

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received NOV 25 1986

date entered DEC 29 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Pacific Gas and Electric Company Substation J

and/or common Station J

2. Location

street & number 565 Commercial Street/568 Sacramento Street N/A not for publication

city, town San Francisco N/A vicinity of Congressional District No. 5

state California code 06 county San Francisco code 075

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Paoli's Partnership (Raymond S. Bregante general partner)

street & number 540 Howard Street

city, town San Francisco N/A vicinity of state CA 94105

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hall of Records

street & number City Hall

city, town San Francisco state CA 94102

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See Continuation Sheet, p. 5. has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u> N/A </u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Station J is a small four-story office building, Classical and Romanesque ornamented, within a former electric utility sub-station on a jogged lot that goes through 120 ft. from a 60-ft. frontage on Commercial Street to a 26-ft. frontage on Sacramento St. It is set in the northern part of San Francisco's financial district on a block 3/4 of which is designated by San Francisco's Downtwon Plan as the Commercial-Leidesdorff Conservation District, an island of small-scale commercial structures in a wide variety of styles, all constructed 1907-1923. Of the buildings adjoining Station J, three are taller, the fourth is only a little lower. Station J was constructed in two phases as two separate and dissimilar buildings which adjoin each other on parts of their rear lines; they have always been interconnected and shared common uses, originally as an electric power sub-station, then as a bag warehouse-factory-office, later a night club, then a restaurant and now as a small office building. Both buildings occupy their full lots and were constructed as single-story spaces, the earlier and narrower one 25 ft. high, the later and wider one 44-50 ft. high. The later facade, on Commercial St., is nearly four times the size of the earlier. The facades are in the middle of their respective block frontages and can never be seen together. The designer of the later and larger building chose to manipulate its proportions so that the two facades might seem of similar size. Each features a giant size entry door in a simply paneled wall with decorative cornice; the door is larger and the overhang deeper on the larger building. The smaller facade is typical of early 20th-century industrial buildings: buff-colored American bond brick with pressed metal cornice, a Romanesque arch and fanlight over the door, and a pair of windows with segmental relieving arches. The larger facade is ornamented in Beaux Arts style with stucco face, generously scaled moldings, corner rustication, no windows, and a projecting entablature with cartouche over the door. These facades are essentially intact, except for new doors, and brick sandblasted in 1969; the brick sidewalls are intact. However the interior has been changed from two interconnecting one-story spaces to a single four-story office building as high as the larger original and extending over most of the smaller building but set back 9 ft. 9 in. from the street to preserve the smaller facade. The added height has been subordinated to the original facade through this setback, through the bland, unobtrusive design and dark color. The original interior, never a public space, was lost probably in 1961 when the buildings were converted from a bag warehouse to a cabaret, or else in a 1969 reconversion. The new office interior is lit from a courtyard/lightwell entirely concealed behind the taller facade, and by the new black-framed window wall recessed above and behind the original smaller facade.

The larger building was designed as the front: its frieze is inscribed in Roman letters, "PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY," its lintel reads "STATION J," and the building address was 569 Commercial Street (rather than 568 Sacramento, which never had any inscription). Its foundation and basement are reinforced concrete, walls are American bond brick with steel columns, and the veneer is stucco above a granite base course. Since the power lines entered and left underground, the building has no windows; it was lit by skylights. The dignified facade is organized as a series of intersecting rectangles, the main one outlined by moldings and contained by the base, by the corner rustication and the frieze. The door is another rectangle cutting through the first. All facade elements are generous of scale; moldings include acanthus at door surround and dentils at door entablature and cornice. The door frame and the transom are the original metal, but the original pair of doors, immensely tall, 27-panel-and-circle affairs probably of metal,

(See Continuation Sheet, p. 6.)

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1914, 1908, 1908–1932 **Builder/Architect** Frederick H. Meyer (1914)

Henry C. Vensano (engineer, 1908)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Station J appears eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria C, architecture, and A, events, as an outstanding example of "the consistent architectural theme throughout the [Pacific Gas and Electric Company (hereafter PG&E)] system which fulfills the mechanical requirements as well as the function of utility . . . [in such a way] that the appearance . . . should be pleasing and capable of inspiring confidence in the company's strength and ability to deliver perfect service in the fullest sense." (1) Adopted as a visual expression of unity and responsibility shortly after PG&E had been created from the merger of two conglomerate California electricity and gas companies into one gigantic utility corporation, the architectural theme came in two types, City and Out of Town, differentiated because the City type had no windows. Of Beaux Arts style, it had symmetrical facades, large plain wall surfaces, corner rustication and an important cartouche projecting over the large-scaled entry; yet each example was an individual assemblage of these design elements. Station J's larger component on Commercial St. is an early example of the City type, designed and constructed in 1914 by outstanding local architect Frederick H. Meyer. Its smaller component on Sacramento, built in 1908 to a design from the PG&E engineering department, exemplifies structures of the utility industry before adoption of the architectural theme. Both buildings are rated individually or together on all local surveys. With the highest survey rating, 565 Commercial St. is San Francisco Landmark No. 142 and noted in city law as one of the "buildings of outstanding merit serving as anchors for the [Commercial-Leidesdorff Conservation] district" and "establish[ing] the character of the area." (2)

