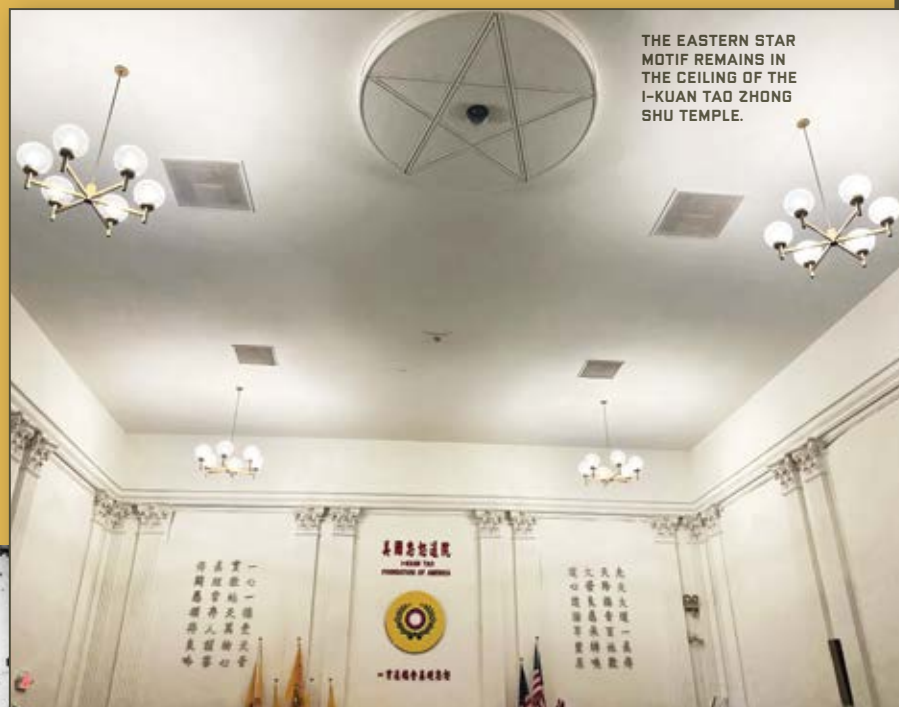
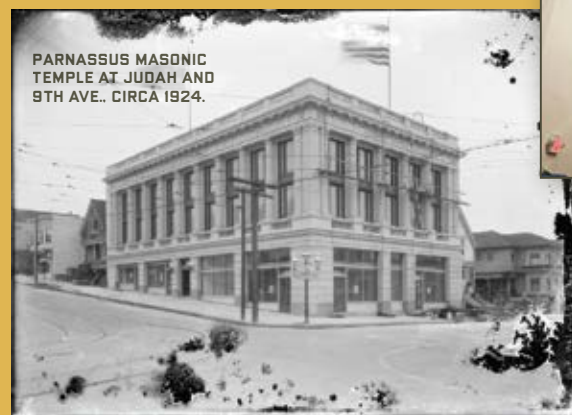
THEN: Much like the organization it once housed, there was never anything subtle about architect T. Patterson Ross's Shrine Temple, opened in 1917. Built in Exotic or Moorish Revival style, the building is a riot of Arabian-inspired tilework, polychromatic terra cotta finishes, and "Ajimez" style windows. Home to the city's first chapter of the Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of Mystic Shrine, the mosque cost \$150,000 to build. Ross, a member of **Oriental № 144**, was a fellow Shriner and one of the most eclectic designers of his time in the city.

NOW: The Shriners remained in the temple until 1970, at which point it was renamed the Alcazar Theatre. It soon fell into disrepair and was gutted in 1982, but was later reopened in 1993 with new theater facilities. It's currently listed as a local landmark and "one of the most unusual downtown buildings, an elaborately eclectic fantasy."

PARNASSUS MASONIC TEMPLE 1407 9TH AVENUE

THEN: Built in 1914, the temple was the second meeting place of **Parnassus № 388**, which had previously held meetings at 12th and Irving. The three-story marble and granite building had a lodge room and administrative offices, a billiards room, and a ladies parlor on one floor; while another was taken up by a banquet hall. The ground-floor retail space was occupied by a grocery store.

PARNASSUS MASONIC
TEMPLE AT JUDAH AND
9TH AVE., CIRCA 1924.



THE EASTERN STAR
MOTIF REMAINS IN
THE CEILING OF THE
I-KUAN TAO ZHONG
SHU TEMPLE.

NOW: Since 1995, the old lodge room has been used as the I-Kuan Tao Zhong Shu Temple, belonging to the non-religious Taoist spiritual organization. The exterior of the building remains largely unchanged, but inside, the Eastern Star motif in the ceiling is one of a few clues to the building's fraternal past.

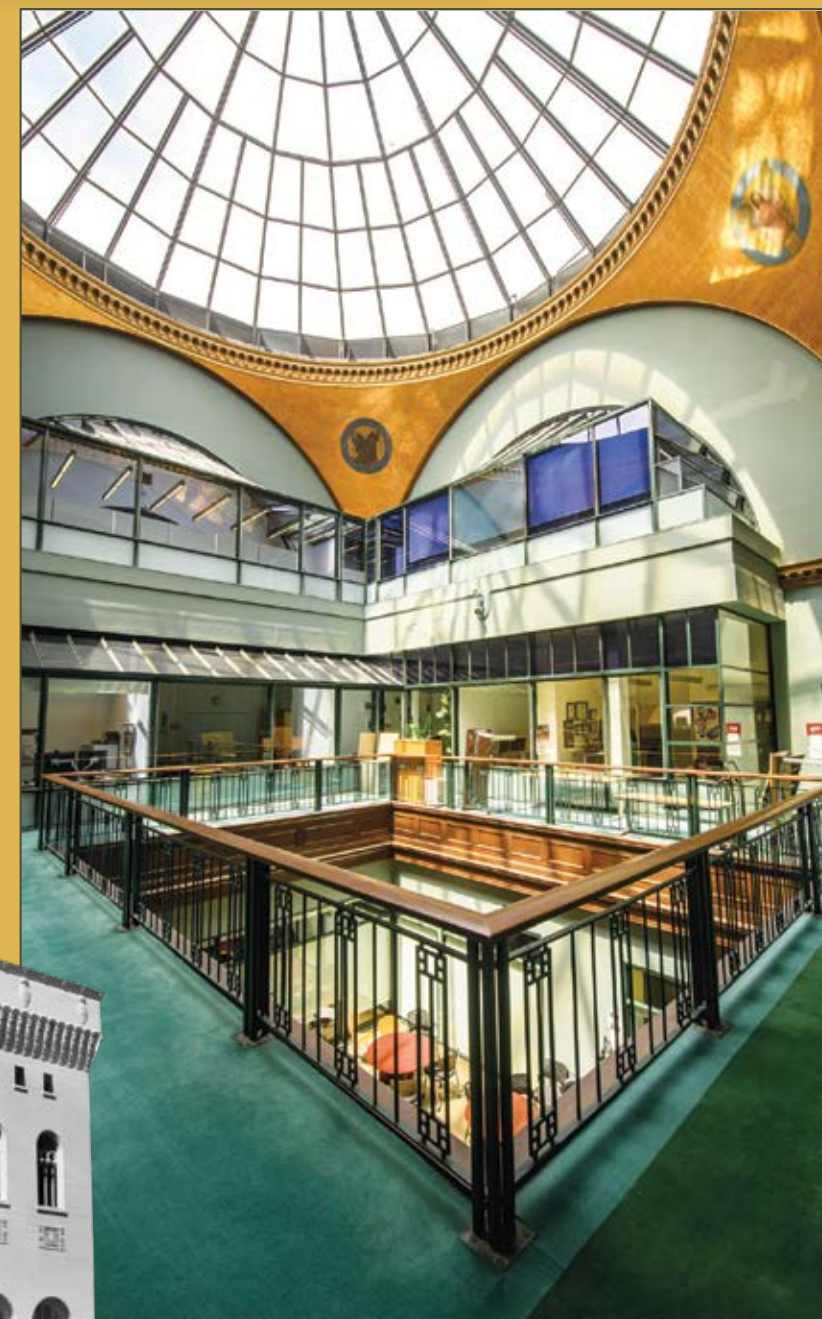


A LARGE FIRE AT THE TEMPLE
IN 1952 (RULED AN ARSON),
ALONG WITH A GROWING
MEMBERSHIP, FORCED THE
GRAND LODGE TO ABANDON
25 VAN NESS AS ITS
HEADQUARTERS. HOWEVER,
SEVERAL LODGES CONTINUED
MEETING THERE UNTIL THE
1970S. WHEN THE BUILDING
WAS REDEVELOPED AS
OFFICES. TODAY IT IS HOME TO
SEVERAL CITY DEPARTMENTS.
THOUGH THE DOMED CEILING
REMAINS IN PLACE ABOVE THE
OLD COMMANDERY HALL.

GRAND LODGE TEMPLE 25 VAN NESS

THEN: Following the 1906 earthquake that destroyed the first Grand Lodge temple, the fraternity scrambled to find meeting spaces. It wasn't until 1913 that a new, 20,000-foot state-of-the-art headquarters was erected—and what a home it proved to be. Built for more than \$700,000 by Walter Danford Bliss (of **California № 1**) and William Baker Faville, the four-story temple featured four lodge rooms, a top-floor commandery hall, 22 offices, a library, and more. At its peak, the building was home to 15 blue lodges, two chapters of the Royal Arch, and several other Masonic bodies.

