

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

PH 0693278

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RECEIVED

DEC 12 1978

DATE ENTERED

JAN 29 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Federal Realty Building, (Pierce Building)

AND/OR COMMON

Cathedral Building

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1615 Broadway

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

Alameda

CODE

001

✓

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION		<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Cathedral Associates

STREET & NUMBER

18 Bartol

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

VICINITY OF

STATE

California

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Alameda County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

1516 Oak Street

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Interim List of Facilities under Study for Landmarks Designation

DATE

April 18, 1974

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Oakland Department of City Planning

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

STATE

California

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Cathedral Building is a 14-story Gothic skyscraper located on a unique site in downtown Oakland. Situated on the narrow gore at the convergence of Broadway and Telegraph Avenue, the structure measures roughly 8 feet 6 inches on the south(gore) end, 37 feet on the north end, 100 feet on the Broadway side, and 104 feet on Telegraph Avenue.

Originally the ground floor was an arcade. In the center of each long facade there were four widely-spaced piers spanned by arched lintels. These were decorated with floral voussoirs. North of these was a tall splayed rectangular opening with rounded corners culminating in a slight cusp.

A thick molding divided the arches as well as the rectangular opening into an upper section of glass and open store windows below. A delicate grid tracery ornamented the glass. North of the arcade on both facades is a portal. Here a tall lancet arch is framed by a rectangular reveal with rounded corners culminating in a slight cusp, similar to the opening next to it. The reveals are decorated with ornate floral filigree. The doors themselves are polished bronze with large panes of glass. The moldings around the glass curve inward at the corners, then are indented outward into a leaf shape. The handles of the doors have elaborate relief decoration in the form of volutes and curvilinear forms. Above the doors is a narrow frieze of circles inscribed with 'S's, surmounted by a band of ogee arches. The tympanum is glass with a thick rectilinear tracery. Each corner between the arch and the rectangular reveal has a shield located in a circle and floral decoration. On the Telegraph Avenue facade the name "Benjamin Geer McDougall Architect" is engraved above the bellcaps to the left of the doorway.

To either side of the portal is a lantern inset in a shallow niche. Under these light fixtures is a large bracket supporting a small podium decorated with arches and shields. The fixture itself is a bronze hexagon, held on a brace. Each facet is decorated with Gothic tracery and quatrefoils. To either side of the fixture is a rib supported by a small bracket. These ribs continue upward and then continue under the protruding frieze above. They create the niche of the lantern, within which there is the outline of an ogee arch. The ribs correspond to the vertical shafts between the bay windows above.

North of the doorway is a slender window that echoes the rounded rectangular form of the entrance portal. The corner store had three tall archways, one on each long facade and one on the narrow south side. These, too, were divided by a molding with curvilinear tracery in the tympanum. A semicircular canopy extended around this corner shop.

The original ground floor of the Cathedral Building has been

8 SIGNIFICANCE

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1913-14

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Benjamin Geer McDougall

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cathedral Building, designed by Benjamin Geer McDougall, was constructed in 1913-14. Initially called the Federal Realty Building, the structure was built at a projected cost of \$300,000. Office space was taken by professionals, brokers, and corporations, and a number of the floors were specially equipped for the use of doctors and dentists. There was also an exclusive restaurant in the basement.

When the building was bought by attorney Wilbur Pierce in 1944 for \$120,000 it was renamed the Pierce Building. It was once again renamed in 1969 when a syndicate headed by Albert Goldhagen purchased the building for a price "in excess of \$500,000". Goldhagen called the structure the Cathedral Building "because that's what the top of it looks like". There were other owners during the interim periods and the structure was popularly known as the "Flatiron Building" because of its shape. Throughout its history the structure has remained an office building with stores on the ground floor. In 1962 the stores were replaced by a fast-food restaurant; the Doggie Diner.

