

PH 0065803

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	California
COUNTY:	San Francisco
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
71.5.06.0017	5/6/71

1. NAME

COMMON: (Abner) Phelps House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Abner Phelps House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 329 Divisadero Street (on interior of the block)

CITY OR TOWN: San Francisco

STATE: California CODE: 06 COUNTY: San Francisco CODE: 075

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Estate of Charles L. Ayers, Jr.

STREET AND NUMBER: 1006 Page Street

CITY OR TOWN: San Francisco STATE: California CODE: 06

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Recorder's office (Note: the Phelps House is probably not a separate parcel.)

STREET AND NUMBER: City Hall

CITY OR TOWN: San Francisco STATE: California CODE: 06

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1965 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Washington, D.C. STATE: CODE: 11

STATE: California

COUNTY: San Francisco

ENTRY NUMBER: 71.5.06.0017

DATE: 5/6/71

FOR NPS USE ONLY

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

ALSO: Jr. League of San Francisco Survey

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in the Gothic Revival Style popular in the mid-nineteenth Century, this residence, two stories in height not including its basement, is of wood frame construction with clapboard or shiplap siding.

All windows are multi-paned, narrow and rectangular. Upper-story fenestration consists of dormers lighted by French doors. The central dormer is the focal point as it is larger than the others and has more prominent projecting eaves which are enhanced by a simple ornamental barge board, repeated at the gable ends afforded by the steeply pitched roof.

balustraded
The balcony, which constitutes the veranda roof, is one of the distinguishing features of the house and, with the veranda, provides a Southern air. Well-turned classic wooden spindle-form balustrades add to this feeling as do the Tuscan columns which support the balcony (veranda roof).

At the time the dwelling was erected, it stood in the midst of Phelps' 160-acre homestead at the foot of Buena Vista Hill, well beyond the city limits which did not reach Divisadero Street until 1854. A portion of Golden Gate Park's Panhandle was then part of the Phelps property.

The house has been moved twice: with the grading and building of Divisadero in the 1890's the house was repositioned on the land; then in 1904, it was moved backward to its present location in the middle of the block to enable Phelps to build stores in front.

Despite its Divisadero address, the house is actually visible only from Oak Street as it is situated at the extreme rear of the large lot. The front of the lot contains an old hall, 321 Divisadero Street.

Zoning is C-2, community commercial. Surrounding land uses include shops and a hall to the east, and multiple residential units to north, west and south.

carved barge boards

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

5. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1850-51

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <u>Oldest unaltered</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | <u>residence in</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | <u>San Francisco.</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although accounts vary as to its date and builder, the Abner Phelps house is generally considered to be the oldest unaltered residence in San Francisco and dates from 1850-51.

The earliest published account (August 8, 1934) states that the house was "built in 1850 by John Middleton & Sons, one of the first real estate concerns in the city ... (and) constructed of lumber framed into sections brought round the Horn from Maine, there being no sawmills here at the time."

However, Mrs. Victor E. Bosenstein, Abner Phelps' great-granddaughter declared in 1961 that the house had been purchased in New Orleans in 1850 and shipped in sections around the Horn to ease the homesickness of Phelps' bride; born Augusta Rousell. It was then re-erected here about 1850-51.

The Junior League of San Francisco book Here Today, favors the latter explanation: the house is raised on a high foundation, reminiscent of southern river-front cottages of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; furthermore, the upper-story balcony and the veranda are also reminiscent of Louisiana homes of the day. This book further states the certainty that Phelps, who had been a colonel in the Mexican War, lived in the house in 1851; and suggests the possibility that John Middleton's firm assembled the house for Phelps when it arrived.

Phelps was a lawyer who had his office in the Montgomery Block, and made what was then a long dusty journey to town daily by horseback. At that time Divisadero Street was no more than a path which served as the western boundary of the new city from 1854 to 1856 when the city and county were consolidated.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bancroft Library Scrapbooks, California Counties: San Francisco,
Book ii, pp. 392 ff.

Junior League of San Francisco, Inc., Here Today - San Francisco's
Architectural Heritage (Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1968)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0 . "	0 . "	37	46	21	122 . 25 . 28
NE	0 . "	0 . "				
SE	0 . "	0 . "				
SW	0 . "	0 . "				

UTM
10/549610/
4180500
CD

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 3,000 square feet

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Ralph A. Mead, Secretary

ORGANIZATION: San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board DATE: August 3, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER: 100 Larkin Street

CITY OR TOWN: San Francisco STATE: California CODE: 06

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name [Signature]

Title State Liaison Officer

Date October 16, 1970

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

[Signature]
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date MAY 6 1971

ATTEST:

[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date 4/5/71

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0676284

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 3 1979
DATE ENTERED MAY 23 1979

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

Abner Phelps House

RECEIVED

DEC 15 1978

AND/OR COMMON

CHP

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1111 Oak Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

6

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

San Francisco

CODE

075

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Phelps Place Associates

STREET & NUMBER

18 Bartol

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

VICINITY OF

STATE

California 94133

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

May, 1964

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>May, 1978</u>

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Abner Phelps House is a unique example of a vernacular Louisiana house with contemporary gothic and classical revival ornament. The main living floor is raised above ground on slender pillars. A flight of ten steps leads to a veranda on the main story. The veranda has Tuscan columns and a balustrade of turned spindles. The central doorway has an octagonal window with an elongated octagonal wood panel below. There are two pairs of French windows to either side of the front door, with six panes in each leaf, and an inset wood panel below.

