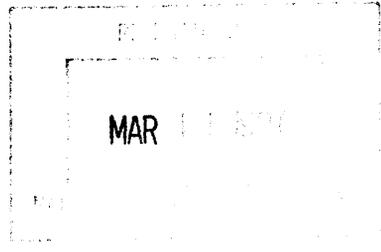


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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Bank of San Mateo / National Bank of San Mateo

other names/site number: Crocker-Anglo Bank

2. Location

street & number: 164 South "B" Street

not for publication N/A

city or town: San Mateo

vicinity N/A

state: California

code CA

county San Mateo

code 081 zip code: 94401

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  X  nomination   request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  X  meets   does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant   nationally   statewide  X  locally. (   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official  
State Historic Preservation Officer

3/4/97   
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

3. State/Federal Agency Certification  
4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  
(See continuation sheet).

determined eligible for the National Register  
(See continuation sheet).

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

  
Signature of the Keeper

4/24/97   
Date

Signature of the Keeper Date

In my opinion, the property   meets   does not meet the National Register criteria. (   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

---

**5. Classification**

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Bank of San Mateo

San Mateo County, California

Ownership of Property (Check as many as apply)

private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one)

building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
___1___	___ buildings
___	___ sites
___	___ structures
___	___ objects
___1___	___0 Total

Name of related multiple property:  
NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

-0-

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Subcategory:

Commercial Financial Institution

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Subcategory:

Vacant

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revival  
Beaux Arts Classicism

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
roof Tar and Gravel  
walls Reinforced Concrete with  
Marble / Terra Cotta/ Cement Plaster  
decoration

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Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

- See Continuation Sheet

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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Bank of San Mateo

San Mateo County, California

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" for each of the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- X** **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- X** **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" for all that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

A: Economics/Finance

C: Architecture

Period of Significance : 1924-1947

Significant Dates: 1924

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect: Weeks and Weeks (William H. and Harold H.)

Builder: Wisnom, Samuel A.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

-See Continuation Sheet

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Bank of San Mateo

San Mateo County, California

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Books:

- Hart, James B., *A Companion to California*, University of California Press, Ltd., London, 1987.  
Jackson, Kenneth, *Crabgrass Frontier, The Suburbanization of the United States*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1985.  
Lewis, Betty, *W. H. Weeks, Architect*, Pioneer Publishing, Fresno, 1985.  
Olmsted, Roger, etal. *Here Today*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1968.  
Postel, Mitchell P., *San Mateo, A Centennial History*, Scottwall Associates, San Francisco, 1994.  
Snyder, John, *I-280 Transfer Concept Study, Historic Properties Survey Report*, Environmental Analysis Branch / Caltrans, Sacramento, 1983.  
Stanger, Frank M., *South from San Francisco, San Mateo County, California: Its History and Heritage*, San Mateo County Historical Association, San Mateo, 1963.  
Starr, Kevin, *Endangered Dreams, The Great Depression in California*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996.  
Wickert, Linda, for the San Mateo County Historical Association, *City of San Mateo Historical Building Survey*, September, 1989.  
Williamson, Roxanne Kuter, *American Architects and the Mechanics of Fame*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1991.  
Withey, Henry and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, "Weeks Biography", Hennessey and Ingalls, Los Angeles, 1970.

