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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

DEC 8 1987

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Engine House No. 31, San Francisco Fire Department  
other names/site number Russian Hill Firehouse

2. Location

street & number 1088 Green Street N/A not for publication  
city, town San Francisco N/A vicinity  
state CA code 06 county San Francisco code 075 zip code 94133

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		1	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

*Kathryn Thallner*  
Signature of certifying official  
State Historic Preservation Officer, California  
Date 11/30/87

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

*Alonso*  
Signature of the Keeper  
Entered in the National Register  
1-7-88  
Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government: fire station

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Social: meeting hall

Domestic: single dwelling

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Tudor Revival

Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation other: not visible

walls weatherboard

roof asbestos

other trim: wood

doorsills: granite

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Russian Hill Firehouse is a 2-1/2 story and partial basement frame building clad in smooth weatherboard, filling the entire front and sides of its lot on a crowded city block. Home of the San Francisco Fire Department's Engine Company #31 from 1908 to 1952, the building is now a private residence upstairs where the firemen used to live; and on the main floor, where the equipment and, initially, horses were kept, it is a pair of large meeting and museum rooms for the St. Andrews Society, Russian Hill Neighbors, and other nonprofit community groups. A mixture of Craftsman and Tudor Revival styles, the facade is symmetrical, with a large center bay, flared dormer on a sloping roof, and decorative false half-timbering. Comparison with a 1910 photo shows only minor facade changes; in the interior a vestibule, hall, elevator, and stairs have been added for the residential conversion, but a maximum of the original tongue-and-groove interior remains. Side and rear elevations are concealed by other buildings; at the rear is a lightwell.

The facade features a four-paneled garage door with square-muntined, curve-cornered transoms and half timbering in tracery-like curves around the dormer's centered louvres and in a horizontal band between the two main stories. The center bay consists of the garage door described above, three double-hung windows on the second floor, and a wide-eaved, gable-ended and flared dormer, with sunken center section, projecting from the roof. The narrow side bays are single nine-light casement windows on the second floor, and on the ground floor a paneled and transomed narrow door on the right, and on the left an open vestibule with iron gate where originally there were a night-light transom and twelve-light window. The original granite doorsills remain at the center and right doors. The upper floors project slightly; simply molded consoles support main-roof eaves over the side windows and the dormer's projecting frame. The building never had an exterior hose-drying tower.

Facade changes are minor. The left window and transom have been converted to the open vestibule; the right door has been replaced. The existing one-piece garage door (its overhead mechanisms are visible in the interior) is an excellent guess at what might have been shown in the 1910 picture had the original paired doors not been open. The dormer finial has gone. Composition shingles now cover the visible roof. Two mysterious small squares have been filled in, a small sheet metal chimney and modest signage have been added, and the goose-necked entry lamp is similar to the original. The new open vestibule has brick floor, tongue-and groove walls, antique four-paneled door at rear with tall modern transom, and a brass fireman's pole (possibly original) descending from the original molded octagonal hole, now glazed.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1908  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1908  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Tharp, Newton J., City Architect  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Engine House No. 31 is architecturally significant as a very pleasing facade design in Craftsman/Tudor Revival style, virtually intact. It is one of the municipal buildings built to replace those lost in the great earthquake of 1906. It is the only Craftsman/Tudor Revival firehouse known to have been built in San Francisco, certainly the only firehouse in this style among the seven post-fire ones illustrated in Architect & Engineer in 1910.<sup>1</sup> Of about 24 firehouses constructed by the City between the 1906 fire and the adoption of motor-powered fire engines in 1912, only seven survive, and none of the firehouses built for horse-power is still in active service. The Russian Hill Firehouse is unique in San Francisco and highly rated in both the City's architectural surveys. Its design and completion came out of the large City Architecture Department headed and closely supervised by locally significant architect Newton J. Tharp.

The basic plan of Engine House No. 31 appears to have been the same as that of all San Francisco firehouses from the 1850s until modern times: main floor absolutely at street level, an arched or trapezoidal tall and wide engine doorway and transom centered on a symmetrical facade, building width of 21-30 feet and depth of 60-85 feet, a second floor as dormitory for the firemen. A few buildings had third stories, or were double width (single symmetry repeated), or were built as one story with the dormitory story to be added later. Only the more important firehouses were of masonry rather than frame construction, possibly a legacy from the proud volunteer companies rather than a response to fire safety. About 1890, hose drying had ceased to require an exterior tower. Even after a motor-powered fire engine decisively won the test race against a horse-powered one on July 11, 1912, and the City committed itself to buy only motor-powered fire engines, even then the basic firehouse plan did not at once change significantly.