Benjamin Geer McDougall(1865-1937), the architect of the Cathedral Building, was a San Francisco architect who designed many buildings in the Bay area and in the San Joaquin Valley. These included a variety of types of structures as well as a wide range of styles. In San Francisco McDougall designed the eight-story Sheldon Building of 1906-07, the Standard Oil Building, a classically-treated skyscraper of 1910, and an apartment house at 800 Bush Street. In Berkeley McDougall executed the Y.M.C.A. in the Georgian manner, and the Shattuck Hotel (1915), a reinforced concrete structure. Amongst McDougall's buildings were three churches--St. Luke's in San Francisco(1915), St. Paul's in Oakland(1917), and St. James' in Los Angeles(1922). A number of schools and private residences were also among the architect's oeuvre. The Cathedral Building was McDougall's most highly praised structure.

¹"Landmark Building Sold to Investor Syndicate," Oakland Tribune, September 14, 1969.

²For a fuller discussion of McDougall's work see: B.J.S. Cahill, AIA, "The Work of Benjamin G. McDougall, Architect," Architect & Engineer XLVII, No.2(November, 1916):38-72.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Newspaper Articles (listed chronologically)

"Building and Leasing Activity Remarkable; Prominent Downtown Corners to Be Improved with Skyscrapers." Oakland Tribune (23 March 1913):50

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Oakland West, Calif.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5

UTM REFERENCES

A 110 516,936,10 4,118,413,80

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

E

G

B

D

F

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Corner of Broadway and Telegraph in downtown Oakland,
104 feet on Broadway and 108 feet on Telegraph.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Fred Wasserman, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

The Preservation Group

DATE

September 15, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

18 Bartol

TELEPHONE

(415) 788-1000

CITY OR TOWN

San Francisco

STATE

California

94133

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Kerry M. Ellow

TITLE

DATE 12-4-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 1-29-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 1-26-79

ATTEST: J. J. [Signature]

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

converted into a Doggie Diner, a fast-food restaurant. The only features that still remain are the portals on each facade and the smaller window to the north of them. A large awning extends all the way around the Doggie Diner, preventing pedestrians from looking up at the building. Above the awning is a very large obvious sign that reads "Doggie Diner".

Extending outward above the ground floor is the narrow frieze mentioned above that runs continuously the length of the two long facades, as well as the corner facade. The frieze is composed of two motifs that are frequently used in the Cathedral Building. The first is an 'S' inscribed in a circle, gothicized with little cusps. These are placed in pairs with the 'S's facing in opposite directions and alternate with shields. Each section of the frieze is separated by tiny colonnettes. The shields located at the base of the vertical shafts above are framed by larger colonnettes that extend upward out of the top of the frieze. Under the frieze there is a narrow band of tiny ogee arches. Ribs, thin under the small colonnettes of the frieze and wider under the bigger ones continue the rhythm of the frieze under the narrow canopy that the protruding frieze creates. In this way the verticality of the facade is subtly maintained all the way down to the ground floor.

The structure that extends upward is nine bays wide. The three bays at the gore end only reach seven stories while the rest of the building attains a height of 14 stories. The height was reduced in the front because of the high wind stresses created because of the narrow base at this end of the structure, as well as the disproportionate cost of building so much exterior wall to enclose so little interior office space.¹

As a result of the limited space on the site bay windows ("which project to the limit of the law") were used,² and this is the basic repeated element of the facade. Each bay has the windows continuously piled up forming a tall vertical column. The bays have slanting sides creating a deep triangular shaft between them that reads as a continuous vertical line from the second story upwards. The windows themselves have a single mullion dividing them into two lights. Below each window is a pair of inset panels, each panel having two curvilinear 'X' forms gothicized with little cusps.

In the three southern bays at the gore end this pattern continues for five stories. The last window(the sixth story) is surmounted by a molding with shields and a miniature entablature with the same circular 'S' motif of the lower frieze. The molding and cornice of the entablature continue in and out of the shafts, creating a continuous stringcourse. The seventh story windows are flush with the building. They have arched lintels with deep reveals. Mullions divide the windows into three narrow lights. The upper portion of each of these windows is a relief arcade of narrow arches with inset trefoil arches and small shields. These are surmounted by a frieze of quatrefoils and another narrow band with widely-spaced floral

¹H.P. Buckingham, "An Unusual Office Building," The Pacific Coast Architect, Vol.IX, No.1(January, 1915):10.