### Periodicals:

- Architect and Engineer*, 5(3) 33-37 39-40 "Rural Schools in California" 9(2)40-62 "Suburban Architecture in California: Building the School" 75 13(1)A13 14(2)48 "Design for Casino" 14(3)76 "Preble Residence, New Monterey, Ca." 17(3)70 "Bank of Burlingame" 19(2)60-62 "Salinas Savings Bank - 15' Frontage" 22(3)51 "Livermore Carnegie Library" 25(1)43 "Palo Alto Masonic Temple" 25(2)57-62 "Building the School" by W. W. Weeks 27(1)58 "King City High School" 28(3)65 "Martinez County Hospital" 30(2)78 96 " Santa Cruz Residence" 33(2)91 "Woodland School" 35(2)105 "People's Bank" 37(3)74-76 "Crow's Landing School" 38(1)46 105 "School Architecture in California" 41(2)38-39 "The Works of William Weeks" by BJS Cahill 45(2)6 "Yolo County Court House" 45(3)48-50 "West Bank / San Leandro, People's Bank / Santa Cruz, Mission Bank / Santa Clara" 50(2)68-69 7 8 "Architecture and Schools" by J.J. Donovan 64(3)79 81 83 85 "Schools: Colusa, Healdsburg, Piedmont, Pomona" 77(1)90 92 "Long Beach City Hall" 81(3)5 Weeks Residence / Piedmont R 77(1)90 92 ??(2)36 (May 1936 Obit: "William H. Weeks").  
*Burlingame (Hillsborough) San Mateo City Directory*, Coast Directory Company, Burlingame, 1905-1928.

### Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- \_\_\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
\_\_\_ previously listed in the National Register  
\_\_\_ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
\_\_\_ designated a National Historic Landmark  
\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Location of Additional Data

- \_\_\_ State Historic Preservation Office  
\_\_\_ Other State agency  
\_\_\_ Federal agency  
\_\_\_ Local government  
\_\_\_ University  
\_\_\_ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property .103 acre

### UTM References

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing  
10-559865-4157740

Verbal Boundary Description: Parcel 1 in Block 8 as shown on City of San Mateo Parcel Map 181, beginning at a point on the southeasterly line of Parcel 10 located South 48 degrees 34' 54" West 62.33 feet from the most easterly portion of Parcel 10; thence from said point of beginning along the southeasterly line 48 degrees 34' 54" West 21.75 feet; thence across said Parcel 10 North 41 degrees 27' 38" West 5.00 feet; thence North 48 degrees 34' 54" East 21.75 feet; thence South 41 degrees 27' 38" East 5.00 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: The boundary is the property line that has always been associated with the property.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name/title: Patrick McGrew  
Organization: Patrick McGrew Associates Architects  
Street & number 41 Sutter Street, Suite 500 Telephone: 415/ 981-3060  
City or town San Francisco State CA Zip Code 94104

date 9.Aug.96

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**Additional Documentation**

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The following items are included with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets: 1 for Section 7 and 4 for Section 8.

**Maps**

A USGS map indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map of the historic property.

**Photographs**

Two sets of representative black and white photographs labeled in pencil on the back,  
and one set of 35mm slides of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name: Steve Porter  
Street & number: 101 Lincoln Center Drive #210 Telephone: 415 / 341-0306  
City or town: Foster City State: CA Zip code: 94404

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   7   Page   1  

Bank of San Mateo  
San Mateo County, California

The building is located in San Mateo's Central Business District (CBD), within a block of the town's original center, along the transit corridor (later commuter rail line) that was established in 1863. The area is characterized by its concentration of second and third generation commercial structures, two and three stories tall, typically built without setbacks, to the limits of the property lines. The Bank of San Mateo, the second building on this site, is located on a prominent corner site that is essentially flat. The two story rectangular building is of reinforced concrete construction with cement plaster exterior decoration, that is unchanged from its original appearance when it was built in 1924, resulting in a high degree of architectural integrity. It is approximately 50 feet wide and 90 feet long, with its narrow dimension facing South "B" Street, and its long dimension facing Second Avenue, resulting in only two exposed elevations - the north and west walls fall on interior property lines and cannot be seen. The building reflects a vestigial classicism that is derived from the declining years of Beaux Arts classical expression in the U.S. The building is essentially unchanged from its original appearance, resulting in a high degree of architectural integrity.

