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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 an 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 THE COFFIN-REDINGTON BUILDING

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 301 Folsom Street and 300 Beale Street

not for publication N/A

city or town San Francisco

vicinity N/A

state California

code CA

county San Francisco

code 075

zip code 94105

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Harriet Almy DSHPO DEC 20 2000  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

California Office of Historic Preservation  
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson R. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

2/2/01  
Date of Action

Coffin-Redington Building  
Name of Property

San Francisco, California  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Health Care: Medical Business
- Industry/Processing: Manufacturing Facility
- Commerce/Trade: Warehouse
- Landscape: Parking Lot/Loading Dock

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Domestic: Multiple Dwelling
- Commerce/Trade: Restaurant; Professional
- Landscape: Plaza

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Modern Movement: Moderne

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Concrete
- walls Concrete
- roof Asphalt
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

SEE ATTACHED CONTINUATION SHEETS

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or 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** N/A  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or 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.

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested 0845-95-CA-96-0711
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1937

**Significant Dates**

1937

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Meyer, Frederick H., FAIA

See Attached Continuation Sheets

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

G. Bland Platt Associates

Coffin-Redington Building  
Name of Property

San Francisco, California  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	10	551580	4182290
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

The Coffin-Redington Building occupies all of  
Lot 20 in Assessor's Block 3747

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

These are legally recorded boundaries.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mrs. Bland Platt, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization G. Bland Platt Associates

date March 24, 2000

street & number 362 Ewing Terrace

telephone (415) 922-3579

city or town San Francisco

state California zip code 94118

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets = 29

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs = 7

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items = 3 Maps

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

**Property Owner**

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

name Embarcadero Lofts LLC, c/o Dana G. Perry, Esq., Agent for Manager

street & number 1200 Concord Avenue - Suite 200

telephone (925) 825-4424

city or town Concord

state California zip code 94520

**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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Coffin-Redington Building  
San Francisco, California

### DESCRIPTION

The Coffin-Redington Building is a four-story over basement structure in the Moderne style which was prevalent at the time of its design and construction in 1936-1937. Prior to 1946, and perhaps as early as 1943-1944 (based on land records), the company constructed an addition to the rear, near the southwest corner of the original building. The addition, which measures approximately 25 feet by 30 feet, is incorporated so carefully into the original that its later construction is not evident. However, it differs in two ways: it is one story higher and its cornice is devoid of ornament. Rectangular in plan, the original building measures 137 feet  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch on Folsom Street which is its primary facade, and 168 feet 9 inches along its Beale Street frontage, according to the architect's original plans. Of solid concrete and mushroom column construction, the building consists of a high, strong base with three stories above and is faced with "cement plaster". "The building's great mass is articulated by differentiating its end bays through the modulation of their width in respect to the central bays" which are wider. Piers, which are fluted above, carry down to the ground, separating the building into bays. Linear industrial sash windows within each bay are separated floor-to-floor with wide horizontal bands; within each bay, the band is divided into three square articulated segments, echoing the division of the windows. Ornament and detailing, restrained, except at the main entry on Folsom Street, are Moderne. For example, the cornice, painted a different color than the base of the building, is relatively simple and narrow, but decorated with layered, connected half-circles. As mentioned above, the cornice on the addition is the same width and color, but lacks the half-circle ornamentation. The roof is flat, tar and gravel, and contains a fifth floor penthouse, with terraces, set back 17 feet from the North and East parapets, as well as elevator and mechanical penthouses. The interior is noteworthy for its repetitive mushroom columns that support the vast floor spaces. Because the original owner moved in the mid-1950's, and subsequent users stripped the interior to suit their individual needs, there was no visible sign of Coffin-Redington's tenure floor by floor when the present owners purchased the property and began their adaptive re-use project, utilizing the 20% Investment Tax Credit, and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The Coffin-Redington Building is especially visible since the removal of various approaches to the Oakland-Bay Bridge as a result of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake; this removal took place across Folsom Street to the North and continues both East and West from that point, giving way to surface parking lots, which can also be found across the street (East) from the Coffin-Redington Building. Until 1999, the building was the only complex on the easterly half of the square block; now the parking lots to the South of the complex contain two 17-story residential towers. The westerly half of this block is

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The Coffin-Redington Building  
San Francisco, California

intact and contains a variety of commercial and industrial buildings that are of the same vintage as this building, but because they sit on a cliff, they seem more removed. Development pressures in this area will continue, but because of its size, corner location and substantial rehabilitation, the Coffin-Redington Building will continue to be a visual anchor within its neighborhood.

#### EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURE

The Coffin-Redington Building is divided into seven (7) vertical bays along Folsom Street which is the North facade. (Photo 1) The Beale Street facade has ten (10) bays, including the former employee entry which is the sixth bay from the corner, and now provides entry to the ground level restaurant. With the exception of the corner bays which measure 7 feet 11½ inches between the piers, the bays measure 11 feet 7½ inches across.

Although the base of the building has a solid appearance, there is a recessed opening in every bay. Window frames are steel industrial sash with wood mullions, each of which is divided into three vertical panels with the central portion wider and fixed while the side panels are each divided into four (4) operable segments. Because these windows suffered from lack of maintenance, and insensitive treatments, each was removed, repaired, re-glazed and painted before being re-installed.

The main entry on Folsom Street is the full height of the ground floor, as can be seen in Photo 2, and is notably recessed. At the time of purchase, the doorway enframing was only visible at the level of the linear transom, the remainder of the opening being covered with a corrugated rolling metal door to discourage intruders. Removal of the rolling door revealed no additional remaining materials, so the existing door was recreated based upon the lines established in the area of the transom, and by consulting the original drawings and distant historic photographs. The reveal is lined in a succession of floor-to-ceiling bands, three of which are richly detailed in the Moderne mode with chevrons and floral motifs, while the band immediately surrounding the door frame is fluted. At the street, the entry surround is simple, projecting slightly from the face of the building, and is capped with a denticulated pediment that gives way to a simple narrow cornice composed of triangular patterns that separates the base of the building from the floor above. Secondary entries, one each on Beale and Folsom, are the height of neighboring bays, but are enhanced by three to four bands within that larger opening. The smaller doorways are then centered in the space and have fluted surrounds with simple denticulated pediments above. It had been hoped that these doors could be repaired, but both proved rotten to the core; new doors replicate the originals in design, but are mahogany in color to match the central entry.

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The Coffin-Redington Building  
San Francisco, California

At the southeast corner of the building on Beale Street and continuing north a distance of four bays, the piers came to the street, and were not glazed because the area behind contained a railroad spur, with entry from the south end of the building, to simplify loading and unloading. Beyond, at the building wall, half of each interior mushroom column projects forward, breaking the flat wall plane. Between these, there were a number of openings protected by metal rolling doors. Fenestration here was randomly spaced, generally linear, but not as long or wide as elsewhere, and filled with industrial sash containing numerous small panes. As part of the adaptive re-use project, this area was converted to an outdoor eating terrace by creating a new floor several feet above the original ground level, and by converting the loading dock openings to doors with side lights to match those on the South and East elevations of the loading docks around the corner. Windows above the loading docks were randomly sized and spaced, so all were made to conform to two larger ones, as seen in Photo 3, including the small paned glazing. The large street facing openings are still open to the air, but have been fitted with metal mesh rolling shades to block excess sunlight and wind.

Above the ground floor, bays are separated by substantial fluted piers, which are smoothly finished at the ground level. Within each bay, a linear window is divided vertically into three parts, with the central section being somewhat wider; glazing is a series of small panes. Horizontal articulated banding separates the windows floor to floor as stated above.

The southerly or rear facade of the original building appears to be four (4) bays wide because the remainder is part of the 1943-44 addition. The original loading dock at the first floor, now part of a terraced plaza, has smaller linear windows above; windows in the three top floors match those on the major facades as does the cornice, although the decorative triple band of semi-circles seen on the upper cornice does not continue beyond the first bay on this elevation. See Photos 4 and 5.

The five (5) story addition is pulled back from the southwest corner of the building the equivalent of one bay. It is three (3) bays wide along the south wall, and is four (4) bays deep as can be seen in Photo 4. The loading dock continued at the base on the east and south sides of this additions, and has been retained and incorporated into the plaza design while also providing access to offices, the restaurant and the residential entry lobby. See Photo 6. The original corrugated iron canopy over the loading dock is considered an important character-defining feature; however, its 1952 extension and 1968 alterations were not. Unfortunately, the canopy and its supports were too far deteriorated to repair, so using the original permit drawings, the canopy was replicated to match the original as can be see in Photos 4

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The Coffin-Redington Building  
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through 6. Windows appear to be identical to those in the original building with the exception of the fifth floor penthouse where a pair of separated windows is centered over each bay. The cornice above is thicker and heavier, but does not contain the triple band of semi-circles, as mentioned above. Photo 4 shows the junction of the addition and the original building at the roof, and the re-worked mechanical/elevator penthouses, as well as the profile of the new, recessed penthouse addition.