²Ibid., p.10.

Also see: B.J.S. Cahill, AIA, "The Work of Benjamin Geer McDougall, Architect," Architect & Engineer, Vol.XLVII, No.2(November, 1916):66.

squares. At the level of the arcade there are brackets between each bay that support slender columniated ogee arches. Within each there is a hexagonal pedestal and a hollowed out stilted arch. They culminate in spires with floral bases and points. Floral bouquets also cluster at the springing line of the arches. Between each of these arches are crenellations with a continuous molding outlining the edge. The larger and central crenellation of each bay has an inset ogee arch, and a scroll with a cross near the top of the arch.

The remainder of the facade (the six northern bays) continues upward until the top of the tenth story. Here there are continuous stringcourses and an entablature with the circular 'S' motif. Colossal two-story basket arches outline the eleventh and twelfth story windows which are flush with the building. Every third voussoir of the reveal has a floral design. Between the stories is a pair of inset panels with quatrefoils. These are framed by tiny colonettes.

Rising from the top of the tenth story are colonettes that stand between the eleventh and twelfth story arched windows. These have foliated capitals which support large flaring dosseretts which in turn support slender lancet arches. These latter have inset ogee arches with small pedestals sitting in them. Besides a central spire at the peak of the arch there are also smaller side pinnacles. All of these are heavily foliated. These spires frame the dormers that crown each bay. At the base of these, resaliti moldings and colonnettes create levels of tripartite compartments above the twelfth story arch. The lower ones have ogee arches with flanking bays at the center of which is a shield with a cross. The smaller compartments above are quatrefoils. The tiny colonnettes of the second row support dentils and an entablature. Above this is the triangular form of the dormer with two ogee arch windows. Between them is a pier with a capital, above which is a tiny niche. Rising from the outline of the narrow arched windows are two spires. There are also piers to either side of the triangle that support spires. Finally a spire rises at the center, above the niche. These spires have floral bouquets at certain intervals and culminate in what resembles a flame-like form.

At each corner of the building a huge crocketed spire ascends, supported by a large bracket and an octagonal post with inset arches and panels. The crocket itself has pointed arch forms around its base. Then it rises with three floral wreaths at different levels, ultimately culminating in a flame-like form. The roof is tall and hipped. It is covered in slate that has been painted silver. Along the edges of the roof there is a braided molding and at the very top there is a parapet decorated with inset panels with the circular 'S' motif. These are surmounted by a row of finials. At either end of the roof there is a tall narrow spire.

The narrow southern facade of the building is a simpler variation of the large facades. Windows on each floor are the same form as those of the rest of the story, though they are sometimes modified to fit the space. To the north of the main body of the building a somewhat narrower section houses a stairway on the Broadway side, while there are fire escapes on the Telegraph Avenue side. The rear facade is flat and was originally unornamented. In 1976 a multi-color mural was painted depicting the symbol of Oakland, the sprouting acorn, amidst elements of modern culture and the

Oakland skyline. The mural only covers around two thirds of the exposed rear wall. Above this it is blank until the top of the wall where the words "Cathedral Building" are painted in black and white.

The lobby is small but very ornate. Colonnettes support a barrel vault. Arched lintels between these colonnettes frame the elevators and a stairway. The elevator doors are bronze with panels of ogee arch variations. The tympani of the elevators have Gothic roses around which are Gothic numbers for the floors. Between the foliated capitals of the colonnettes and the springing line of the vault there is a frieze with ogee arch forms and foliation. The walls of the lobby are made of Tavernelle marble, except for the base which is a thin strip of red Verona. Three fixtures hung from the vault. They were faceted glass and bronze and were suspended by several chains from the vault. These fixtures are no longer extant. There is now one chandelier that hangs in the center of the lobby.