In 1906, 22 of the City's 44 firehouses were destroyed by the fire; only nine required earthquake repair. Within 24 hours of the three-days' fire, all the burned-out companies "were provided with quarters for the men and apparatus, and they were again in readiness to respond to alarms of fire."<sup>2</sup> Within one year, 12 temporary firehouses had been constructed, nine of them on their former lots. None of these temporary buildings survives. They were decidedly minimal: frame construction, standard towerless plan, "rustic" weatherboard siding, plain board surrounds for the openings, an engine door essentially square with the simplest commercial-style strip transom and a single exterior lamp.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Hansen, Gladys. "San Francisco's Vintage Firehouses", San Francisco Almanac, San Rafael, CA, 1908, Presidio Press: 99.

Municipal Record, The, 1:9 (December 3, 1908).

Zurier, Rebecca. The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History, New York 1982, Abbeville Press.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

San Francisco Archives

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property 0.05 acres

UTM References

A 1, 0 5, 5, 1 4, 2, 0 4, 1 8, 3 4, 5, 0  
 Zone Easting Northing

C                              

B                                
 Zone Easting Northing

D                              

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies Lot 10 in Assessor's Block 121 and is roughly 27½ ft. X 72 ft. in size.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lot that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Anne Bloomfield, consultant  
 organization Russian Hill Neighbors, c/o Rogers date 1 May 1987, revised 8 June 1987  
 street & number (Bloomfield:) / (Rogers:) telephone (Bloomfield) / (Rogers)  
 city or town 2229 Webster St. / 1019 Vallejo St. state (415) 922-1063 / zip code (415) 885-0802  
San Francisco / San Francisco CA 94115 CA 94133

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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

1. Here Today (Junior League Survey)  
1967, county survey  
records deposited in: San Francisco History Room  
San Francisco Public Library  
Civic Center  
San Francisco, CA 94102
  
2. Architectural Survey, San Francisco Department of City Planning  
1976, county survey  
records deposited in: Department of City Planning  
450 McAllister Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102
  
3. A Guide to Architecture in San Francisco & Northern California,  
David Gebhard et al., Santa Barbara, 1976.

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7. DESCRIPTION continued

The ground floor interior consists of a hallway and two rooms connected under an enclosed modern overpass retaining the original stable doors which separated the horses' rear section from the engine's front section. Original tongue-and-groove finish covers the north, east and west walls and the front room's ceiling. The 1950s remodeling for adaptive reuse included adding a new wall to make an entry corridor along the west wall, with elevator and stairs. The wider rear room contains, at the northeast (right) corner, an apparently original W.C. and next to it, along the east wall, a cupboard labeled "Hose Tower" that runs through the upper floor as well and must have been used for laying out firehoses to dry. At the northwest corner is an apparently original cast-iron spiral staircase that leads both up to the upper floor and down to the large firemen's kitchen filling the partial basement. Fire memorabilia exhibits, including two mid-19th century fire engines, line the walls of both rooms. Floors are wooden, with a threshold between the two rooms. The new hall space has been tastefully handled, and a maximum of original interior remains.

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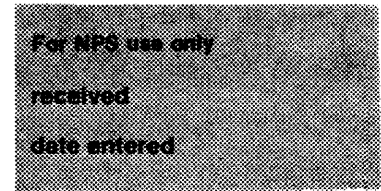
More permanent structures came later. By the end of the 1906-1907 fiscal year (30 June), two "permanent" firehouses were under construction. Newton J. Tharp was appointed City Architect on 23 October 1907, and he immediately took in hand the design and construction of long-lasting municipal buildings. About a dozen new firehouses were completed 1907-1912, only two of them brick, the rest frame. The seven illustrated in the Architect & Engineer article all appear of the standard plan but have individual facades. Four have engine entries with voussoired half-round arches and stylistically could be considered Beaux Arts (the two brick ones), Chicago style (1) and Sullivanesque (1). Two more have molded half-round arches and could be called respectively Mission Revival and Chinese Revival. Cladding is stone, stucco, or brick and terra cotta (the Sullivanesque one). Engine House No. 31 is unique in its Craftsman/Tudor Revival Style.

After the advent of motor-powered fire engines in 1912, firehouse design changed slowly. Reinforced concrete structures have replaced frame, buildings and entries are wider to accommodate more pieces of equipment per station, symmetry was abandoned, and greater distances were tolerated between fire stations. Horse-drawn equipment could not reach distant fires soon enough, so the earlier firehouses were placed near each other and were smaller and more numerous. At the beginning of the motor era San Francisco had 66 firehouses; in 1986 only 43 of them served a larger population and a greatly increased building stock spread over a larger area. The Fire Department has decommissioned or destroyed all its buildings constructed for horse-powered engines. Engine House No. 31 is one of only sixteen firehouses surviving from that era; in order it was the third of the seven survivors built between 1906 and 1912.<sup>3</sup> And its facade is the only known example of those styles on a San Francisco firehouse.