When the present owners purchased the property, there were only three (3) small windows on the otherwise blank West wall of the complex. Set back from the street one to two bay widths, these were placed one above the other to provide light to an interior stair system. Because this is considered a secondary elevation and because the building was converted to residential units, the owners received permission to cut additional window openings in this wall using the lines of the original retained windows as guidance. These new windows are linear and highly contemporary to distinguish them from the historic windows on primary elevations.

#### INTERIOR

When purchased by the present owners, the interior was essentially two large, connected, open floor plates with concrete mushroom columns evenly spaced throughout. The only indication that the addition came later was on the second floor where the two sections met where there was additional structural bracing. Because the complex had had numerous users after The Coffin-Redington Company departed in 1953, there were few signs of their tenancy, and none that State and Federal reviewers considered worth retention. Because the new use would be/is residential units, inserting these worked more efficiently with removal of non-historic elevators along with several stair systems; these were replaced with centrally located, code-complying alternatives.

Residential units of varying sizes and layouts have been carefully inserted within the complex above the ground floor restaurant and commercial spaces. All spaces, whether commercial or residential, have been designed around and incorporate the mushroom columns.

#### ADDITIONAL ALTERATIONS

Initial inspections by a licensed structural engineer pointed up some disturbing deficiencies in the complex, including the fact that the building appeared to be without a proper foundation and was resting on bay mud. That, coupled with the increased load of the new uses, and additional code requirements for residential occupancy called for a



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substantial seismic upgrade that also permitted the addition of basements and garages, contained within the structure, which are accessed along the non-historic western elevation of the property.

Shear walls were called for, but are not obvious to the casual observer. Six inch thick concrete floors, which sagged and collected water in numerous locations, were essentially retained and rebuilt to include energy-efficient radiant heating. When complete, the floors were 9 inches thick which also provides sound insulation from floor to floor.

The roof appeared to be original with layer upon layer added over time. It also contained numerous pipes, vents and other appurtenances that served no useful purpose. Further, its drainage system was antiquated and not functioning which brought water into the building in numerous locations. Consequently, the entire roof structure was rebuilt which was also necessary because of the new penthouse units and terraces. However, the new surface has the same visual qualities as the original.

The project, of course, included all new plumbing, mechanical and electrical as well as fire suppression systems, and all other code required elements. All work is covered in detail in Part 2 of the "Historic Preservation Certification Application".

### LANDSCAPING

There was no landscaping on this parcel during Coffin-Redington's tenure nor was any provided by subsequent warehousing tenants. With conversion of the building to residential units and commercial spaces, however, the former loading dock and parking area provided the ideal location for an inviting but hard-edged space that would also serve as the entrance to all but the restaurant portion of the project. The decision to retain the canopied loading dock with its unusual shape provided the focal point for the balance of the design which includes terraced concrete planting beds, containing a variety of plant materials, including a Palm tree and grassy areas. It also masks the handicapped ramp that provides additional access to the loading dock which in turn provides access to the various commercial uses and spaces. See Photos 4 through 6.

In addition to the plaza, the owners planted 16 street trees. Interestingly, the first ones planted were small and did not fare well. These have been replaced recently with large, mature trees that are impressive in size, but make photographing the complex quite difficult.

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SETTING: NEIGHBORHOOD AND SURROUNDING LAND USES

As will be discussed more fully in the Significance section, in the 1850's and earlier, the shoreline of San Francisco Bay came up to a point at Beale and Folsom Streets, diagonally across from the present Coffin-Redington Building. Rincon Point and Rincon Hill behind it to the West were extremely steep cliffs that have been excavated or cut down over time. In this century, the most significant levelling took place in preparation for construction of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (1936), and its attendant ramps and approaches. The appended Map A from the Department of City Planning's "Rincon Hill - An Area Plan of the Master Plan of the City and County of San Francisco" shows the effect of the bridge construction on this area. Until 1999, when the two 17-story residential towers were constructed directly to the South of the Coffin-Redington Building, remnants of Rincon Hill could be seen as steep rock outcroppings. This demonstrates that while the Coffin-Redington Building is now on flat land, as late as 1937, portions of Rincon Hill were quite visible on the southerly three-quarters of this block; the westerly half of the square block presently sits atop a portion of the remains of Rincon Hill. See Photo 7. Note, too, that due to the steepness of the block south of this site, coupled with Bridge construction, Harrison Street is elevated here; the concrete bridge bears the date 1936, the same year construction began on the Coffin-Redington Building.

Across Beale Street, bordered by the Harrison elevated roadway on the south, is a major, very contemporary United States Postal Service Center. The contiguous parking lot serves that building. As Beale crosses Folsom, one is aware of the vast steep open space on the North side that extends both East and West, the result of removal of Bay Bridge access roads damaged by the Loma Prieta Earthquake in 1989.

The westerly half of the square block containing the Coffin-Redington Building, however, contains a handsome collection of two and three story buildings, many of which date to the 1930's, although several are older. The two buildings to the west of the subject property, on either side of Zeno Alley are visible in Photo One while the most westerly of the two is in the foreground in Photo 7. The most interesting buildings, though, face Fremont Street. See Photo 7. The rear facades of most of these buildings overlook the Coffin-Redington site, and were visible, along with the hillside, until the recent construction of the 17-story apartment towers mentioned above.

The number of vacant parcels presently devoted to parking will surely soon give way to new construction as this is a neighborhood in transition. Regardless of changes in the area, the Coffin-Redington Building will continue to be a visual landmark, and its setting will not be compromised because of its impressive size, its corner location, the

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wide streets that will continue to separate it from its neighbors, and its simple but elegant architectural design.

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The Coffin-Redington Building  
San Francisco, California

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designed by Frederick H. Meyer, FAIA (1876-1961), one of San Francisco's most significant and prolific architects of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries, the Coffin-Redington Building is the only known extant example of Meyer's design of a multi-faceted manufactory, which, in this instance, was an architecturally distinguished but understated, state-of-the-art pharmaceutical headquarters. Although Meyer did design several other manufacturing plants during his long and prodigious career, all of which appear to have been demolished, he is primarily associated with downtown office buildings and a variety of government commissions as well as residential work for repeat clients. The Moderne idiom adapted here by Meyer in the detailing of an otherwise Classical Revival industrial building certainly reflects the period, but is not one generally associated with Meyer's body of work. As a rare and unusual example within his body of work, the Coffin-Redington Building qualifies for listing in the National Register under Criterion C. Founded in 1849 by pioneers Andrew J. Almay, Dr. E. S. Holden, and John H. Redington, and joined early on by Andrew Coffin (1859) and Horatio P. Livermore (1857), The Coffin-Redington Drug Company was "the first and oldest drug company in the West" (Ryder) until it was absorbed by Brunswig Drug Company in 1949; it was also "the first wholesale drug house in San Francisco", and by 1870, the pioneer firm was larger than all similar firms combined in California or San Francisco. The last vestige of that firm, and, for 17 years, its last headquarters, the Coffin-Redington Building was constructed in 1936-1937, with an addition that stylistically essentially duplicates the original, completed by 1945-1946, to accommodate the company's continuing expansion; it housed the company's offices, laboratory, manufactory, warehousing and shipping activities. Following completion of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge in 1936, the Coffin-Redington Company's previous headquarters was demolished to make way for construction of the Transbay Terminal, a new transit center connected to the bridge by a series of looping ramps to facilitate speedy loading and unloading of commuter trains and buses. The new site the firm selected, at the southwest corner of Folsom and Beale Streets, in San Francisco's Rincon Hill area, became increasingly desirable due to its proximity to the newly-opened San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge via access ramps just South of the site along Beale, and from Fremont Street to the West; to the piers with Belt Line Railway along the San Francisco waterfront, only three blocks to the East; and to the vast railroad network provided by Southern Pacific, owners of much of the land East of the site and from whom Coffin-Redington purchased the property.

