

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 31 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 15 1978

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
**Dunns Block** (current: **Dunns Block Building**)  
AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
**725 Washington Street**

CITY, TOWN  
**Oakland**

STATE  
**California**

VICINITY OF  
\_\_\_\_\_

CODE  
**06**

COUNTY  
**Alameda**

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
**7th**

CODE  
**001**

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: <b>condemned</b>

**OWNER OF PROPERTY** As of 3-1-78

NAME **Thomas and Robin Wolf**

STREET & NUMBER  
**5449 Thomas Ave.**

CITY, TOWN **Oakland** VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ STATE **Ca 94618**

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **Alameda County Court House, Recorder**

STREET & NUMBER **12th and Oak Sts.**

CITY, TOWN **Oakland** STATE **California 94612**

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE **none**

DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

--Building was constructed as a three-story (with basement) brick "block" hotel, with four stately bay windows on the upper floors. Interiors were finished like residential Victorian homes of the same period--grained redwood wainscoting, open corridors, ornate wood trim, high baseboards, moldings, winding stairs, open corridors. Built as a hotel, it also had two large skylights illuminating the upper floors. All walls and ceilings were plastered; ceilings were curved and sculptured, with rosettes on ceilings from which hung gas lights. Large front and rear rooms had large sliding doors opening onto other rooms. Ceilings were 14 feet tall.

--Today: Building, though deteriorated, is in surprisingly good condition, little altered from 1876. It is structurally sound, except for needed reinforcing in the masonry shell. Wood trim retains much of the original finish, including graining. All doors are present. Plaster in ceilings is cracked and needs replacing. Otherwise, the interior is essentially unaltered (except for the nearly unobtrusive addition of surface plumbing pipes, which can be easily removed).

The exterior is essentially unchanged (though badly deteriorated). A fire escape has been added to the facade. Roof ornamentation as been removed. The retail street-level facade has been modified.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1876

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

John Dunn

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

--Architecture: an example of vintage Italianate Victorian architecture of the period, applying the design of residential style to a commercial hotel. Also an excellent example of late 19th century commercial block, with street retail space, and cavernous storage basement. Typical of the flamboyant statement of the builder's notion of his own importance in the community. It sits among many other commercial buildings of the same vintage to form a substantial historic district made up of similar commercial "blocks" (which themselves are about to be rehabilitated into an "old Oakland" district). The interior of this building is in far better condition than those of the other buildings. The facade is unusually ornate with carvings; the cornices are splendid; The facade is supported by cast iron pillars, cast in San Francisco in the 1870's.

--Commerce: this buildings, like others in the district, was part of the great new downtown which rose immediately following the arrival of the transcontinental in 1869. This hotel was located just around the corner from the main 7th Street passenger station. It is part of what remains of the vital shopping and hotel district of Oakland of the 1870's through the 1900's. As commerce moved uptown to newer, taller buildings, the building--along with the district--quickly deteriorated. Most recently it served as transient hotel and as used-goods shop in a skid-row district. During and for some time after World War II, the area was a shopping district of migrant Mexican workers who lived nearby. Until very recently, the aged proprietor of the junk store downstairs still sold shoes to the agents of migrant workers, at fifty cents a pair. As the whole district --including a street called "Victorian Row"--is restored and rehabilitated, it is expected that the building will be an important part of a new thriving commercial and office district.

--Community Planning: Building is in an 8-block area recently zoned Historic Preservation. City has recently applied for a grant to study a larger 18-block area for possible redevelopment as an "Old Oakland". The adjacent 2 blocks are already a designated historic redevelopment project involving \$16 million in public and private investment. Adjacent to Old Oakland is a 15-block urban renewal project. All of this is part of the rehabilitation of a skid-row old downtown.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History compiled from various sources by Mr. Wolf, the owner, who is also professor of Oakland History at Laney College and at the Oakland Museum. Sources include various numbers of the Oakland City Directory, 1880-1900; also, City map books of the same period.

(SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 37 ft. x 100 ft.

