

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation 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 Pacific Gas & Electric Company Building

RECEIVED
AUG 12 1985

and/or common Pacific Gas & Electric Company Building

ONP

2. Location

street & number 1625 Clay St./551 17th St.

n/a not for publication

city, town Oakland

n/a vicinity of

congressional district 8th

state California

code 06

county Alameda

code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Marlin Industries

street & number 8601 Wilshire Blvd. 11th Floor

city, town Beverly Hills

n/a vicinity of

state CA 90211

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the County Recorder, Alameda County Court House

street & number 1225 Fallon St.

city, town Oakland

state California

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey (Tax Certification, Part I, June 13, 1985)
has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records Oakland City Planning Dept., Office of the Cultural Heritage Survey

city, town Oakland

state California

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
poor	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original	alte
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruine	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	(on interior)		n/a

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The subject building is an 8-story, steel-frame and reinforced concrete structure on a corner lot; it is attached on the south side to a smaller, two-story building. The north and east elevations received complete architectural treatment; the south and west elevations were left plain on the assumption that they would be attached to buildings of comparable size. Rectangular in plan with a three-part, vertical composition, the building was designed in a restrained Renaissance/Baroque revival mode with clean massing which looks forward to Modern styling.

The high-ceilinged ground floor, which contained the public space devoted to the order, pay-bill, cash receivers, and new business departments, has an arcaded exterior clad in mottled rose/cream, glazed terra cotta tile set in coursed ashlar. The base board or water table is polished, light gray granite. Above this base story are six floors of offices and the top floor which contained an auditorium also used as a cafeteria. This mid-zone or shaft is clad in dark, varigated red brick laid in a diamond pattern on the second floor. A horizontal emphasis occurs at the second and seventh floor in the form of belt cornices in cream-colored terra cotta and the roof cornice and frieze, also in terra cotta, above which is a low brick parapet. Large electric signs on the north and east elevations originally read "P. G. & E.". Only the metal frames remain. Belt cornices at the base and second stories have simple moldings; that which sets off the top story has rosette bosses on the window spandrels and festooned shield panels on the piers. The frieze below the roof cornice is embossed with rectangular panels bearing knotted reliefs. The windows of the 7th story have a running sill continued around the corners by a line of contrasting brick. In the center of the Clay St. sill is a cartouche in relief with the monogram "P. G. & E.", the company's early 20th century logo. Windows on the 8th floor are paired with round arches set within a round-headed arch. In the center is a pointed, large and dark-colored light bulb set in a cream-colored socket, doubtless a modest advertisement.

The building has three bays on the east side (Clay St.) and seven bays on the north side (17th St.). Ground floor arches are in-set with copper-framed, tripartite openings with transoms. The transom bars are expressed with coquillage cresting. Entrance doors are centered on Clay and 17th Sts; they are recessed in the lower part of the openings and have architraves with hoods and paneled side piers. The hoods have dentil-courses. Windows on the office floors are rectangular with double-hung sash. They are paired with the exception of single windows in the outer bays on the 17th St. elevation.

The exterior appears unaltered and in very good condition. Although the office floors have received interior remodeling over time, the ground floor retains much of its original decor. The wooden counter which originally partitioned off the public space has been removed, but the square piers with modified Composite capitals supporting the paneled ceiling remain. A hung, accoustical ceiling is removable. Also remaining are the Tennessee marble floor and wainscotting in the public space. The stairway to the second floor is intact.

A small parking area, historically associated with the building, is located at the rear of the property.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1922 Builder/Architect Architect: C. W. Dickey
 Builder: R. W. Littlefield

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Pacific Gas & Electric Co. district headquarters building in Oakland, designed by C.W. Dickey and constructed in 1922, is significant under National Register Criteria A, for its association with the history of Northern California's major utilities company, and under C, because it is an important work of a prominent architect who had a long and distinguished career both in the East Bay and in Honolulu.