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## EARLY HISTORY OF THE COFFIN-REDINGTON COMPANY

The history of the Coffin-Redington Company from 1849 to 1949 was written by David Warren Ryder, author of several other corporate histories, in 1949, based on corporate records, City Directories, and early diaries and other information provided by members of the founding families. Unless otherwise noted, quotations come from that book entitled: The First Hundred Years - Being the Highlighted History of the First and Oldest Wholesale Drug House in the West.

As young men in their early twenties at the time of the California Gold Rush, Boston natives Redington, Almy and Holden pooled their resources, "chartered a sailing ship, stocked it with lumber, steel and drugs and sent it to San Francisco via Cape Horn." Holden was a pharmacist, Almy had worked in a drug firm, and "Redington was superintendent of a firm which dealt in lumber and certain articles of steel and iron." Because the young men arrived via Panama on September 18, 1849, they had two months to explore the gold fields before the arrival of their merchandise. Returning to San Francisco, they "sold their steel at a handsome profit ... used their lumber cargo to build a store at 125 Sansome Street, stocked it with their cargo of drugs and opened for business in November 1849." Under the name "E. S. Holden & Co.", because Holden was entitled to call himself Doctor, the three partners became "the first wholesale drug house in San Francisco". By early 1850, they had set up branch stores in Sonora and Stockton to serve the gold miners.

By mid-1850, Holden had moved to Stockton to run that operation which he renamed "Holden Drug Company", and the San Francisco store had burned in one of many fires in those early years, but much of the inventory had been preserved. When they found space in Charles R. Story's space nearby, the business was re-named Story, Redington and Co. "Story had previously dealt ... in oils, paint and glass" and had recently absorbed a "small drug concern", so this was a good fit.

By 1852, the firm was so prosperous that it took a full page in that year's City Directory: "Story, Redington & Co., importers and wholesale dealers in drugs and medicines ... offer for sale at the lowest market prices a large and well selected assortment of East Indian, Mediterranean and American chemicals of all kinds. Perfumery, fancy articles, extracts, surgical instruments, druggists' glassware, Shaker's herbs, fancy soaps, trusses, leeches, together with all other articles comprising the stock of a druggist or physician. Story, Redington & Co. are general agents for the Graeffenburg Company's medicines, for California, Oregon and the Sandwich Islands, and wholesale agents for Wistar's Balsam of Wild Cherry, Osgood's Indian Cholagogue, Corbett's Shaker's Sarsaparilla, Hunt's Elixir, Hyatt's Balsam of Life, and Ayer's Cherry Pectoral. Sansome Street Corner of Merchant."

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In the 1854 City Directory, the firm "listed themselves as 'Importers & Jobbers, Drugs, Medicines, Chemicals'". In 1855, Story left the firm which was then re-named Redington & Company and moved to a larger space at 107 Clay Street.

A licensed pharmacist and partner in the New York firm Sherwood & Coffin, Andrew Coffin journeyed to Marysville, California in 1852, where "he established the wholesle drug house of Rice-Coffin & Co." In 1859, that firm merged with Redington & Co. Rice remained in Marysville to run that branch while Coffin soon returned to New York where he established the firm's buying arm under the name Coffin-Redington and Co.

Circa 1852, "Horatio P. Livermore got the first job of his life in the Boston buying office of Redington & Company." After completing his apprenticeship, he moved his family to San Francisco in 1857, where he became the firm's "clerk and bookkeeper". Four years later, he became a partner in the firm. The 1861 City Directory lists the partners as: John H. Redington, Andrew J. Almy, Horatio P. Livermore, A. G. Coffin and D.W.C. Rice.

Ryder points out that San Francisco's early businessmen "were laying the political and moral, as well as the business and economic foundations of the great metropolis into which San Francisco has since grown.... (The partners) were not just successful businessmen, they were -- they had to be -- community leaders and metropolis builders." During the early 1850's, Redington served as a volunteer fireman and participated in both the 1852 and 1856 Vigilance Committees, formed to combat lawlessness in those early days. Together, Redington and Livermore "were actively associated with to score of enterprises dedicated to community progress and civic betterment", while building "a wholesale business that served not only San Francisco and California but the whole Pacific Coast."

During the Civil War years, Mr. Almy died, but the firm was strengthened by the arrival of John Redington's cousin, William P. Redington in November 1863. In 1870, Coffin's son Isaac S. joined the firm "and was made a partner and manager of the New York office". The result, whether direct or indirect, caused William P. Redington to write in October 1864: "We are now doing an immense business, between six hundred thousand and seven hundred thousand dollars a year. We sell as many heavy goods -- such as acids, sulphur, iron sulphate, quicksilver that the miners require -- as all of the other drug houses in the State put together, and as much in the regular drug line as all the drug houses in the city."

In 1870, the firm expanded through its merger with Hostetter-Smith & Company, necessitating another move, to the Harpending Block, 529-531 Market Street, and a brief name change to Redington-Hostetter & Company.

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The City Directory that year noted that the firm was "sole agents Redington Quick Silver Company and Hostetter's & Drake's Plantation Bitters".

According to Ryder, "quicksilver, extensively used in mining gold and silver, was in great demand". Consequently, when "a vast and extensive deposit" was found in Napa County in the late 1860's, Redington and Horatio Livermore purchased the land, formed the above-referenced company, and hired laborers to mine the quick silver which was then sold through Coffin-Redington. Soon thereafter, Horatio Livermore's brother Charles left his partnership in a drug store in Virginia City to head the quick silver company.

The year 1870 was significant, too, in that the firm hired its first travelling salesman, S. G. Miller, to service communities from San Francisco North to Victoria, British Columbia. Miller would purchase a "buckboard and team", stop to display his wares, mail orders to San Francisco, and upon completing his business in Victoria, would sell samples, horse and wagon, returning to San Francisco by ship." This not only provided exposure and business for the firm, but later resulted in Coffin-Redington partnerships with local entities in a number of cities, all tied to and supplied by the San Francisco headquarters.

In 1870, Coffin-Redington established "the first pharmaceutical laboratory in San Francisco under the direction and management of ... Edward Wheelock Runyon", who became a Professor of Pharmacology at the California College of Pharmacy. "Here, the firm did its own grinding; made its own fluid and solid extracts, and put up a line of its own pills, powders, etc." for local customers as well as for export to Mexico, Australia and Asia. The company's exporting business actually began in the 1850's, when they supplied ships sailing the world over with the variety of medicines required by law. The laboratory continued to be a focal point of the business until the 1940's, when research and the practice of medicine advanced to such a degree that large companies took over this work. Coffin-Redington's lab was then "purchased by the Parke, Davis Company under an agreement which made Coffin-Redington the Pacific Coast distributors for Parke, Davis' full line of pharmaceuticals. During the same period, "Coffin-Redington became a distributor for Eli Lilly & Co. of Indianapolis." For these reasons, coupled with the high cost of labor in running a lab, Coffin-Redington closed its manufacturing plant in 1947.

By the mid- 1870's, the firm name once again became Redington & Co., on the West Coast, and William P. Redington, who had joined the firm in 1863, became a partner. But significant changes in the firm's management took place between 1880 and 1884, when Horatio P. Livermore sold his share of the partnership to devote his energies to other interests set forth below; and when John H. Redington retired at the end of 1884, by which time Andrew G. Coffin, on the East Coast, had turned his interest over to his son Isaac.

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Horatio P. Livermore sold his partnership in Redington & Co. to assist his aging father, Horatio Gates Livermore, who, in 1862, had gained control of the Natoma Water and Mining Company, responsible for diverting the American River at Salmon Falls, and building a ditch to transport water to a number of mining camps in the early 1850's. In purchasing the company, the Livermores became owners of 9,000 acres, once part of the larger Rancho de los Americanos, a Spanish Land Grant. According to Coleman's PG&E in California, 1852-1952, "the elder Livermore planted 500 acres in orchards and vineyards to demonstrate his faith in the agricultural future of the region. A fruit-drying plant and winery were built at Folsom." But the elder Livermore "clung to his dream of making an industrial city at Folsom and his plan for logging down the American." He envisioned a dam above Folsom from which "a canal was to be built on each side of the river to the town of Folsom, one for the development of industrial water power under a total fall of 80 feet and the other for west-side irrigation. Only the east side canal was constructed." Work on the dam commenced in 1867, but was not completed until 1893, after the elder Livermore's death January 13, 1892.

