

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic First Unitarian Church

and/or common 2401 Bancroft; University Dance Studio

2. Location

street & number 2401 Bancroft Way not for publication

city, town Berkeley 94720 vicinity of congressional district 8

state CA code 06 county Alameda code 001

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Regents of the University of California

street & number University Hall

city, town Berkeley 94720 vicinity of state California

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alameda County Courthouse

street & number 1225 Fallon Street

city, town Oakland 94612 state California

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Historic Resources Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date July 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records 1. Office of Historic Preservation, Box 2390/ 1220 K Street,
2. Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assn., Box 1137,

city, town 1. Sacramento 95811 2. Berkeley 94701 state California

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	(little)		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This former church is a small brown-shingled building, about 60' x 76', with a wide, low gabled roof 10' above ground at the eaves & three times that at the peak; it follows traditional church orientation with chancel to the east & large west window. On S & W sides the original stone wall still stands at the lot's edges along the sidewalk; building is now largely overgrown with wisteria to the E & redwoods to the W. West facade now faces University service road & loading area, & the original main entrances are not used. This front presents a symmetrical, unbroken gable shape, with circular window in the center (c.12' diameter, amber glass in metal industrial sash) & porches at each end. Like all the exterior walls, this facade is brown-shingled--red cedar, according to 1898 description, in 'courses 12" to the weather.' A band of ornamental small dog-tooth shingles runs around the top of the window & horizontally out to the porch eaves; at the top of the window just under the roof peak is a wooden low-relief cross. Roof edge is flush with the wall, & the roof beams project forward about 2'. At either end of the facade (still under the main roof) is a deep shingled porch with (unused) door to the W end of the sanctuary. The 2 corners of the roof rest on porch columns which are 3'-thick redwood logs with the bark left on, resting on wooden pedestals.

East of the porches the 2 sides of the building are dissimilar. On the north the roof runs straight back over a low shingled wall with rectangular windows & an arch-topped brick chimney--the outside of the Sunday School room. On the south--the Bancroft Way facade--the porch is a separate projection, beyond which the roof is cut back & the wall is taller, with 4 large round-topped windows that light the sanctuary (amber glass in industrial sash, with panels that open) alternating with concave shingled buttresses, under which the brick foundation is conspicuous.

At the rear the semi-circular apse abuts against the wall, its peak about 4' below the peak of the main roof; it has a half-conical roof with a parasol-like skylight at the center. Lower part of the apse is surrounded by a further low flat-roofed rectangular extension, which forms 2 small rooms around & behind the apse. A third small room is attached N of this, at the end of the side Sunday School room. Entrance is now through the northern of the 2 apse rooms (choirroom which is finished cloakroom style: plain wood floor, walls & ceiling painted white, coat hooks at the top of the wainscot on the curved inner wall. Door from this vestibule enters NE corner of the sanctuary, to the side of the apse.

Sanctuary is a large open barn-like space, with exposed roof beams--4 big trusses of dark timbers resting on ship's knees (or brackets) attached to the main wall posts. Walls are wainscoted with vertical redwood boards (now painted light brown) to about 8' high, & stuccoed above: stucco is now white, was originally intended to be deep red for "a rich & subdued effect." Apse is now a bare stage 3 steps up from the floor, with domed back & skylight. Door S of stage leads to pastor's study--now faculty office--the same shape as the choir room/vestibule, with intact finish: redwood paneling, rough brick fireplace, heavy dark ceiling beams radiating from the curved wall. Parallel to the sanctuary on the N, & now reached by a door at its NW corner, is the Sunday School room, with low beamed ceiling & fireplace. The wall between the sanctuary & Sunday School room originally opened so the 2 spaces could be combined. It is now covered with mirrors on both sides for the rooms' present use as large & small dance studios; the floors have also been resurfaced.