The second story is half-floor, half-roof, with high dormer windows opening onto the second story balcony. The pointedness of the dormers is gothic revival in feeling. The second story windows are also French doors with three panes in each leaf. The central opening on the second floor (with two dormers to either side) is a large gable with a bargeboard in the gothic revival manner; curvilinear and scalloped with two cut-out diamond forms at the top. The balcony is similar in its balustraded form to the veranda.

The house is a wood frame covered with bevel lapped siding. The roof is gabled and sheathed in wood shingle, and has a gothic revival bargeboard, similar to that of the central gable, along the sides of the roof. There are double-hung windows with six panes on the sides, and dormer windows in the rear. The building is painted with oil-base semi-gloss white enamel.

An account of the origins of the Phelps House published in the San Francisco Chronicle of August 8, 1934, stated that the house was built by John Middleton and Sons in 1850 and sold along with 160 acres, to Phelps in 1852. The house was "constructed of lumber framed into sections brought round the Horn from Maine, there being no sawmills here at the time."¹ Research has shown that this story, at least insofar as the Maine origins of the house, is suspect for two reasons. The first is the wood which Dr. Cockrell of the University of California at Berkeley has studied. His results were as follows: The kitchen interior walls are Douglas Fir, common in California forests; wood from the frame of the building, the second story siding, the roof sheathing, and the upper porch balustrade is definitely redwood; and pieces of the floor sheathing, sash from upper and lower story windows, and bargeboard from the front gable were found to be soft pine, which was available in California and New England, but not in the South (family tradition maintains that the house was shipped from New Orleans). Lumber was commonly shipped to San Francisco from the East Coast during the 1850's, and it is quite possible that some boards used to build this house were purchased from such a shipment. However, the major portion of the house was built from local wood.

¹"Phelps House Falls Victim to S.F. Advance," San Francisco Chronicle, August 8, 1934, p.28.

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 checked="" 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 1850-51

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Abner Phelps House is generally considered to be the oldest residence in San Francisco. It was built in 1850-51 on a 160-acre plot at the foot of Buena Vista Hill. Old watercolors painted by C. Rogers in 1870¹ show the house in an isolated setting surrounded by hills. There are a number of stories concerning the early history of the Phelps House.

The traditional story, repeated in several written accounts, maintains that the house came from New Orleans. However all of these accounts originate in information supplied by the Phelps family. Mrs. Shirley Phelps Robinson Rosenstein, the great-grandniece of Abner Phelps, maintains this story as the one told to her by her aunts and uncles (the children of Abner Phelps). She calls this "the romantic version of the story, and the one that I always believed."² The architecture of the Phelps House, similar to New Orleans houses of that period, has reinforced the story that the house actually came from New Orleans. No evidence to support this story of the house's origin has been found either in San Francisco or New Orleans. As was discussed in Item 7, the nine pieces of wood which have been analyzed are of west coast or possibly New England origin. We must therefore conclude that the story was merely a family tradition which has gained credibility over several generations.

An entirely different account was published in the San Francisco Bulletin of October 14, 1924. This article states that John Middleton built the house in 1851 and sold it to Colonel Phelps, along with 160 acres, in 1852. The story goes on to report that Phelps "presented the land and the house to his bride as a wedding gift, and the gift deed was written in French so that she might fully appreciate it, for that was her language."³ To investigate this story, descendants

¹"Phelps House Falls Victim to S.F. Advance," San Francisco Chronicle, August 8, 1934, p.28. These paintings are now in the possession of Phelps' great-grandniece, Mrs. Shirley Phelps Robinson Rosenstein.

²Interview with Mrs. Shirley Phelps Robinson Rosenstein, October 22, 1977.

³"Halting of Fire of 1906 Left Hayes Valley; One Taken to a Distant Age by Phelps House," San Francisco Bulletin, October 14, 1924, p.8.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES
Selected Bibliography

Books

Baird, Joseph. Time's Wondrous Changes: San Francisco Architecture 1776-1915. San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1962.

(Continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .036 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME San Francisco North, CA

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 10 549610 4180560
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Property is located at 1111 Oak Street (south side of Oak) between Divisadero and Broderick Streets. The nomination is for the building only, which occupies a 34' x 45'6" area in the rear central portion of the Phelps Place project, as shown on enclosed site plan.

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

Fred Wasserman

ORGANIZATION

The Preservation Group

DATE

December 1, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

Eighteen Bartol

TELEPHONE

(415) 788-1000

CITY OR TOWN

San Francisco

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Knox Mellon

TITLE

DATE

3-28-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

[Signature]
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

5-23-79

ATTEST:

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

5-22-79

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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DATE ENTERED	MAY 23 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET

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2. National Register of Historic Places
1970 Federal
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Washington, D.C.
3. San Francisco City Landmark
1969 Local
Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board
Department of City Planning
San Francisco, California
4. Junior League of San Francisco Survey
1968 Local
San Francisco Room
San Francisco, California.

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The second error in the 1934 Chronicle article is the claim that there were no sawmills in the San Francisco area during the 1850's. In fact, there was a sawmill in Mill Valley, as early as 1836, and by 1840 there were several mills in the area.² The first sawmill on the Peninsula was built in Woodside in 1849.³

The following is a discussion of the relocation and restoration process. The Abner Phelps House was originally located on a 160 acre plot at the foot of Buena Vista Hill. Early watercolors (from 1870, but clearly harking back to an earlier time in their representations) show the house surrounded by hills in the outskirts of the town of San Francisco. An early photograph, also from 1870, shows the house with a large front yard.