PG&E is the amalgamation of some 520 predecessor companies acquired through purchase, absorption or merger. One of these companies began generating electricity in 1879. The earliest, San Francisco Gas Company, was incorporated in 1852 when Peter Donahue was preparing to manufacture the city's first illuminating gas. Using its immense financial strength to maintain its monopolistic position, the company bought out some rivals and merged with others to reincorporate in 1873 as the San Francisco Gas Light Company, in 1896 as the San Francisco Gas and Electric Company (hereafter SFG&E), and in 1905–06 as the PG&E. The last major acquisitions occurred in 1930, making the definitive form we know today of this major U.S. corporation which provides gas and electricity for all northern California. In the 19th and early 20th centuries the monopoly position was not so generally accepted as it is today. The public and the press kept hoping for competition to reduce prices, and rival capitalists would start rival systems in the hope of splitting the immense income or at least selling out at a profit. The various established local utility companies had quite a job to both swallow such competitors and convince the public that duplicate distribution systems made for higher rates and greater inconvenience from torn up streets and overhead wires. The 1905–1906 merger of the California Gas & Electric Company, which operated hydroelectric plants in the mountains and served a number of inland cities, with the SFG&E, which owned the larger city market and produced steam power, required a public relations campaign about more reliable service, the cheapness of hydroelectric power, the greater availability of financing for future improvements, and

(See Continuation Sheet, p. 10.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet, p. 13.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.10

Quadrangle name San Francisco North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

110	552700	4182940
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property occupies Lot 11 of Assessor's Block 228, San Francisco, CA. Its boundary is shown as a red line on the accompanying Assessor's Parcel Map. ~~These are the historic boundaries.~~ *These*

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title

organization Fredric C. Divine Assoc. Architects date 31 July 1986

street & number 1214 Lincoln Ave. telephone (415) 457-0220

city or town San Rafael state CA 94901

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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.

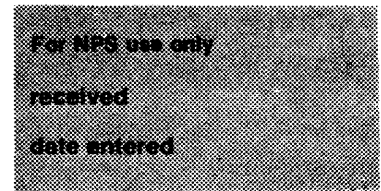
State Historic Preservation Officer signature Kathryn Gualtieri

title date 11/20/86

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register entered in the National Register
<u>J. Alvaros Byers</u> Keeper of the National Register
date <u>12.29.86</u>
Attest:
Chief of Registration
date

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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Junior League Survey/ Here Today

1967, county survey

records deposited in San Francisco History Room
San Francisco Public Library
Civic Center
San Francisco, CA 94102

Architectural Survey, Department of City Planning

1976, county survey

records deposited in Department of City Planning
450 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

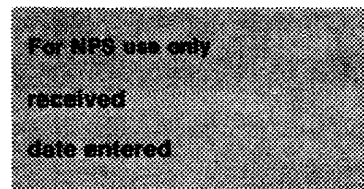
Splendid Survivors Survey

1979, local survey (downtown)

records deposited at Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage
2007 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

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7. DESCRIPTION (Continued)

have been lost (permit #251186, 1961, called for "re-working of entrance doors"). The most recent replacement is four pairs of black-painted oak doors with beveled glass panels, four panels on each ground-floor door, three on each second-floor "door." Fire standpipes have been added. Giant steel Xs brace the interior. Otherwise this facade is intact.

The smaller building has two windows, arranged symmetrically, with four-light steel sash, simple brick sills and segmental-arch radiating lintels. A flat brick molding radiates around the door and its fanlight. The basement is concrete; the original permit (#20086, 1908) calls for brick walls 17 in. thick in front and 13 in. thick on the sides, a steel trussed concrete roof with four wire-glass skylights, galvanized steel cornices, and a height of 20 ft. from curb to roof beams. In the brick facade major cracks have risen diagonally to the right and were repaired or reinforced at various periods with steel anchor braces and different patches. Recent restoration has repatched the cracks and replaced the anchors with new invisible anchors on the interior, fastened into and concealed by an extra gunite reinforcing wall inside. Probably during the bag warehouse period (1933-1959), the left (west) window was cut down as a door and given a concrete surround, which appears in the Splendid Survivors photo of the mid-1970s. This window is now restored to its original configuration as shown in a photo Pacific Gas & Electric published in 1911 (see block 9), but some of the concrete surround remains. The 1911 photo shows the fanlight and door jamb which still exist, but the doors opened inward and are invisible. The original doors were replaced at least in 1961, when permit #251186 called for "new entrance doors." The present doors, a pair of 12-panel black-painted oak and beveled glass ones, essentially match those on the other facade. The awning of a now-departed tenant, visible in photo No. 10, is attached to the building only at two pre-existing bolts in the fanlight frame.

The interiors have been completely and repeatedly reworked. The original use as an electric power substation demanded clear open space from floor to roof. In 1915 P.G. & E. house architect Ivan Frickstad reported in Architect and Engineer (see block 9): >

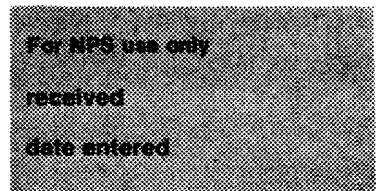
The main room where are located the generating units, is open to the roof, a height of 48 feet, and at the end are two balcony floors on which are located the switchboards and switch cells. The main floor and wainscoting to a height of first balcony floor is tiled, the walls above are panelled and finished in an imitation caen stone, with the ceiling finished smooth and colored to match. The side walls are hollow and the space used as an air duct through which a fan located in the space over the second balcony discharges fresh air. A large skylight with side vents floods the building with light and completes the ventilating system. Ornamental iron stairways, bronzed, connect the main floor with sidewalk and balconies and add the finishing touch to this interior.

The accompanying interior photograph looks as described. The bag warehouse-factory-office use probably changed very little. The initial conversion to a restaurant-bar-cabaret is documented by five permits June 1961 to March 1962, aggregating nearly \$100,000. Architects Baird Heffron and Ted Moulton entirely re-worked the interior of

(See Continuation Sheet, p. 7.)