NOW: Between 1940 and 1950 alone, some 100,000 new Masons joined California lodges, forcing the fraternity to search for yet another new home, which would be opened in 1958. Today, the Van Ness temple remains intact and retains much of the exterior decoration. Inside, it was subdivided in the 1970s into several offices, including the city rent board and Department of Public Health, while the New Conservatory Theater stages plays in the old ground-floor auditorium.



BIRTHPLACE OF CALIFORNIA FREEMASONRY

726-728 MONTGOMERY STREET

1 The Genella Building was the site of the first official meeting of **California No. 13** (later to become No. 1) under master Levi Stowell, who carried the charter from Washington, D.C. to California. The lodge held its first meeting there Nov. 15, 1848, but didn't stay long: By 1850, it had moved into a new hall on Kearny Street, the second of six meeting places in its first century.

SAN FRANCISCO HALL

WASHINGTON STREET BETWEEN KEARNY AND MONTGOMERY

2 The third meeting place of **California No. 1**, this was another short-lived home, a two-story brick building on the south side of Washington that also served as a theater, in the shadow of where the Transamerica Pyramid is today. By 1853, the lodge was meeting at the "New" Masonic Temple on Montgomery Street (See below). **San Francisco No. 7, Occidental No. 22, and La Parfaite Union No. 17** also met on Washington Street in 1852-53, and the Annual Communication was held there in 1852 and 1855.

"NEW" MASONIC HALL

110-112 MONTGOMERY STREET

3 Completed in July 1853, this four-story hall was owned by Samuel Brannan, one of the most colorful characters in San Francisco history. Brannan originally landed in California on a mission to launch a Mormon colony here but broke with the church, opened a mining store, and became the richest man in San Francisco. Brannan petitioned **Occidental No. 22** for membership in 1855 but was denied. It wasn't until 1855 that he was accepted into the lodge that he'd once been landlord of.

REESE BUILDING

722 WASHINGTON STREET

4 The Masonic hall on the third floor of the brick structure known as Reese's Building, at the corner of Portsmouth Square, was in 1861 home to several lodges including **La Parfaite Union No. 17, Golden Gate No. 30, Mt. Moriah No. 49, Fidelity No. 120, and Oriental No. 144**—the latter of which split from Occidental in 1860 at the dawn of the Civil War, the result of an intralodge dispute pitting northerners (who affiliated with Oriental) against their Southern lodge brothers.

GRAND LODGE TEMPLE

6 POST STREET

5 Construction on the first permanent home for the Grand Lodge, at Post and Montgomery, began in 1860 and was finished in 1870. Designed by architects Reuben Clark (of **Mount Moriah No. 44**) and Henry Kenitzer (of **Fidelity No. 120**), the three-story Italian-Gothic structure, which served 10 blue lodges and virtually all the other Masonic bodies in the city, was crowned by a 128-foot tower above Montgomery Street. Grand Master William Belcher in 1863 declared: "This is the finest and most perfect building upon the Pacific coast." However, by the time it was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake, both the city and fraternity had outgrown it: During its lifespan, the fraternity had grown from 6,000 members in San Francisco to more than 33,000.

GOLDEN GATE HALL

825 SUTTER STREET

6 Another early and relatively short-lived meeting place, this belonged to **Golden Gate Commandery No. 16** of the Knights Templar,

one of two early commanderies in the city, which launched in 1883. In 1891, the group raised \$130,000 to construct the temple, and the San Francisco City Directory first lists it meeting there in 1896. However, by 1904, the group was once again on the move, eventually relocating to 2135 Sutter. The Golden Gate Hall, which was also used as a theater, hosted several blue lodges, including **California No. 1, Mt. Moriah No. 44, Doric No. 216, and Jewel No. 374**. It was destroyed in 1906.



BAYVIEW OPERA HOUSE

4705 THIRD STREET

7 When in 1888 the members of **South San Francisco No. 212** dedicated the cornerstone for their new lodge in what's now called the Bayview, the neighborhood was known as Butchertown, a motley assortment of farms and slaughterhouses. So it might have registered as curious the decision to erect, immediately adjacent to the new hall, an elaborate Italianate-style opera hall (above) designed by Henry Gelfuss, one of the most prolific architects of the era. During the late 19th century, the remote opera hall became a major cultural institution. The lodge sold the building in 1965 and consolidated into **Francis Drake-South San Francisco No. 212**. In recent years, the opera house has undergone a significant renovation and today hosts several community groups and theater companies.

MASONIC CEMETERY

BETWEEN TURK, FULTON, PARKER, AND MASONIC STREETS

8 The 38-acre gravesite on Lone Mountain—one of the "Big Four" cemeteries at what's now the University of San Francisco—once served 20,000 souls. Among its notable headstones were prominent San Francisco Masons including the sugar king Adolph B. Spreckles and Munroe Ashbury, an early champion of Golden Gate Park. In the wake of the 1906 earthquake, the cemetery was shuttered, part of a citywide effort to re-inter San Francisco's dead elsewhere. However, its legacy remains: It's estimated that only a quarter of its dead were ever moved.

B'NAI B'RITH BUILDING

149 EDDY STREET

9 For several years before and after the 1906 earthquake and fire, a number of Masonic lodges shared space with the Jewish fraternal organization B'Nai B'rith in their lodge hall in the Tenderloin. Among those groups were **Pacific No. 136, Crockett No. 139, and Doric No. 216, and, in the 1920s and beyond, Military Service No. 570, Bethlehem No. 453, Lincoln No. 470, Roosevelt No. 500, and Fairmont No. 435**.

PALACE HOTEL

2 NEW MONTGOMERY STREET

10 The Palace Hotel is one of the most august institutions in downtown San Francisco, tracing its history to 1875, when it was considered not just the greatest hotel in San Francisco, but in the West. It also has a close connection to

Freemasonry: In 1916, the fraternity opened the Masonic Club of San Francisco inside the hotel, taking over the entire west wing of the second floor of the building. Inside were eight rooms practically dripping in luxury, plus a dining room, billiards room, and card room, all in addition to the main clubhouse. The hotel also reserved several hotel rooms for Masonic Club members and their guests. Its initial membership numbered 1,700, including bold-faced names like William H. Crocker, son of the Southern Pacific Railroad fortune. The club was born out of **Bethlehem No. 453**, and during World War I, it helped organize the Masonic Ambulance Corps, a volunteer company that deployed to the Argonne.

D. NORCROSS MASONIC GOODS

6 POST STREET

11 In the late 19th century, as Masonry was taking off in San Francisco, business unsurprisingly followed. Beginning in the 1860s, several Masonic goods retailers popped up downtown offering lodge furnishings, Masonic regalia, costumes, and more. One of the largest of these was Daniel Norcross Masonic Goods, relocated from Sacramento Street to the Grand Lodge temple at 6 Post Street. Norcross was a member of **Oriental No. 144**. He certainly wasn't the only one in the business: The Johnson T. Rogers Masonic Goods Co. set up stakes in the 1860s, while AJ Plate and Co. Masonic Goods hawked its wares from 325 Montgomery. CF Weber and Co. came in the 1910s, while a West Coast outpost of the Henderson-Ames Lodge Paraphernalia Co. formed in 1920 at 833 Market Street. In the 1940s, ABC Emblem & Pennant Co. at 1251 Market Street was similarly advertising Masonic regalia.

THOMAS STARR KING STATUE

JFK DRIVE, GOLDEN GATE PARK

12 Though he lived in San Francisco for just four years, Rev. Thomas Starr King is remembered as the man who "saved California for the Union" during the Civil War. A preacher at First Unitarian Church, he earned fame for his speeches against slavery. Starr King, who joined **Oriental No. 144** in 1861, served as Grand Orator for the Grand Lodge of California in 1864, the year he died. In 1892, a memorial fund was raised to erect a statue of him by Daniel Chester French (designer of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.) in Golden Gate Park. More than 2,000 people attended the opening, including King's grandsons.

EMPEROR NORTON PLACE

600 COMMERCIAL PLACE

13 San Francisco's most celebrated 19th century eccentric, Joshua Norton was a failed businessman turned beloved prophet. He roamed the streets in a faded military costume and proclaimed himself Emperor Norton I (below), penning missives proposing, among other things, a bridge connecting San Francisco to Oakland and an underwater streetcar tube traversing the bay—a century before those came into being. A member of **Occidental No. 22**, Norton died penniless, but today is remembered as a hero.

ABOVE: COURTESY OF OPENSF HISTORY; RIGHT: WIKIMEDIA



WAYFINDING YOUR ROOTS

MAPPING THE CITY'S HISTORIC-AND CURRENT-MASONIC MEETING PLACES.

ILLUSTRATION BY PUSHART



GOLDEN GATE COMMANDERY NO. 16

2135 SUTTER STREET

14 After decamping from Golden Gate Hall, **Golden Gate Commandery No. 16** met from 1905-1949 in this Matthew O'Brien and Carl Werner-designed temple in the Western Addition. The imposing building, built in the so-called "Jacobean phase of the Medieval Revival" style, also hosted several blue lodges, including **Occidental No. 22, Argonaut No. 461, Bethlehem No. 453, Educator No. 554, and Military Service No. 570**. That was only the beginning of the building's history, though: In 1950, it was taken over by Macedonia Baptist Church, an influential Civil Rights-era institution where Martin Luther King twice gave speeches.

KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

1739 FILLMORE STREET

15 The meeting place of **King Solomon's No. 260** had only just opened in 1906 when the massive earthquake and fire damaged nearly 80 percent of the city. At that point, the lodge became the de-facto headquarters from which San Francisco Masonic Relief Board President William Frank Pierce organized the disaster response. From there, he and dozens of Masonic volunteers gathered food and goods and raised money for the more-than-50 percent of the city that had been displaced. In all, California Masons distributed more than \$300,000 (more than \$10 million today), and handed out 74,200 food rations over 43 days.