In 1881, the Livermores formed the Folsom Water Power Company which absorbed all of Natoma's water power rights and properties. About the same time, "Horatio P. Livermore began to see that by the time the dam was finished, water power as a direct motive force for the wheels of industry would be superceded by electric power." Consequently, he began to explore ways to use water power to create electricity, a radical concept in the beginning stages of electricity. He envisioned powering Sacramento's street railways with electricity, and though he did not know how it could be done, he formed the Sacramento Electric Power and Light Company in 1892. Engineers from Westinghouse and General Electric found the solution, and after solving complex financing difficulties, the electrical power was generated for the first time in early 1895. The following year, the Livermore companies were reorganized into the Sacramento Electric, Gas and Railway Company. In 1903, that company was purchased by the California Gas and Electric Corporation, a forerunner of today's Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

Coleman attributes today's Folsom Reservoir to Horatio P. Livermore's ingenuity, for in 1892, he had envisioned such as a mean of using American River flood waters for irrigation. Instead, his son Norman S. Livermore was present in 1948, when the Army Corps of Engineers began work on the project.

To bring the Livermore story full circle, it is important to state that Horatio P. Livermore's son Norman, mentioned above, joined Coffin-Redington in 1926, and became President of Coffin-Redington in 1929, returning to his father's original passion. An engineer by training, he was elected to the Board of Director of PG&E in 1916, a position he continued to hold as late as 1951, when he was 79 years old. After receiving his engineering degree, and working at General Electric for a



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~~year, he had returned to Sacramento to assist his father in the family's electrical and lumber operations, during which time, he "made an exhaustive study of other hydroelectric plants in the state." When the family interests wound down, Norman Livermore "established his own business, dealing in heavy machinery and representing the American Locomotive Company", which was so successful that he continued to purchase more PG&E stock, along with stock in Coffin-Redington. He also purchased bonds in the Natomas Company, successor in interest to his grandfather's holding, and became a long-time director of that company as well.~~

In 1889, Redington & Co. moved again to larger headquarters at the southeast corner of Second and Stevenson Streets. The building was destroyed by the fire which followed the 1906 earthquake. Employees constructed an interim building on Third Street between Brannan and Townsend Streets in less than two weeks, opening at that location June 1, 1906. In the aftermath of the disaster, various employees rescued records and some supplies which were given to the City and military for their needs. The day before, a ship loaded with "drugs, medicines and chemicals" for the company had docked, but had not been unloaded; one employee notified the army at the Presidio, who sent trucks to the pier, where the supplies were unloaded, and taken to the Presidio to aid the relief efforts.

Returning to their pre-earthquake site, and a new building in 1908, the company elected to dissolve its long-standing partnership and form a corporation named Coffin-Redington Company. Officers included: Isaac S. Coffin, Vice-President; William P. Redington, Vice-President and General Manager; and Sherwood Coffin, son and grandson of the founders, as assistant treasurer.

Coffin-Redington participated in the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, commemorating the completion of the Panama Canal and San Francisco's rebuilding after the 1906 disaster, in several ways. William P. Redington was a Director of the Exposition; and the company joined other national pharmaceutical manufacturers in creating displays to convey the industry's role in "conquering and controlling the ravages of disease." Soon thereafter, on January 4, 1919, William P. Redington died.

Again in need of more space, the company moved in 1923, to 401 Mission Street at the corner of Fremont. As noted above, Norman B. Livermore joined the company in 1926, as a member of the Board of Directors and of the Executive Committee. In 1929, Livermore became president. Although he had no experience in the drug trade, his executive talents allowed him to make the transition effortlessly. Ryder notes additional appointments of Livermore's: former President of Pacific Coast Aggregates, and Board of Directors of Fireman's Fund

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Indemnity Company, California Packing Corporation, and Crocker National Bank. Co-incident with Livermore's appointment, Sherwood Coffin became Vice-President and General Manager.

In the early 1930's, Coffin-Redington learned that the site of its Mission Street building (1923) would be required for construction of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge's ramps and the Transbay Terminal, a new transportation center. The company located an ideal site at the southwest corner of Folsom and Beale Street, with proposed bridge access ramps via immediate cross streets Beale and Fremont and just blocks to the South, the waterfront with its piers and Belt Line Railroad just three blocks to the East, and its own rail spur, courtesy of Southern Pacific Railroad from whom they purchased the land. Although city records show that the actual purchase was not recorded until March 1937, an agreement to purchase must have been reached at least two years earlier because Ryder reports that following site selection, the Coffin-Redington Company sent its Manager of Operations "on a ten thousand mile trip, to learn first hand the details of construction, arrangement and equipment of the most up-to-date and efficient wholesale plants in the country." According to Ryder, the company then hired its architect Frederick H. Meyer, FAIA, and other professionals to translate that information into plans for the new building for which permits were received in October 1936.

## SITE HISTORY

In his introduction to The First Hundred Years, Ryder includes a map of San Francisco in 1849-1850, which he attributes to the archives of the Board of State Harbor Commissioners for San Francisco Harbor. Appended as Map B, the map shows the shore line at that time together with wharves, as well as streets then laid out. The shading indicates population density. Locating the intersection of Beale and Folsom near the lower edge of the map and near center, it is apparent that Yerba Buena Cove was just across the street. It is interesting to compare this with Map C dated 1852, which shows individual buildings in this area.

From San Francisco's earliest days, this area has been known as Rincon Point with Rincon Hill behind it and to the West. In his California Place Names, Erwin G. Gudde defines "rincon", a Spanish word, as meaning "a small portion of land". About San Francisco's Rincon Point, he says: "The elevation at the terminus of the Bay Bridge was a true "rincon" until a part of the water front was filled in. The hill was a prominent landmark often mentioned in early reports; it was used by the Coast Survey as a secondary triangulation point as early as 1850."

By the mid-1850's, wealthy San Franciscans had begun to build large, fashionable homes on Rincon Hill. For the most part, these

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four (4) blocks to the West, on and near Second Street, including South Park, a protected ellipse laid out by George Gordon circa 1855. Using Albert Shumate's ~~Rincon Hill and South Park - San Francisco's Early Fashionable Neighborhood~~ as a reference, it is interesting to note that John Redington lived at 31 South Park from 1856 to 1861; Horatio G. and Horatio P. Livermore lived on Minna between Second and Third in 1859, and on Folsom between Second and Third in 1860.

The demise of Rincon Hill as a desirable residential area is attributed to the cutting of Second Street from Market Street through Rincon Hill in 1869. Because Rincon Hill was 120 feet high in some areas, the chasm created by the cut severed this easterly portion of the area from the more densely populated residential area. While some, arguing for the cut, had opined that property values would increase, they in fact declined dramatically. With the invention of the cable car in 1873, the well-to-do left Rincon Hill for Nob Hill and other neighborhoods previously unattainable due to the heights of hills.

The 1886 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows considerable industrial activity in the Folsom and Beale area. The subject parcel contained Hall's Boiler Works and Pendergaast's Foundry on the corner with approximately four (4) dwellings to the South followed by Whittier Fuller & Co.'s "Team Stables", the company itself being in the next block North of Folsom on Beale. With the exception of Saint Brendan's Church, at the Northeast corner of Fremont and Harrison, the remainder of the square block was predominantly residential with a few small scale commercial establishments. The same combination of uses was prevalent in neighboring blocks.

The 1894 San Francisco Block Book shows this easterly half of the square block divided into seven (7) parcels, four (4) of which were generous in dimension. The 1901 San Francisco Block Book shows that Edward M. Dunbar has purchased most of this same area, his lot having a Beale Street frontage of 457.11 feet and 137½ feet on Harrison; the northerly property line extends an additional 50 feet to the west, adding a segment of land 50 feet by 91.10 feet, with access to Zeno/Zoe Place. Dunbar also owned a 25 foot by 68½ foot parcel between the corner parcel (92.1 feet on Beale and 137½ feet on Folsom) and the alley. Prior to publication of the 1906 San Francisco Block Book, Southern Pacific Co. had purchased Dunbar's large lot and the corner parcel as well as a 25 foot by 68½ foot parcel on the corner of the alley, and a 52 foot by 137½ foot parcel in the westerly half of the square block, just North of the Saint Brendan's complex. Thus, Southern Pacific owned the full length of Beale Street in this block, a 550 foot frontage. Southern Pacific's ownership and this lot configuration continued until 1936.

According to the Department of City Planning's 1985 "Rincon Hill - An Area Plan of the Master Plan of the City and County of San

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Francisco": "The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire leveled the neighborhood.... The only people who made their homes in Rincon Hill immediately after the earthquake were workers and seamen. Their self-built shacks made of refuse lumber, packing boxes and sheet iron dotted the slopes of Rincon Hill." To illustrate this last point, a permit search for this property produced an October 1907 permit to build a one story "shop" measuring 14 feet by 30 feet with a height of 10 to 15 feet. Whether it was actually constructed or not is not known. However, it does not show up on the 1913 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of the parcel which is completely vacant; with the exception of the Saint Brendan's complex, the square block contains at most four (4) structures, clustered around what is now called Zeno Place, originally known as Zoe Place.

