

State of California The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary #
HRI #
Trinomial
NRHP Status Code

Other Listings
Review Code

Reviewer

Date

Page 1 of 9 *Resource Name or #: 2136-2154 San Pablo Avenue

P1. Other Identifier: None

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

*a. County Alameda and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Oakland West Date 1993 Township & Range --

c. Address 2136-2154 San Pablo Ave. City Berkeley Zip 94710

d. UTM: Zone __, ___ mE/ ___ mN

e. Other Locational Data:

Assessor's Parcel Number 56-1977-11-1

*P3a. Description:

2136-2154 San Pablo Ave. is a single-story commercial building, eight storefront bays wide and occupying a parcel filling almost one-half of the central-southern portion of its block front. The subject building is a rectangular (approx. 150 feet wide by 60 feet deep), concrete-walled structure with a low-slope, wood-framed roof. Its front is a series of framed storefront bays consisting of nine equally spaced piers, between which are the eight storefronts, with a continuous spandrel above. (cont.)

P5a. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



Fig.1 – 2136-2154 San Pablo Ave., front view (looking west)

*P3b. Resource Attributes:

HP6: 1-3 story

commercial building

*P4.Resources Present: Building

Structure Object Site District

Element of District Other

P5b. Description of Photo:

fig.1)MH,2019;

fig.2)Sanborn map,c1981;

figs.3-4)MH,2019;

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and

Source: Historic Prehistoric

Both

1923, Completion Notice

*P7. Owner and Address:

Milton & Gary Pagonis

14450 Black Walnut Ct.

Saratoga, CA 95070

*P8. Recorded by:

Mark Hulbert

446 17th St. #302

Oakland, CA 94612

P9. Date Recorded:

October 23, 2019

*P10.Survey Type: (Describe)

Intensive

*P11. Report Citation:

None

*Attachments: NONE Location Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record

Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record

Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (List):

State of California The Resources Agency Primary #
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION HRI#
BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*Resource Name or # 2136-2154 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley *NRHP Status Code _____
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B1. Historic Name: none
 B2. Common Name: 2136-2154 San Pablo Avenue
 B3. Original Use: Commercial/Stores B4. Present Use: same
 *B5. Architectural Style: Beaux Arts commercial block
 *B6. Construction History:

When first mapped, the northern portion of the subject block stood in the Berkeley Land and Town Improvement Association (BLTIA) Tract B and the southern approx. one-third, inclusive of the subject parcels, in the Allston Tract. The property and its building occupy original lots 13-19 of block 101 of the Allston Tract, which was first recorded in 1890. (cont.)

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____
 *B8. Related Features: None
 B9a. Architect: Schirmer Bugbee & Co. b. Builder: C. Texdahl
 *B10. Significance: Theme Commercial development Area Berkeley
 Period of Significance 1923 Property Type Commercial Applicable Criteria CR3

The architectural style exhibited at the building's front is Beaux Arts commercial, with storefronts enframed by cast ornamentation consisting of Corinthian style pilasters crowned with a molded entablature with, in the flat wall segment above the crown, applied garlands centered above each pilaster, the entablature completed by the molded projecting cornice, spanned by a parapet with its own molded cap (cont.)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: none

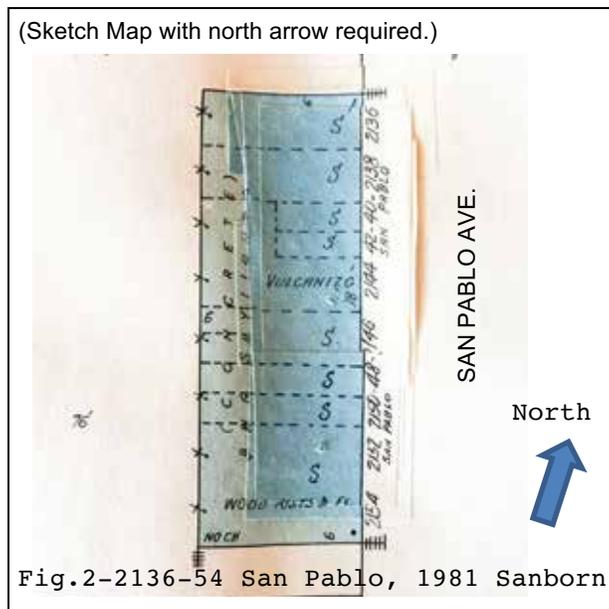
*B12. References:

Alameda County/Oakland directories – 1910-1974; Sanborn Maps – 1929, 1950, c1981;
 Alameda County Assessor's records, 1919-1940; City of Berkeley permit records.