SWEDISH-AMERICAN HALL

2174 MARKET STREET

16 The number of Scandinavian people doubled in San Francisco between 1900 and 1910, mostly near Market Street and Dolores. Smack dab in the center of it was the Swedish-American Hall, built in 1908 and home to several social and fraternal groups including, from 1908 until 1987, **Balder No. 393**, named for the Norse god of light. Initially the lodge aimed to work in Swedish (as similar French, Italian, and German-speaking lodges did at the time in San Francisco), but ultimately settled on English.

FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOL MONUMENT

PORTSMOUTH SQUARE

17 On Sept. 25, 1957, Masonic dignitaries and city officials gathered to dedicate a plaque recognizing the location of the city's first public school, a one-room schoolhouse opened in 1848 by the Afro-Cuban businessman William Leidesdorff. "Here churches held their first meetings, and here the first public amusements were given," read Grand Master Harold Anderson. "Not a vestige of the old relic now remains and its site is only recognized by a thousand cherished associations that hover like spirals around its unmarked grave."

ALBERT PIKE MEMORIAL TEMPLE

1859 GEARY STREET

18 Originally built in 1905 by the Scottish Rite, the temple at Geary near Fillmore had scarcely been opened in time for the 1906

quake. The building, along with its neighbor, the Temple Beth Israel synagogue, were both badly damaged, but were rebuilt. In the 1960s, when the new Scottish Rite temple on 19th Avenue was opened, the Pike Memorial was left vacant, and in 1971 it was taken over by the infamous Rev. Jim Jones for his People's Temple—just seven years prior to the Jonestown Massacre.

RICHMOND MASONIC TEMPLE

405 ARGUELLO BOULEVARD

19 Many of the fraternal flourishes remain inside the 1908 Richmond Masonic Temple, designed by Hermann Barth, architect of the city's German Hospital. However, the most striking details are not part of the original design at all: In 1936, Bernard J. Joseph renovated the building's exterior in a Mayan Deco theme, with engraved paneling along the parapet. The temple was once home to **Richmond No. 375** and later **Lebanon No. 495** and **Seal Rock No. 536**. Today it's a fitness gym.

GEORGE WASHINGTON TEMPLE

542 SAN JUAN AVENUE

20 The cornerstone for the future home of **George Washington No. 525** was laid on Feb. 22, 1923, the birthday of the nation's first president and just a few months before the dedication of the George Washington Masonic National Monument in Virginia. The San Francisco lodge was somewhat more modest; a three-story edifice in Mission Terrace, near the current City College of San Francisco. In 1974, the lodge began a series of consolidations, eventually folding into **Brotherhood No. 370**. The old temple is now a Korean Evangelical church.

TARAVAL TEMPLE

2400 14TH AVENUE

21 Still used by **Golden Gate Speranza No. 30** and **Phoenix No. 144**, the temple, variously known as the Golden Gate Masonic Temple and Taraval Temple, was first built in 1928, possibly as a Knights of Columbus hall. By 1929, however, it was being used by the Parkside Masonic Association, a group of Masons living in the Sunset/Parkside neighborhood. That group eventually formed **Far West No. 673** and by the 1940s was sharing space with **Mt. Moriah No. 44, Paul Revere No. 462, and Seaport No. 550**—lodges that, over the years, have variously consolidated into the two extant bodies.

PARK MASONIC HALL

1748 HAIGHT STREET

22 Right in the heart of the Haight-Ashbury district that birthed the hippie movement, the Park Masonic Hall was opened in 1915 to serve **Park No. 449**. Over the years, it also hosted **Victory No. 474, Bethlehem No. 453, and others**. But by the early '60s, the Masons had left the building, which was later taken over as the I-Beam, the legendary gay dance club, until the 1990s.

MT. DAVIDSON LODGE

385 ASHTON AVENUE

23 The first meeting spot for **Mt. Davidson No. 481** opened in 1925 just off Ocean Avenue to serve as a "West of Twin Peaks" community lodge. As the city spread outward, the hall began hosting other lodges, too, including **Mt. Vernon No. 517, Educator No. 554, and Ingleside No. 630**. Today the building remains intact and is occupied by a yoga studio.

PRINCE HALL HANNIBAL NO. 1

2804 BUSH STREET

24 Prince Hall Masonry has been a fixture in San Francisco since 1852 with the formation of **Hannibal No. 1**. Originally, three Prince Hall lodges met in North Beach. After the earthquake, Hannibal relocated to the Western Addition, which became the center of the city's Black population, first setting up at 1547 Steiner and finally, in the 1940s, relocating to its current, unassuming spot on Bush Street.

SHRINER'S HOSPITAL

1601 19TH AVENUE

25 The San Francisco Shriner's Hospital was built in 1922 as the order's third-ever medical center. Designed by the firm of Weeks and Day (of the Mark Hopkins Hotel), the Italian Renaissance-style hospital accepted young patients for a range of surgeries and physical therapy. North and south wings were added in 1929, and in the 1960s an extension was built to its west. In 1997, with the opening of the new hospital in Sacramento, the San Francisco branch was sold. Today, following an extensive retrofit, it's in use as an assisted living facility.

CALIFORNIA MASONIC MEMORIAL TEMPLE

1111 CALIFORNIA STREET

26 The current home of the Masons of California, the CMMT plays host to more than 250,000 visitors each year, thanks largely to its 3,300-seat auditorium, which has hosted performances from the likes of Bob Dylan and Ella Fitzgerald. Opened in 1958, the 50,000-square-foot temple, clad in Vermont marble, was designed by Albert F. Roller, of **Excelsior No. 166**, who also built the Scottish Rite Temple on 19th Avenue. A "Modernist marvel," the CMMT was designed to evince "no stylized tradition or cliché." The most notable ornamentation is the artist Emile Norman's massive "endomosaic" window made of crushed glass and other material, pressed between panels of acrylic. In 2019, the CMMT opened Freemasons' Hall, the first-ever lodge room inside the temple, where today eight different lodges meet.

SCOTTISH RITE MASONIC CENTER

2850 19TH AVENUE

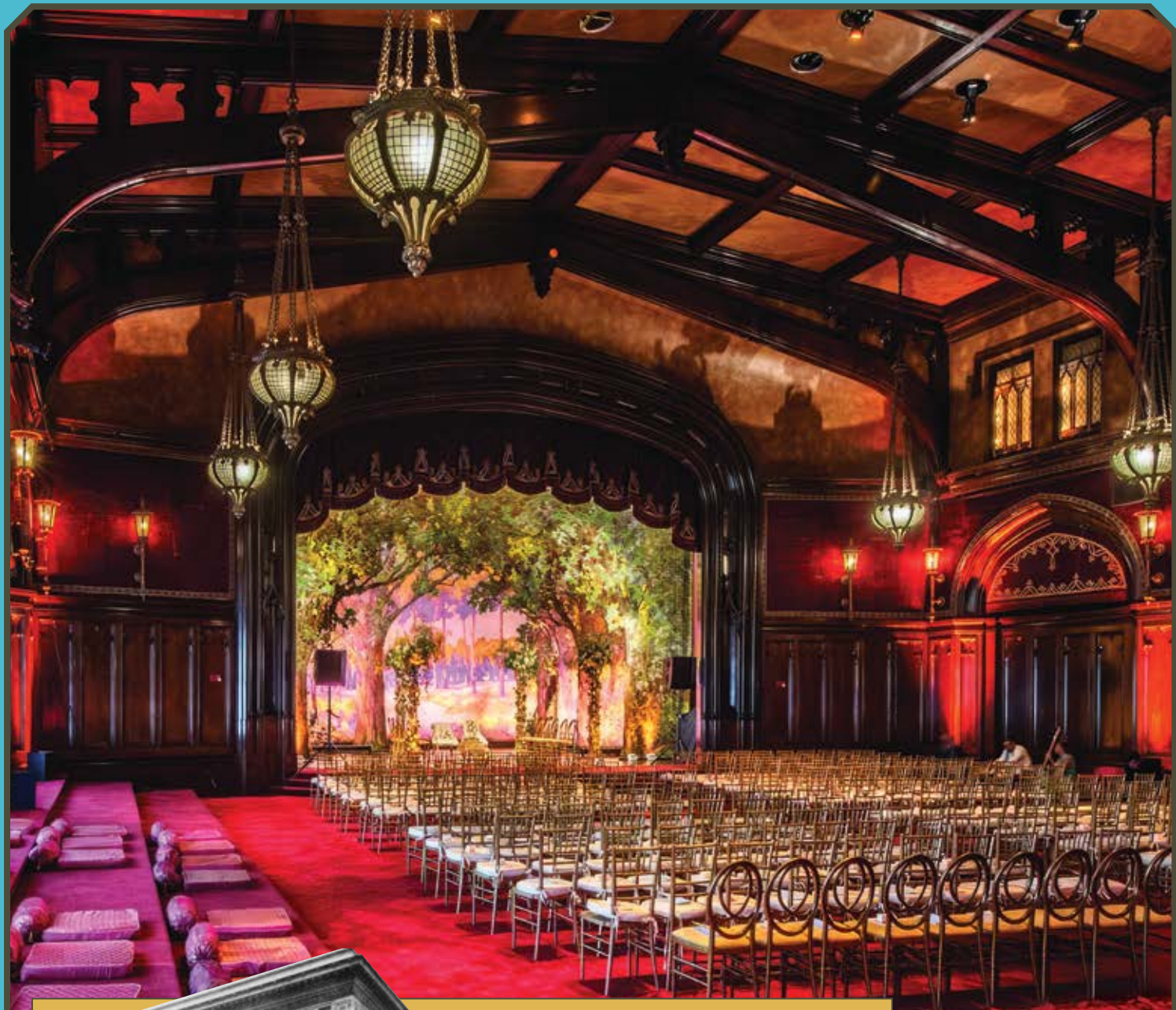
27 Opened in 1963, the current home of the Scottish Rite was also designed by Albert Roller. Many of the striking artworks at the building, including the exterior mosaic, double-headed eagle, and interior murals, were executed by Millard Sheets, the influential artist and architect. In addition to its use by the Scottish Rite bodies, the auditorium is one of the city's best-known venues for weddings, graduations, and other large celebrations.