Responding to growing pressure that dated back to the 1850's, in 1929, President Hoover appointed the Hoover-Young San Francisco Bay Bridge Commission, and California's legislature passed the California Toll Bridge Authority Act "to lay out, acquire, and construct a highway crossing connecting San Francisco with the County of Alameda", among other things. In 1930-1931, studies were completed that resulted in preliminary designs, and the selection of the optimum site for bridge placement: "from Rincon Hill in San Francisco to Yerba Buena Island and thence to Oakland". In 1932, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation was formed and the War Department issued the final permit. Invitations to bid were issued in January 1933 with responses required in February and March; construction began on July 9, 1933. The double-decked San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge officially opened to motor vehicles on November 12, 1936.

The lower deck of the bridge was reserved for trains, but their introduction was delayed until construction of a new regional transportation facility, the Transbay Terminal with its looping ramps could be constructed, and that required Coffin-Redington's move into its new facility. According to Ryder, the company moved into its new facilities on June 7, 1937; interestingly, the Golden Gate Bridge opened to traffic just 10 days earlier, on May 28, 1937. According to The Architect and Engineer, demolition of the company's former headquarters began in July of that year, and the Transbay Terminal opened for business early in 1939, which also marked the required termination of ferry service across San Francisco Bay and the demise of the Ferry Building as the focal point of commuter and visitor access to and from San Francisco from the East. More limited ferry service resumed 50 years later as a result of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

The Planning Department's "Rincon Hill Plan" notes: "When the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge was completed in 1936, the squatter shacks disappeared. The South of Market area (including Rincon Hill) became an important regional distributing center. Many wholesalers and warehousemen took advantage of its location which was close to the port,

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the rail network and the central district of the Bay Region's largest city and next to a bridge connection with the growing East Bay area."

The Planning Department's "Rincon Hill Plan" continues: "South of Market (including Rincon Hill) grew in importance as a distribution center until after World War II, when shipping modes went from rail to truck. Breakbulk operations became less important as cargoes were containerized. Competition from Oakland and other ports further reduced San Francisco's ship trade. As transportation-related activities left, vacancies were filled by warehouses, storage, distributors, government services and other uses not as dependent on the port."

As noted above, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge opened to traffic on November 12, 1936. Sales Ledgers in the San Francisco Assessor's Office show Southern Pacific beginning to respond to the impending event first by conveying land at Beale and Harrison to the City and County of San Francisco on April 29, 1936. This would appear to be for the elevated portion of Harrison Street, South of the project site, which is dated 1936.

In the next transaction, dated May 26, 1936, Southern Pacific conveyed to Coffin-Redington Co. a parcel at the southwest corner of Folsom and Beale with a frontage on Folsom of 137.5 feet and a Beale Street frontage of 205 feet, known as Lot 1. On March 31, 1937, Coffin-Redington acquired an additional 20-foot frontage on Beale, and the Lot Number became 1B. On December 31, 1942, Coffin-Redington purchased an additional 60 feet on Beale, and added another 50 foot purchase to their holdings along Beale on August 26, 1943, giving the company a total of 335 feet here.

**FREDERICK H. MEYER, FAIA**

By the mid-1930's, when Coffin-Redington selected Frederick H. Meyer as the architect for their new facility, Meyer was approaching 60 years of age, and had achieved a prominence in his field equalled by few. Although his body of work to that point substantially exceeded 100 highly significant commissions, all biographical pieces consistently point to his 1912 appointment to San Francisco's Board of Consulting Architects, a three-member body that served instead of a city architect, with the primary responsibility of devising "the comprehensive Civic Center scheme and supervising its execution"; together, the triumvirate designed the first Civic Center building, the San Francisco Civic Auditorium. In 1934, he had been elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, the AIA's highest accolade and recognition of the significance of his vast body of work. That same year, he was appointed chairman of the executive committee of the San Francisco Better Housing Program, a national initiative to improve the quality of housing across the country. At the same time, he was a member of the California State Board of Architectural Examiners to which he had been

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appointed by Governor Richardson (1923-1927), a position to which he continued to be re-appointed into the 1940's. He was also a proponent of the automobile and increasing the quality and quantity of the roads available for travel which resulted in his being a founder and long-time director of the California State Automobile Association as early as the 1920's, a long-time member of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce's transportation committee, and in 1942, his appointment as San Francisco's Administrator of Defense Transportation, a federally supported position that gave him the sole authority to deploy all modes of transport to ensure defense workers could get to work while conserving rubber and fuel.

With these responsibilities coupled with the care of his unwell wife, and a variety of other interests and commitments, Meyer's architectural practice was more limited during the 1930's than had previously been the case. The Coffin-Redington commission was one of the largest projects he undertook during this period, and the only one of these that survives, as will be discussed below. It is also the only known example of his work that employed Moderne ornamentation.

Born in San Francisco June 26, 1876, Frederick Herman Meyer was "the son of a highly-skilled cabinet maker", according to the obituary prepared by his firm, following his death on March 6, 1961, at age 85. The obituary continues: "He was one of the last survivors of the pioneer architects of San Francisco dating from a time when there were no architectural schools in California. His career started in the early 1890's as draftsman for a planing mill where he applied technical knowledge imparted by his father."

In 1899, he and important pioneer architect Samuel Newsom formed a partnership, Newsom & Meyer, which lasted until 1901. Among other commissions, the pair is credited with a residence for Rudolph Spreckels in San Francisco, and The Marin County Bank.

Circa 1902, Mr. Meyer entered into partnership with Smith O'Brien; the firm was dissolved in 1907. San Francisco commissions attributed to the partnership include: the Cadillac Hotel, the Foxcroft Building, the Galen Building, the Hastings Building, the Humboldt Bank Building, the Monadnock Building, the Rialto Building, and the Thompson and Ortman Building.

By 1909, Meyer's body of work was so great and his client list so impressive that The Architect and Engineer of California of October 1909 devoted 34 pages to photographs of his work together with some text. According to his obituary, he was sought after because of "his originality and insistence on practical solutions of structural and architectural problems". The obituary continues: "He was an originator in the development of large glass areas and modern storefronts at a time when heavy masonry masking steel construction with relatively small

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windows in the tradition of European Renaissance architecture were universally accepted."

In 1912-1913, Mr. Meyer was so highly considered that he was selected as one of three consulting architects to assist the City of San Francisco in re-organizing its Bureau of Architecture, and to oversee design and construction of the Civic Center complex that was being rushed to completion for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition. His fellow commissioners were equally well considered: John Galen Howard and John Reid, Jr. The three men are credited with designing the Exposition Auditorium, completed in 1914, in Civic Center.

Downtown San Francisco buildings designed by Meyer while a sole practitioner include: four commissions for Pacific Gas and Electric Company (1913-1914); two buildings for the Y.M.C.A. (1921-1924); The German House Association (1913); the Beverly-Plaza Hotel (1912); The Belgravia (1916) and the Warrington (1915) Apartments; and the Post-Taylor Garage (1922). During the same period, he designed a number of office buildings, including the Bankers Investment Building (1912, 1918), the Kohler & Chase Building (1909), the Physicians Building (1914), and the Press Club/Poetz Building (1913).

According to the Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage's files, Meyer was associated with Albin Johnson from 1920 through 1927. Buildings attributed to this partnership include the Terminal Plaza Building (1920), the Elks Club (1924), and the Financial Center Building (1927).

Although Meyer associated with Albert J. Evers (Meyer and Evers) in the 1940's, he appears to have had his own firm at the time he designed the Coffin-Redington Building. Noted architectural researcher and historian Gary A. Goss reports that Meyer's commissions in the 1930's and 1940's include: a vast complex, since demolished, for Lucky Lager Brewing (1934-1937); a Y.M.C.A. in the Western Addition area (1935); branch libraries in the Bernal Heights and West Portal (1936) areas; public housing for San Francisco's Housing Authority (1939), and a two-story printing plant on the South side of Harrison near Second Street (1941). Of these, only the Y.M.C.A. and the two small neighborhood libraries survive; all are restrained California adaptations of the Spanish Colonial Revival. Of these, the Coffin-Redington Building is the most important extant example of his work during this period based upon its restrained Moderne styling, coupled with its monumental size and its manufacturing/warehousing use, concepts not otherwise associated with Meyer's body of work.