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7. DESCRIPTION (Continued)

the larger building, refinishing, replacing metal mezzanine railings, extending the mezzanines, enlarging the doorway between the buildings, mirroring the west wall, building an orchestra platform, etc. They used the smaller building as kitchen and service area. Another major remodeling took place in 1969-1970 under six permits aggregating \$246,000, architect Bruce E. Heiser. Instructions included "Strip out existing interior of building." So when conversion to four stories of offices was planned in the early 1980s, there was no original interior left to preserve. The exterior brick walls were preserved except for knocking out most of the remaining rear walls where they adjoin. Height was added to the walls by concrete block construction faced with brick where at all visible: two stories-worth set back and above the smaller building, and 32 in. above part of the other. The front entry's open sense was preserved by locating the open elevator lobbies immediately behind it. The rear building's sense of openings and two-story height was preserved by a two-story glass-roofed lobby between facade and building, about twelve ft. deep across the entire building width (see Section, Continuation Sheet, p. 8).

The original flat roofs were concrete on unprotected steel trusses with a total of six skylights. The 1929 and 1952 Sanborn maps show that the front skylight on Commercial St. was "6' above roof," that there was a 110-ft. chimney at the building's rear west corner, and that the whole rear portion (about 18 ft. of its 59½-ft. depth) was an extra story, 57 ft. high altogether. There are mysterious discrepancies among the interior height of 48 ft. in the clear claimed by Frickstad in 1915, the 50-ft. height shown on Sanborn maps, and the 44-ft. height of the Commercial St. facade. In any case, a 1961 permit (#250046) included "repairing roofing" of both buildings, and at some time the tall chimney came down. Whatever may have been left of the original roofs was demolished about 1984 for the office conversion. Like the old roof, the new one is flat and invisible from the street, but it is stepped up about 32 in. higher than the old one on the Commercial St. side, and two stories higher on the Sacramento St. side. The setback between the latter facade and the taller office stories is covered with a greenhouse roof, invisible from the street, which slopes gently up from a probably original beam across the facade rear (see Section and Roof Plan, Continuation Sheets, p. 8 and 9).

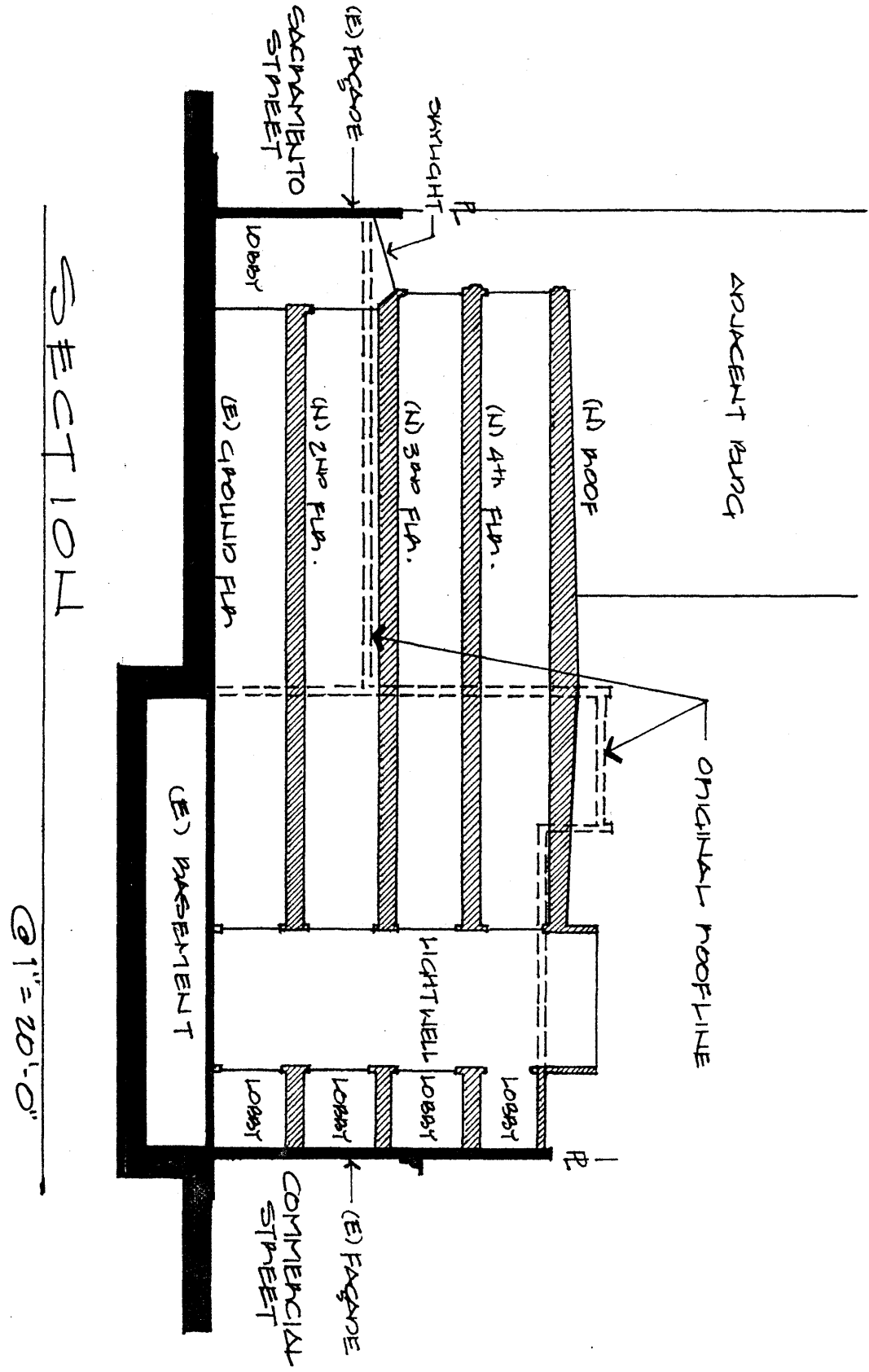
Since the original interiors were not public space and since some office use has been on the site since at least 1933, the recent conversion to four floors of offices can be justified as a reasonable adaptive re-use of the space. The new alterations and additions appear to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically numbers 9 (contemporary design) and 10 (reversability). Originally only the facades were available to the public; they were the most ornate parts of the buildings and a conscious public image. Now the facades, side walls and basement remain intact, newly reinforced, cleaned and restored.