The Cathedral Building is of steel-frame construction resting on concrete footings. The main supporting columns are located between every other bay window. Spandrel girders between columns support the bay windows and carry the load of an intermediate cross girder. The floors are constructed of reinforced concrete. The curtain walls are also concrete sheathed in semi-glazed terracotta of a light buff color. The decoration on the lower stories is concrete and terracotta. However, the extensive decoration at the top of the building is made of hollow sheet metal and painted an orange-tan color.

At the present time much of the paint is peeling. As well, some of the terracotta is chipped, as is some of the decoration. Most notably, one of the brackets by the Broadway entrance, as well as a few of the spires are damaged.

The site of the Cathedral Building has been somewhat altered. Initially the building came up to the sidewalk which was rounded at the point of the gore. However in 1961 the gore was extended to create Latham Square. Here large stone piers support a zig-zag awning.



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One critic observed, "The ~~ingenuity~~³ of its plan, the boldness of its composition and the massed interest of the bewildering detail combine to place its architect Mr. Benjamin Geer McDougall, in the front rank of the profession."

The Cathedral Building's significance rests in both its architectural quality as well as in its historical context. Architecturally the structure is the unique solution to two major problems. The first of these was the aesthetic problem of the skyscraper and how to deal with its height on a formal level. The second problem, more specific to the Cathedral Building, was its trapezoidal site. In order to solve the first problem architects looked for historical styles that offered a solution to the extreme verticality of the skyscraper. Some used the tripartite formula of the classical column (this can be seen in one of the Cathedral Building's contemporary neighbors, the Thomson Building at Broadway and Seventeenth Street) while others resorted to the verticality of the tower. But McDougall turned to the Gothic for the Federal Realty Building.

The proto-typical Gothic skyscraper, Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building in New York, was completed just when McDougall began work on the Cathedral Building. 792 feet in height and 55 stories tall, the building was unanimously acclaimed at the time. The Woolworth Building spurred the use of what has been called "Commercial Gothic" for skyscrapers and its influence was widespread. Not only was it discussed in the national architectural journals, but it was hailed in the regional publications from coast to coast. In the Architect & Engineer (of California) of March, 1913 there was a poem called "The Great Woolworth Building" by Samuel Arnold, a Berkeley citizen. He proclaims that Gilbert built better than the builders of Babylon, Egypt, Troy, Greece, Rome, and Gaul.⁴ A much more in depth discussion accompanied by a number of photographs of details appeared in the Architect and Engineer in July, 1914.⁵

McDougall, seeking a solution for his flatiron skyscraper, was clearly impressed by the clamor over the Woolworth Building. The result was the first fully Gothic skyscraper built on the West Coast.⁶ The Federal Realty Building is a fine example of how this medieval style could be applied to a modern structure. McDougall was striving for an extreme sense of verticality in the Federal Realty Building and Gothic proved to be the perfect historical solution to his problem. It also allowed him to use his unique site^{to} its fullest potential. From the south looking towards the ~~gore~~, one sees a narrow vertical tower that really resembles a cathedral. However from the sides one gets a very different impression. Here one sees the full

³ Ibid., p.66.

⁴ Samuel Arnold, "The Great Woolworth Building," Architect and Engineer XXXI, No.2 (March, 1913):101.

⁵ Twells Brex, "Beauty of the American Skyscraper with Special Reference to the Woolworth Building," Architect and Engineer XXXVII, No.3 (July, 1914):47.

⁶ Cahill notes that the Federal Realty Building was the only Gothic structure of such a considerable extent on the West Coast. Cahill, Architect and Engineer XLVII, No.2 (November, 1916):66. Earlier buildings like the narrow one at 130 Bush Street (George Applegarth, 1910) in San Francisco had dabbled with some Gothic ornament but the Federal Realty Building was the first skyscraper fully conceived in the Gothic manner. Another later example of the "Commercial Gothic" in the Bay area is the Russ Building (George Kellum, 1928), San Francisco's tallest structure from 1928-64.

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breadth of the building and the verticality is reinforced by repetition. The effect that McDougall has achieved is very much like the two experiences of looking at the facade of a Gothic cathedral and then moving around to see the side elevation, a series of repeated vertical buttresses. The Gothic provided the solution to both of McDougall's problems, the height of the skyscraper and the site, and it allowed him to turn them to his advantage.