P.G. & E.'s history begins in the 19th century with the establishment and growth of the various gas and electric companies which were finally consolidated in 1905. The first franchise for a gas plant for Oakland was obtained in the 1860s by Peter Donahue, one of the Bay area's most notable pioneer entrepreneurs. The first electric power plant, in operation in 1884, was purchased by the Oakland Gas Light Co. in 1885. In 1889, a new plant at 1st and Grove Sts. expanded the service. Called the Oakland Gas light and Heat Co., its headquarters were in a building of 1893 at 13th and Grove Sts. In 1903, this company merged with the California Gas & Electric Corporation. Previously, in 1901, this company had merged with the San Francisco Gas & Electric Co, founded by Donahue in 1852, to form the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. John Martin, co-founder of the California Gas & Electric Co., was P.G. & E.'s first Director. Born in Indianapolis in 1858, Martin came west in 1891. Three years later he met Eugene de Sabla, who was planning a mountain powerhouse. As a result of Martin's selling new generators to the new plant, he and de Sabla formed a team. Over the next ten years the two men built power plants and consolidated scattered gas and electric systems. After the consolidation of many of their properties as the California Gas & Electric Corp. in 1901, they continued to expand. By 1905, the company had 19 hydroelectric plants. The unification of many small, competing power companies into a comprehensive system was a significant achievement. The other half of the merger, the San Francisco Gas & Electric Co., involved George H. Roe, who came to California from Canada in 1875 and incorporated the California Electric Light Co. In 1894, when Roe died, this company joined with Peter Donahue's San Francisco Gas Light Co. to form the San Francisco Gas & Electric Co. Finally, in 1905, all of these companies were consolidated under the name, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. John A. Britton, who had been head of the Oakland Gas Light & Heat Co., became P.G. & E.'s first General Manager.

By the 1920s, the first East Bay district headquarters building at 13th and Grove Sts. (now destroyed) was inadequate. The new location chosen by the company at Clay and 17th Sts. reflected the northern expansion of the downtown district during the boom period following the 1906 earthquake and fire. The building was also well located near the 1913 City Hall. Projected at \$318,500, as stated on the 1922 building permit, the new building was one of the costliest projects of that year. As the headquarters for the district, which comprised the East Bay cities of Oakland, Berkeley, San Leandro, Hayward, and parts of Contra Costa County, the building was intended to convey the importance of P.G. & E. in the major East Bay city of Oakland. Yet, architect Charles W. Dickey stated, in P.G. & E.'s magazine, Pacific Service, that his aim was to design "a plain, dignified structure in keeping with the ideals of Pacific Service." Apparently, the design suited his clients very well; the company remained in the building until the mid-1970s when larger quarters were required.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Lee H. Newbert, "New Home for 'Pacific Service' in Historic Oakland," Pacific Service Magazine, v.XIII, no.9, Feb. 1922, p.271.
"Our Colorful Past", P.G. & E. Progress, 7/76, 2/78, 1/78
"The Work of Charles William Dickey, Architect", Architect and Engineer, July 1907, pp.35-58.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 50' x 150' (0.17 acre)

Quadrangle name Oakland West, California

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	0	5	6	4	1	4	0	4	1	8	4	4	7	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification Two portions of Block numbered 270, as laid down and delineated upon Boardman's Map of Oakland, see attached sheet, Exhibit "A". Assessor's Parcel No. 3-63-17. Boundaries are drawn on historic (and present) lot lines.

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sally B. Woodbridge, Architectural Historian

organization N/A

date July 2, 1985

street & number 2273 Vine St.

telephone (415) 848-4356

city or town Berkeley,

state CA 94709

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Kathryn Guathieri

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6-12-86

For HCERS use only

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

[Signature]
Keeper of the National Register

National Register

Attest:

Chief of [unclear]

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

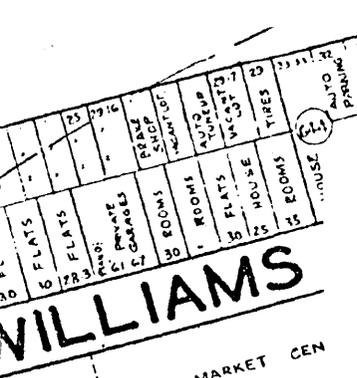
P.G. & E. Building, Oakland, significance, cont'd.: Criterion C:

The P.G. & E. Building was one of only three buildings of comparable scale and design quality built in the central downtown district between 1920 and 1925. The others: the Bank of America Building (originally the Oakland Bank of Savings), designed by C.W. Dickey in 1907 with additions by Dickey & Reed in 1909 and the successor firm of Reed & Corlett in 1922-23; and the Tribune Tower addition of 1922-23 by Edward T. Foulkes were nearby. The former is also a Renaissance Revival building in the Beaux Arts tradition; the latter employs a form and vocabulary of ornament more in keeping with the Gothic Revival style. In fact, only two other skyscrapers of comparable scale were built in the district by 1930: the Central Bank Building, 1925-26, by Kelham and Matthews, and the Financial Center, 1928-29, by Reed & Corlett. Therefore, the subject building is a relatively rare example of its type for this time in this place. Furthermore, the building exterior is unaltered, a rarity in downtown Oakland for older buildings. (The Bank of America building's ground floor has been altered.)

In respect to design, the P.G. & E. building is less historicist than its contemporaries. With its clean massing and restrained Classicism, it points the way to the early Modern buildings of the late 20s and 30s.

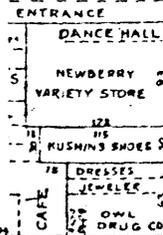
The architect, Charles W. Dickey, had a long and distinguished career both in the East Bay and in Honolulu. Dickey was born in Alameda, Calif., in 1871. After graduating from M.I.T. in 1894, he returned to the Bay area and worked for the Reid Bros. in San Francisco until he opened his office in Oakland in 1904. In partnership with William Reed, he designed the aforementioned Oakland Bank of Savings at 1200 Broadway. He also designed the Capwell's Department Store (demolished) and Kahn's Department Store (in restoration) in 1912-13. The Claremont Hotel, one of the East Bay's enduring landmarks, was completed as designed by Dickey in 1915. In 1924, Dickey returned to Honolulu, where he had grown up and where his family lived, to reside and practice there until his death in 1942.

Dickey's work was well published. A lengthy article in the Architect and Engineer, July 1907, credited him with "having left his stamp upon the architecture of the Islands and done more than any one man to raise it to its present high standard." His design for the P.G. & E. Building was also published in the Architect and Engineer in March 1922.

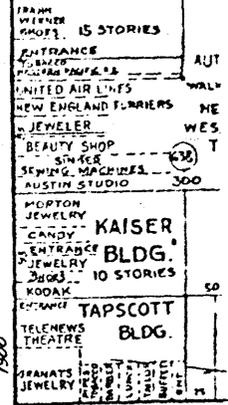


THE PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING
 1625 Clay Street/551 17th Street
 Oakland, Alameda County, California