The symmetrical front elevation is composed of three bays: a wide center bay is flanked by narrower matching side bays. The bays are separated and framed by pairs of two story tall fluted pilasters which rest visually on a Verde Antique marble (vener) base, atop a gray granite plinth at the sidewalk. The pilasters are composed in a simplified classical sensibility (base, shaft, cap): the bases are decorated in low-relief Greek key fretwork, the lower one-third of the pilaster fluting is decorated with carving, and the capitals are decorated with an abbreviated egg and dart molding over a band of rosettes. The overall composition of base, pilasters and balustrade recalls, in a decorated expression, the structural frame that lies beneath. This is surmounted by an entablature composed of a two-part architrave, a banded frieze, a dentil course and three part cornice composed of a bed mold, corona, and crown molding. The entablature is topped by a continuous balustrade capped by an upper rail supported by regularly spaced groups of ten balusters (12 at the entrance bay) with pedestals at the corners and uncut balusters atop each column pairing. The assembly is backed with a continuous cement plaster parapet wall that prevents light from outlining the balusters.

Glazing is recessed within each bay. The matching side bays are each composed of a pair of one-over-one wood double hung windows in the upper floor. These rest upon a recessed spandrel decorated with a frame composed of low relief floral motifs. The glazing at the lower level is framed in steel, painted to resemble dull bronze. All of the exterior materials remain as they were originally built. The lower level windows are composed of two tiers of fixed glass two panes high and three wide in the proportion of two parts over one part high, and one part-two parts-one part wide. The glazing in the upper center bay resembles the side bays, except there are three windows. The lower portion of the center bay provides a recessed entrance to the ground floor banking hall, and is given emphasis by an elaborate light pink terra cotta frame. This frame is decorated in low relief floral patterns and is surmounted by a simple entablature composed of a cornice and a dentil course. The entablature is surmounted by a small cartouche bracketed by inverted scrolls. Set deeply behind this frame is a pair of bright bronze french doors beneath a single transom, surrounded by a bronze frame. A modern security gate has been added to the entranceway.

The Second Avenue elevation is divided into two distinct parts. The first four bays (east to west) restate the side bays of the front elevation in every detail. The second section of the elevation reflects a more utilitarian composition and use, and actually resembles a later addition, although it was part of the original construction. It is a stripped down version of the more decorated parts of the building. It has the same entablature and the marble base continues, but it has no cast pilasters, and the balustrade has been reduced to a simple parapet with recesses where the balusters are otherwise found. The upper windows are double hung and resemble those found on the front elevation, but they are combined into a group of five: three narrow windows with a wider window at each end. This section has a simplified version of the framed front entrance, sans cartouche and scrolls, but this one is built of cement plaster. This entrance provides access via an interior stair to the second level of the bank which was occupied by office workers; public access to the banking hall was restricted to the South B Street entrance. Today, the exterior of the building remains essentially as it was originally built. The importance of this building derives from its exterior; the interior of secondary importance, and substantial alterations have taken place on the interior. The main entry with its marble detailing survives largely intact, as do two bathrooms on this level that have Alaska White marble wainscoting. The public functions of banking took place at the lower level in the banking hall, a large space that was interrupted by structural columns. The teller windows and counters were originally installed between these columns, and all but one of the teller stations have been removed. The original vault survives at the west end of the banking hall. The hall itself has been subdivided with new partitions, and all of the original lighting fixtures have been removed. The original decorative features of the interior of the first floor have been lost. The entrance to the second floor is located on Second Avenue. Access is made through a foyer/stair hall that is decorated with surviving, original Alaska White marble wainscoting and stair tread. The second floor space itself was used for offices for the bank, and has been reconfigured many times, resulting in a loss of original detailing.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page   1   of 4

Bank of San Mateo  
San Mateo, California

**Summary:**

The Bank of San Mateo is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of economics for the role it has played in the economic life of the citizenry as the town's only locally-owned financial institution. The construction of this building was a direct response to the advent of branch banking in California, and this building maintained its locally-owned alternative to "big business" branch banking in the community for thirty years. The loss of **single site or locally-owned banking institutions represents a pattern of events** dating from the settlement period to modern times, that is significant as a broad pattern of the history of the architectural evolution of small towns. The Bank of San Mateo is also significant under Criterion C as the **sole example of Beaux Arts classicism** in the San Mateo central business district. The building reflects a timeless classicism, not seen elsewhere in the downtown, which may be seen as an iconographic representation of the abstract notion of the community's faith in its financial institution. **The classical roots of this building were used to express the concepts of solidness, reserve, thrift and stability.** These characteristics continue today to generate respect and value for this building, even though it has long ceased to function as a bank.