GRAN ORIENTE FILIPINO

74 JACK LONDON ALLEY

28 Still standing today, the Gran Oriente Filipino Masonic Temple traces its beginnings to 1921, when a group of merchant marines organized the first California chapter of that Masonic organization. The group served as a community anchor for the first great wave of Filipino workers in California. In the 1930s, they purchased a residential hotel on South Park and eventually built a temple, home to **Rizal No. 12**. That group continues to meet there, and though it has just a few remaining members, it stands as a testament to Filipino and Masonic history in the city.

TOBIAS KLEINLERCHER/WIKIMEDIA



REGENCY CENTER 1290 SUTTER STREET

THEN: Many former Masonic buildings have been repurposed as theaters or concert venues. But with its abundant fraternal embellishments, perhaps none has inspired as much gawking from visitors as the old Scottish Rite temple

at Sutter and Van Ness. The four-story structure, built in 1909–11 by Werner and O'Brien, whose firm executed several Masonic buildings in the Bay Area, was one of the jewels of Masonic architecture in San Francisco, blending Gothic, Neoclassical, and Beaux Arts designs. The temple featured an auditorium (with seating for nearly 1,200), two banquet halls, and all manner of lounging areas.

NOW: With the opening of the new Scottish Rite Center on 19th Avenue in 1963, the Sutter Street building was sold to Blumenfeld Developers, which converted it and the Avalon Ballroom next door into today's Regency Center. In recent years, concert promoter Goldenvoice has operated it as a music venue, and it hosts the annual gothic-inspired Edwardian Ball. Especially in the latter case, the upstairs lodge room, still largely intact, lends a suitably esoteric atmosphere.

THE LODGE ROOM FEATURES EXTRAVAGANT WOODWORK AND AN ORIGINAL PIPE ORGAN, WHICH IS STILL IN PLACE TODAY.



THE MASONIC STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO

THROUGHOUT THE CITY, SUBTLE REMINDERS OF A FRATERNAL PAST.

IN 1847, THE IRISH-BORN land surveyor Jasper O'Farrell set out to redraw the map of San Francisco. As part of that, he gave many of the newly made streets their names—including O'Farrell Street—and in so doing, began a long and rich naming tradition that's probably totally invisible to those outside the craft. But for those in the know, there's a fraternal link, wink, and nod on just about every other street corner in San Francisco. —IAS

O'FARRELL STREET

Born to a prominent Masonic family in Ireland, O'Farrell surveyed much of Northern California on behalf of the Mexican government. After receiving land grants in the Sonoma Valley, he became a member of Temple No. 14. His namesake street in San Francisco runs through the Tenderloin and ends—fittingly—at Masonic Avenue.

John Townsend, the state's first licensed doctor and junior warden of San Jose No. 10.

BELDEN PLACE

Named for Josiah Belden, the first mayor of San Jose. Like Townsend, he was a member of San Jose No. 10 from 1854–59.

WASHINGTON STREET

One of the first streets O'Farrell christened was in honor of George Washington. In time, four more San Francisco streets would be named for Masonic presidents: Jackson, Polk, Buchanan, and Franklin.

STANFORD STREET

A curiously small strip considering its namesake, Stanford Street pays homage to Leland Stanford, former governor of California and one of the Big Four railroad tycoons. Stanford helped found Michigan City No. 47 in 1855 in California's Gold Country.

SLOAT BOULEVARD

Commodore John D. Sloat—the man who claimed California for the U.S., and a Mason in New York—first lent his name to what's now Sansome Street. Around 1919, his name reappeared on this main drag through the westside.

REVERE AVENUE

This street in the Bayview is named for Joseph Warren Revere, son of Paul Revere—hero of the American Revolution and a former grand master of Massachusetts. The younger Revere was part of the force that raised the Bear Flag at Sonoma in 1846.

STEVENSON STREET

Named for Jonathan Drake Stevenson, the state's first grand master and a charter member of California No. 1. Stevenson arrived as commander of a regiment of volunteers in the Mexican-American War and later made a fortune in mining and real estate.

RIZAL STREET

The SoMA Pilipinas Cultural District includes several streets named for Filipino national heroes, including Masons Jose Rizal y Mercado and Andres Bonifacio, leaders of the Philippine independence movement.

GILMAN AVENUE

Charles Gilman was nearly the first grand master of California. A past grand master of both New Hampshire and Maryland, Gilman helped organize the first Masonic convention in California and was nominated as its first leader. However, planning to return to Baltimore, he declined the honor.

FOLSOM STREET

Just south of Stevenson is a street named for Captain Joseph Libby Folsom, a member of Stevenson's staff and another member of California No. 1. The Sierra foothills town of Folsom is also named for him.

BRANNAN STREET

San Francisco's first millionaire, Samuel Brannan led a party of 250 Mormons to California in 1845 and founded the *California Star* newspaper. However, he and church leader Brigham Young eventually had a falling-out, and Brannan became a powerful figure in local politics. In 1855, the Grand Lodge effectively blackballed Brannan but, curiously, rescinded its order two years later, allowing him to join Occidental No. 22.

LEESE STREET

Jacob Primer Leese came to San Francisco in 1836 and built one of the first houses in the Yerba Buena settlement. In 1858, he joined California No. 1.

DRUMM STREET

This street was named for Lieutenant Richard Coulton Drum (with one m), an adjutant general of the Department of the Pacific during the Civil War and a member of Oriental No. 144.

DAVIS STREET

William Heath Davis, pilot of John Sutter's vessel up the Sacramento River, was a trader in 1830s San Francisco who helped found San Diego No. 35 in 1851.

TOWNSEND STREET

Just south of Brannan is Townsend, named for

GEARY BOULEVARD

One of the longest streets in San Francisco is named for General John White Geary, a colonel in the Mexican-American War and San Francisco's first mayor. Geary left San Francisco in 1852 and later served as a major general in the Civil War, was appointed governor of the Kansas territory, and was eventually elected governor of Pennsylvania. He was a charter member of California No. 1 and its first secretary.

ROLPH STREET

Named for James Rolph Jr., or "Sunny Jim," the longest-serving mayor of San Francisco and one of its most popular. Rolph, a member of California No. 1, resigned in 1931 to serve one term as governor of California.

BRENHAM PLACE

Captain Charles J. Brenham was a steamboat captain who came to San Francisco in 1849, became the city's second mayor, and in 1855 joined California No. 1.

FALLON PLACE

This tiny street in North Beach is named for Thomas Fallon, a member of San Jose No. 10 who recruited a company of volunteers during the Mexican-American War in 1846 and raised the U.S. flag over San Jose.

CROCKER-AMAZON

The neighborhood takes part of its name from the Crocker Holding Company, which once owned the land. Brothers Charles H. Crocker and William Henry Crocker, sons of the Southern Pacific Railroad tycoon Charles Crocker, were active members of California No. 1 and the local Scottish Rite.

HAIGHT-ASHBURY

Ground zero of the hippie movement is named for two Masons: Gov. Henry Haight, a member of Pacific No. 136, and Munroe Ashbury, a member of the Board of Supervisors who helped plan Golden Gate Park.

STANYAN STREET

Nearby, Stanyan takes its name from Charles Henry Stanyan, another city supervisor involved in the building of Golden Gate Park, who belonged to Oriental No. 144.

COLE STREET

William Beverly Cole was a surgeon and founder of the University of California Medical School. In 1862, he joined Occidental No. 22.

MASONIC AVENUE

So named for the old Masonic cemetery on what's now the University of San Francisco campus. The cemetery was shuttered in the 1920s during a wide-scale reinterment of the city's cemeteries to the town of Colma.

MASON STREET

Ironically, Mason Street bears no connection to Masonry—like Fort Mason, it's named for Col. Richard B. Mason, the fifth military governor of California.



HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT ON ONE OF THE CITY'S BUSIEST BLOCKS, THE MISSION MASONIC TEMPLE IS A LIVING LINK TO THE AREA'S WILD AND WOOLY PAST. BY GARY KAMIYA

THE CONNECTION TO HISTORY is all around as you wander San Francisco's Mission District. Now the center of the city's Latino community, it was formerly a predominantly Irish neighborhood with large numbers of Scandinavians, Italians, and Germans, as well. In more recent years, it's been the eye of the storm over gentrification and the impact of tech money on the town. While Mission Street itself has fallen on hard times, the stretch between 16th and Cesar Chavez was, during the 1950s, called the Miracle Mile—a thriving commercial district second in importance only to downtown.

An expansion of the Mission Masonic Temple in the 1930s resulted in the installation of a new ceramic tile façade featuring three Masonic symbol medallions.

Yet most pedestrians walking along Mission won't notice one of the most significant connections to the area's rich history. There, among the check-cashing outlets, produce markets, and pawnshops, is a massive dollar store. Unless they look up, however, they won't notice the building's elegant Art Deco exterior, whose strikingly horizontal design elements give it a Bauhaus quality. And even if they see that façade, they might not notice the three cryptic medallions high up on its

south end, including, at the top, the famous square and compass. This is the Mission Masonic Temple, where Masons have met for more than 125 years. Inconspicuously standing over the Mission, the lodge is strangely hard to spot, but a closer look provides vivid detail about the early days of Freemasonry in the American West and of San Francisco history dating back to the Gold Rush. As James Lintner, a longtime member of the lodge who now manages the building, says, "It's amazing how much history is packed into the place. The ghosts of past members are everywhere."