The Phelps House had already been moved twice from its original site prior to its most recent relocation. It was moved in the 1890's when the area was graded down, so that it faced on Divisadero Street. It was relocated again in 1904 when the children moved the house backward on the lot, from its easterly orientation facing Divisadero, to a southern one. This enabled them to build a store facing the street which was managed by the two daughters.⁴ Since that time the house had been hidden in the middle of the block and was allowed to fall into a greatly deteriorated condition. It could only be reached via a small alley off of Divisadero Street. Hidden away as the city grew around it, the cramped-in setting of the Phelps House bore little resemblance to its landscaped historic setting at the foot of Buena Vista Hill.

It was with this in mind that the Phelps House was once again moved by the Preservation Group in May, 1978. It was relocated 80 feet north and turned around a full 180° to face Oak Street. In its new location the structure is the center of the Phelps Place Historic Plaza, a grouping of four historic structures around a landscaped plaza. The new site is much closer in feeling to the original rural setting than its previous site. An added benefit is that the oldest house in San Francisco, long hidden, is now in the public view.

Structural alterations were required to comply with current seismic regulations in the building code. In its new location the

²Lucretia Little, The Mill that Shouldn't Have Been, (Mill Valley: 1967)

³Frank M. Stanger, Sawmills in the Redwoods: Logging on the San Francisco Peninsula, 1849-1967, (San Mateo: San Mateo County Historical Association, 1967).

⁴"Phelps House Falls Victim," p.28.

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Phelps House could be placed on a concrete foundation. Plywood was also added to the walls to strengthen the structure. The house, long in a precarious condition that threatened its longevity, is now capable of resisting an earthquake.

Historic accuracy was paramount in the restoration of the Phelps House. As much of the original material as possible was preserved. The exterior siding and veranda were removed, the pieces numbered and dipped in a preservative. The walls were insulated before the siding was replaced. Two major alterations were necessitated by historic fidelity: the roof has been sheathed in wood shingle (now illegal), because it was discovered that this was the original material used; a photograph from 1870 as well as early watercolors show that the stairway extended out straight from the building and it has been restored to this position. The ground floor windows in the watercolors are not thought to be accurate. When carefully studied with a magnifying glass, the historic photograph does not show a row of windows behind the bushes. When the restoration of the Phelps House was discussed with the San Francisco Landmarks Advisory Board, Mrs. Bland Platt, the chairperson, stipulated that paintings were insufficient proof on which to base an historic alteration. As a result the Phelps House was restored without ground floor fenestration.

In conclusion, the relocation and subsequent restoration of the Phelps House, rather than detracting from the building's integrity, has brought the house much closer to its original historic condition.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

of John Middleton were interviewed. They are convinced that Middleton did indeed build the house, that he and his family lived in it for a short period, and that he then sold it to Colonel Phelps. This is what the Middleton family was told by their older relatives. Furthermore, Mrs. Camille Cochran, the great-granddaughter of John Middleton, believes that the wood for the house came from Maine because there were no sawmills here at that time. As discussed in Item 7, it has been shown that the majority of the wood in the structure is actually of local origin, and there were sawmills in the area as early as 1836. This research tends to discount the veracity of both the Maine and New Orleans origins of the Phelps House. However it does not invalidate the theory that John Middleton built the house. Unfortunately a search for deed documents concerning a transfer between Middleton and Phelps was unsuccessful; however, this should not be taken as conclusive evidence that a sale did not take place.

Whatever the origin of the Phelps House, both its history and architecture are of interest. Abner Phelps was born in 1804, a native of Orford, New Hampshire.⁴ He attended West Point, and fought as a colonel in the Mexican-American War. He lived in New Orleans for many years, where he was on the City Council,⁵ and in 1842 he was the Mayor of Lafayette, Louisiana⁶, which was incorporated into New Orleans in 1852. Phelps' first wife, the former Elizabeth B. Drew, died in New Orleans in 1844, at the age of 29.⁷ Abner Phelps visited San Francisco in 1849, and in 1851 he married a young New Orleans woman, Charlotte Augusta Roussell. She joined him in San Francisco in 1852. The tradition is that Phelps wanted to provide an environment for his sheltered bride which would remind her of home, so he transported a house to San Francisco. Phelps was an attorney and worked in the Montgomery Block.⁸

Abner and Augusta Phelps had six children, four boys and two girls. The Phelps children lived in the house their entire lives, with the exception of Abner Jr., who married and had his own family. Abner died in 1873 and Augusta died in 1893. The children lived

⁴Phelps Obituary, San Francisco Bulletin, December 30, 1873, p.3.

⁵Kathryn C. Briede, "A History of the City of Lafayette," Louisiana Historical Quarterly 20:925-27.

⁶New Orleans City Directory, 1842.

⁷Obituary, New Orleans Daily Picayune, August 24, 1844, p.2.

⁸"Phelps House Falls Victim," p.28.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

together there until very advaced ages, when they all died within five years of one another in the 1930's.

Shirley Phelps Robinson Rosenstein, their grand-niece, had lived with her aunts and uncles and taken care of them as they grew older. Eventually the house was left to her with the stipulation that she sell it rather than try to keep up the family traditions alone. The house was sold to Charles L. Ayers, Jr., who was the son of an old acquaintance of Abner Phelps. This man owned it until his death in the early 1960's. The Phelps House was acquired by the Preservation Group in 1975. It has since been moved to a new site as the focus of the Phelps Place Historic Plaza, and completely restored.