The 1894 date of incorporation of the (National) Bank of San Mateo, during the area's settlement period, makes it the first financial institution to have been established in San Mateo. It is intimately associated with Irish immigrant carpenter/contractor Robert Wisnom, one of the bank's founders, whose descendants still live in the San Mateo area, more than one hundred years later. Although most conventional histories of San Mateo deal with the wealthy landowners who built country estates nearby, it was the laborers and merchants, such as Wisnom and others, who actually established the original village of San Mateo. Wisnom arrived in California in 1866, and he soon became San Mateo's best-known builder. Today he is credited with the construction of many of the city's most important historic buildings. His financial success led him to invest in real estate in the central business district where he established a lumber yard. He joined with Michigan immigrant Philip Rodel in the organization of the area's first financial institution, the Bank of San Mateo. He served as the bank's vice-president in 1905 when it was located at Third Avenue and B Street. His son David was employed as the bank's cashier. The senior Wisnom was also an original member of the village's first governing body. The surviving 1924 structure at 164 South B Street is the last building to house the locally-owned and operated National Bank of San Mateo. In 1955 the bank was absorbed by, and became a branch of, the Crocker-Anglo Bank. In the 1980s, Crocker was acquired by Wells Fargo Bank, the site was declared surplus and the building was closed. It was subsequently leased for commercial purposes, and is now vacant.

The Bank of San Mateo is one of three San Mateo buildings designed by pioneer California architect William H. Weeks, and was built by bank founder Robert Wisnom's grandson Samuel. Its design was rooted in Beaux Arts classicism, chosen to present a monumental treatment that would suggest the character of a solid and substantial institution. The style was often chosen for bank buildings to foster the impression of stability and infinite endurance in the minds of its depositors through the use of Greek and Roman decorative motifs, and elegant and/or expensive materials. In this case, the building may be seen as an example of a style that has lost its vigor, and is considerably reduced in quality from earlier examples found throughout the U. S. , as well as earlier examples produce by architect Weeks. Nonetheless, the building is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion C, for its embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of Beaux Arts Classicism as it neared the end of its popularity. This is the sole surviving academic example of the style in San Mateo and provides an important link in the understanding of the architectural styles found here. The building is one of three that have been identified in a city-sponsored survey as being potentially eligible for individual listing on the National Register. All three are included in a potential Downtown San Mateo National Register Historic District.

**HISTORY Period of Significance (1920s -1930s)**

The history of the development of the City of San Mateo may be seen as typical of the growth of commuter suburbs in the United States. Its recorded history begins with Mexican rule, when the 6,438 acre Rancho San Mateo was established under the stewardship of Cayetano Arenas. In the 1850s, well into the American occupation, Arenas sold the rancho to pioneer capitalist William Howard. In 1863, with the arrival of the San Francisco/San Jose railroad, an embryonic business district was established (one of seventeen between the two cities), but incorporation of the town of San Mateo was to come later. In the 1880s Howard began subdividing the Rancho and the area became known for its occupancy by a group of wealthy landowners who built elaborate country estates.

  X   See Continuation Sheet

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Bank of San Mateo  
Name of property  
San Mateo, California  
County and State

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A village grew up around the railroad station, first on Main Street, and later centering on Second Avenue and South B Street. The town was incorporated in 1894; among its first businesses was the Bank of San Mateo which was also established that year. The area was heavily damaged during the 1906 earthquake, and largely rebuilt in its original location. In the 1920s, some of the country estates on the west side of town near Third Avenue and El Camino Real were subdivided and portions were sold for commercial development. At this time the traditional center of the downtown moved to that new location.