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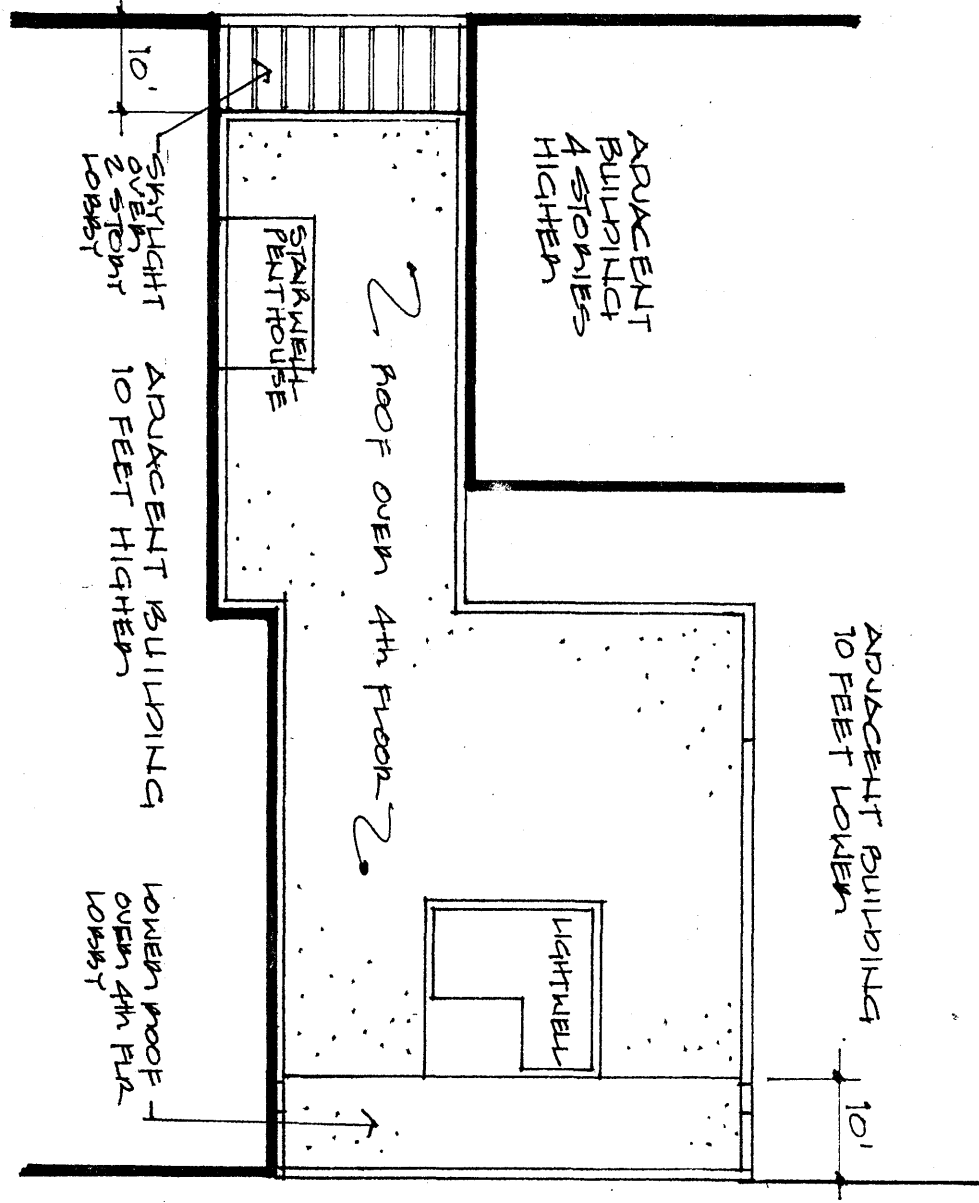
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SACRAMENTO STREET



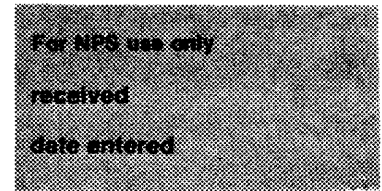
ROOF PLAN

1/8" = 20'

COMMERCIAL STREET

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

the concern of the new giant for its neighbors' welfare and good opinion.

All these goals, plus that of company identification were served by the new architectural program described by Ivan Frickstad, PG&E's architectural assistant to the civil and hydraulic engineer, in 1915 and 1924 (see block 9). Acknowledging the public relations value of a design theme, Frickstad found, "It is also necessary that [substations] be free of extravagance and express the economic use of capital." (3) The resulting large flat building surfaces, with or without windows, inspired use of "the fundamental principle of Spanish Renaissance, i.e. the universal concentration of ornament at a few salient points." (4) The Out of Town type of the PG&E theme came in wide variations, all with bands of windows over plain wall spaces, many with arches, with Spanish tile roofs and an elaborate entrance. The City type was windowless because the power leads came and went underground, light entered through skylights, and unbroken wall surfaces were needed for machinery installations and for deadening noises (the larger Station J had double walls for acoustic and ventilation purposes). Lacking windows, "to make the building attractive the designer has had to use means other than the usual study of voids and solids. From this point of view has resulted the use of projections, panels and contrast in texture and color." (5) Each substation was to be an individual design assemblage of the various thematic elements, and was to have a special relationship to its site. "Thus is a system being built up through co-operation where each unit presents a substantial and pleasing appearance, a welcome addition to its neighborhood, and expresses its relationship to the system." (6) The architectural theme continued to govern design of new PG&E buildings through the mid-1920s.