Architecturally the Phelps House is a unique example of a Southern type of architecture in San Francisco. In its raised first story, veranda, French windows, and dormers it is clearly derived from such colonial New Orleans houses as "Madame John's Legacy". The latter was in turn based on Acadian or French Canadian prototypes. The raised floor, a formal convention in Acadian houses, assumed a functional purpose in flood-ridden Louisiana. Obviously it had no function in San Francisco and was once again only a formal convention in the Phelps House. The house has a strictly symmetrical plan around a central hall which is indicative of its eighteenth century sources. Contemporary ornament was imposed on this traditional form; Tuscan columns of the classical revival on the veranda, gothic revival in the dormers and the bargeboard.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Beebe, Lucus and Charles Clegg. San Francisco's Golden Era; Picture Story of San Francisco Before the Fire.

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"Obituary, Mrs. Elizabeth B. Drew(Phelps)." New Orleans Daily Picayune
(August 24, 1844):2.

"Obituary, Abner Phelps." San Francisco Bulletin (December 30, 1873):3.

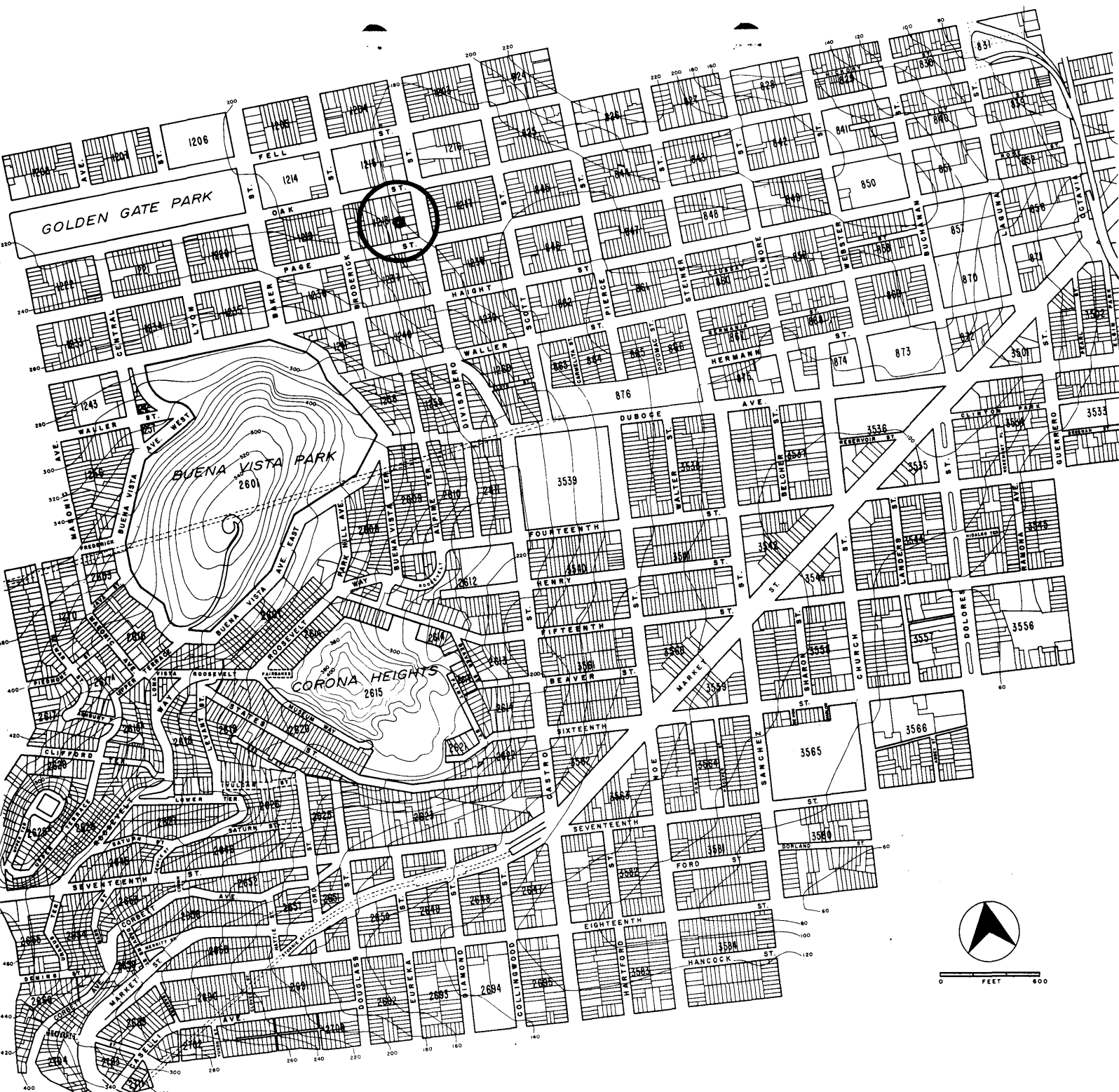
"Phelps House Falls Victim to S.F. Advance; Historic Home Built on
Divisadero St. Still Occupied." San Francisco Chronicle(August 8,
1934):28.

Interviews

Dr. Robert A. Cockrell, wood analyst, University of California, Berkeley,
October 27, 1977.

David Finn, former tenant, October 17, 1977.

Hirley Phelps Robinson Rosenstein, great-grandniece of Abner Phelps,
October 22, 1977.