The *San Mateo Historical Survey* characterizes the period of significance for the potential National Register Historic District as "twenties-thirties." What is significant about this period is that it was a transitional period marking the completion and subsequent decline of the dominance of the Second Avenue/South B Street area that was the nucleus of the original town. In the 1930s, the Third Avenue/El Camino Real end of town emerged as the "new" downtown. Architect Weeks designed one of the last important buildings in the original downtown area (the Bank) as well as the largest and most visible building in the "new" downtown, the Benjamin Franklin Hotel.

#### **History of Financial Institution**

The banking business in frontier California came into being during the gold rush, largely superseding similar services provided by hide and tallow dealers and others. The necessity to hold gold for miners and the merchants who supplied them necessitated the security of safes provided by stage company agents and saloon keepers who consequently became the state's first bankers. The first California bank was established in San Francisco in 1849 by Robert A. Parker on Dupont Street (later Grant Avenue). A State Banking Commission devised to regulate state-chartered banks was established following the failure of the Bank of California in 1875.

Despite this legislation, the state's banks were hard hit by the Panic of 1893. This occurrence led to the establishment of the Bank of San Mateo, which was incorporated in 1894 by Philip M. Rodel, according to clipping files maintained at the San Mateo Public Library. By the end of the 19th century there were 189 commercial banks in the State, including the first Bank of San Mateo which was located in a brick building on Main Street. In 1905 the *San Mateo/Burlingame City Directory* records a new location, the corner of B Street and Third Avenue, a block from the existing site. By then, Robert Wisnom had become the bank's vice-president. Following Rodel's death in 1905, the bank and Rodel's home were purchased by A. P. Giannini, the founder of the Bank of Italy. It retained its name and officers, including the Wisnom's who continued in their previous capacities. National financial problems led to bank failures throughout the nation leading the state to require more control of its financial institution which led to a 1909 act that intensified the monitoring of banking practices, and also established branch banking. That year the Bank of San Mateo became the National Bank of San Mateo. A few years later (1918) Giannini changed the name of the bank on the 3rd and B Street site to Bank of Italy (now the Bank of America), a location it continues to occupy. The original (Bank of San Mateo) building on this site was demolished in the 1930s to be replaced by the current building, which has subsequently undergone substantial alterations. In 1923 the Bank of San Mateo's original directors appear to have split with Giannini and made the decision to build a new building and revive the Bank of San Mateo name on the subject property at 164 South B Street, a block away. Restoring the bank to its family origins, Wisnom's son David was the bank's cashier, and his other son Samuel was the contractor for the new construction. This was the third generation of the Wisnom family to have direct connections to the bank.

The Bank of San Mateo building is significant for its embodiment of and association with the pattern of events that led to the replacement of the small locally-owned banks dating from the late 19th century with large corporate, multi-branch banking institutions of the 20th century. This pattern of change began locally with the take-over of the original Bank of San Mateo by the founder of the Bank of Italy A. P. Giannini in 1905. Changing its name to Bank of Italy in 1918 precipitated the re-establishment of the original name in the new building built in 1924. In order to retain the interest and association with the families of the town's

See continuation sheet

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page 3 of 4

Bank of San Mateo  
San Mateo, California

founders, the subject building was built and the institution of the small (non-branch) bank was kept alive for another thirty years, until the bank and the building were acquired by Cracker in 1955. The building and its services were a focus of the community's economic system. Although the banking institution continued in the building until 1955, nothing of exceptional significance has occurred within the last fifty years. The period of significance, therefore, is arbitrarily ended in 1947.