That history began in 1863, when 13 Masons gathered in the small second-floor parlor of a rooming house at the corner of 16th Street (then called Center) and Valencia, out in what was then San Francisco's suburban sticks. By that time, the city was already home to a dozen Masonic lodges, all of which met inside the newly built Grand Lodge temple at Post and Montgomery, in the heart of the "instant city" created by the Gold Rush. But as the nascent metropolis expanded, increasing numbers of its residents moved out of



The lodge hall of the 1897 Mission Masonic Temple features several ornate details, including stamped copper doors and intricate doorknobs.

The lodge room features a multicolor Eastern Star lighting motif in the ceiling.



Watch Online
CHECK OUT A VIDEO FEATURE ON THE MISSION MASONIC TEMPLE.

today's downtown and into the outlying neighborhoods, including the rural area around Mission Dolores.

Almost all the charter members of what would become **Mission № 169** lived within a few blocks of their proposed lodge. With varied and colorful occupations and often rollicking life stories, they were a representative cross-section of the working-class Mission. They included Daniel Hanlon, a ship's carpenter who lived near the Pioneer Race Course, eight blocks away at 24th Street; Mortimer Hopkins, a policeman who lived at Valencia and 16th next to the new lodge; Nathan W. Spaulding, a carpenter and gold miner who patented an improved type of saw and later became mayor of Oakland; James H. Welch, who ran a grocery and liquor business at 16th and 1st Avenue

crumbling old Spanish quarter full of bars, bullfights, and brothels—and the rest of the Mission District.

The new lodge proved successful, and by the late 1890s, Mission № 169 had grown to more than 300 members (it would top 500 in 1900), and the decision was made to relocate to larger quarters nearer the heart of the district. The cornerstone of the new Mission temple was laid in 1897, and the building formally dedicated on December 29, with the traditional pouring of corn, wine, and oil. Another happy event took place a few years later, when the building's mortgage was paid off and ceremonially burned. In later years, several more lodges would share space there, including **Amity № 370, Bethlehem № 453, Golden West № 455, Mt. Moriah № 44, and Seaport № 500.**

The new temple was—and remains—a grand affair. Lintner, who has deep connections to the lodge (his father, Robert D. Lintner, was a past master), calls it one of the most impressive Masonic buildings in the state. With its imposing copper doors, gorgeous hand-made wall coverings, chandeliers, and stained-glass windows, the room exudes dignity and elegance.

The site was impressive outside as well: The imposing brick building featured a three-part horizontal order, large Palladian windows opening onto Mission Street, and a mansard roof. It survived the 1906 earthquake and fire. But in 1938, when the lodge was expanded, its façade was covered with the modernist ceramic tile design scheme that passers-by see today.

That's been a point of some contention. Kevin Hackett, a member of the lodge and the architect who designed Freemason's Hall inside the California Memorial Masonic Temple, was among a group of members interested in daylighting some of the old façade and uncovering a bit more of the building's history. However, those changes proved impractical and were eventually scrapped.

And so the Mission Temple is simultaneously a preservationist's dream and nightmare, a rare example of a historic building that's too much of a good thing: a wondrous 19th-century structure, covered by a 1930s façade that's also a significant piece of local architecture. Hiding in plain sight, the lodge is a forgotten treasure, a living link to 150 years of history in the ever-changing Mission. 

(now Guerrero); and Henry Hock, a barber who later ran a drayage business, with an exclusive contract to deliver beer for the Mission Railroad Brewery. For these men and others who joined Mission Lodge after it formally opened in September 1863, it was far easier to have a lodge close to home. Theirs, they proposed, would be the first "neighborhood lodge" in the city.

It's easy to understand why the members would advocate for a lodge to come to them. Consider what it took to get from the Mission to downtown at the time: It wasn't until 1860 that an entrepreneur named Francois Pioche opened the Market Street Railway, a steam line that ran out Valencia Street to 17th Street. That, in turn, connected to Mission Plank Road, which linked up with Dolores—a



AT THE FRENCH-SPEAKING **LA PARFAITE UNION № 17**, A FRANCOPHONE LEGACY LIVES ON. BY BRIAN ROBIN

EVERY TIME David Chemla-Vogel takes his seat in the east of **La Parfaite Union № 17**, he feels the weight of history, the responsibility of shepherding a 173-year-old tradition forward. "I'm bringing this lodge into the future, not just the present," he says. "What I do will keep this lodge going."

La Parfaite Union, chartered in San Francisco in 1852 as the state's first French-speaking Masonic lodge, is certainly an important historic relic. And yet, as Chemla-Vogel says, it's not simply a monument to the past. Rather, it's a tradition that's kept alive by adapting to the times.

That push-pull between history and tradition on one hand, and innovation on the other, is and has always been a hallmark of the lodge. Even its origin story contains a seminar's worth of history on the French immigrant experience in San Francisco—not to mention on 19th-century Masonic schisms and continental high-degree Masonry.

At the time of its founding, in 1852, French immigrants made up one of the largest ethnic groups in Gold Rush San Francisco, second only to Germans. Much of North Beach, and later Noe Valley, were

French neighborhoods. The French dominated the laundry business, wine importing, and gambling at the Barbary Coast casinos. Groups like the French Mutual Benevolent Society and Alliance Française provided relief and support to the city's Gallic population, helping earn San Francisco the nickname the Paris of the Pacific.

Despite that considerable influence on the city, the "French Lodge" of San Francisco was largely derived from members of another French-speaking locale: Louisiana. There, several different Masonic groups, practicing in multiple languages and with numerous rites, regularly (and often rancorously) competed with one another. Amidst one such split, in the mid-19th century, the first two masters of La Parfaite Union № 17—Hubert Kidel and Lucien Hermann, both high-ranking figures in the Grand Lodge of Louisiana—resettled in San Francisco and formed their new lodge.

Over the years, La Parfaite Union served as a beacon for French-speaking immigrants in San Francisco, not all of them from France. Perhaps the lodge's most notable member was Domenico Ghirardelli,

Members of La Parfaite Union № 17 celebrate inside Freemasons' Hall in San Francisco.



Members of the lodge celebrate at their annual Banquet de la Saint Jean, held June 23 at Freemasons' Hall.

whose chocolate empire is still located near Fort Mason. (Ghirardelli was Italian by way of Peru; it was likely his business partner, the French-born Auguste Girard, who brought him into the lodge.)

That international flavor was an important part of the lodge's early years, and it's still reflected in its unique first degree. Unlike other California lodges, which use the Preston-Webb Masonic ritual, La Parfaite Union received special authority in the 19th century to practice its own French degree, which is based more closely on the Ancient York Rite form. Whereas the California rite tends to emphasize the third, or Master Mason, degree, La Parfaite Union's first degree is the real showstopper, clocking in at more than three hours long.

"Masonry is something very personal, very intellectual," says Georges Vieux, a past master of the lodge and its current prospect manager. "It's better to practice Masonry in your mother language, because what you are learning in Masonry is an interaction with the language."

There's also the cultural component: Vieux, who is a board member of the Alliance Française and has been involved in the city's Bastille Day celebration, says the lodge is a way to preserve and promote French cultural heritage in the city. In fact, Vieux is practically a living archive of lodge history. He and fellow member Sebastien Taveau wrote a 30-page paper on the history of French Masonry in California and the origins of their rite which they presented in 2019 to the International Conference of Masonic Research in Bordeaux, France.

That paper was only the beginning, Vieux says. Now he has the responsibility to keep the story going.

"For me, it's never finished," he says. "It's never-ending and I continue to be passionate about the history of this lodge. We continue to talk about French Masonry in the United States. That was the end of the paper, but not the end of the history." ♦



NEXT STOP: LODGE

AT SAN FRANCISCO
No 120, A CREW OF
STREETCAR WORKERS
ARE MAKING THEIRS THE
"MUNI LODGE."

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL, at least historically, for San Francisco's lodges to be dominated by members of a single professional field. **Forest Hill No 534**, for instance, was for years known as the "Doctors' Lodge" because practically its entire membership were faculty or students at the University of California School of Dentistry. **Jewel No 374**, on the other hand, was a daylight lodge that met during the day because so many of its members worked in the theater. In the early 20th century, **Parnassus No 388** was similarly dominated by police officers, the most famous of whom was the "incorruptible" Prohibition-era police captain Charles Goff.

Today, the industry-based lodge is a little less common—but, as the membership of **San Francisco No 120** shows, not completely extinct. Today, that lodge includes an entire streetcar's worth of members

who work as operators, engineers, drivers, and supervisors with the San Francisco Metropolitan Transit Authority. Call theirs the "Muni Lodge."

That's no accident, of course. Most of the Muni-affiliated members of the lodge came in through their connection to one another, and in particular to Sal Tandoc, the current senior warden and a superintendent with the SFMTA who's been with the department for 26 years. It was through Tandoc that Garry Fontillas, a streetcar operator and the current junior warden, was first introduced to Masonry. So, too, was Clarito Balquedra Jr., the current senior deacon, who operates the historic F-line trains from Fisherman's Wharf down the Embarcadero.

In fact, seven officers of the lodge are transit operators with Muni. That includes Jonathan Martinez, the lodge marshal (and a streetcar operator); Jim Meade, the senior steward (an electronic maintenance technician); and Ricky Hermoso, the junior deacon (a maintenance tech).