QUADRANGLE NAME Oakland West Quadrangle 7.5'

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 10 563900 4183720

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

E

G

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D

F

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Thomas M. Wolf , Professor of Oakland History, (and owner)

ORGANIZATION

Laney College, and Oakland Museum

DATE

2-6-78

STREET & NUMBER

5449 Thomas Ave.

TELEPHONE

(415) 655-7384

CITY OR TOWN

Oakland

STATE

Ca. 94618

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Knox Mellon*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 5/22/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: *Bill Laborich*

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 11/15/78

DATE Nov 13, 1978

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Summary of architectural significance:

The Dunns Block is the only surviving Victorian block in Oakland which is unaltered. The interior is in near-mint condition, needing only surface refinishing. Floor layouts from the original are undisturbed; ornamental detail is nearly complete.

The building is also the only one of its vintage which retains an out-building--a three-story tower containing toilets, connected to the main building by ramps. The out-building was probably built at the same time (1876) or shortly after.

The large open basement reveals many of the period's building practices: massive brick foundations; heavy girders supported by 10-inch round wooden columns; oversize 4" by 14" ceiling joists resting on brick ledges at each end; and spacious vaults arching under the sidewalks.

In 102 years, the center of the building has settled only 3/4 inch below the level of the brick-supported periphery. As a result, this is the only building of its vintage in which the original doors and windows open and close easily.

The other buildings in the historic district must be rebuilt inside; this building is intact and structurally sound, unremodeled and unaltered. It will be restored rather than be rebuilt. It can also provide clues for the rebuilding of detail in the other buildings.

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Bibliography:

Bishop's Oakland Directory for 1879-1880  
(Directory Publishing Co., San Francisco, 1879) (pp. 8-11)

Sanborn Map Co., Insurance Maps of Oakland, California, 1902,  
(New York, 1902), (Volume I, p. 5)

Sanborn Map Co., Insurance Maps of Oakland, California, 1889,  
(New York, 1889), (Volume I, p. 24)

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ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Real property in the City of Oakland, County of Alameda, State of California, described as follows:

Lot 17 and a portion of Lots 18 and 14 in Block 75, as said lots and block are delineated and so designated upon Kellersberger's Map of Oakland, on file in the office of the County Recorder of Alameda County, and described as follows:

Beginning at the point on the western line of Washington Street, distant thereon southerly 50 feet from the point of intersection thereof with the southern line of 8th Street; and running thence southerly along said line of Washington Street 37 feet 6 inches; thence at right angles westerly 100 feet; thence at right angles northerly 37 feet; 6 inches; thence at right angles easterly 100 feet to the point of beginning.

