United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic  The Koshland House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number  3800 Washington Street  N/A not for publication

city, town  San Francisco  N/A vicinity of

state  California code 05  county San Francisco code 075

3. Classification

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4. Owner of Property

name  Washington Street Associates

street & number  3800 Washington Street

city, town  San Francisco  N/A vicinity of  state  California  94118

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.  Recorder of the City and County of San Francisco

street & number  Room 167  City Hall

city, town  San Francisco  state  California  94102

6. Representation in Existing Surveys  SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Situated in the Presidio Heights neighborhood of San Francisco, the Koshland house is a three-story (above a partially submerged basement) building of brick construction with a Colusa sandstone veneer. The sandstone is regular ashlar blocks, 1'-6" x 5'-0" generally, 4" thick, tied onto the structure with wrought iron or mild steel cramps. The exterior face of the block and carved ornament is dressed in a regular horizontal pattern of grooves called broaching, or broached ashlar. At 3800 Washington, the presence of a fine red lichen growing on the stone gives the building a pinkish cast.

Approximately sixty feet wide by seventy-five feet deep, the building appears to be two stories high because the third floor is set back from the parapet and is not visible from the street (see photo #1). The front elevation of 3800 Washington is an academic replica of Le Petit Trianon at Versailles, designed by Ange Jacque Gabriel in 1761 for Louis XV. As such, it features a ballustraded parapet atop the second floor, over a classical entablature with bracketed cornice, plain frieze, and banded architrave. The front elevation is composed of five equal bays separated by four Corinthian columns. The columns have traditional Corinthian capitals, slender fluted shafts two stories high, and attic bases resting upon smooth-faced plinths. This elevation features regularly spaced French windows at both floors. The first floor has pairs of ten-light casements below an eight-light transom. The upper floor has pairs of eight-light casements. This entire elevation rests upon a monumental sandstone terraced entrance which features white marble steps and landings rising to a pair of symmetric curving stairs which arrive at a broad marble terrace which is the main entrance to the building. There are four cast iron light standards, each about nine feet tall, which feature lavender glass spheres on top and clusters of four dolphins at the base.

The third floor has a flat roof, painted cement plaster exterior walls, and irregularly spaced double hung windows.

The east elevation (see photo #2) has the same parapet and entablature. This face, also divided into five bays, has four Corinthian pilasters similar in detail to the front columns. It is here that the basement level can be seen. It is surfaced in heavily rusticated sandstone with deep-set openings for double hung windows, secured behind tubular wrought iron grilles. Between the four pilasters are three large art glass windows designed by artisan and poet Bruce Porter. The middle window bears the greeting "Salve" (Welcome) and the date MCMIV. The flanking windows are images of female-headed terns. There are three smaller art glass windows at the third level, and all are executed in a palette of pink, purple, green, yellow, and blue.

The rear elevation (photo #3), also framed with the parapet, entablature, and rusticated base, has no pilasters or columns. It has unevenly spaced openings, all glazed with the same window type as the front. There is also a small sandstone stair that leads from the garden level to the first floor in one continuous rise. There is one small unglazed opening on the second floor which opens onto a porch, and there is a large fireplace stack centered on the east one-half of this elevation and extending above the parapet.
8. Significance

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Specific dates 1902-1904  
Builder/Architect Franklin S. Van Trees

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Koshland house is significant architecturally far beyond the implications of its eclectic front facade. Its spatial qualities and the quality of its interior detailing excel among its contemporaries in both richness and monumental character. Its owners have had deep association with San Francisco's commercial life and were intimately involved in the cultural development (specifically music) of this city. They also had a deep commitment to their social and humanitarian responsibilities and generated a legacy of philanthropic endeavor. The building is also associated with the work of artist Bruce Porter who designed and executed the art glass windows and the original formal landscaping.

3800 Washington is far more interesting architecturally than its front facade might suggest. Its period and type define the end of an era in San Francisco, for few such imposing and monumental private residences were built following its completion in 1904. In comparing photographs of 3800 Washington and Le Petit Trianon, it is important to note that while there are minor differences in the details, the concept, massing, and proportions of 3800 Washington are virtually identical to the French original. The terraced base is modified to accommodate the site, but the double curving stair appears to be almost as masterful a solution as the broad, rectangular base of Gabriel's masterpiece. Also, because of the unusually spacious and beautiful interior, this residence continues to intrigue San Franciscans in a way that few other private residences do. Its most recent change in ownership has generated extraordinary media attention (see bibliography). It is almost as if the building were publicly owned, so keen is the public interest in it.