In addition to Mr. Meyer's many achievements discussed above, according to his obituary, Mr. Meyer was a Past President of the Northern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and a Regional Director of the A.I.A. It states, too, that he was a

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director of the Redwood Empire Association, a member of the Bohemian Club and of numerous local yacht clubs.

## COFFIN-REDINGTON BUILDING, FOLSOM AND BEALE STREETS

In October 1936, Coffin-Redington Company applied for and received a building permit to construct a four-story and basement building with a Folsom Street frontage of 137.5 feet and a depth along Beale Street of 170 feet, with a note that an additional 30 feet was allocated to the "yard". According to the permit, the architect was the famed Frederick H. Meyer, FAIA, with L.H. Nishkian as engineer, and Cahill Brothers, Inc., contractors. According to Ryder, the company moved into the new building on June 7, 1937.

Original plans, obtained from the San Francisco Department of Public Works Department of Building Inspection, include elevations (which show no significant or irreversible exterior changes over time) as well as floor plans which are marked to show how the company planned to use the spaces. The basement ran the width of the building at the rear, but was only four (4) bays deep, equivalent to the rail spur area, with the remainder being unexcavated; the largest area was devoted to "Paper Storage & Cutting", next to which was the "Acid Storage Room" on one side and the "Boiler Room" on the other.

The northerly one-third to one half of the First Floor was devoted to the company's offices, served by the two Folsom Street entrances. According to Mr. A. Kirkham Smith, who began working for Coffin-Redington in 1946, the smaller, more westerly door gave access to the company's wholesale liquor department whose best known label was "Old Fitzgerald"; an interior wall separating this function from the offices is not shown on the original plans. Behind the liquor area and accessible to it was a large "Bulk Storage Room". According to Mr. Smith, the Beale Street entrance was the employee entry. However, the original drawings show this as the entrance to the Waiting Room, for those wishing to order and/or pick up immediately. Behind these spaces, to the South, were the Receiving Room (facing Beale Street) and the Shipping Room beyond.

An L-shaped Mezzanine Floor, complete along the rear, overlooked the Bulk Storage Room and the Office Space. It contained Lockers and Washrooms along the rear with the foot of the "L" containing a Sales Room, a Director's Room, the Pharmacy Study Room, and a mid-sized Storage Room, incorporating access to the Chute and Dumb Waiter.

Plans for the Second, Third and Fourth Floors do not specify usage, and only show an "L"-shaped mechanical core, stairways and a Locker and Toilet complex on the Fourth Floor. The Roof Plan is similarly simple.

Ryder sheds additional light on the new building: "This steel



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reinforced concrete building has four stories and a basement, totaling 120,000 square feet of floor space. Besides ample quarters for all of the various departments, it contains an especially constructed refrigeration room to take care of biologics, serums and other merchandise requiring refrigeration. There are more than five miles of shelving, mostly adjustable; and a complete system of chutes, conveyors and tubes connecting all departments. Spur track facilities permit the bringing of railroad cars into the building; a large loading zone, where trucks can back up to a canopy-covered platform, speeds the movement of goods to customers. A parking lot provided for customers' convenience and holding some 25 cars becomes more and more appreciated as the parking problem grows more acute."

As noted above, Coffin-Redington did expand the building in the early-to-mid-1940's, but there is no record of this addition in City records, probably due to World War II activities. The rationing in effect during the war makes it difficult to understand how the company was able to secure the materials and manpower to accomplish such an undertaking, unless the expansion aided the war effort in some way. Former employees who are available for consultation either joined the company after the war, or were fighting in the war at the time; they report that the building was as it is today by 1945. Land acquisitions, noted above, in late 1943 and mid-1944 suggest that the addition was undertaken in 1944, and perhaps completed in 1945. Sanborn Maps indicate the complex was constructed 1937-1946.

**COFFIN-REDINGTON BUILDING - 1949 - 1999**

On July 20, 1949, the San Francisco Chronicle announced that Coffin-Redington would merge with Brunswig Drug Company later that same year; the merger took place on October 1, 1949. The merger was heralded as "the joining of the two largest independent drug wholesalers on the Pacific Coast", and made it clear that: "The San Francisco house will operate under the name Coffin-Redington Co...." According to A. Kirkham Smith, Coffin-Redington continued to occupy the building until 1953, when a new one-story building was constructed in South San Francisco; in the early 1950's, one-story operations were considered more efficient. In March 1952, Coffin-Redington took out a permit to add "Corrugated iron extension to present shed over loading platform".

In April 1958, Carpenter Paper Company applied for a permit to effect "Miscellaneous removals; minor alterations to loading dock; new plaster interior partitions; new flooring, painting, electrical fixtures, etc." On April 21, 1961, Carpenter Paper purchased the Coffin-Redington Building, comprising Lots 1 and 1B. In April 1964, Carpenter filed for two permits. The first was: "Remodel of offices on first floor. Remove non-bearing partitions, Hollow Tile Basement Floor. Remove non-bearing partitions, Wood and Glass and Hollow Tile -

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Mezzanine Floor". The second permit, probably required by the City, was for interior demolition as described above.

On February 19, 1968, the property was conveyed by Southern Pacific to Nationwide Papers, Inc. This may well have been necessary to clear the title. Nationwide may also have owned Carpenter at this point. On April 15, 1968, Roos-Atkins, Inc. purchased the property from Nationwide.

Roos Brothers was an old and important San Francisco department store founded in 1865 by Adolphe and Achille Roos, who had recently arrived from France. In 1957-1958, Roos Brothers was purchased by the Robert S. Atkins Clothing Company to create Roos-Atkins Department Stores which was purchased in 1966 by Genesco.

In July and August of 1968, Roos-Atkins applied for three permits to alter the interior of the building. First was: "To remove approximately 900 lineal feet of non-load bearing interior partitions and 6,000 square feet of suspended ceiling system including miscellaneous built in casework and equipment, preparatory to remodeling work to be applied for under separate permit". The second reads: "Rehabilitation of existing service building", and the third corrected a mis-interpretation of the code. A fourth permit issued in October of that same year called for "installation of elevator entrance frames & doors only...."

On March 26, 1969, Roos-Atkins sold the property to the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. In February 1981, Roos-Atkins, as the tenant, applied for a permit to "Construct partitions for temporary offices in building in process of being sold...." On August 25, 1981, Genesco, Inc. purchased the property, and on September 1, 1981 sold it to a development group. Since that time, the property has changed ownership five (5) times. Many of those owners have obtained permission from the city for projects ranging from a storage locker facility to condominiums, but none has come to fruition. Because permits were issued, it is not possible to know what, if any, interior modifications have taken place over that period of time. In 1989, however, because of a development proposal, Lot 1B, containing the Coffin-Redington Building, became Lot 20, with a portion of its land allocated to Lot 1 which comprises the remainder of this easterly portion of the square block. Lot 1 is now known as Lot 21.

In the mid-1990's with development in San Francisco's downtown contained by the Downtown Plan, developers began to look to the South into San Francisco's South of Market area for development opportunities with fewer Planning Code restrictions. The present owners of the Coffin-Redington Building were intrigued by the "white elephant" that had been considered for numerous new uses by developers unable to see viable permits through to construction. Knowing that the site is within walking distance of downtown offices to the North and having heard

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rumors that the San Francisco Giants would build a new baseball stadium within walking distance to the South, and recognizing that housing of all kinds was scarce, they elected to purchase the property and convert the building to apartments with a major restaurant on the ground floor for the tenants' convenience. Because they were fascinated by the Coffin-Redington Building and its history, the owners committed to designing their adaptive re-use project to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation projects. Parts One and Two of the Investment Tax Credit Certification Application have been approved, the latter with conditions, and have served as the master plan for the project; Part 3 is in process.

## ARCHITECTURAL SURVEYS INCLUDING THE COFFIN-REDINGTON BUILDING

In its 1984 Extended Survey of Downtown San Francisco, The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage's professional evaluators, including a representative from the State Office of Historic Preservation, rated the Coffin-Redington Building as a building of Major Importance. The definition of such buildings is set forth in Heritage's Splendid Survivors: "Major Importance - Buildings which are of individual importance by virtue of architectural, historical and environmental criteria. These buildings tend to stand out for their overall quality rather than for any particular outstanding characteristics. ...are eligible for the National Register...."