Additional regulation occurred after the creation of the Federal Reserve system that assisted in the smooth operation of banks during the expansionist and speculative period of the 1920s and the great depression of the 1930s. California's population explosion of the 1950s brought economic growth and expansion to banking facilities. A pattern of mergers began then and continues unabated today. Banking systems and facilities continue to evolve, and by the 1950s most of the independent, locally-owned banks have been replaced (by merger or acquisition) with large corporate banking institutions. Today, the evolution continues as branch bank buildings are increasingly replaced with automatic tellers, and the existing buildings undergo conversion to new uses. The Bank of San Mateo, with its intact exterior, survived in its last home until 1955 when the San Francisco based Crocker Bank merged with the Anglo-American Bank and acquired control of the Bank of San Mateo. In the 1980s, as the merger pattern continued, Cracker was subsequently absorbed by Wells Fargo Bank. By then Wells Fargo had established other branches in San Mateo, and this property was deemed surplus and closed.

### ARCHITECTURE

**Architect:** William Henry Weeks (1866-1936) occupies a modest but relatively unique place in California architectural history: during the time that architects were generally considered to be the servants of the wealthy class, he was considered the architect of the common man. His clientele was largely school boards and church groups who built their churches, schools and libraries in rural California locales. As a consequence of Weeks' willingness to bid on projects in numerous villages and towns, his firm became one of the most prolific in the state. It is not known exactly how many buildings the firm completed in its thirty-nine year history, but a 1915 article in *Architect and Engineer* indicates that in its first eighteen years the firm had already completed more than one thousand commissions.

Weeks was a second-generation architect, the son of a Canadian builder-architect. He was born in Charlottetown on Prince Edward Island, and at the age of fourteen moved with his family to Denver, Colorado. There he studied architectural design at the Brinker Institute and began his apprenticeship as a draftsman. He designed his first important building, the 1895 Garfield Institute, in Wichita, Kansas. By 1897 Weeks had relocated to Watsonville, California, the headquarters of the Spreckels Sugar Company beet processing plant, where members and high-ranking employees of the Spreckels family were among his early clients. Seeking to attract larger-scale commissions, in 1904 Weeks established an office in San Francisco. He was among the earliest of California architects to envision a regional practice and by 1926 maintained offices in San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose.

Week's reputation was that of a consummate professional who delivered his multitude of projects on budget and on time. While he is not remembered as an exciting designer, he was capable of a certain flamboyance, as may be seen in the Casino and Natatorium he created for the Santa Cruz Boardwalk in 1906 and 1911. The design of these buildings may have been influenced by architect Joseph Cather Newsom, with whom Weeks collaborated on the early phases of the project. Unsympathetically altered in the 1950s, these buildings once resembled exposition buildings such as those at the Chicago and San Francisco Fairs of 1893 and 1894 respectively.

Eclecticism reigned as the dominant architectural expression in America between the 1880s and the 1930s, and Weeks' work reflects many diverse aspects of that aesthetic. His earliest Watsonville projects derive stylistically from the waning Victorian era and generally speaking embrace the Queen Anne sensibility. By 1906 he was working in an elaborate Mission Revival style, although an occasional commission would reveal a Richardsonian sensibility. His elementary school projects invariably embraced the Mission Revival, Tudor Revival or Collegiate Gothic styles. His high schools, business blocks, and banking "temples" offered the opportunity to explore main-stream classical themes deriving from Beaux-Arts classicism. During this period, California was

  X   See continuation sheet

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Bank of San Mateo  
Name of property  
San Mateo County, California  
County and State

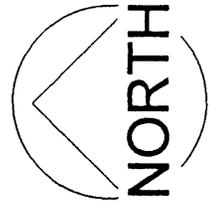
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becoming more appreciative of her Spanish / Mexican / Mediterranean roots, and a preference for buildings designed in these styles emerged as the California standard, so buildings deriving from classical roots were less common.