They, in turn, have brought more coworkers into the lodge, to the point that Tandoc says he's lost count

of how many there actually are. He estimates that perhaps 30 Muni men have joined the lodge since 2019—which also makes the lodge one of the fastest-growing in the state. One of those recently raised members is Carlo Gonzaga, who works as a transit supervisor for

THE LODGE INCLUDES AN ENTIRE STREETCAR'S WORTH OF MEMBERS WHO WORK AS OPERATORS, ENGINEERS, DRIVERS, AND SUPERVISORS WITH THE SAN FRANCISCO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY.

Muni, making sure trains are running on time and rerouting disrupted train and bus lines. "Having a few coworkers in the lodge def-

initely made it easier for me to meet the rest of the group," he says. "But more than that, the fellowship's just really good there."

As for what kind of vibe a lodge full of Muni guys creates, Tandoc says the responsibilities inherent in their job make them a reliable and engaged set. "The people who've decided to pursue this vision and mission, they're all very active in the lodge," he says. "They're all very supportive. They participate. They volunteer."

And, presumably, they make a point of arriving on time. ♦ —Ian A. Stewart

More than two dozen members of the lodge work for the SFMTA in one fashion or another, including seven lodge officers.



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CABLE CAR GRIPMAN



BERNARD BASSIL
TRANSIT OPERATOR



CHADI NICOLAS
LIGHT RAIL OPERATOR



SALVADOR TANDOC
SFMTA DIVISION MANAGER/
OPERATIONS



CLARITO BALQUEDRA JR.
HISTORIC STREETCAR OPERATOR

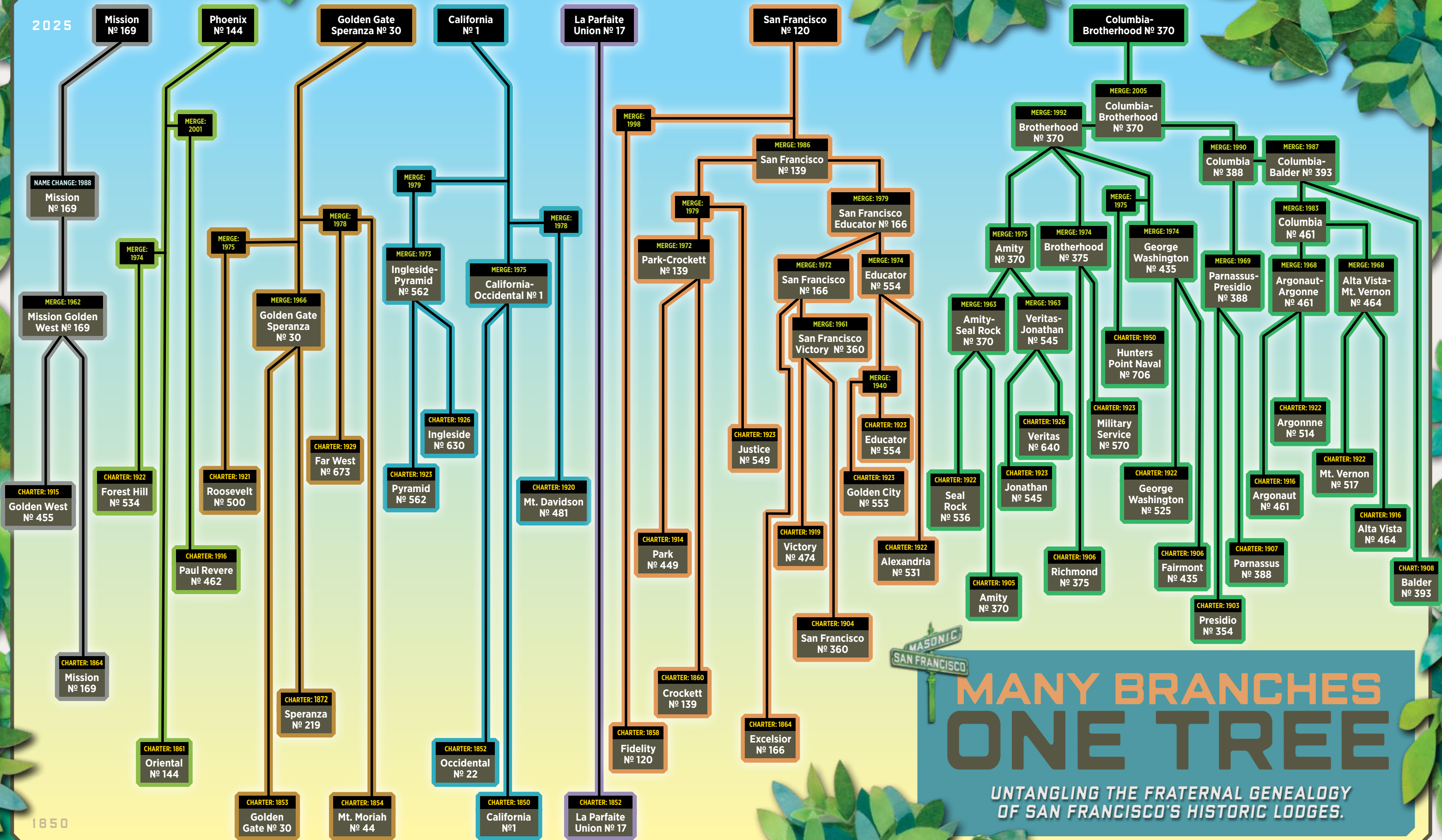


GARRY FONTILLAS
TRANSIT OPERATOR



EDMUND ENRIQUEZ
AUTOMOTIVE MECHANIC
SUPERVISOR

2025

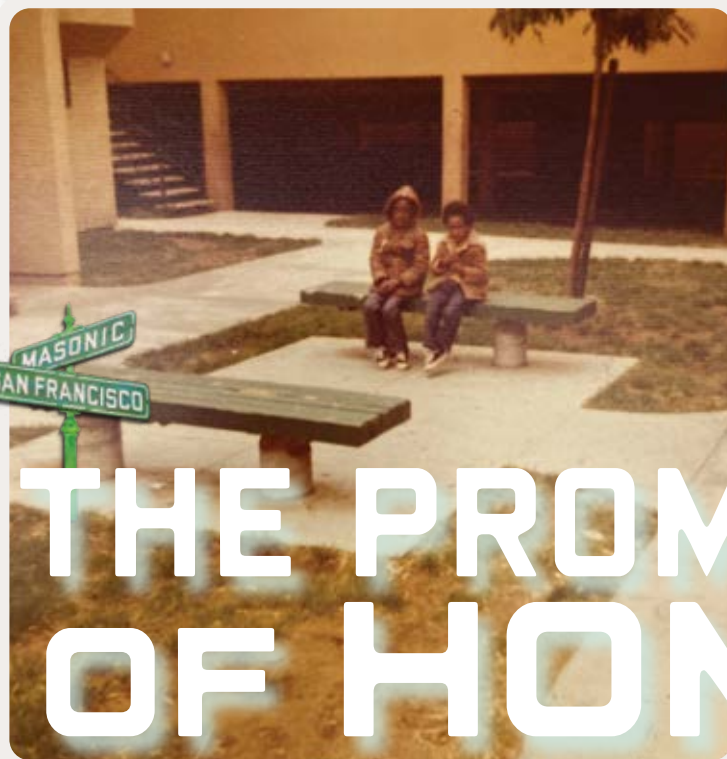


1850



MANY BRANCHES ONE TREE

UNTANGLING THE FRATERNAL GENEALOGY
OF SAN FRANCISCO'S HISTORIC LODGES.



THE PRINCE HALL APARTMENTS, BUILT BY THE FRATERNAL ORDER DURING SAN FRANCISCO'S CONTROVERSIAL URBAN RENEWAL, REMAIN AS A TESTAMENT TO THE CITY'S BLACK HISTORY.
BY IAN A. STEWART

ALTHOUGH PRINCE HALL Masonry can trace an unbroken history in San Francisco all the way back to 1852, there's scarcely any official acknowledgement of its long presence in the city. None of its lodges are deemed historic landmarks, no bronze plaques exist to mark its meeting spaces, and no streets or neighborhoods are named for it. Instead, the most significant structure bearing the name of the historically Black fraternity is a nondescript low-income apartment complex in the Fillmore. That may register as a surprise, but it's somewhat appropriate: The story of the apartments' construction encapsulates much of the African American experience in the Bay Area, for better and worse.

Today, the Prince Hall Apartments, a federally subsidized housing development completed in the 1970s, remain a testament to a painful era in the city's history, during which San Francisco's Black population suffered a mass displacement from which it never recovered. However, the history behind those homes shows that nothing is ever quite as simple as black and white.

"URBAN RENEWAL"

Originally, San Francisco's Prince Hall lodges met in North Beach, eventually moving, post-WWII, to a modest Victorian residential building at 2804 Bush Street. At the time, the Fillmore neighborhood was the center of the city's Black community, with a buzzing commercial corridor known as the "Harlem of the West" for its bustling jazz scene. Between 1940 and 1950, the Black population of the area swelled from 2,000 to 15,000.

Despite that growth, the area was one of the first targets of the city's newly established Redevelopment Agency for urban renewal, which aimed to bulldoze what it described as a "blighted" ghetto. The plan was part of a nationwide "slum clearance" undertaken in the hopes of stemming the middle-class flight to the suburbs. Almost as a rule, these redevelopments were focused on low-income and nonwhite neighborhoods. In San Francisco, the Fillmore was ground zero for redevelopment.