Newton J. Tharp (c.1867-1909) influenced San Francisco's municipal buildings far beyond what might be expected from his mere 18 months as City Architect. He initiated the immense task of replacing the city government's buildings lost in the 1906 fire, he was extremely conscientious, hard-working and effective, he hired a large and talented staff (the city fathers must have allowed him a liberal budget), and in the 18 months after his sudden death from pneumonia while on a business trip in New York City, his position was filled by no less than four architects in succession, who seem to have done little more than follow in the high-quality, City Beautiful/Beaux Arts path Tharp had laid out. He was born in Petaluma and learned his profession at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, in Chicago, in European travel that included a little study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts and in the San Francisco office of Edward R. Swain. At different times he was associated with Edward L. Holmes and First Bay Area Tradition specialist Albert Farr; in 1905 Tharp and Tudor Revival specialist Edgar Mathews shared a publicity booklet. Tharp's work is known to have embraced Beaux Arts, Chicago, Craftsman and First Bay Area Tradition styles. Before working with the City he had designed cover No. 16 of The Lark (San Francisco's little literary magazine of the 1890s), the column and base for the Dewey Monument in Union Square, the Grant Building in the Market Street Theatre and Loft District, a few other business buildings and quite a few residences. On 23 October 1907 he began work as

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8. SIGNIFICANCE continued

the City Architect at a salary of \$4,000 a year. In that position he planned a number of firehouses, several schools and the basic outline of today's San Francisco General Hospital. His obituary in Architect & Engineer reads in part:

In the death of Architect Tharp San Francisco loses one of its most faithful servants--a man who made his personal comfort and health second to his duty toward his city. The position of City Architect was given him soon after the great fire of 1906, at a time when practically every municipal building was in ruins. It remained for him to plan the noble structures that since have risen in place of those destroyed. It was, indeed, a stupendous task--barely commenced, in fact, when he was taken away. . . He gathered around him a staff of experts, none better in the country. He sought the best help the market offered, and he was willing to pay well for it. At the time of his death Mr. Tharp had a corps of more than sixty draughtsmen in his employ, each especially fitted for the particular line of work for which he was engaged.<sup>4</sup>

Tharp's firehouse on Russian Hill (the place name was derived from some pre-Gold Rush graves with Russian inscriptions) reflects the development and topography of the area it served. The ridgetop location permitted horses to race downhill to a fire in any direction. In this residential neighborhood, the style is appropriate to nearby houses such as those in the Russian Hill/Paris Block Architectural District, to which it would belong were it not separated by a very intrusive modern highrise apartment building next door at 1070 Green Street. The firehouse's style may relate to the nearby Craftsman or First Bay Area Tradition fire survivors at 1000 and 920 Green (both demolished) and in the Russian Hill/Vallejo Street Crest District. The unusual design may also reflect the architect's desire to please such influential and aesthetic-minded nearby residents as industrialist and "Father of Russian Hill" H.P. Livermore at 40 Florence/1045 Vallejo, retired merchant Louis Feusier at 1067 Green, real estate tycoon O.D. Baldwin at 1000 Green (demolished), and physician J. Mora Moss at 930 Green (demolished).

The original fire company for the Russian Hill area had been organized in 1869 and located about 3-1/2 blocks away also between Leavenworth and Jones but on Pacific Street in the saddle between Russian Hill and Nob Hill. Its firehouse had burned in 1906, and Chief Engineer P.H. Shaughnessy recommended to the Board of Supervisors "that the lot of Engine Co. 31 on Pacific Street, near Jones, be exchanged for a lot near Union and Leavenworth Streets, to furnish better protection to a section which is rapidly building."<sup>5</sup> The subject lot was accordingly purchased in April 1907. In June 1908 Tharp reported to the Board of Supervisors, "Under the present system it is the intention of the Board of Works to have all of the proposed schools and fire houses designed within the Department of Architecture, but to call for competitions among architects for the larger and more monumental structures."<sup>6</sup> On the "Green Street Fire Engine House" he reported: "An appropriation of \$8,554 was made by the Board of Supervisors during the early part of 1908, for the construction of a fire engine house on the north side of Green street, near Leavenworth. Plans were prepared in the Department of Architecture and a contract for the construction



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received  
date entered

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8. SIGNIFICANCE continued

of the building was let to John Dahlin on February 27, 1908, for the sum of \$7,380. The inside sheathing was put on by the Superintendent of Public Buildings after the completion of the contract on May 27, 1908, and the building was occupied by the Engine Company shortly thereafter."<sup>7</sup> The Firehouse initially held a Metropolitan double apparatus engine, third class, served by ten men and five horses under the command of Capt. Thomas Canty, who had been a fireman about 25 years.