When the building was a church the rear of the chancel held organ pipes (in the usual pyramid arrangement); altar rail ran across the front; at least in its early days, the church was noted for handcrafted furniture & decorations. As university dance studio (& previously scene shop) the building has been emptied but not significantly altered in structure or shape. Adjoining it on the NE until 1965 was a Unity Hall in similar style--beamed ceiling, industrial windows, big fireplace--built by Maybeck in 1907. Originally part of a neighborhood of 2½-story homes & rooming houses, church is now engulfed by University's 6-story Eshelman Hall & parking garage (1965) & Zellerbach Auditorium (completed 1968) to the E & N, & men's gym & athletic fields (slated for further development) to the west.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1898

Builder/Architect Albert C. Schweinfurth

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph) This was an important building in the development of San Francisco Bay Region architecture, by a transplanted East Coast shingle-style architect who responded to the California landscape & made a distinctive contribution to the self-conscious & still influential "building with nature" movement of the Worcester-Maybeck-Keeler-Hillside Club coterie in the East Bay in the 1890s. It is Schweinfurth's only work in the area known to survive in essentially its original form, & is (accidentally, since it wasn't University owned till 1961) the second oldest building on the University of California campus. With its adjoining divinity school (1906-40) it was part of a "street of churches" encouraged by the founders of the University. Early members of First Unitarian included many of Berkeley's prominent artists & intellectuals from Maybeck on down, & the congregation has remained notable for liberal & humanitarian & cultural activities. With Maybeck's Town & Gown Club of 1898, & Julia Morgan's Presbyterian church of a decade later, First Unitarian is a masterpiece of the non-residential use of the rustic, handcrafted, open-beamed, redwood "Simple Home" style.

The so-called Bay Tradition in architecture--building into the landscape, natural local materials, much less ornate than other versions of the Arts & Crafts movement--has been traced back to Rev. Joseph Worcester's 1876 home in Piedmont, & his 1894 Swedenborgian church in S.F. designed with A. Page Brown. Berkeley's Unitarian church closely reflects these beginnings in a number of ways: its general size & shape, with wide low gabled roof & big uninterrupted open interior, as well as its rustic materials, resemble the Piedmont house; the round arches & window, the deliberate homeyness, the incorporation of raw tree trunks, as well as the commission by a free-thinking religious denomination, all have precedents in the Swedenborgian church; & Albert Schweinfurth (1864-1900) had worked with A. Page Brown in New York before both headed west in 1889. (In addition, a draftsman in Brown's S.F. office was Bernard Maybeck, who belonged to 1st Unitarian & designed its 1907 parish hall & mostly-unrealized seminary.)

Schweinfurth brought to the Unitarian Church a background in the East Coast residential shingle style, & an early interest in the Ruskin-Morris Arts & Crafts movement (resulting in an 1883 design for an "artisan's cottage" named Sweete Simplicite). In the west (S.F., after a short time in Denver) he became noted as "among the earliest...American architects to appreciate the charm & adaptability to surroundings of the Colonial Spanish style, as exemplified by the remains of the early missions" (March 1902 Arch'l Review)--the "old Spanish feeling" lying not in the ornamental quotations of later Mission Revival & Spanish Colonial but in a "peculiar air of rich poverty", whether tile roofs or rough wood, exposed beams, clinker brick (which he is credited with bringing into fashion: used in First Unitarian's chimneys & fireplaces), & a feeling of being weathered into the landscape.

Schweinfurth's Bay Area work spanned a mission/pueblo hacienda for Phoebe Hearst at Pleasanton (1895?: later a country club, now gone); tile-towered, quatrefoil-windowed S.F. Examiner & Children's Hospital buildings; the clinker brick "Dutch" house Weltevreden for Volney Moody in Berkeley (1897, seriously remodeled in the 1950s); & the rustic Unitarian Church (1898). Both the church & Weltevreden were favorite views for postcards & promotional brochures of Berkeley in the early 1900s. While Weltevreden leaned toward the period-costumed, rather precious, often English aspect of the Arts & Crafts, the church was closer to the inward-looking beliefs of Unitarianism & the distinctively Berkeleyan, defiantly simple houses Maybeck was beginning to build (1894-99) just east of Weltevreden in the Hillside Club enclave on Highland Place. It also had local precedent for its shingled exterior & solid shape--if not its barnlike interior & Worcester/Hillside ideology--in the Anna Head school buildings (1892 & 95, Soule Edgar Fisher) & Ernest Coxhead's 1892 William E. Loy house nearby--"severely plain" with similar low-hanging roof. The Berkeley Gazette in 1898 praised the progressive new Unitarian church, "one of the