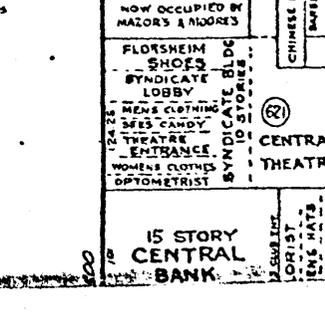
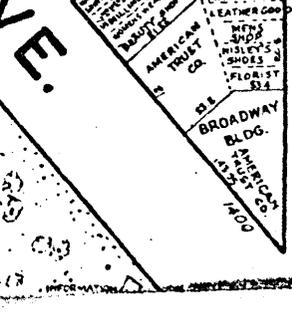
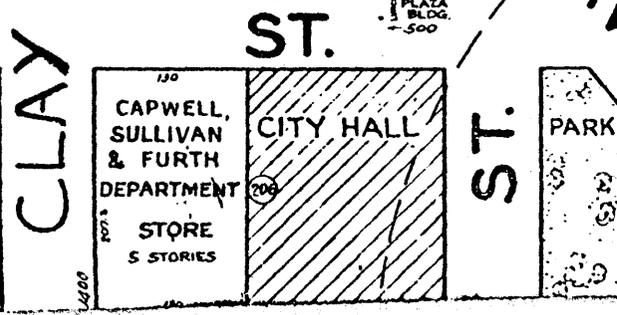
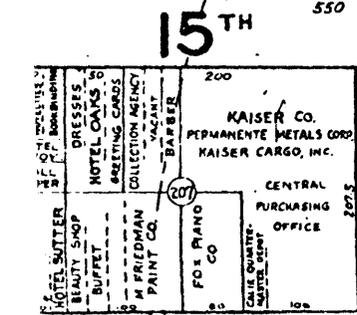
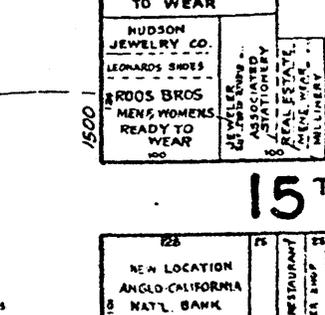
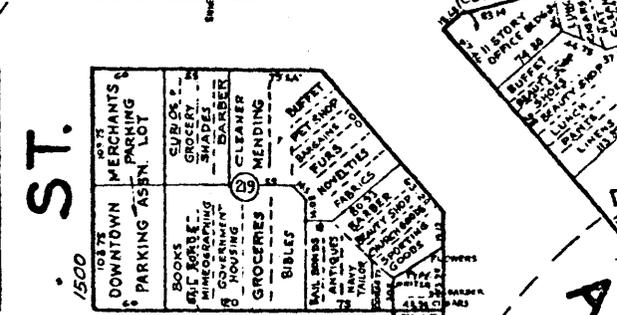
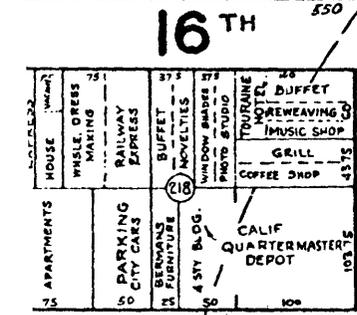
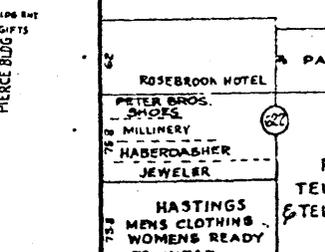
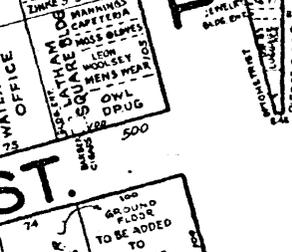
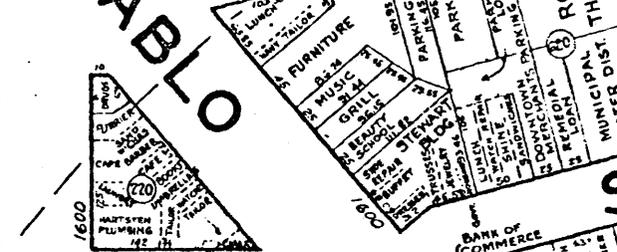
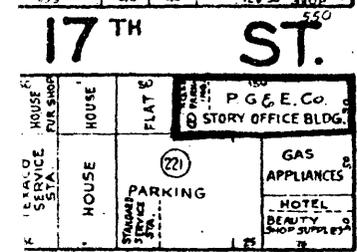
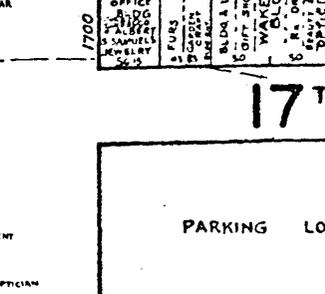
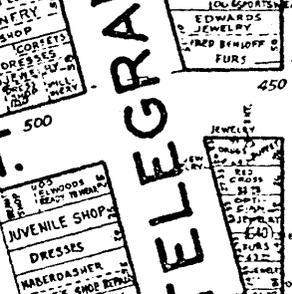
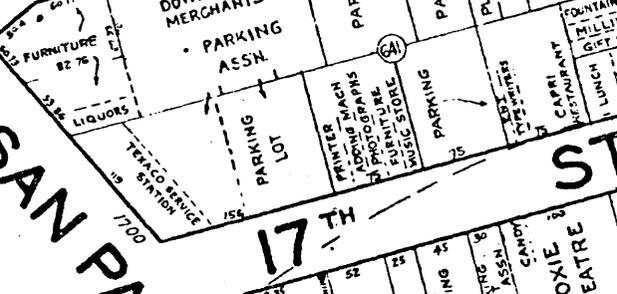
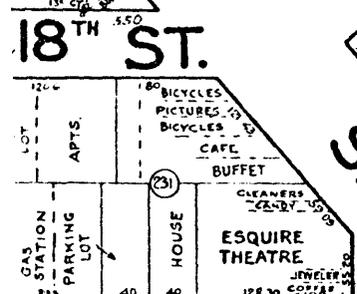
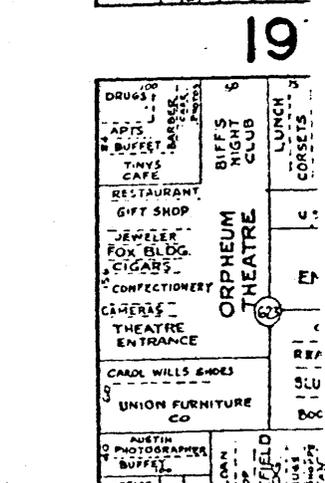
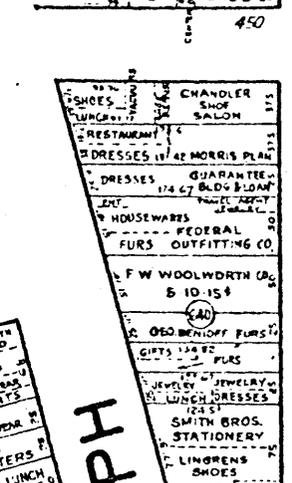