The first City Beautiful substation had been designed and built on Jessie St. in 1905 by Willis Polk, and it was rebuilt in 1907 after the great San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906, but the conscious development of a City Beautiful design theme to be used with variations on all new PG&E buildings did not happen until about 1910, when Polk designed Station G at the northwest corner of Ellis and Broderick Streets, San Francisco, specifically as the prototype for all. Polk also designed two later examples: Station D on Fern and Bush Streets off Larkin, San Francisco, and the River Station, Sacramento. Frederick H. Meyer, who had done the PG&E office building at 445 Sutter in 1909, designed substations J and S in the PG&E theme. Also shown in the 1915 article were City-type Substation K and Out-of-Town types at Cordelia, San Mateo, Woodland, Drum and on the Yuba River, designed by the PG&E civil engineer H.C. Vensano and his architectural assistant Frickstad. Many more examples of the PG&E theme were built later, usually by the Vensano-Frickstad team; one such is the third (present) Station J, built in 1924-1925 half a block away from the original one.

The history of the subject Station J began as a distribution station of an SFG&E rival, sugar magnate Claus Spreckels' Independent Electric Light and Power Company, which had been incorporated in 1899 and acquired by SFG&E in 1903. Spreckels' 26x60-ft. station on Sacramento St. was destroyed in 1906 along with the rest of downtown San Francisco, and for the next two years PG&E seems to have been too busy rebuilding its wires and such to pay much attention to new buildings. Late in 1908 the company took out San Francisco building permits and signed contracts for two nearly identical electric substations, one

(See Continuation Sheet, p. 11.)

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

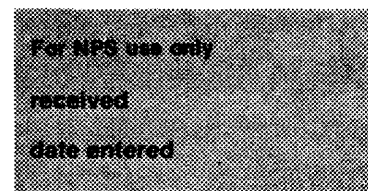
on Eighth St. near Mission (demolished) and the other on the north side of Sacramento 90 ft. east of Montgomery, the former Spreckels site. (7) It was designed as an electric substation "which supplies lighting and power to the financial district and a portion of the wholesale and water front districts." (8) The contract notice read, "One-story brick power station . . . architect none, Day's work, Cost \$7,000." The permit has the printed word 'architect' crossed out and that blank filled in "Engineering Department PG&E"; builder and owner were PG&E, and the form was signed for the company by H. C. Vensano, civil engineer. (9) San Francisco native Henry C. Vensano (1881-1960) joined PG&E a couple of years after graduating from the University of California in 1903, and he rose to become head of the company's Civil Engineering Department. In 1914 he left to work as a private consultant/contractor, specializing in industrial buildings and utility plants. He worked on the Golden Gate International Exposition 1936-1940 and became San Francisco's Director of Public Works 1942-1950. For PG&E he has been credited with design of Substation K, San Francisco, and parts of Station C, Oakland. Conceivably other PG&E engineers besides Vensano were involved in the construction and design of the first, small Station J; James H. Wise (c.1881-1912), Paul M. Downing (1873-1944), Charles F. Adams and Vensano were all listed in the 1908 San Francisco Directory as engineers, SFG&E Co. When the rapid development of the San Francisco financial district indicated a larger electric substation would be needed soon, the company bought the 49.75 x 59.5-ft. lot on Commercial St. in March 1911. Frederick H. Meyer was commissioned to design the new substation, which worked in conjunction with the old one through an opening in the adjoining rear walls of the two buildings. The new street facade was the then-new PG&E City Type. The two lots were legally made one in 1917. Power came to Station J from steam generating plants in North Beach and on the Potrero, and from mountain hydroelectric plants via Martin Substation in South San Francisco. Station J provided direct current for the buildings in its area, alternating current for street lights and 600-volt current for street railways. When it was becoming overloaded in 1924 a third Station J, by Frickstad, was built half a block away on the east side of Leidesdorff St. from Commercial to Sacramento. Eventually expansion on Leidesdorff and/or technical advances made the two earlier buildings unnecessary, and PG&E leased them to Richard C. Hyland but retained ownership through 1947. Hyland was listed as selling bags on the property in 1934, as "Manufacturers, Importers and Dealers in Bags, Burlap, Twine" in 1940, as bag manufacturers in 1944, and as undifferentiated importers there in 1953. Hyland's widow sold the property in 1960 to restaurateur James Battaglieri, and it became first a cabaret called Station J, then "Whisky 'A Go Go," and finally a rear adjunct of Paoli's Restaurant on Montgomery St. The present owner bought the property in July 1982, and the office development followed.

The second Station J's designer Frederick H. Meyer (1876-1961), F.A.I.A., was one of San Francisco's most prominent architects of the first half of the 20th century. Corbett gives him the only architect's portrait in Splendid Survivors and the first of only two biographies, stating in part, "Meyer was one of the few local architects who is known to have visited Chicago and been influenced by the planning and design of skyscrapers there . . . Meyer was also typical in his wholehearted embracing of the City Beautiful Movement." (10) He practiced both independently and concurrently in partnerships: Newsom (Samuel) & Meyer 1899-1901, Meyer & O'Brien (Smith) 1902-1908, Meyer & Johnson (Albin H.) 1908-1926, Meyer & Reed (Walter D.) for Oakland work 1910-1912, and Meyer & Evers (Albert J.) 1946-1961. Splendid Survivors credits him alone or in partnership with thirty buildings: five

(See Continuation Sheet, p. 12.)