9. Major Bibliographical References Architectural Review (Boston), March 1902, "Later Wk. of Schweinfurth".

Berkeley Gazette, 7/9 & 11/14/1898; 5/12/48; 6/10/61 (last service); 6/23/76 (history).
 First Unitarian Church, Prospectus (1894), Yearbook (1908), A Brief Account (1940s); Bancroft Library, L. Freudenheim et al., Building With Nature, 1976. W.W. Ferrier, Berkeley, Calif., 1933.
 C. Keeler ed. D. Shipounoff, The Simple Home, 1904/1979. K. Reeves, First Unit. Church (photos), 1959.
 Berk. Independent, 5/22/07; Sun & Letter 10/11/12 (seminary). block books & Sanborn maps, 1890s--.

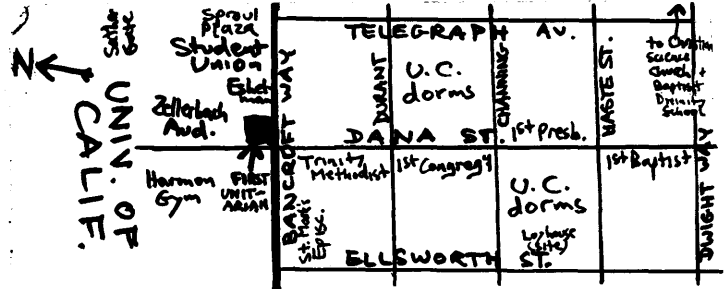
10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property ~ 0.2
 Quadrangle name Oakland West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	10	565080	4191300
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			



Verbal boundary description and justification Book 57, Block 2039, until 1961.
 NE corner of Bancroft Way & Dana Street, on University of California campus (formerly Villa Lots South, Block 3, SW corner lot)—about 110' on Bancroft & 80' on Dana, including building & what remains of landscaping & stone wall.

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 Betty Marvin
 organization Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assn. date April 24, 1981.
 street & number Box 1137, Main Post Office telephone (415) 845-6591
 city or town Berkeley 94701 state California

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *K. Miller*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 10-26-81

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

low factory
 Keoper of the National Register *Allen* Entered in the National Register date 12/1/81
 Attest:
 Chief of [unclear]

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

FOR NCRS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	NOV 10 1981
DATE ENTERED	DEC 10 1981

CONTINUATION SHEET First Unitarian Church ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2
Berkeley CA

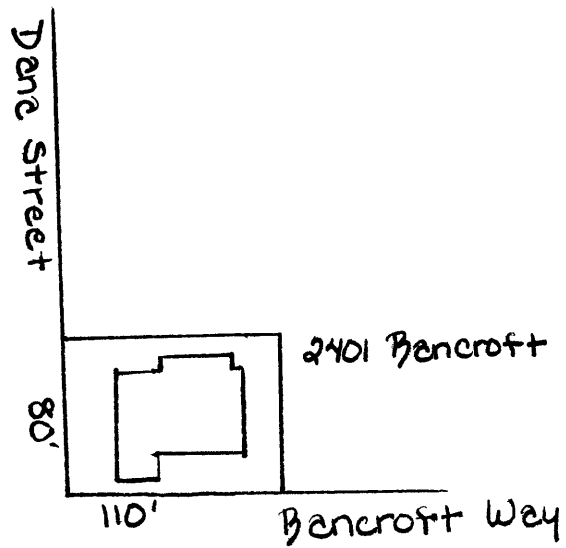
most unique on the coast", & its "rustic idea" & "radical departure from conventional church architecture." But popular associations with the building's small size & rough materials still tended toward the idea of utilitarian outbuildings, so a bystander during construction was supposed to have said "It looks like a powerhouse"—an anecdote of course cherished by the congregation in later years.