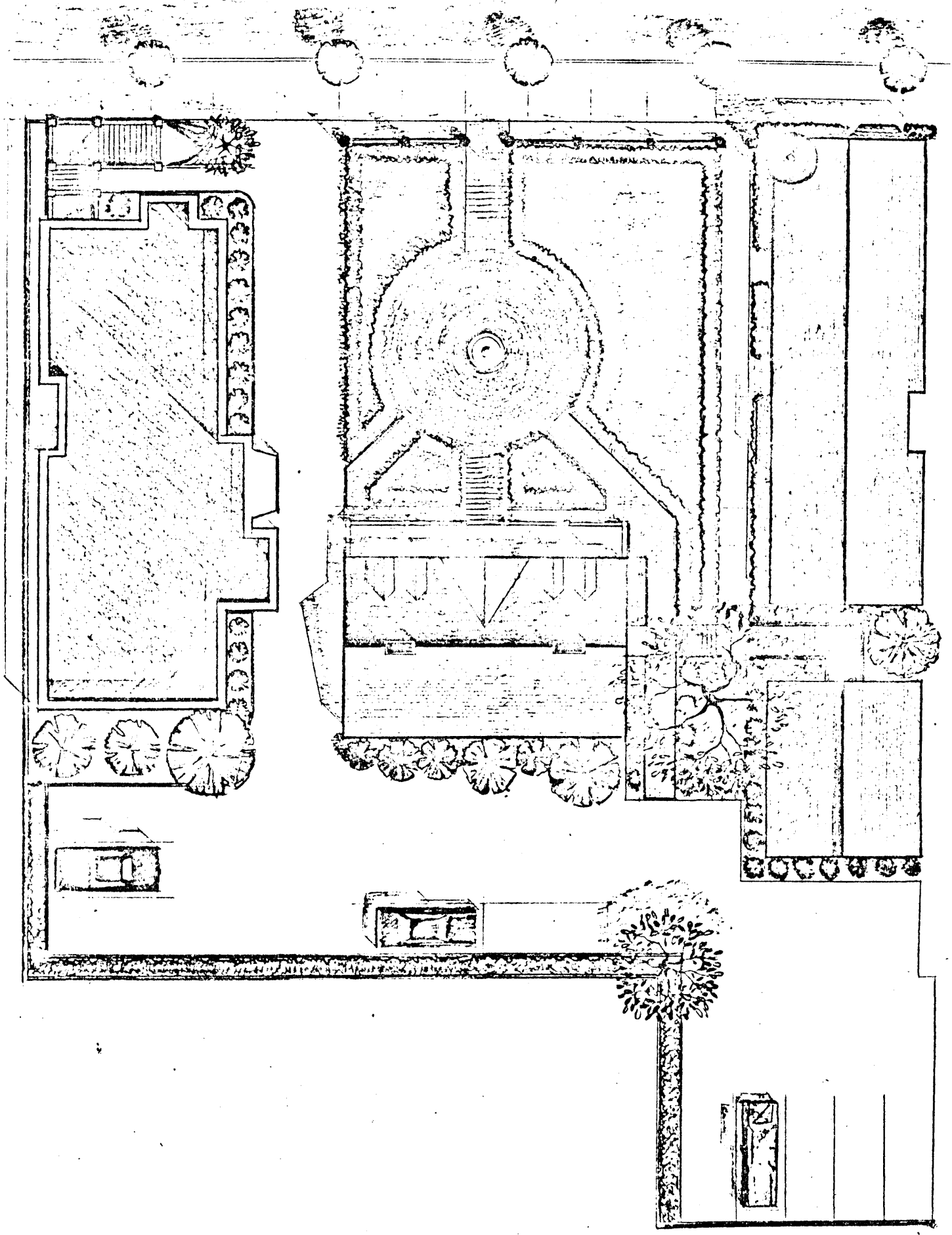
COMMUNITY AREA LAND USE STUDY

DUBOCE

COMMUNITY 6 · PLANNING AREA 2

ABNER PHELPS HOUSE

FILE 825 4-2 (1)
BASE JULY 1987
DATA



LIST OF DRAWINGS

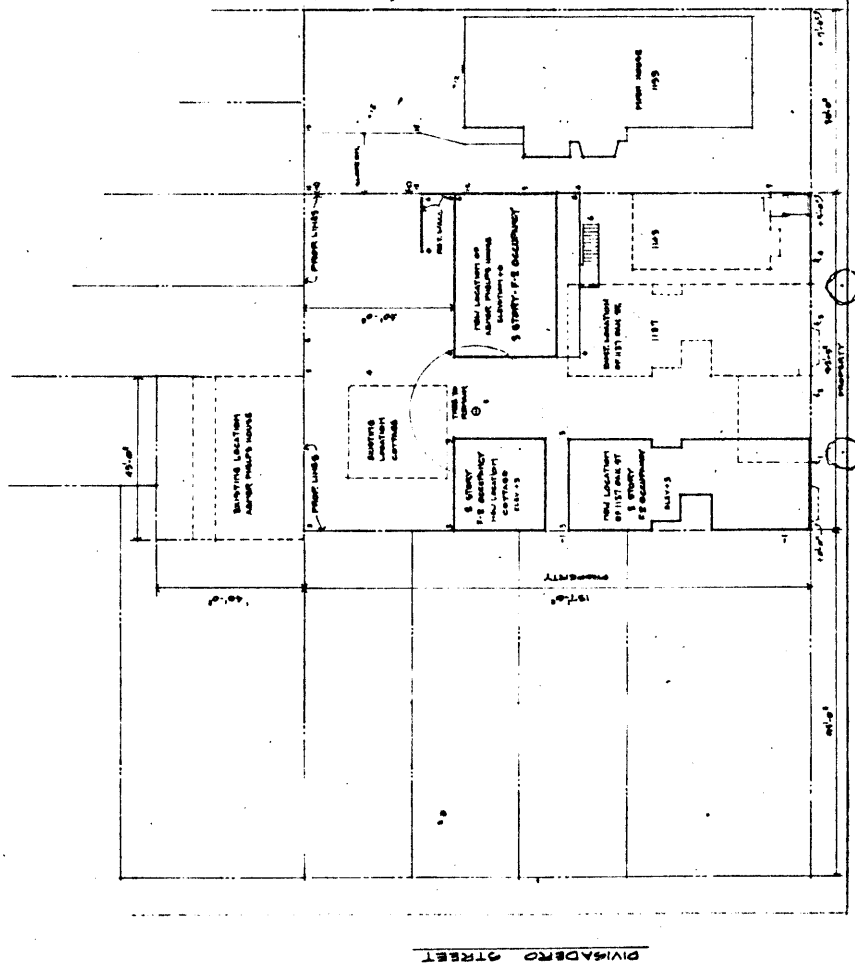
- 1 SITE PLAN - SPECIFICATIONS
- 2 LAYOUT PLAN
- 3 PHELPS HOUSE - 1ST & 2ND FLOOR PLANS
- 4 PHELPS HOUSE - FOUNDATION & 3RD FLOOR PLAN
- 5 PHELPS HOUSE - FRONT ELEVATION - SECTION
- 6 PHELPS HOUSE - REAR & SIDE ELEVATIONS
- 7 SITE GRADING & FOUNDATION PLAN
- 8 1187 OAK - SECTION - 1ST & 2ND FLOOR PLANS
- 9 1187 OAK - FOUNDATION & 3RD FLOOR PLANS
- 10 COTTAGE - SECTION - 1ST & 2ND FLOOR PLANS