One can clearly see the architect's intent if we compare the original design with the completed building. Though in general form the design was maintained, a number of essential features were changed that altered the effect of the building. In the finished structure the bay windows are wider than planned and the windows on the slanting sides have been eliminated. As a result the bay windows read as vertical columns, clearly separated by vertical shafts that create a great deal of shadow which adds to the overall effect. The horizontals created by the continuous windows of the original design have been eliminated. The roof, originally a mansard with a parapet around the four edges, was changed to a steep hipped roof with a single parapet down the center. The heavy cornice below the roof was eliminated and was replaced by all of the Gothic decoration in the finished building. The result is that the roof appears as a continuation of the vertical facades, rather than merely as a crown. The spires, of course, accentuate in detail the overall verticality for which McDougall strove. Ultimately this was attained by simplifying and paring down the main body of the building, while elaborating the decoration. In this solution McDougall may very well have been looking at Gilbert's work in the Woolworth Building where there is certainly no lack of Gothic ornamentation at the top of each section, but where the facades themselves are simple and vertical, reflecting the structure of the building.

While it is the crocketed spires and finials that most blatantly make the structure Gothic, McDougall has used simple decoration to stylistically harmonize the entire structure. His gothicism consists of a number of motifs and forms that are used throughout the building. These are the 'S' inscribed in a circle, the curvilinear 'X', the quatrefoil, the ogee arch, the lancet arch, foliation, and shields. These are used in various forms and combinations and give an undeniably Gothic manner to the structure. McDougall has not limited himself in his Gothic sources however. When he wanted the lower portion of the building to be climactic but not to rival the roof, he resorted to another form, crenellations, as medieval as spires though not as flamboyant. The Gothic is alluded to in many subtle ways in the details of the Cathedral Building--the slight cusps at the top of rectangular portals and in the cusps of the 'S' and 'X' motifs. This is also seen in the general placement of inset panels and the organization of the decoration in repetitive compartments and arcades that is very characteristic of Gothic architecture.

When the Federal Realty Building opened, the caption under a photograph in the newspaper said that it was "an exact replica" of the city hall of Louvain, Belgium which was destroyed by the Germans in their assault on the city.⁷ This caption raises the question of whether McDougall was

⁷ Oakland Enquirer, October 24, 1914, p.12.

The architect of the town hall in Louvain was Mathieu de Layens and it was built from 1448-59.

actually imitating the Belgian building or whether this is merely the fancy of an over-zealous journalist who thought it was an interesting parallel. While the words "exact replica" would indicate the former, there are reasons to doubt the assertion. Louvain only came to the attention of Americans in August, 1914, by which time the Cathedral Building was already nearly completed. The likelihood of the architect looking at the same relatively obscure Gothic structure that was attacked by the Germans seems slight. More concretely, there is a factual error in the statement. Though most of Louvain was destroyed by the Germans, the town hall was preserved more or less intact. Thus the credibility of this caption is seriously called into question. Finally, the Cathedral Building is certainly not an exact replica of the Town Hall in Louvain. While in the basic form of repeated windows, hipped roof, and spires there are similarities between the two buildings, in detail the Cathedral Building is plain compared to the flamboyant Gothic in the Louvain Town Hall.

Two important observations can be made, however, as a result of this comparison. Firstly, McDougall was probably looking not only at Gothic cathedrals, but also and perhaps more significantly at Gothic secular architecture. The latter is obviously more relevant to the architect of a modern skyscraper--even if these buildings did ironically come to be called "cathedrals of commerce". Secondly, this comparison is a measure of the architect's success. He was able to create a truly Gothic feeling in a skyscraper, while simultaneously using the historical style to emphasize the essential modern aspect of the skyscraper--height and its concomitant verticality.