The Department of City Planning's "Rincon Hill Area Plan of the Master Plan of the City and County of San Francisco" selected the Coffin-Redington Building as one of only eight (8) buildings in the area to be preserved and protected from future development. The Plan cites the building's "restrained Moderne idiom", the articulation of the building's massing "by differentiating its end bays through the modulation of their width [4 feet narrower than the central bays and set off by more massive piers] in respect to the central bays", and the variety of decorative "Moderne elements", including "decorative chevrons and half circles at the frieze and fluted piers, dividing the facade into a series of horizontal window bays with industrial sash. A dentilated lintel, fluted piers, and decorative floral patterns and chevrons decorate the two entrances."

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San Francisco, California

PHOTOGRAPHS

NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Mrs. Bland Platt

DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHS: March 2000

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVES: 362 Ewing Terrace  
San Francisco, California 94118

Photo One

Looking Southwest at the East and North elevations of the Coffin-Redington Building, note new recessed fifth floor penthouse set back approximately 17 feet from the parapets. New 17-story residential tower is visible at left edge of photo. At the right, next to the Coffin-Redington Building is a new small scale 4-story residential structure. Visible in the foreground is a parking lot used by the United States Postal Services.

Photo 2

Looking Southeast at the central entry to the Coffin-Redington Building on Folsom Street with its restrained Moderne surround, the most decorative feature in the complex. Note, too, the dentil pediment with incised cornice above. The entry, of stained wood and glass is new, having been replaced pre-1995 with a rolling metal door; the only remaining feature was the transom which, together with distant historic photos and original drawings provided the design solution for the replacement. The wall light fixture on the left is an example of those used on all elevations.

Photo 3

Looking Southwest at the East wall of the former recessed loading dock that accomodated a rail spur. Note the projecting half mushroom column. This space has been converted to an outdoor dining terrace connected with the ground floor restaurant. Former loading dock openings have been converted to doors; side lights are new, duplicating those on the South and East elevations of the loading dock to the rear. Windows above were variously shaped, sized and placed; all now duplicate two original ones as seen here.



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Photo 4

Looking Northwest at the South (rear) and East elevations of the Coffin-Redington Building as well as the East and South elevations of the addition. The former parking lot servicing the loading dock has been converted to a terraced, landscaped plaza while retaining and resurfacing the loading dock, and relocating the loading dock canopy using original plans. The large opening in the foreground, right, was formerly the rail access. The covering is a wire mesh rolling shade providing protection for diners from sun and wind.

Photo 5

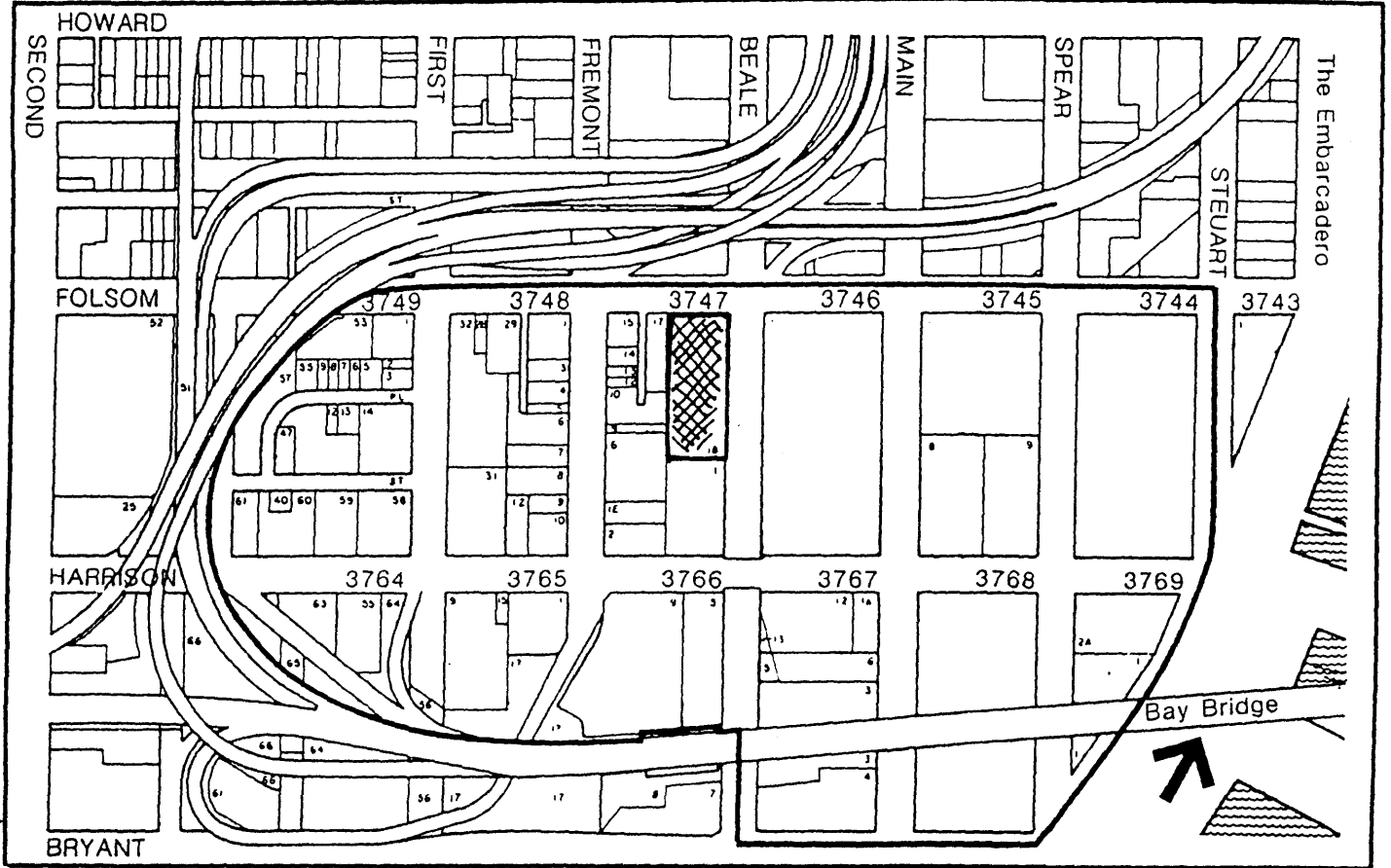
Looking West at the East elevation of the 1940's addition with the newly terraced and landscaped plaza in the foreground. The entire run of the loading dock canopy is visible beyond.

Photo 6

Looking Southwest along the refurbished loading dock with canopy above. Former loading dock openings have been converted to doors; side panel windows have been added in the few instances where they did not originally exist. The designed panel, far left, is on the North wall of the 1999 highrise apartment building next door to the South.

Photo 7

Looking Southeast along Fremont Street at the variety of buildings occupying the westerly half of the Coffin-Redington square block. The difference in elevation between the East and West portions of the square block is emphasized by the fact that one only sees the top 6 floors of the new 17-story highrise to the South of the Coffin-Redington Building. The 1936 elevated roadway in the background (right) is Harrison Street.