SPECIFICATIONS

ALL WORK TO CONFORM TO 1935 EDITION OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BUILDING CODE.

CONCRETE: ALL FOUNDATIONS SHALL BE REINFORCED GRAB CONCRETE SHALL DEVELOP A COMPRESSIVE STRENGTH OF 3000 P.S.I. IN 28 DAYS.

WOOD: LUMBER SHALL BE MANUFACTURED GRABED AND GRADED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WEST COAST LUMBER INSPECTION BOARD'S PRACTICE NUMBER 700 & 8 OR BETTER, UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED. ALL PILES AT SPACED



SITE PLAN

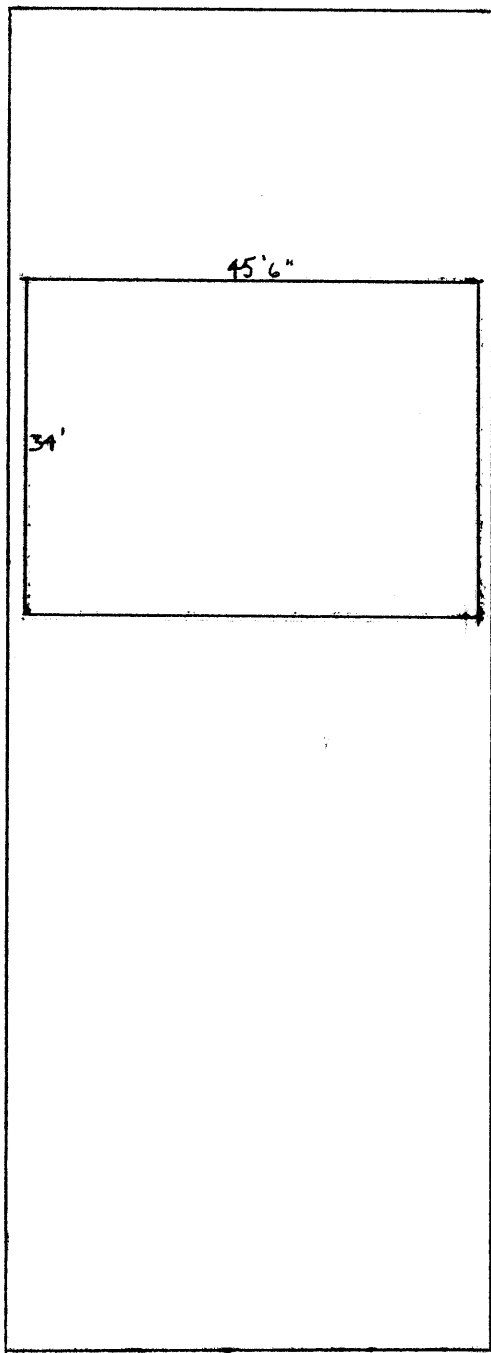
PHELPS PLACE HISTORICAL AREA
 OAK STREET NEAR DIVERSO, SAN FRANCISCO

DATE: 1935
 DRAWN BY: [Signature]
 PROJECT NO. 1187 OAK

HAROLD K. MAJOR A.I.A. ARCHITECT
 1234 PINE STREET
 SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