It is important to understand the Cathedral Building in its historical context, as well as for its architectural significance. The period when the Cathedral Building(1913-14) was built was one of great development in Oakland. A good number of people left San Francisco for the East Bay following the fire and many businesses relocated in Oakland. The building boom began the next year and in the years that followed a number of steel-frame skyscrapers were erected, mostly along Broadway. As well, in 1913 the new 15-story City Hall, by Palmer and Hornbostel was completed. This period also saw the growth of many major department stores and hotels in downtown Oakland. At this time Oakland was at the height of its competition with San Francisco for preeminence in the Bay area.

It is in this historical context that the city viewed its development in general and the Federal Realty Building in particular. A large two-page spread was devoted to "Real Estate" every week in the Sunday Oakland Tribune. The headlines clearly indicate the mood of the city and the tempo of its growth. On March 23, 1913 the big headline read: "Growth of Modern Downtown Oakland Impressively Shown by the Camera; Architectural Monuments of Brick and Concrete Are Rapidly Changing Skyline of City's Retail District; Development of Half-decade Makes East Bay Metropolis Marvel of West".⁸ It was on this page that it was first reported that Carlston and Snyder would erect a \$300,000 building on the gore of Broadway and Telegraph Avenue. From then on the construction of what came to be called the Federal Realty Building was covered periodically, from the clearing of the

⁸ Oakland Tribune, March 23, 1913, p.50.

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site and the laying of the foundation until the completion of the structure. Several buildings were being constructed simultaneously and the newspaper proclaimed, "Building of Skyscrapers to be Feature of 1913 Activity".⁹ There were often photographs of the downtown construction. In the Oakland Tribune Annual Number of 1914, there was a page of photographs showing "Some Steel-Frame Skyscrapers Now Under Construction in Oakland", with the Carlton and Snyder Building prominent among them. This building completed what was called the "Oakland Canyon" and there was talk that this canyon with all the new skyscrapers would be pictured on the city seal.¹⁰

The Federal Realty Building, of all the new skyscrapers, created the greatest stir. Everyone watched its construction with anticipation. It became common in articles to refer to the Federal Realty Building as "tower-like", while many thought that the steel frame looked like the prow of a ship. As work was about to begin on the roof, it was noted in the Tribune, that "The beauty of this unique architecture monument is now becoming evident to all who inspect it."¹¹ In the announcement of its opening, it was called "the newest and the most beautiful skyscraper erected in Oakland".¹² The Federal Realty Building was taken to be an important symbol of Oakland's development-- a symbol of what the city should be, as well as a catalyst in that direction. Pictured on the cover of the Observer, an important society magazine in Oakland, the accompanying article highlighted these ideas. "When the plans and elevation for the Federal Realty Building were revealed amazement and gratification were unbounded among all those who aspire to the City Beautiful."¹³ It went on to say,

"It is not overstating the fact to say that, prominence and unique character of location being considered together with architectural distinction, the Federal Realty Building is one of the most notable business structures in America. The owners have shown an admirable appreciation of their responsibility in using a corner whose architectural improvement must have so far-reaching an influence upon the development of the most important district in Oakland."¹⁴

In February, 1915 an Observer article speculated on the full nature of this influence. Not only does it affect surrounding property, but it inspires improvements which extend this good influence. The Observer

⁹ Oakland Tribune, May 18, 1913, p.50.

¹⁰ "'Canyon' Now Complete; May Be on City Seal," Oakland Tribune, August 30, 1914, p.30.

¹¹ "Construction Activity is Notable," Oakland Tribune, June 28, 1914, p.30.

¹² Oakland Enquirer, October 24, 1914, p.12.

¹³ Observer 14, No.9(November 28, 1914):3.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.3.

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notes that the new structure has also made the public realize that Oakland has one of the most remarkable street arrangements in the United States. Finally,

"With this building as a focus it is much easier to visualize the great throngs that must inevitably gather at such a juncture, and hence the trade and realty advantages that must arise in the circumstances. It is not too much to say that, in making a structure worthy of the site, the owners of the Federal Realty Building have done as much for us as the government of the nation, state, county, or city could do in any public building."¹⁵

We can see how the Federal Realty Building became a pivotal structure, both in the physical sense because of its site and its standard of architectural quality, as well as in the conceptual sense. In 1914, the Federal Realty Building was the symbol of Oakland and of its hope for the future. Though this period is long since past and new skyscrapers tower in Downtown Oakland, the Cathedral Building's prominence has not waned. Its unique site on the gore separates it from the surrounding structures by wide boulevards, while its Gothic form makes it exceptional amidst the rectilinear skyscrapers. The Cathedral Building still stands out as an important landmark of Downtown Oakland.