The ambitious project was slow to develop, and then came on fast. The first shovels went into the ground in 1958, and within a year some 28 blocks of mostly dilapidated Victorians and modest storefronts were demolished, replaced with high-rise towers and the new, six-lane Geary Expressway. It's estimated that 8,000 residents of the Western Addition were displaced as a result, including entire swaths of the majority-Black Fillmore and the Japanese Nihonmachi area across Geary. A great many of those former residents never returned, while others reported

being intimidated into selling their homes under market value or undercompensated for their lots.

That experience led to significant community opposition to the plan. As a result, the second phase of the project, launched in 1963, involved far more concessions to local residents, many of whom organized alongside labor and neighborhood groups. For instance, the city agreed to set aside 30 percent of all new units for low-income residents, and to guarantee displaced residents a spot in the new buildings. Rents in the new housing projects were capped at \$185 a month for a four-bedroom unit, with federal subsidies bringing that number much lower for some.

Community-based groups were also invited to bid on many of the individual developments. Backed by financing secured under the National Housing Act, groups including Bethel AME church, the Construction and General Laborers Union Local No. 261, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church each sponsored housing developments within the zone. The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Prince Hall Masons, headquartered just a stone's throw away on Bush Street, submitted its proposal in 1966 and, a year later, Redevelopment Agency head Justin Herman, speaking as a guest of honor at its annual Grand Session, announced the fraternity had been awarded the project to develop Block 773, bounded by Golden Gate Avenue, Fillmore, McAllister, and Webster streets.

A POLITICAL PLAYER

It's not entirely surprising that Prince Hall Masons of the era turned to home-building. The fraternity in the late 1960s was especially keen on such programs: It developed two small apartment complexes in San Diego, the Euclid Apartments and the Prince Hall

THE STORY OF THE APARTMENTS' CONSTRUCTION ENCAPSULATES MUCH OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN THE BAY AREA—FOR BETTER AND WORSE.

Apartments, under the supervision of Past Grand Master Paul E. Washington. And in 1969 it partnered with two other nonprofits to sponsor the 21-unit Hoover Senior Housing apartments in Los Angeles using federal financing. Years later, it would develop similar plans in South Berkeley, although that project stalled out. Even earlier, in the 1950s, the fraternity purchased land for a senior home in Tulare County. Additionally, the fraternity in 1952 launched the Prince Hall Credit Union to provide loans to members at a time when discrimination against Black Americans in housing and banking was all too common.

The apartment development can also be seen as an example of the fraternity's growing social and political capital. By the 1960s, San Francisco boasted eight

The Prince Hall Apartment complex in San Francisco's Fillmore District, which was sponsored by the historically Black fraternity, included 91 units of federally subsidized housing—part of the controversial redevelopment of the city's Western Addition neighborhood in the 1960s and '70s.



Prince Hall Grand Master Harry A. Brewer (center) is joined by Mayor Joseph Alioto (right) and Redevelopment Agency head Justin Herman at the groundbreaking for the Prince Hall Apartments in 1970.

Prince Hall lodges (in order, **Hannibal No 1, Victoria No 3, Bayview No 64, Jerusalem No 72, Twin Peaks No 80, Charles H. Tinsey No 92, George W. Wilson No 101, and Chester A. Girard No 106**) and had around 7,000 members on its rolls. Across the bay in Oakland, another 10 lodges had been established. That made Prince Hall an organizing force within San Francisco's still-small Black community—which peaked at about 13 percent of the city's overall population.

With the Prince Hall Grand Lodge acting as sponsor (and board of directors head John Wiley as lead), the apartment project called for a village-like complex of low- and moderate-priced homes, ranging from studio units to 3-bedroom models. The endeavor was the first in San Francisco to be both designed and built by Black-owned architectural and construction firms. In the first case, that fell to the outfit of Robert Kennard and Arthur Silvers, influential Los Angeles-based architects who'd been inspired by modernist designers including Richard Neutra. The pair had also developed the Watts Happening Cultural Center in Los Angeles, the Temple Akiba synagogue, and several local schools around L.A. Kennard was also responsible for much of the Thurgood Marshall College at UC San Diego, while Silvers, who'd been chairman of the Congress of Racial Equity in L.A. in the 1960s, designed the Strawflower Shopping Center in Half Moon Bay. The Winston Burnett Construction

Company, one of the few Black contracting firms in San Francisco at the time, was responsible for the building of the apartments, hiring as many as 100 workers, nearly all Black, and many of whom were trained on the job. In all, the project cost \$1.8 million (\$149 million today).

On June 27, 1970, Prince Hall Grand Master Harry A. Brewer, in full Masonic regalia, joined Herman and Mayor Joseph Alioto to drive the ceremonial first shovels into the ground. The development, which would include 91 units and parking for 72 vehicles, was opened in 1972.

A LEGACY HITS HOME

For more than 20 years, the fraternity operated the low-slung apartments at 1170 McAllister Street. However, financial challenges in later years forced the Department of Housing and Urban Development to take

over responsibility for the loan from the fraternity, and in the 1990s, the complex was sold to Bethel AME. That church, with its deep roots in the Western Addition neighborhood, had previously constructed the Friendship Manor development immediately adjacent to the Prince Hall Apartments, running it as a co-op owned by its parishioners. Around the same time, the church also took ownership of the nearby Freedom West, Laurel Gardens, and Thomas Paine apartment blocks. In so doing, the church has helped the community retain a toehold in the rapidly changing city.

In the end, the redevelopment program was seen as a massive failure, one that nearly wiped out the city's Black community and decimated what had once been a vibrant, if poor, neighborhood. Nearly 15,000 people were displaced from the Western Addition, 60 percent of whom never returned. Almost three-quarters of Black-owned businesses in the area were permanently closed. Out of about 22,000 Black residents that lived in the Fillmore in 1970, there are now just 6,000. What had once been the Harlem of the West was reduced to yet another poor neighborhood, but no longer a cultural mecca.

Standing at the very heart of that effort, the Prince Hall Apartments are a reminder of the area's proud and troubled past—and the complicated legacy that would define its future. ♦



The “Crusader” mural by Arthur Mathews, a 22-by-20-foot painting that once hung over the Commandery Hall of the Grand Lodge Temple.

THE MISSING MASTERPIECE

THE INFLUENTIAL ARTISTS **ARTHUR AND LUCIA MATHEWS** ONCE DESIGNED THE INTERIOR OF THE GRAND LODGE TEMPLE. SO WHERE'S IT ALL GONE? BY IAN A. STEWART

IT WAS MORE THAN 40 years ago that Thomas Portue first gazed up at the massive painting of a crusading knight on horseback inside San Francisco's old Grand Lodge temple. The colors were a little off, but in its style, tone, and theme, Portue—an art restorer by trade—instantly recognized the hand of Arthur F. Mathews, one of California's most important artists.

In fact, Mathews' fingerprints were all over the former temple at 25 Van Ness, which housed the Grand Lodge of California from 1913 to 1958. Together with his wife, Lucia Kleinhans Mathews, with whom he ran an influential studio, Mathews in 1913 won the commission to design and execute almost all of the interior

decor for the 20,000-square-foot building, including paintings, carpeting, furniture, moldings, and more. That made the site one of the most important examples of the work of Arthur and Lucia Mathews, artists who “were a guiding and refining influence on the exuberant development of San Francisco's cultural identity,” as the Oakland Museum of California curator Harvey Jones once wrote.

And yet now, practically all traces of that commission are gone, scattered to the winds or plastered over.

Today the crusader mural—an arched 20-by-22-foot canvas, one of six large paintings Arthur Mathews created for the temple's Commandery Hall—is in

RIGHT: The mural, which was overpainted in the 1970s, is now in storage with a private collector. Many other Mathews pieces from the Grand Lodge Temple have been lost, destroyed, or plastered over.

BELOW: A carved and painted doorframe in the Mathews' unique fusion of period styles, with detail (bottom).



storage, part of Portue's private collection. Additional Mathews pieces from the temple are in other private collectors' hands. Still more are unaccounted for entirely. The reasons for this are numerous, beginning with the 1970s sale of the temple, during which many of the furnishings were sold off at auction. In other cases, pieces were destroyed, misplaced, or otherwise lost track of. Others were literally painted or plastered over. (Portue says he obtained the mural from the developer hired in the 1980s to convert the temple into office space.)

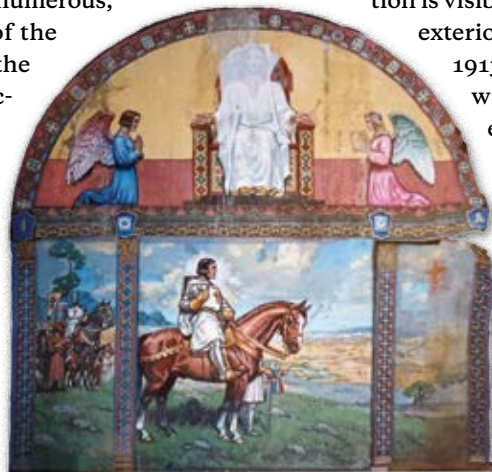
For years, the 25 Van Ness collection seems to have flown under the radar. But with the recent surge of interest in California Arts and Crafts style, the Masonic temple project stands as something like a lost testament to what might have been.

A RENAISSANCE COUPLE

Along with figures like Bernard Maybeck, Julia Morgan, and William Keith, Charles and Lucia Mathews were among the leading figures of the California Decorative Arts style. In form and function, their work blended the arts of painting, architecture, and furniture making, each emphasizing the beauty of nature. It also married the American Renaissance style of the time, with its allusions to ancient Greece and Rome, with the Arts and Crafts mien first made popular by William Morris in Britain. Crucially, the Mathewses added a third element: California itself. "The indigenous colors and the local informal life-style," Jones wrote, "combine with the art historicism and the craftsman ethos ... to produce the comfortably elegant style that is uniquely Mathews."