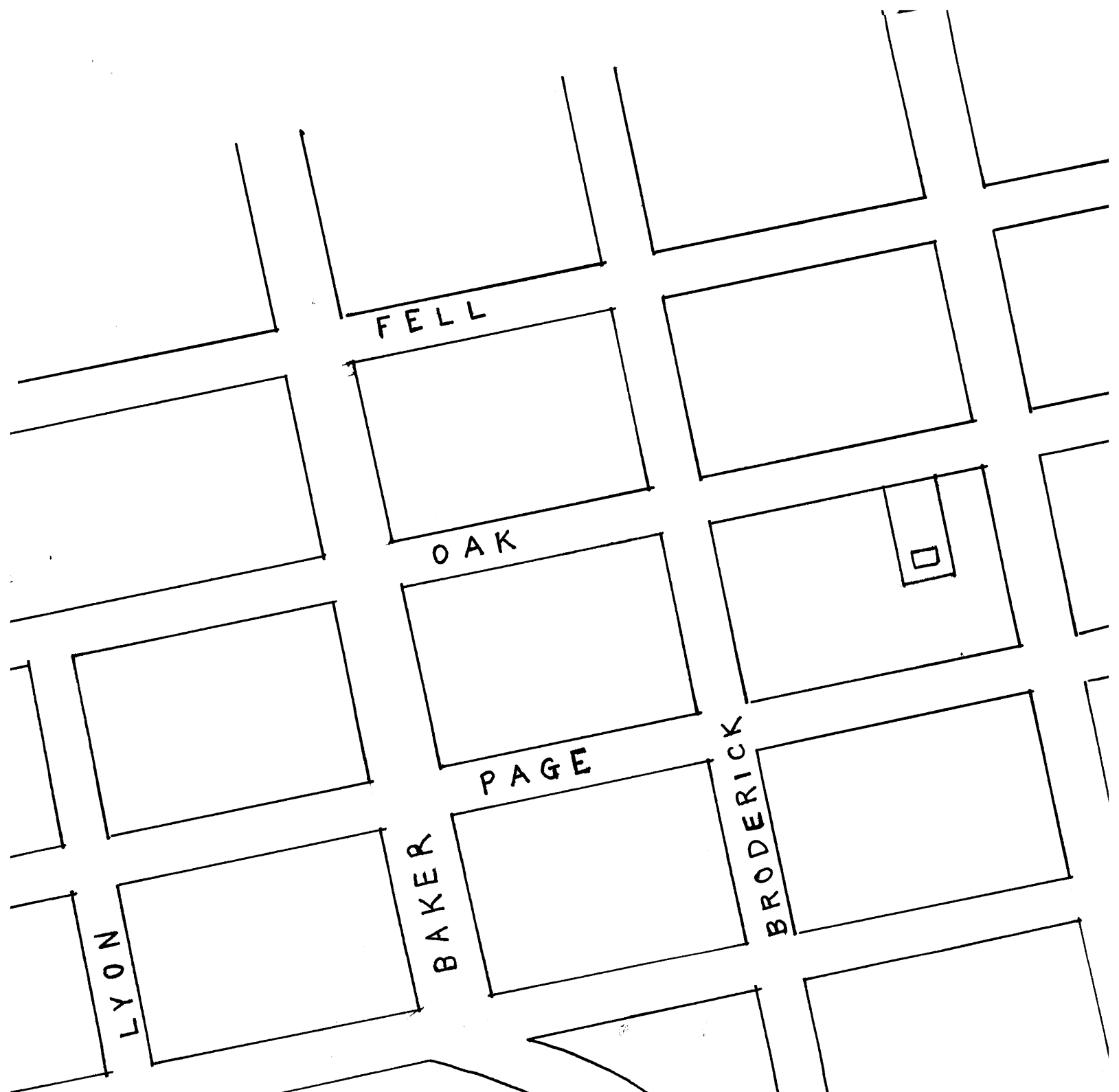
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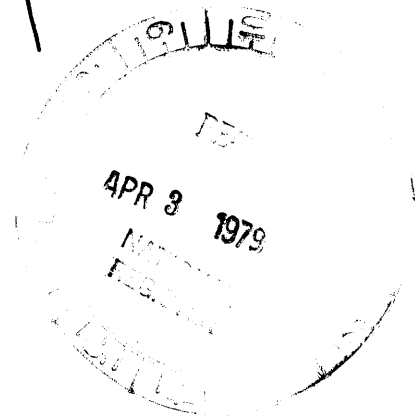
ABNER PHELPS HOUSE



ABNER PHELPS HOUSE



1" = 200FT.





1206

1205

1204

FELL

ST.

1214

1215

ST.

PARK

ST.

OAK

1219

1218

ST.

1220

PAGE

BRODERICK

1237

LYON

BAKER

1236

1241

1240

north



SCALE: 1" = 200 FT.