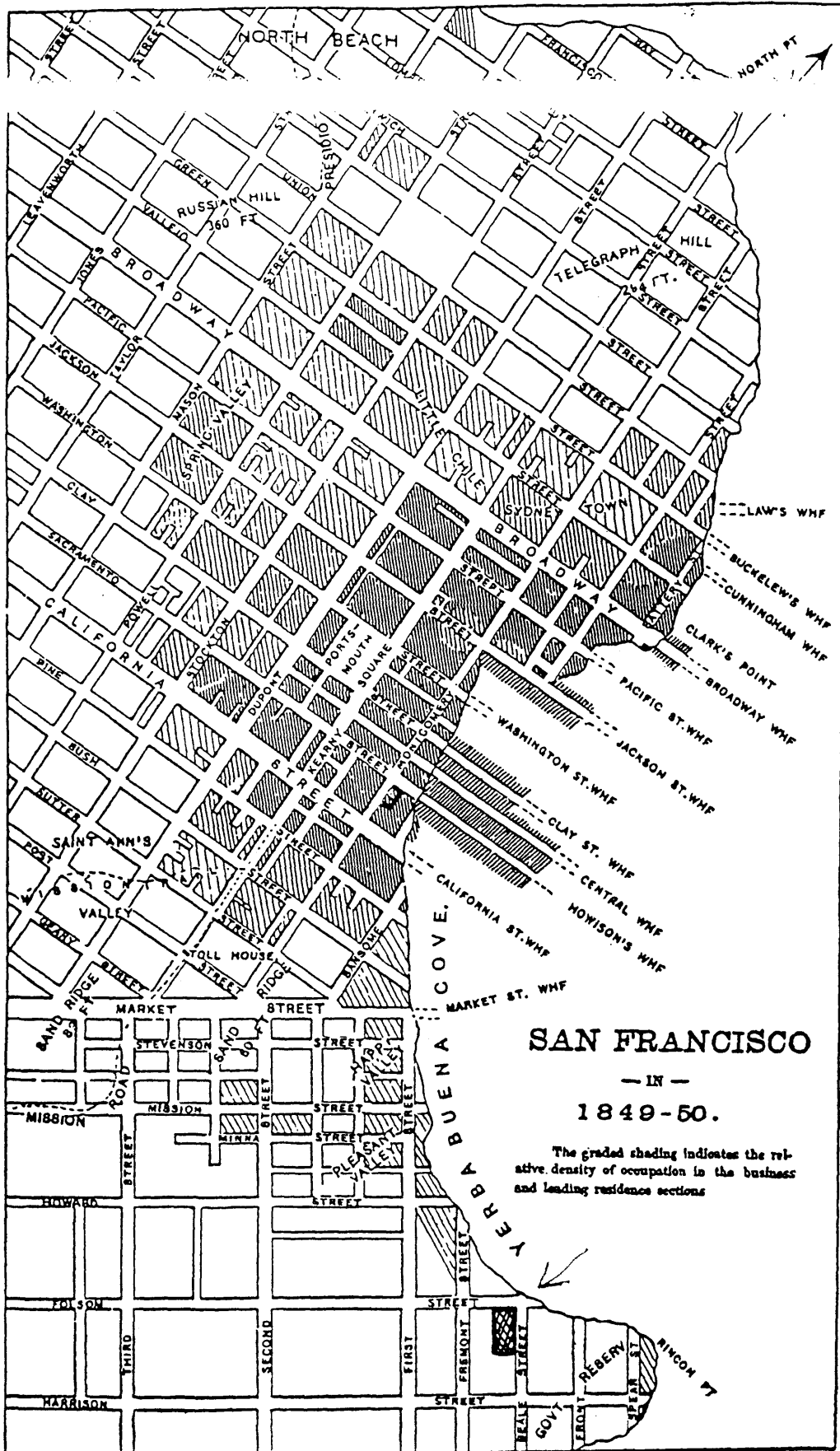


ASSESSOR'S BLOCK AND LOT NUMBERS

Map 1

*Coffin-Redington Building  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA*

R973 A MAP B  
629683



### 100 YEARS AGO

A look at the Map on the left and then at the Center Spread shows what

... we see vividly and quickly what new-born San Francisco was like in the year 1849 when COFFIN-REDINGTON was founded. Their first location, at 125 Sansome Street, was, as can be readily seen, not far from the water's edge, as Sansome ran into the Bay just beyond Pine Street. Likewise, their present location—100 years later—at Folsom and Beale, was then right on the edge of that portion of the Bay known as "Yerba Buena Cove."

Observe that Market Street, which ran plump into the Bay at First Street, was blocked at Montgomery by a sand ridge sixty feet high; and then two blocks farther up—at Dupont (now Grant Avenue) — by another sand ridge twenty-nine feet higher.

The Mission Road was the only road connecting the little city with the Mission at Sixteenth and Dolores. It started at Pine and Kearny and ran along Kearny, crossing Market at Post Street, between the two sand ridges. This was a privately built and operated road, so you had to pay to use it; and the Toll House, where you paid, was at Post and Montgomery, about where the Crocker First National Bank now stands.

Of course, if you didn't wish to pay toll, you could always use the Mission Trail, which was free, if crooked, steep and narrow. It began at Bush and Kearny and wandered diagonally — crossing Sutter slightly below Dupont (Grant Avenue) and Stockton; coming into Geary just above Stockton, and striking O'Farrell below Powell. To traverse this same route today—in 1949—you would have to walk (or ride your horse) through Sloane's; then through the Sutter and Grant Avenue corner of The White House; then on through Magnin's and Macy's to O'Farrell; turning then a bit to your left to wander across Market Street and pass through The Emporium to Mission Street. (Considering what this would entail, especially on horseback, probably it would be simpler to stay home and look at the map).

Five times in as many years the little city, as seen on the left, was almost completely destroyed by fire. But five times it was as quickly rebuilt. For then, as now, the spirit of the City of Saint Francis was indomitable.

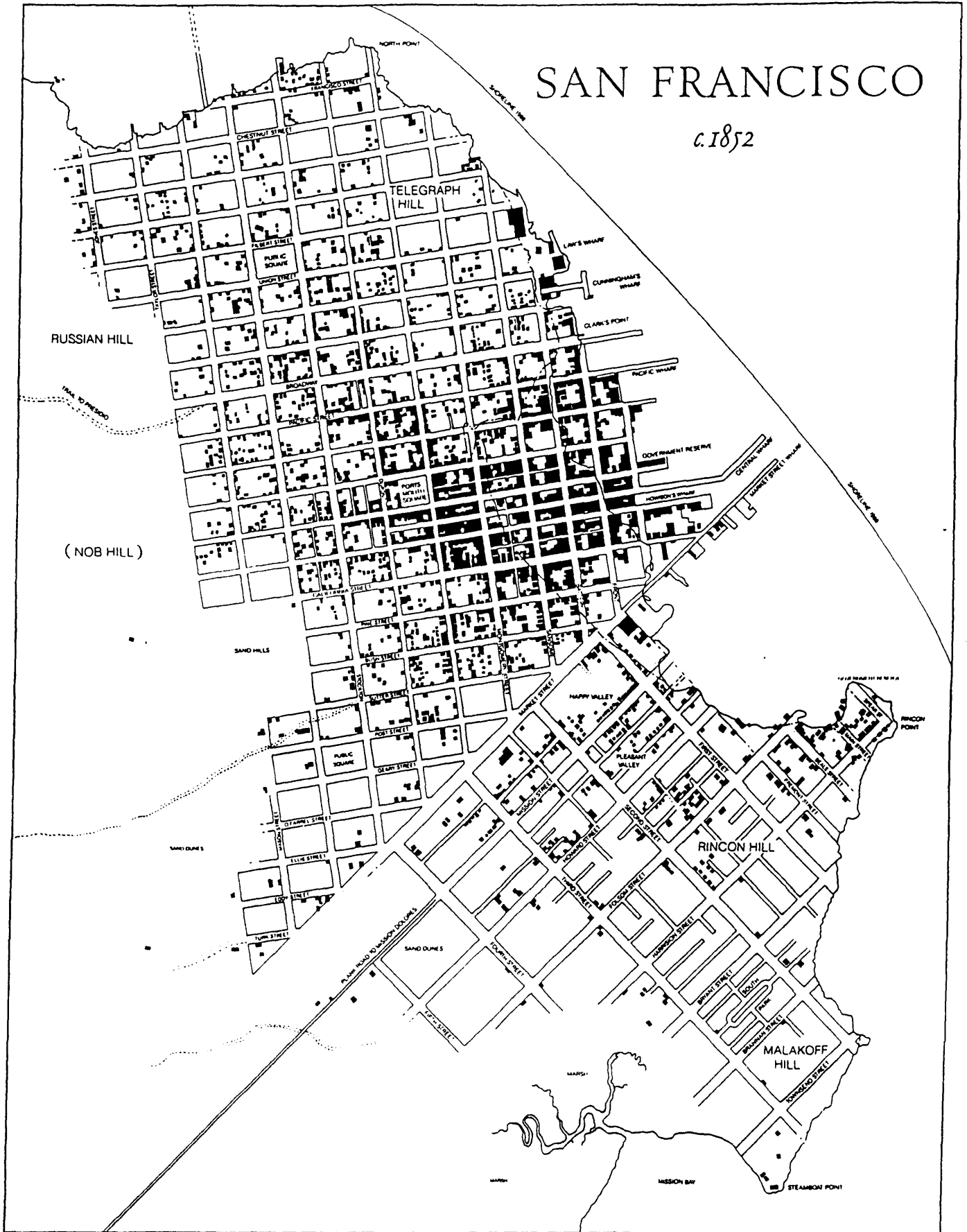
Map courtesy of Board of State Harbor Commissioners for San Francisco Harbor.

Coffin-Redington Building  
SAN FRANCISCO, California

MAP C

# SAN FRANCISCO

c.1852



Coffin-Redington Building  
SAN FRANCISCO, California