The City's Municipal Record reported that Newton Tharp designed this Firehouse "to conform with the architectural features of the private residences of the district".<sup>8</sup> In The American Firehouse Rebecca Zurier cites the Russian Hill Firehouse as an example of residential-influenced Tudor Revival design for firehouses, and she seems to have found only four other examples: in Seattle, New Orleans, Lake Forest, IL, and South Orange, NJ.<sup>9</sup>

After the Firehouse was decommissioned by the Fire Department in 1952, its future was uncertain until Louise S. Davies bought it in 1958. She had it restored and adapted to serve as her townhouse upstairs, and a small museum of Fire Department memorabilia and "partyroom" downstairs. She is doubtless responsible for the vestibule conversion and the paneled single overhead garage door and transom, and probably also for the present right side door which is harmonious but different from the historic photo. To Mrs. Davies' meticulous preservation and care we owe the continued existence of this unusual and delightful building, which she deeded to the National Trust for Historic Preservation (retaining life interest) in 1978.

1. "San Francisco Municipal Buildings," Architect & Engineer, Oct. 1910: 81-89.
2. Fire Chief's Report, Municipal Reports, 1905-1906 and 1906-1907: p. 21.
3. Hansen, "San Francisco's Vintage Firehouses," San Francisco Almanac, 1980: 99.
4. Architect & Engineer, May 1909: 64A.
5. San Francisco Municipal Reports, 1905-06 and 1906-07: 72.
6. Municipal Reports, 1907-08: 737.
7. Ibid.:741.
8. The Municipal Record, 1/9 (3 December 1908): 1.
9. Zurier, The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History, 1982: 138-141.

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National Park Service

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES continued

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American Art Annual, V, 1905-1906: 505.

Corbett, Michael. Splendid Survivors, San Francisco 1979, California Living Books: 50-51, 98, 123, 237.

"Death, The, of Newton J. Tharp, City Architect", Architect & Engineer, 17/1 (May 1909): 64-A, B.

Hamilton, Mildred. "Engine No. 31 rides again", San Francisco Examiner, 5 February 1979: 21.

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Koenig, William (curator, Fire Department Museum), interview January 1987.

Matthews, Edgar and Newton J. Tharp. Selected Bits of San Francisco Architecture, comp. Douglas White, San Francisco 1905, Commercial Art Co.

Olmsted, Roger and T. H. Watkins. Here Today: San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, San Francisco 1968, Chronicle Books: 47.

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Sanborn Map Company. San Francisco, vol. 1:69. 1929. 1986.

San Francisco Directory, various years, passim.

"San Francisco Municipal Buildings", Architect & Engineer, 22/3 (Oct. 1910): 80-89.

San Francisco Municipal Reports, Fiscal Year 1875-1876, San Francisco, 1876: 278-279.

San Francisco Municipal Reports, Fiscal Year 1905-1906 and Fiscal Year 1906-1907, San Francisco 1907: 72, 351.

San Francisco Municipal Reports, Fiscal Year 1907-1908, San Francisco 1908: 328, 330, 336, 673, 736-737, 741.

Tharp, Newton J. The Lark, No. 16 (August 1896): Cover.

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National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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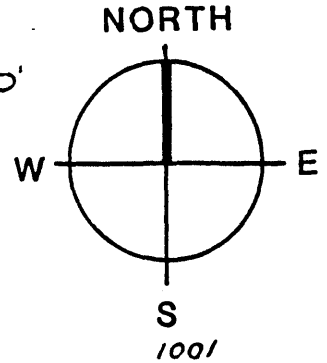
Appendix: Owner of Property

Name: National Trust for Historic Preservation  
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