Buildings in the Beaux Arts style were generally large-scale civic structures including city halls, court houses, libraries, train stations and schools. It was also the style of choice for banks. The style is characterized by axial formality, the relatively large scale of the structures, and the lavishness of the materials employed: cut and carved granite, inlaid marbles, and patinated and/or polished bronze. The style emphasized the use of details derived from pattern books of classical architecture and found a receptive public audience following the Chicago World's Colombian Exposition of 1893, whose designers had legitimate Beaux Arts roots. Beaux Arts classicism became the dominant mode for the most prestigious civic buildings in the U. S. These monumental buildings often had large areas of unarticulated window wall between the base and the classical cornice, leading some architectural theorists to see the movement as a precursor to the modernism that was to follow. As the style fanned out from Chicago, Washington, D.C. and New York to the cities of the West Coast, "correct" interpretation was found to a greater or lesser degree to be dependent upon budgetary considerations and the architectural education and design skills of the architects who used the style. The Bay Area's first Beaux Arts building was Albert Pissis' brilliant Hibernia Bank of 1892, and this building set a precedent that California architects have aspired to ever since. California architects known for their Beaux Arts banks include Pissis and John Galen Howard, who studied at the Beaux Arts, and Bliss & Faville among others, who apprenticed in offices guided by Beaux Arts principles. In the early decades of the 20th century, William Weeks' catalog of styles included a subdued Beaux Arts classicism as seen in his projects like the Elko Nevada County Court House, the People's Bank of Santa Cruz, and the Banks of San Leandro, Arcata, and Palo Alto. His high schools for San Mateo, Burlingame, Willow, Santa Cruz, Eureka, Woodland, and Santa Rosa all featured a relatively sleek interpretation of the Beaux Arts style. His Modesto Public Library may be considered his most successful and innovative building in this style. Most of these buildings were built in the late teens. One of the "secrets" to his prolific practice was his formulaic reuse of a successful floor plan that required only new exterior elevations to give each project a semi-unique expression. This tendency to reuse a floor plan is found in many of his school and library projects and a few of his bank buildings, including the San Mateo Bank, which is a refinement of his better-known Santa Cruz People's Bank of 1910. Weeks expressed his belief that certain styles were appropriate for school buildings - his preferences included Mission, Classic (Greek) and Gothic. In an article about architectural styles for school buildings he wrote: "An historic style is more appropriate for the school than the original types that are usually short-lived and seldom bear repeating." His work indicates that this philosophy carried over into his bank projects.

By 1924, when the Bank of San Mateo was designed, Weeks was 58 years old, and the head of a large and successful practice. That year he also opened a branch office in Oakland, assisted by his son Harold H. (1895-1945) who had become his father's business partner, and two years later Weeks and Weeks opened another branch office in San Jose. Under the partnership, the firm's already exemplary reputation as specialists in school work was expanded to include a series of Spanish influenced Art Deco towers including the Hotel Palomar (1929) in Santa Cruz, the Medical-Dental Building (1927) and the Hotel DeAnza (1931) in San Jose, and the Benjamin Franklin Hotel (1926) in San Mateo. The senior Weeks' role became one of traveling administrator, and the firm's design work was produced by skilled designers in each office. As one of the oldest and largest architectural firms in the state, large public projects provided the bulk of the firm's work. When seen against this background, the Bank of San Mateo was a minor commission. This relative lack of importance combined with a relatively modest budget is expressed in the building's absence of refined proportion, detail, and materials that characterized the firm's earlier bank projects. Here, columns had been replaced by pilasters, granite had been replaced by cement plaster or terra cotta, and bronze had been replaced by painted steel. The resulting building still referenced its classical roots, but its expression had been marginalized. Among the published records of the firm's work, the Bank of San Mateo appears to be the last of the projects produced by the Weeks firm to utilize classical motifs. Harold Weeks, who had studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, is credited with leading the firm into new stylistic directions, and within a couple of years the practice would leave behind the classicism that had been an important part of the firm's design philosophy, for the pursuit of an Art Deco-based modernism.

The San Mateo Bank building is the only example of monumental Beaux Arts classicism in downtown San Mateo. In terms of San Mateo's architectural evolution, the building is important as an example of the classical temple form which pervaded small town bank design across the country during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



SITE PLAN: BANK OF SAN MATEO  
SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA