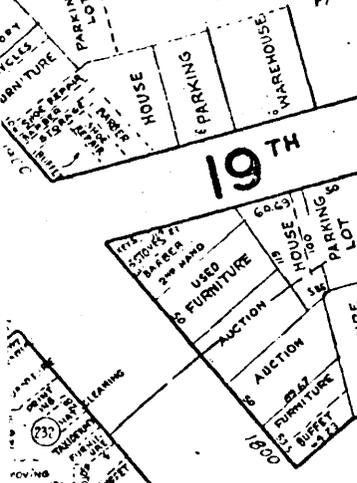
DEPARTMENT STORE



BROADWAY



WILLIAMS



CLAY ST.

ST.

ST.

AVE.

15TH

17TH

19TH

CAPWELL, SULLIVAN & FURTH DEPARTMENT STORE 5 STORIES

CITY HALL

PARK

KAHNS DEPARTMENT STORE

ST.

ST.

ST.

ST.

FOX OAKLAND THEATRE

ST.

TELEGRAPH

PARKING LOT

ROSEBROOK HOTEL

PETER BROS. SHOES

HABERDASHER

HASTINGS MENS CLOTHING

MUDSON JEWELRY CO.

LEONARDS SHOES

BROOKS BROS. MENS WOMENS READY TO WEAR

NEW LOCATION ANGLO CALIFORNIA NATL. BANK

FLORSHEIM SHOES

15 STORY CENTRAL BANK

DRUGS

RESTAURANT

GIFT SHOP

JEWELRY

CAMERAS

THEATRE ENTRANCE

UNION FURNITURE CO.

PHOTOGRAPHER

OFFICE

JEWELRY

SHOES

RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT

RESTAURANT