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

not rated (after 1945), four rated C, eleven rated B. Ten Meyer buildings are rated A: the Rialto (1902), Humboldt Bank (1906), Hastings (1908), PG&E Station J (1914), Physicians' (1914) PG&E on Sutter St. (1909), Elks (1924) and Financial Center (1927) Buildings. He also designed the 1928 YMCA Hotel, now on the National Register.

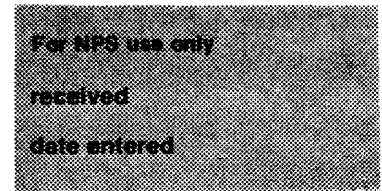
For PG&E Meyer built the 1909 office building, the 1914 Station J, and the 1913 Station S. At the end of 1913 his office announced, "Meyer also has plans in prospect for several power houses and sub-stations for the PG&E," (11) but whether this project advanced beyond Station J is not known. It is not surprising that design of the first two "City" theme substations should have been given to Willis Polk, whose patron William B. Bourn had been president of SFG&E. After Bourn was eased out, it is also logical that the new PG&E executives, hydroelectric power men from California Gas & Electric, would move carefully into the San Francisco business sphere by commissioning such an outstanding architect as Meyer to present their public facade. With later confidence, they relied on in-house architect Ivan Frickstad to continue the substation program and only called on outside architects (Bakewell & Brown) for their 1925 office tower at Beale and Market Streets.

The industrial significance of the PG&E Station J buildings is limited to the years of PG&E occupancy: 1908-1932. Although the larger facility down the block was constructed 1924-1925, as late as 1929 the Sanborn map showed the old site a "Pac. Gas & Elec. Co. Sub-Station 'J'," but the newer site as merely "P.G. & E Sub-Station." Perhaps for a time both were needed technologically, or the third Station J expanded gradually, or the company needed time to move out, or the Depression caused it to seek economies, such as renting out the first and second buildings of Station J to Hyland Bag Co. In any case, the PG&E interiors were never open to the public and disappeared long ago; the only public parts of the buildings, the facades, remain as they were during the period of significance, except for the doors and the sandblasting. They still show both the unifying PG&E architectural theme and the anonymous power house style that preceded it. The architectural significance remains because the two-story addition over the smaller building is visually disconnected from the historic facade by setback and design. The two facades and the side walls are intact and in excellent structural condition. Some significance also results from the very early adaptive reuses: from electric substation to warehouse-factory-office in 1933, and thence to cabaret in 1961, near the beginning of the modern preservation era.

- (1) Ivan C. Frickstad. "Some Sub-Stations . . .," 1915 (see block 9), p. 55.
- (2) San Francisco Municipal Code, Part II, Chapter II, Section 11, Appendix G, Sec. 5(c).
- (3) Frickstad. "Characteristic Building Features . . .," 1924 (see block 9), p. 373.
- (4) Frickstad. 1915, p. 67.
- (5) Frickstad. 1924, p. 374.
- (6) Frickstad. 1915, p. 68.
- (7) Daily Pacific Builder, 26 Oct. 1908, p. 2 col. 5 (permit). --- 6 Nov. 1908, p. 3 col. 3 (contracts). PG&E Co., Properties Owned and Operated, 1911, p. 251.
- (8) PG&E Co., Properties Owned and Operated, 1911, p. 250.
- (9) Building Permit Application No.20086, approved 26 Oct. 1908.
- (10) Michael Corbett. Splendid Survivors, 1979, p. 52.
- (11) "Forecast of 1914 Building Record in San Francisco," Architect & Engineer, vol 35, No. 3 (Jan. 1914), p. B.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

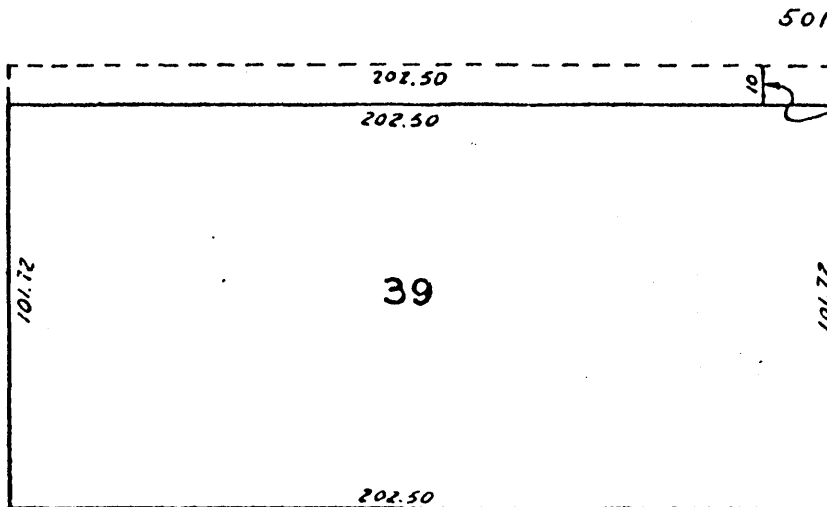
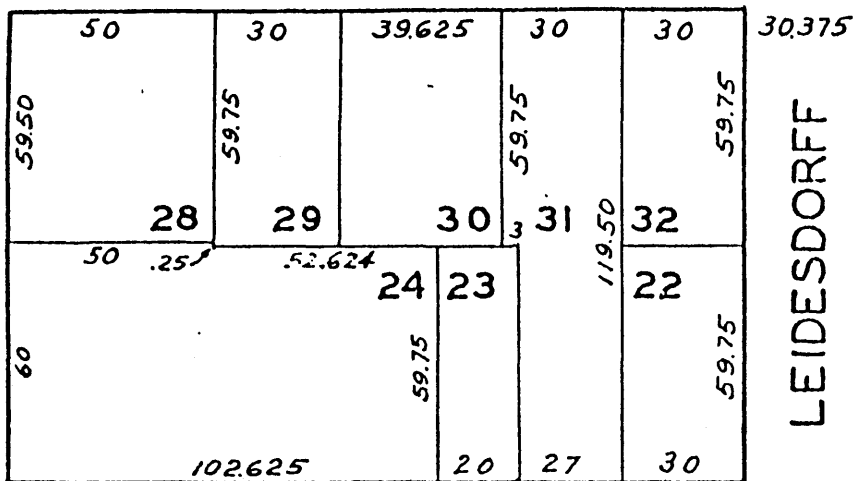


Continuation sheet Station J San Francisco, CA Item number 9 Page 13

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CLAY



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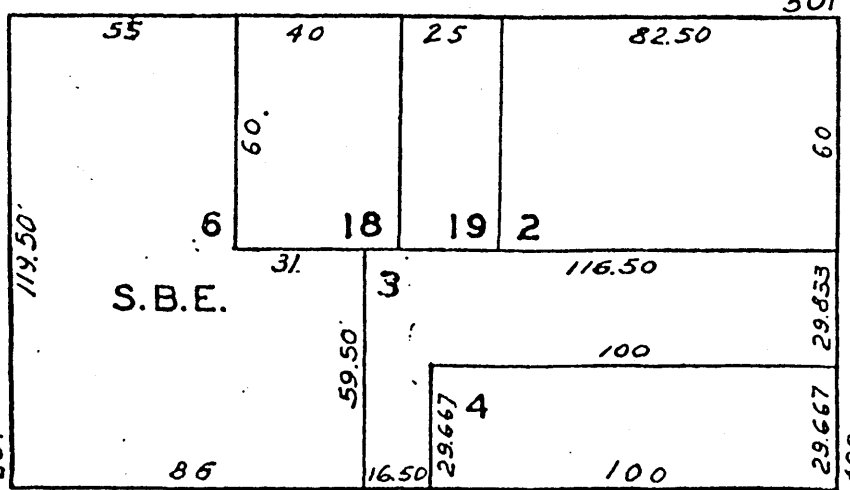
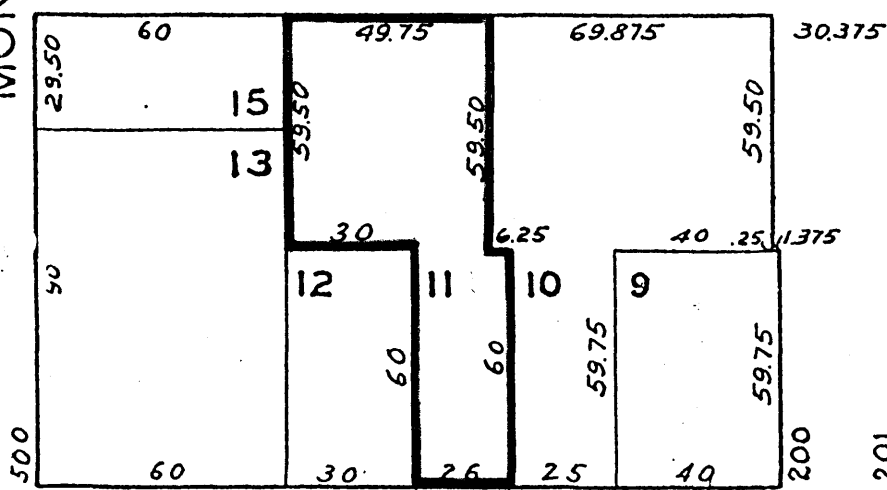


MONTGOMERY

LEIDESDORFF

SANSOME

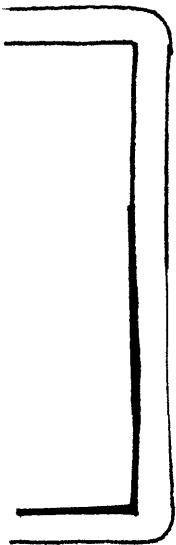
COMMERCIAL



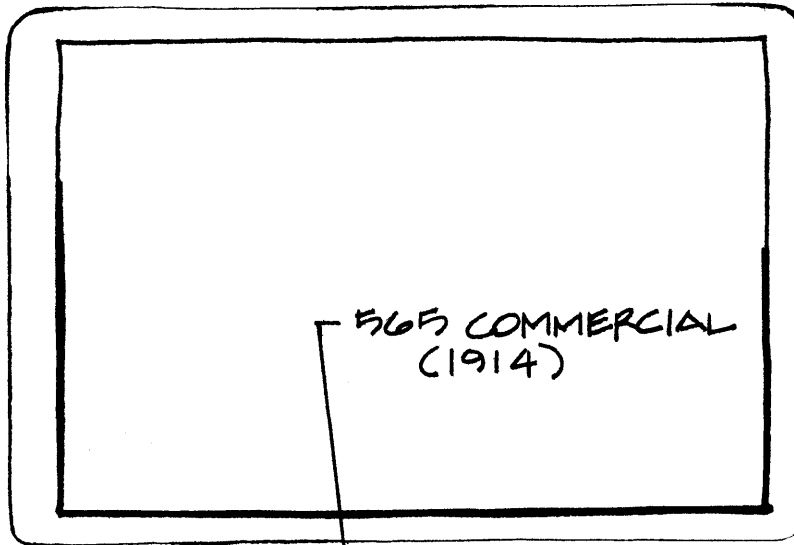
SACRAMENTO

CLAY

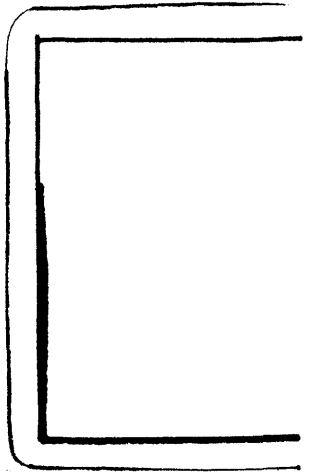
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ST.