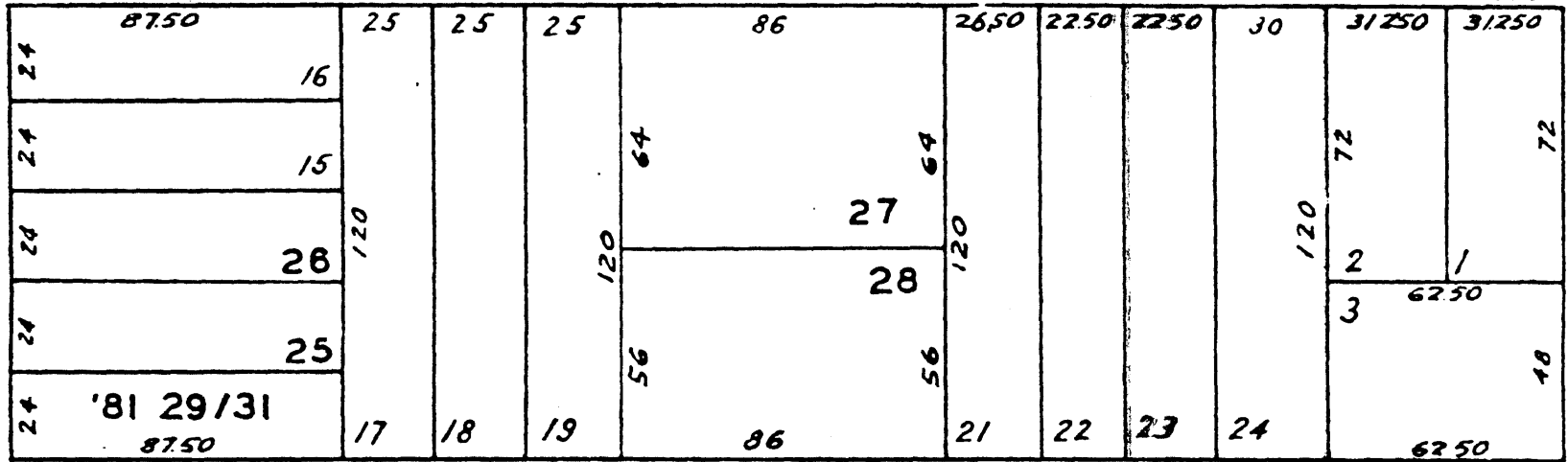
Life Interest: Mrs. Louise M. Davies  
122 Lakeview Drive  
Woodside, CA 94062

# RUSSIAN HILL FIREHOUSE

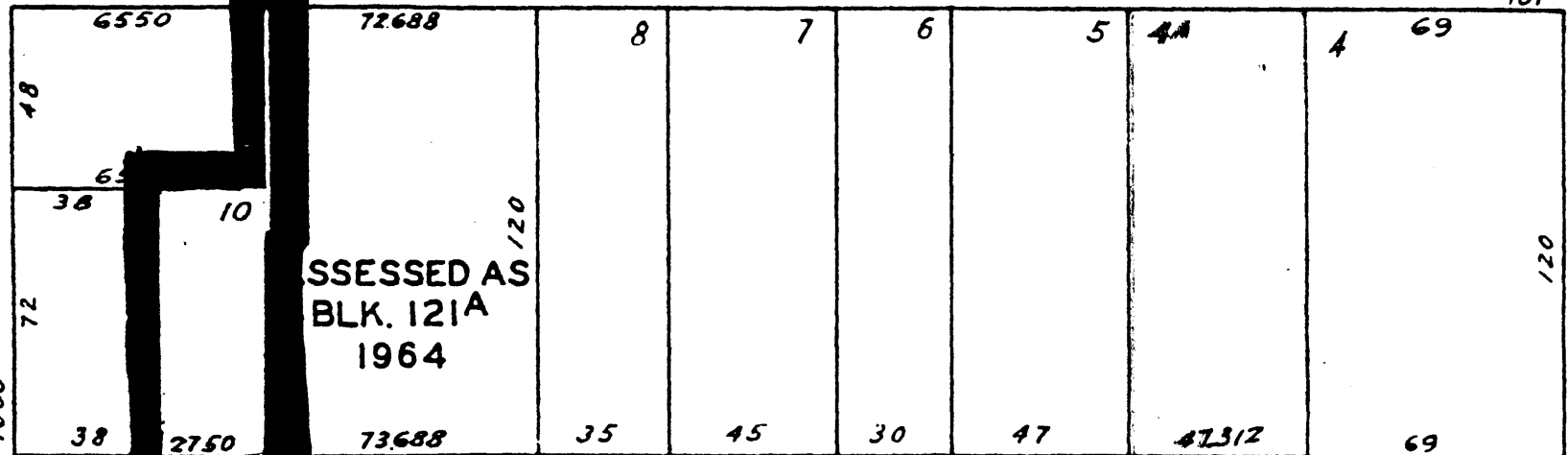
1088 Green Street  
 San Francisco, San Francisco Co.  
 California



UNION



MACONDRAY LANE



ASSESSED AS  
 BLK. 121A  
 1964

GREEN

LEAVENWORTH

JONES