The full-blown Hillside Club organization & philosophy dated from the same year as the church—1898—as did a Handcraft Guild, also founded by Keeler, and the Hillside School—open-air & shingled, first fruit of Hillside Club pressure on the city government. Localized successor to a Ruskin Club founded in 1896 by Berkeley poet/naturalist/aesthete Charles Keeler (owner of the first Maybeck house on Highland Place), the Hillside Club was dedicated to preventing "unsightly grading & the building of unsuitable & disfiguring houses" in the Berkeley hills, & therefore to promoting suitable building, closeness to nature, & the simple life, through both education & political action. Its members were originally mainly from the First Unitarian Church & the Highland Place neighborhood, among them the Maybecks, Keelers, Volney Moodys, Oscar Maurers, & the Warren Gregorys (also associated with the Swedenborgian church in S.F.). The Club often met at the new church in its early years, the church's Women's Auxiliary in 1898 published a book of nature essays by Keeler & others titled A Berkeley Year, & it was at First Unitarian that Keeler's Triumph of Light, A California Mid-Winter Sun Mystery was performed in 1905.


The church served both this artistic community & the city of Berkeley at large—equally strong & indeed earlier contingents represented the University & the business world. Trustees who signed the 1894 Prospectus for the new building included businessmen J.G.Wright (of the Golden Sheaf Bakery), J.L.Scotchler, & N.S.Trowbridge, & Professor Wm.Carey Jones (who also owned the lot at Dana & Bancroft). The church actively recruited U.C. students even while it was meeting in temporary quarters downtown (Odd Fellows Hall & the Maybeck-decorated "Rope Church")—even as the University had recruited churches to locate nearby. The New England Congregational founders of the University had been deeply if liberally interested in their students' spiritual life, & President Daniel C.Gilman in 1872 invited all (Protestant) denominations to establish schools & halls near U.C., so that by the time the Unitarian church was built the South Campus neighborhood was home to Congregational (1874), Episcopal (1878), Presbyterian (1878), Methodist (1883), & Baptist (1887) churches, & the University YMCA (1892), most of them in a "luminous white way" along Dana Street. The Unitarian congregation organized in July 1891, deciding almost accidentally to become a church rather than a society; called its first pastor, E.B.Payne, in Jan 1892; purchased (Jones's) land in 1893, issued a call for subscriptions in 1894, appropriated \$3500 for the main church building & finally erected it in 1898 (plans completed in January, dedication Nov. 20) at a total cost of \$5924. In 1906-7 a Unity Hall by Maybeck was added, & the church began a drive to build a seminary which would "not suffer by comparison with the neighboring buildings of the University" on a nearby lot donated by its patron Sarah Cutting. This Pacific Unitarian Divinity School was founded in Oakland in 1904, moved to Berkeley in 1906 & remained on the Cutting site until the University bought the land in 1940, although its elaborate Maybeck campus was never built. (It is now part of the complex of divinity schools on so-called Holy Hill north of the University.) First Unitarian continued its progressive tradition through this century: in the 1950s, for instance, it was 1 of 12 California churches that successfully resisted a state loyalty oath. The last service in this building was on June 11, 1961: the University had bought the property (for \$329,400) & the congregation built a new concrete cathedral on a hilltop in Kensington north of Berkeley. Architecturally First Unitarian has a number of descendants in Berkeley, some more famous than itself: Julia Morgan's St.John's Presbyterian Church (1908), Maybeck's Christian Science church (1910), James Plachek's "Berkeley Bungalow Church" & the Unitarian Fellowship hall in north Berkeley, & others more recent, all owe something of their barnlike uncluttered design & residential or industrial or vernacular mater-

SKETCH MAP

First Unitarian Church
2401 Bancroft Way
Berkeley, California



DEC 10 1981

Scale:  = 30'