After the 1906 earthquake and fire, the pair were at the forefront of a movement that aimed to rebuild San Francisco along not only utilitarian lines, but artistic ones too. Arthur Mathews, as one of the most important instructors at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, where he met Lucia (then a student), was well positioned to lead that charge. Already respected as one of the preeminent muralists of his time, Mathews worked closely with Bay Area architects including Albert Pissis (of the Mechanics' Institute Library) and Timothy Pflueger [see page 12] to place the couple's work—including paintings, but also decorative chairs, dressers, tables, wall panels, and more—into private homes and public institutions.

Nowhere was this more evident than at 25 Van Ness. Designed by the firm of Bliss and Faville—the pair behind the St. Francis Hotel and the Geary



Theater, both of which Arthur Mathews contributed artwork to—the Van Ness temple was designed as a monument to Freemasonry. "The stamp of distinction is visible on every square foot of its stone exterior," read a review of the temple in 1913. "Its inner walls and halls are wrought in forms whose newness enchants the eye, yet whose oldness warms the memory."

The Mathewses were contracted through their studio, called the Furniture Shop, to produce the furnishings for the temple. The bill for that ran to nearly \$75,000 (equivalent to \$2.3 million today). It was the Furniture Shop's first and largest-ever commission—the creative and commercial apex of an acclaimed partnership.

There's no indication that Mathews was a Mason. Rather, says Richard Pettler, a Bay Area collector, Mathews moved in a circle of developers, architects, and arts patrons that would have included more than a few Masons. The architect Walter Danforth Bliss, for example, was an active member of **California No. 1**.

THE EMPTY FRAME

Today, works by Arthur and Lucia Mathews are in museum collections throughout the country, including the Smithsonian in Washington and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. At private auctions, paintings and furniture by the pair regularly fetch tens of thousands of dollars. In fact, pieces related to the Masonic temple occasionally surface online. Gallerist Gus Bostrom, who operates an Alameda showroom devoted to Arts and Crafts furniture, has bought and sold numerous Mathews chairs, tables, and other decorations from the old temple, including a 13-foot-tall hand-carved wall panel that once flanked the master's station in one of the temple's lodge rooms featuring the figure of Prudentia, the Roman goddess of virtue. Bostrom recently acquired a collection of Arthur Mathews' papers related to the commission, including drawings of the Masonic working tools. "The Masonic temple project represented Arthur and Lucia Mathews at the height of their powers," he says.

That so much of that work has vanished is a tragedy, wrote Harvey Jones, who organized a book and traveling exhibition on the Mathewses' work in 2006. "For such a large undertaking, it is amazing how few pieces of the temple's history remain."

And so the Mathewses' connection to the temple remains as a forgotten piece of Bay Area art history, plastered over but still enduring, lurking just beneath the surface. ❖

TOP: PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS PORTUE;
LEFT: WINNI WINTERMEYER (2)



MASONIC ASSISTANCE

It Takes a Village

WHEN IT COMES TO CARING FOR ELDERLY PARENTS, THE MASONIC OUTREACH SERVICES TEAM HAS YOUR BACK. BY IAN A. STEWART

MANY MASONS BELONG to what's called the sandwich generation, responsible for providing care both to children who are not yet fully grown and to parents in their twilight years. That's an enormous responsibility, and one that comes with considerable stress and anxiety. Especially when caring for elderly parents or parents-in-law, navigating the "the second conversation"—involving sensitive topics like finances, estate planning, and living arrangements—is understandably difficult.

But you don't have to go it alone. In Masonic Outreach Services, members have licensed care managers who can guide members through the finer points of one of life's big challenges. Here, members of the MOS care team offer some much-needed advice on caring for elderly parents.

EARLY SPADEWORK PAYS OFF

A common refrain from professionals is that it's important to get ahead of those difficult conversations about a parent's living arrangements, finances, and other sensitive matters. "Prioritize these conversations long before you need them," says Roberto

Attalla, a licensed clinical social worker and manager of MOS in Covina. Shelly Jioia, a care manager with MOS in San Diego, agrees. "This should foster less pushback when decisions need to be made," she says. "Sometimes just spending time with loved ones and asking questions regarding their future plans will enlighten you to the reality of the situation."

KEEP AN EYE OUT

It can be hard to separate normal patterns of aging from more serious health matters. (Were the keys simply misplaced, or is this early-onset dementia?) Getting more involved can help you distinguish between the two. "Certain physical, emotional, and environmental indicators can suggest a need for additional support," advises Espie Esparza, a care manager in Los Angeles. She says to keep an eye out for things like clutter and uncleanliness around the house, mail piling up, or bills going unpaid. Self-neglect, such as poor hygiene, undereating, or overeating, can also indicate a problem. Medication misuse—taking the wrong dosage or forgetting to take medication—may also indicate cognitive decline,

Esperanza says. In such cases, she recommends speaking with the parent’s primary care physician, who can refer you to specialists such as nutritionists, social workers, and physical therapists.

PLAN IT OUT

There’s no getting around this next bit: “When you notice that your loved one’s health is declining, it is important to realize that your involvement in managing their care will also increase,” says Kai Hoyer, a care manager in Central California. That doesn’t mean the entire responsibility should fall on just one set of shoulders, though. Esparza advises calling in other family members or neighbors who can help in case of an emergency. She also suggests making a calendar of caregiving “shifts,” including having someone on backup duty.

Amy Averweg, director of Masonic Family and Senior Outreach Services, agrees with that, and says it’s important to keep that care schedule, plus a list of all medications, appointments, and important contacts, together in a binder or shared app so everyone on the care team can track health updates, symptoms, and upcoming tasks.



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STAY SOCIAL

A care calendar can also help you ensure that parents have activities lined up and that they aren’t sitting home alone all day. “As your loved ones find social events they enjoy, their overall well-being will be immensely improved,” Gioia says. It’s also one of the most effective ways to stave off dementia. “Consistent, small, and simple activities seem to work best,” Esparza says.

TALK ABOUT END-OF-LIFE ISSUES NOW

It’s imperative to have this conversation before the issue is imminent. “While it can be difficult, the sooner you know the wishes of your loved ones, the more time you’ll have for funeral arrangements, cremation procedures, and more,” Hoyer says. She points to a “Five Wishes” form (see QR code at left) you can download to help get their intentions down on paper.

Speaking of which, having all the relevant paperwork together is another must, says Angela Dickson, the manager of MOS in Union City. Especially if your parent has a Do Not Resuscitate order, “It’s imperative you have a signed Physician’s Orders for

Life-Sustaining Treatment, or POLST, displayed visibly within the home,” she says. It’s a hot-pink form that police and EMTs use to guide treatment in a life-threatening emergency.

BE REALISTIC

It can be hard to broach the subject of moving a loved one out of their home and into a memory-care or assisted living community. But those environments can help your parent make the most the time they have. “It’s important to think about them on their hardest days,” Dickson says. “We tend to minimize how difficult those days can be. But think

“As your loved ones find social events they enjoy, their overall well-being will be immensely improved.”

about what that really looks like—the obstacles to normal routines, behaviors or arguments that arise, safety concerns. Those are the considerations to think about when weighing whether it might be time to transition to the next level of care.”

KNOW YOUR OWN NEEDS

On a personal level, it’s also important to guard against your own level of burnout—the emotional and mental exhaustion that comes with taking care of someone else. Hoyer recommends coming up with a list of tasks around the house that you can use help with—and then not being shy about asking others for that help. That might include grocery shopping, picking up medication, rides to appointments, meal prep, or household chores and yard work. “You can hand that list to friends and family who want to help but often don’t know how,” she says. “Then they can choose what type of assistance works best for them.”

That in turn should help you gain a bit of respite. “Remember to take care of yourself by allowing down time, pampering yourself, going for walks, and separating from the situation momentarily to recharge,” Esparza says. She recommends seeking out support groups and meeting up for coffee to share tips. “Connecting with others in similar situations can provide emotional support, practical advice, and a sense of community.” ✦



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Keith Jones

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California Freemason: How did you discover Masonry?

Keith Jones: I actually became involved with the youth orders first, for about 10 years before I became a Mason. My kids were in Job's Daughters and DeMolay, and I wanted to be there to support them. I DJ'ed dances for the Job's Daughters in Orange Grove, and also rose through the DeMolay leadership and became a jurisdiction-level advisor. As soon as I was able to free up some of my time, I became a Mason myself.

CFM: What's most meaningful to you about Masonry?

KJ: It sounds cliché, but it's the personal growth that comes with hearing the ritual again and again. You don't absorb it your first time, but as you experience it multiple times and even go through the line and become a lodge officer, you start to apply those lessons in your regular life.

CFM: What inspired you to give back to the Foundation?

KJ: To me, it feels more impactful to give back alongside others who are just as passionate and committed to the craft as me, rather than just donating by myself. It sets an example and inspires others to give back that same way as well. To those that are considering giving back, we need to remember the 24-inch gauge. As Masons, we must devote our time in aid of others.

CFM: You've held several leadership positions in your lodge, the Scottish Rite, and the Shrine. What kinds of issues are you focused on in those roles?

KJ: I want to prioritize building a stronger mechanism for prospecting. Having a background in Greek fraternity life as a member of Phi Kappa Psi, I understand that prospects want to feel a genuine sense of camaraderie and brotherhood. So we need to host more fulfilling social events where people can really sit down and get to know one another. —JUSTIN JAPITANA



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PHOTOGRAPH BY JUSTIN L. STEWART

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