The Preservation Group is the general and controlling partner in the Cathedral Associates. They foresee a number of steps in the restoration process on the Cathedral Building. The most important will be the redesign of the ground floor Doggie Diner by Harold K. Major, AIA of the Preservation Group. The canopy and the sign at the mezzanine level will be removed in order to see how much of the original features are still extant. Then the arcade configuration will be reintroduced in a material that is compatible with the rest of the building. The emphasis will be on a design that embodies the general form and tone of the original design. This will reunite the ground floor and the skyscraper above into an integrated design.

Several measures are planned for the upper stories as well. The Preservation Group has contacted the company that is thought to have done the original terracotta veneer. They are authorities on terracotta and will be consulted on the restoration of the chipped and cracked exterior. The hollow sheet metal spires will be inspected for rust and deterioration and the internal light steel framing will be repaired where necessary to insure stability. After this preparatory work, the spires will be repainted.

Finally, minor changes are anticipated in the lobby. The light fixtures will be replaced by fixtures that approximate the original ones. The marble and bronze will also be cleaned.

¹⁵ Observer 15, No. 7 (February 13, 1915): 2.

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"Growth of Modern Downtown Oakland Impressively Shown by the Camera; Architectural Monuments of Brick & Concrete Are Rapidly Changing Skyline of City's Retail District; Development of Half-decade Makes East Bay Metropolis Marvel of West." Oakland Tribune(23 March 1913):50.

"To Start Work on Two Fine Buildings." Oakland Tribune(30 March 1913):50.

"Spring Real Estate Trading Satisfactory; Building of Skyscrapers to Be Feature of 1913 Activity." Oakland Tribune(18 May 1913):50.

Photograph: Northeasterly View from Broadway and Fifteenth Street. Old building being torn down on site for \$300,000 Carlston and Snyder office structure. Oakland Tribune(8 June 1913):50.

"Downtown Building is Unabated." Oakland Tribune(28 September 1913):50.

Photograph: "With the addition of one more story than is shown in the photograph, the steel framework of the 12-story Carlston & Snyder building at the Broadway and Telegraph Avenue gore will be completed." Oakland Tribune(21 December 1913):50.

"Some Steel-Frame Skyscrapers Now Under Construction in Oakland(photographs)." Oakland Tribune Annual Number(January 1914):15.

Photograph: "Three Oakland Skyscrapers All in a Row." Oakland Tribune(11 January, 1914):50.

"Building and Realty Trade Brisk." Oakland Tribune(15 February 1914):50.

Photograph: "Photographic view of monumental improvements in City Hall and upper Broadway retail district." Oakland Tribune(19 April 1914):50.

"Construction Activity is Notable." Oakland Tribune(28 June 1914):30.

"'Canyon' Now Complete; May Be on City Seal." Oakland Tribune(30 August 1914):30.

Photograph: "'The Gore', where Telegraph Avenue and Broadway join, showing the remarkable effect of the new construction in the vicinity." Oakland Tribune(27 September 1914):30.

Photograph: "View of New Carlston & Snyder Building from Sixteenth Street and San Pablo Avenue. At Right is Corner of New First Trust & Savings Bank Building." Oakland Tribune(18 October 1914):10.

Photograph: "The Federal Realty Building, the newest and the most beautiful skyscraper erected in Oakland, which will be opened and ready for occupancy Monday." Oakland Enquirer(24 October 1914):12.

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17TH STREET

TELEGRAPH

16TH

STREET

15TH ST.

BROADWAY

FRANKLIN

CATHEDRAL BUILDING - corner of Broadway
and Telegraph

SCALE: 1 INCH = 100 FEET