400

1258

1259

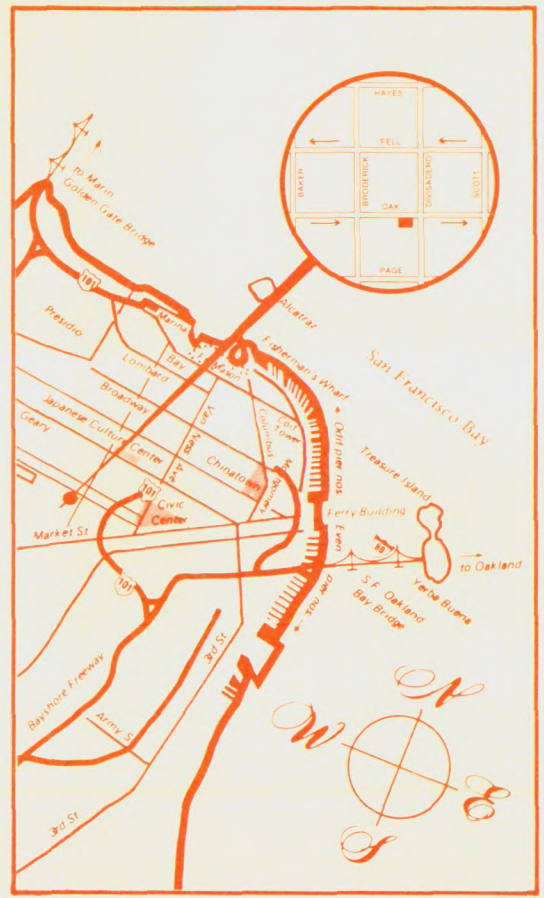
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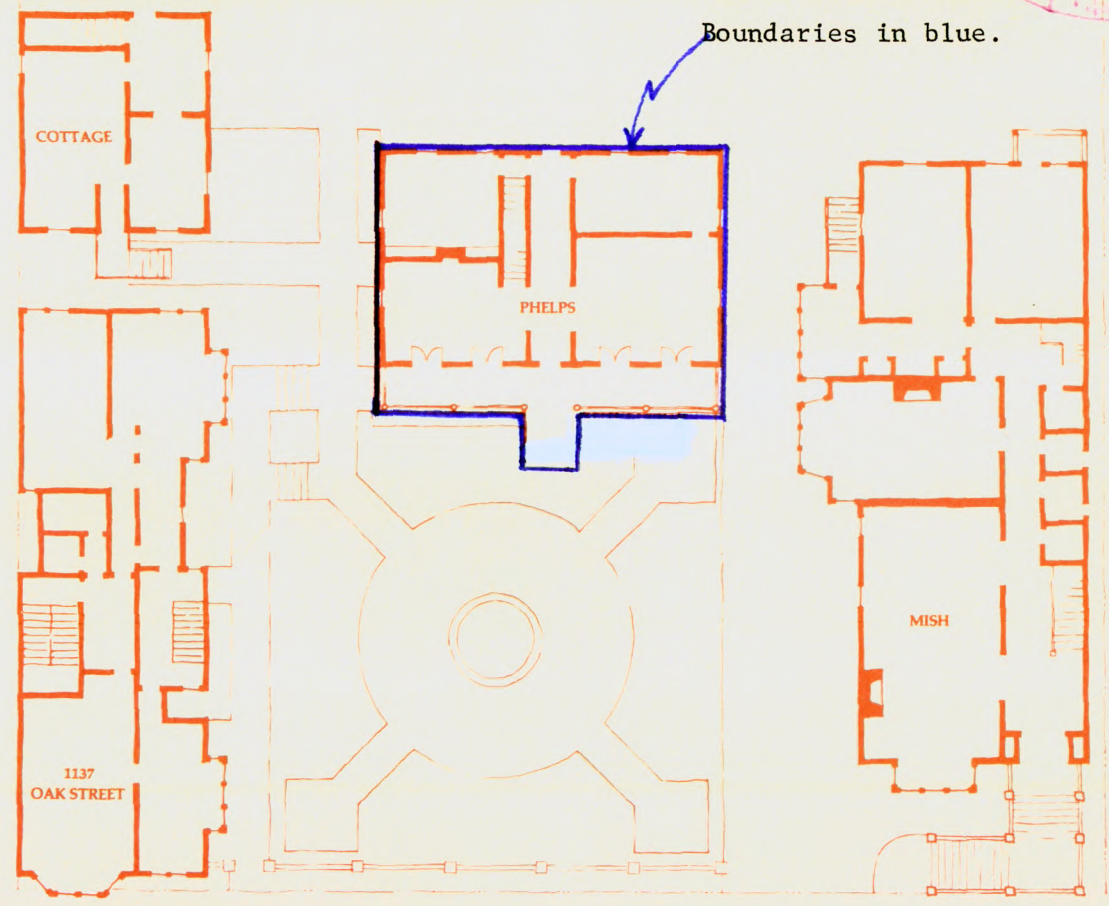
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Map



Sample Floor Plans

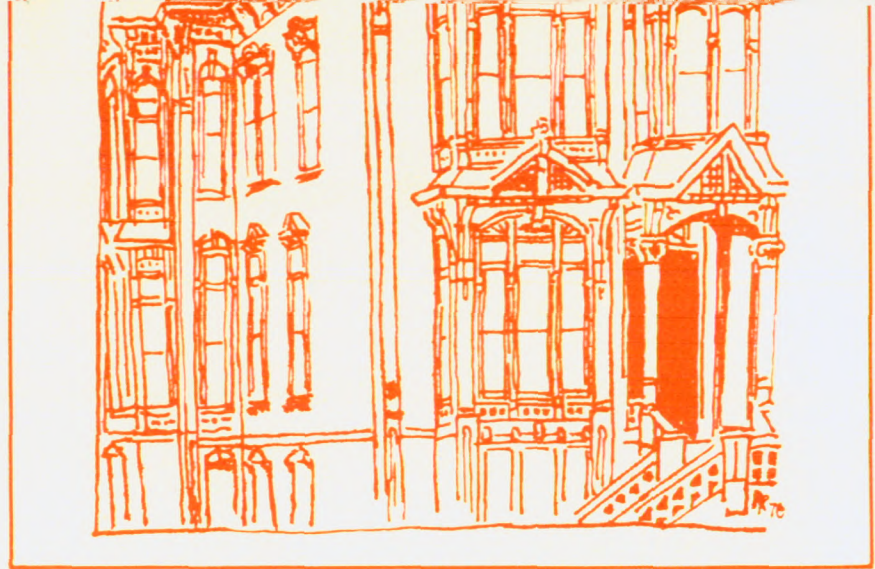


ABNER PHELPS HOUSE

Leasing Agent:



1137 Oak Street, a large Victorian with restored facade and interior. 1,340 net feet per floor, three floors.



The Mish House, a Victorian mansion built in 1885. Huge rooms, high ceilings, and a ground floor ballroom suitable for meetings of up to 150 people. The Mish House has been restored with stained glass skylights, carved oak doors, and crystal chandeliers. 2,200 square feet per floor, three floors.



The Cottage, an exquisite Victorian located next to the Phelps House, contains 1,425 net square feet.