Declared a City Landmark in 1977, the building is also featured in the survey "Here Today" and received high ratings in the Department of City Planning's Inventory which rates only the top 10 percent of San Francisco's buildings.

Little is known about architect Van Trees. This building is undoubtedly his major commission. It is known that he apprenticed in the office of A. Page Brown about the time that Brown was commissioned to design the Ferry Building. Brown's subsequent early death may have delivered the commission for the Koshland house to Van Trees because of his familiarity with the sandstone which is common to both buildings. Van Trees is not listed in City Directories after 1913.

Bavarian immigrant Simon Koshland began his business life in California as a wool sorter in Sacramento's Mission Woolen Mills. Within a few years, he had established his own business, S. Koshland and Company, which was to become one
9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name: San Francisco North

UTM References

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Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Patrick McGrew, Architect

organization: n/a

date: 6 May 83

street & number: 2398 Pacific Avenue, Suite 403

telephone: (415) 922-9330

city or town: San Francisco

state: California 94115

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: [Signature]
title: State Historic Preservation Officer
date: 8/18/83

[For NPS use only]
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: [Signature]

Chief of Registration
2. The Junior League of San Francisco, Inc.  
1968 Local/County  
California History Room - Main Library  
Civic Center, San Francisco, California  

3. Department of City Planning  
1976 Local/County  
Department of City Planning - 450 McAllister Street  
San Francisco, California 94102  

"Here Today"

"Architectural Inventory"
The west elevation (photo #4) has irregularly spaced openings, reflecting the plan functions within. It, too, has a large fireplace stack extending above the parapet. The distinguishing feature of this elevation is its cast iron and glass enclosed entrance porch, which is currently being restored.

Paint scrapings indicate that all of the trim on the building window frames was originally painted a light grey, followed by a dark grey, a dark green-black, and finally its current off-white. It appears that all of the metal work was originally the same dark green-black but seems to have been "glazed" to resemble patinated bronze in the 1930s.

Structurally, the house remains unaltered on the exterior since its completion in 1904. Much of the cornice and all four front columns collapsed in the earthquake of 1906 but were replaced soon thereafter.

Adjacent to the site on the west is the original garage (1909) with servants quarters above (1912), but they are not longer a part of the subject property.

The original landscaping was done in the French style with clipped hedges and formal lawns and a group of Yew trees which give the illusion of an alley when viewed from the center axis of the interior of the house. At the end of the alley was a small sculpture of Pan (now gone) standing in a lily pond. The landscaping was modified many times through the years, and the formal gardens in the rear yard were removed long ago.

The interiors of 3800 Washington feature many notable rooms. See the attached plans for location.

1. Foyer: The foyer is a small rotunda with white marble floors and dark green marble walls. It is flanked on either side by a pair of small conservatories, each accessed by three pair of curved French doors. Each conservatory has a large stone planter.

2. The Atrium: This room was designed to bring light into the center of the house. An opening roughly eighteen feet on each side penetrates the two uppermost floors of the building and is capped by a skylight. At the first floor, the atrium features eight green Irish marble columns with bronze capitals and bases. Centered in the atrium is a small marble fish pond.

3. The Salon: This room is said to have been imported in its entirety from an 18th century French chateau. It features a 12-foot-high white marble fireplace with a rose marble inset. The room is paneled in a light, soft wood which appears to have been sandblasted. There are large wooden columns, pediments, and cornices and a plaster barrel vaulted ceiling.
4. The Library: This room was designed to conceal the books contained therein behind a system of large wooden panels which are detailed with concealed hardware. The panels are flanked by large wooden columns, and all of the woodwork is a dark mahogany but was painted an off-white in the 1950s. There is an elaborately coffered ceiling and rust-colored marble fireplace.

5. The Dining Room: This room was also paneled in two dark-colored woods and originally featured accents of gold-tooled green leather. The leather has been removed and replaced with mirror. There is a beamed ceiling with gothic detailing and an enormous fireplace with dark green marble facing and a wooden mantel supported by two nearly life-size carved figures of Bacchus.