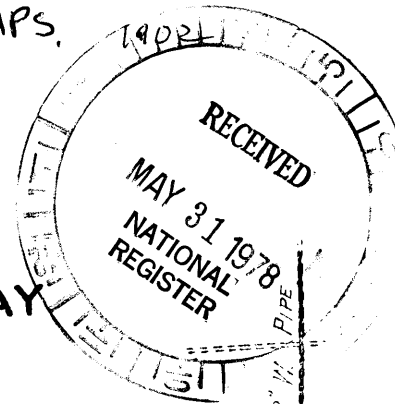
111254

HELLERSBERGER'S  
MAP OF OAKLAND

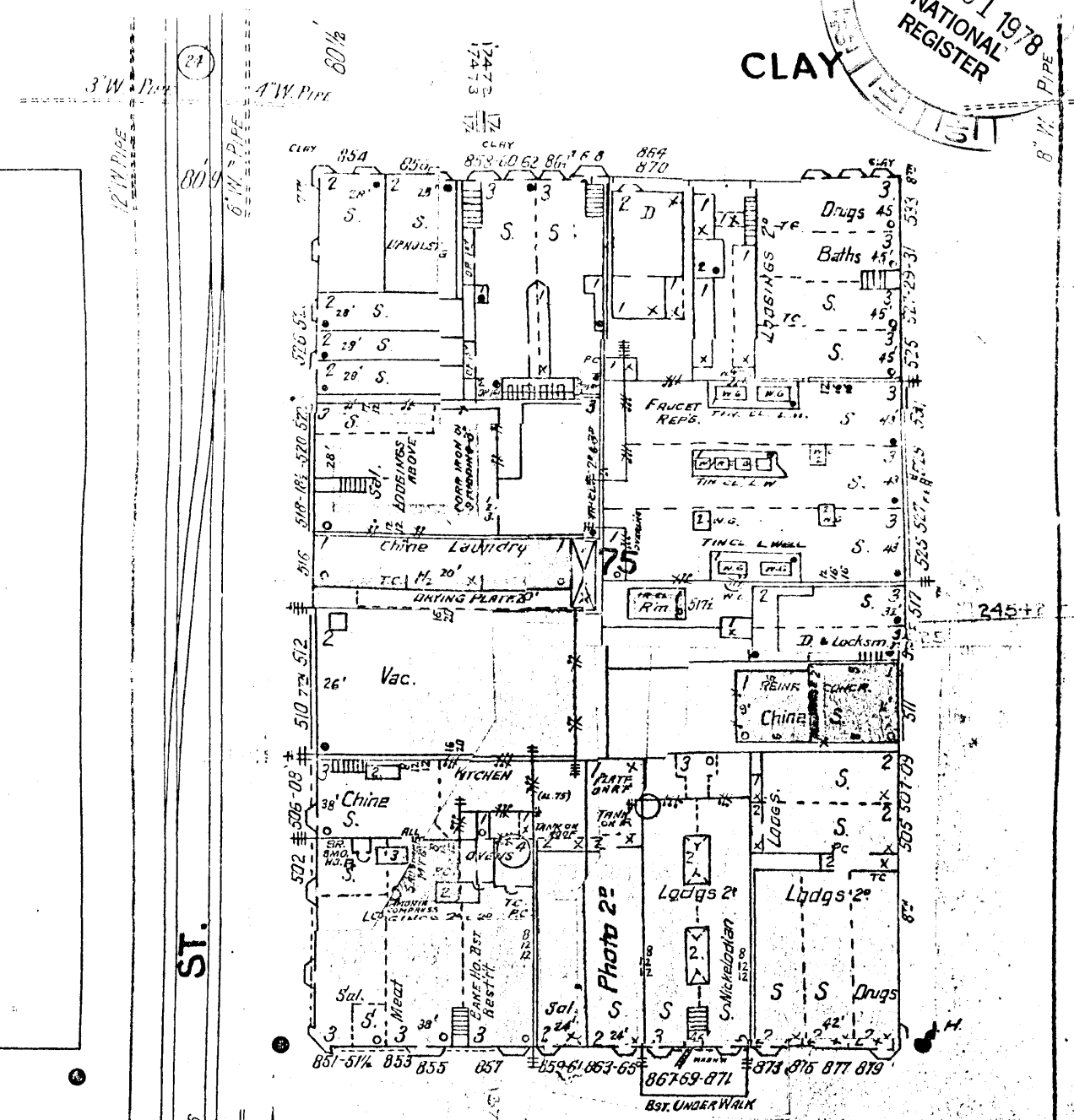


THIS PLAT IS NOT A SURVEY OF THE LAND BUT IS  
COMPILED FOR INFORMATION ONLY BY FIRST AMERICAN TITLE COMPANY  
FROM DATA SHOWN BY THE OFFICIAL RECORDS.





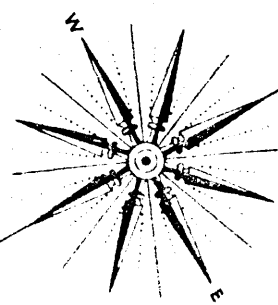
CLAY



ST.

OAKLAND LOCAL TRACKS

DUNN'S



WASHINGTON

1895



DUNNS BLOCK



SEVENTH ST. 853 855 865 871 EIGHTH ST.

WASHINGTON ST.—WEST SIDE—FROM SEVENTH TO EIGHTH ST.

853. FOGARTY'S. Boots and Shoes. Successor to Co-operative Boot and Shoe Co.

855. CLARENDON HOUSE. Mrs. Mary Hayes, Prop. Furnished Rooms at Reasonable Rates.

865. HENRY EVERS, Tel. 284. Undertaker.

871. THE PALACE SHAVING SALOON, Henry Menges, Prop. Stylish Hair Cutting; Hot, Cold and Sea Salt Baths.