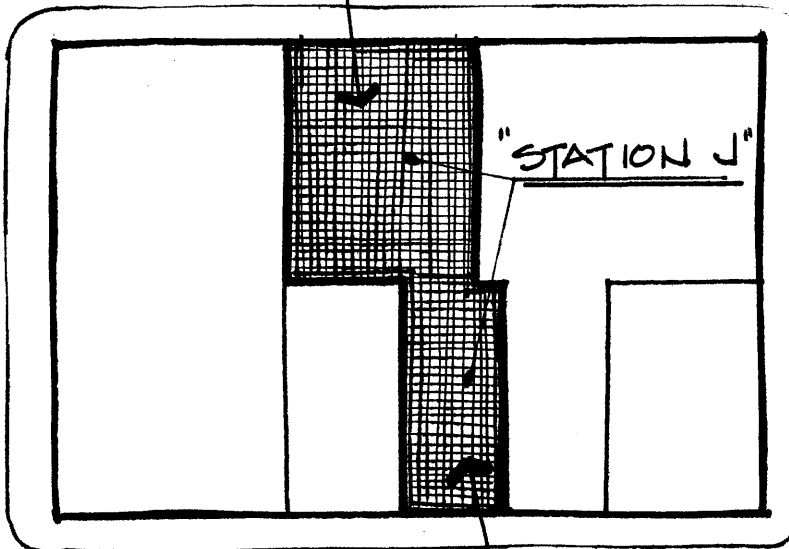
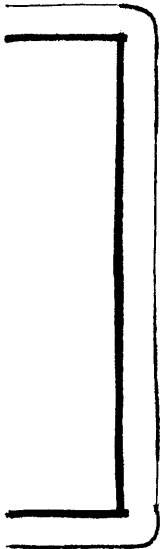
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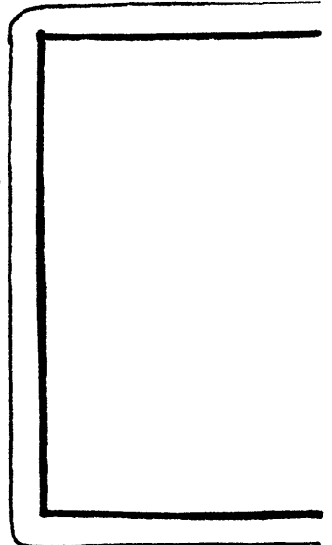
565 COMMERCIAL
(1914)

COMMERCIAL

ST.



LEIDESDORFF



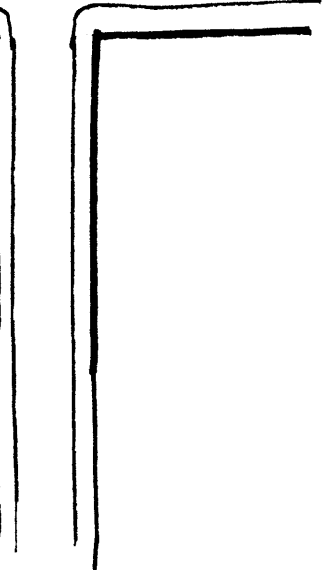
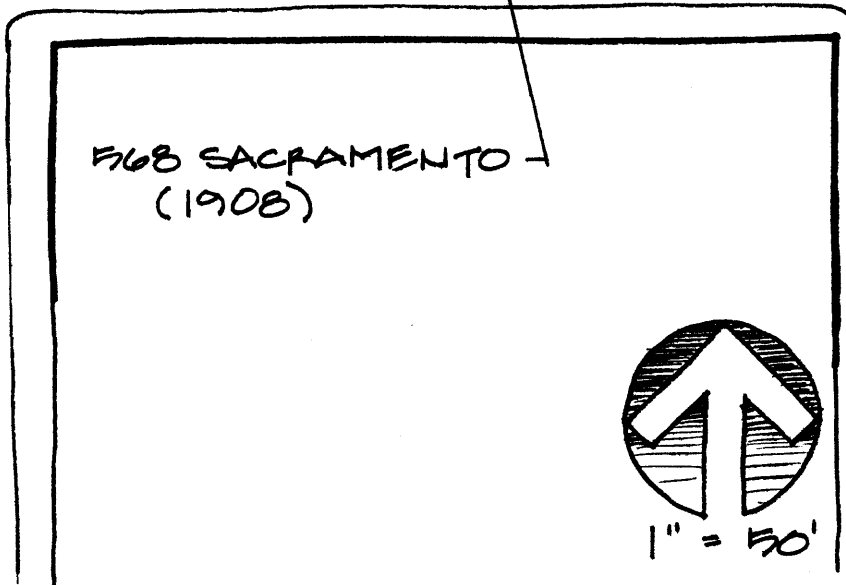
"STATION J"

SACRAMENTO

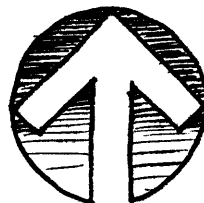
ST.



MONTGOMERY



568 SACRAMENTO
(1908)



1" = 50'