6. The Ballroom: In the basement, there is a large hall of mirrors which runs the entire width of the house. Each wall features panels of mirrors framed by elaborate gilded boiserie. There are raised platforms at each end which were designed to be used as stages for musical performances. The finishes in this room were restored to their original character in 1982, although the original silvering on the mirrors remains.

7. Second Floor Living Room: This is the second largest room in the house and features a dark wooden wainscot and beamed ceiling. It, too, has a large fireplace, this one in tan stone with an arched opening.
of the leading woolen companies in America. It later became S. Koshland and Sons, with sons Marcus and Jesse heading offices in San Francisco and Boston, respectively.

Son Marcus married San Francisco native Corrine Schweitzer (daughter of Bernard Schweitzer, a furnishings wholesaler) in 1890, thus establishing a union between two San Francisco families whose commercial successes were to finance a large part of this city's cultural and philanthropic life, continuing even to this day. Marcus died in 1925, leaving his widow and children (Daniel, Robert, and Margaret) a fortune and a legacy of cultural and philanthropic endeavor.

Mrs. Koshland, because of her love of music, played an important role in the establishment of the San Francisco Symphony and the San Francisco Opera. 3800 Washington was frequently the scene of musical events which generated support for the Symphony. Mrs. Koshland was an early Board Member of the Symphony. Musicians who either entertained or were houseguests at the house during this period included Yehudi Menuin (whose education was partially financed by Mrs. Koshland), Issac Stern, Leonard Bernstein, Jascha Heifitz, Pierre Monteaux, and Igor Stravinski.

Later, much of the Koshland fortune went into the establishment of the San Francisco Foundation, through the efforts of Daniel Koshland. This is the major cultural/philanthropic agency in San Francisco, and they have recently instituted a series of bequests called the Daniel Koshland Awards.

The second owners of 3800 Washington also figured prominently in San Francisco's commercial, social, and philanthropic life. They were Mr. and Mrs. Walter Buck. He was an extremely successful financier with interests in banking, shipping, and distilling. He also served for a time as President of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. After their deaths, part of their estate became the basis for the Buck Foundation (administered by the San Francisco Foundation), which is the major cultural/philanthropic agency for Marin County.
CONTINUATION SHEET  Bibliography  ITEM NUMBER  9  PAGE  1

BOOKS


McGrew, Patrick (ed), Landmarks of San Francisco (Unpublished Manuscript).


San Francisco Department of City Planning, Architectural Inventory, 1976 (Unpublished Manuscript).


Koshland, Edith (Guggenheim) obituary, San Francisco Examiner, August 1, 1977.


Moffat, Frances, Nob Hill Gazette, July 1982, p. 4, "Mystery at 3800 Washington".


Porter, Bruce obituary, Berkeley Gazette, February 18, 1954, "Artist Bruce Porter dead at 88".


Pixea, Bea, San Francisco Examiner, December 15, 1975, "There's no place like Petit Trianon".


San Francisco Chronicle, February 2, 1976, p. 37, "For Sale Again".

San Francisco Chronicle, August 3, 1967, p. 2, "4.5 Million Estate".


San Francisco Chronicle, March 25, 1954, "Koshland Estate is $1,215,453".


San Francisco Chronicle, April 30, 1983, C8, "Koshland Awards".

San Francisco Examiner, April 28, 1982, "Koshland Awards".
Verbal boundary description and justification: Beginning at the point of intersection of the northerly line of Washington Street with the westerly line of Maple Street; running thence westerly along said line of Washington Street 117.75 feet; thence at a right angle northerly 169.647 feet; thence at a right angle 117.75 feet easterly; thence at a right angle southerly 169.647 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundaries are drawn upon current lot lines which encompass the historic structure and result from the subdivision of the once larger parcel.
THE KOSHLAND HOUSE
3800 WASHINGTON STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

BASEMENT AND FIRST FLOOR PLANS
second and third floor plans
THE KOSHLAND HOUSE
3800 WASHINGTON STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

SANBORNE MAP WITH PHOTO LOCATIONS
THIS IS NOT A SURVEY OF THE LAND, BUT IS COMPILED FROM DATA SHOWN BY THE PUBLIC RECORDS

WESTERN TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY
THE KOSHLAND HOUSE
3800 WASHINGTON STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

LOT MAP
THE KOSHLAND HOUSE
3800 WASHINGTON STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

VICINITY MAP