B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator: Mark Hulbert Preservation Architect
 *Date of Evaluation: October 23, 2019

(This space reserved for official comments.)



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Description (continued):

The materials appear to be a mix of flat cement plaster finishes with cast ornamentation, presumably terra cotta, although the exterior has been painted numerous times, so the exact cast material is not in evidence. The ornamentation lends the building architectural character. It consists of Corinthian style pilasters crowned with a molded entablature with, in the flat wall segment above the crown, applied garlands centered above each pilaster, the entablature completed by the molded projecting cornice, spanned by a parapet with its own molded cap.

The eight storefronts are each in two vertical parts, with a sub-spandrel from pier-to-pier, below which are the storefronts with, corresponding to a mezzanine, transoms. The spandrels are mostly open at their faces, presumably for electrical and signage, and appear to be wood construction. The four southern storefronts also appear to be largely original/early, though with some alteration, whereas the four northern ones have evidently been modified, at least at the storefront level yet including several of the transoms. Identifiable original/early storefront elements include steel sash fixed storefront windows and semi-operable transom windows. Four of the eight storefronts have central recessed entry ways with canted side windows, marble mosaic tile exterior landings, paneled wood ceilings, wood and glass panel entry doors. One of these entries has two side-by-side entry doors and, thus, a wider vestibule with narrower storefront windows. A fifth storefront also has a recessed entry with the tile floor and wood ceiling, yet its storefront is board and batten, not windows, and its door solid wood. The adjacent storefront also has a board and batten exterior as well as a multi-lite entry door flush to the building front. A seventh storefront has two doors at the face of wall, without a vestibule. Finally, one of the central storefronts is fully recessed with a recessed, roll-up door. That bay is also the only one without any remnant of transom windows, which all four of the southern storefronts and the two northern storefronts retain, plus a partially retained transom in another bay. The surviving transom windows are thirteen lites wide by two lites high, the upper lites small and the lower lites tall.

The building is set back from its side lot lines, some eight feet at the north, where there is a gated service area and the partial front of a rearward addition. The setback at the south is some twenty feet, where there is a paved driveway to the rear of the lot, which is largely open. At the rear, north end, a rear addition was appended to the 2136 San Pablo shop in 1966. That addition is a plain, wood framed, stucco clad box. An open tent abuts the rear of the building at its center, corresponding to the auto repair business at no. 2144. Otherwise, there are single rear doors with wooden stoops at each of the shops at the southern end of the building. (cont.)

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Description (continued):



Fig.3 – 2136-2154 San Pablo Ave., front (looking north)



Fig.4 – 2136-2154 San Pablo Ave., Rear (looking north)

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History (continued):

The range of assigned addresses number ten. Presumably, from its origins, several of the building's eight bays were subdivided into two commercial spaces, which divisions partially remain. However, original and current addresses do not correspond and several original addresses are not currently in use, including no. 2136.

No original building permit records exist. The earliest such record is a December 1923 permit application for alterations to the interior and storefront at the address 2146 San Pablo, by the building's then owner, Lawrence Borg.

Under Borg's name, Alameda County Assessor's records include a Notice of Completion for a "class "c" reinforced concrete 8 story [sic] building" on a lot on the west side of San Pablo 75 feet north of Allston Way. That notice was dated the 19th of June 1923 and which also identified that the construction contract was filed on the 24th of January, along with the identity of the contractor, C. Texdahl.

Borg was then the owner and manager of the Varsity Theater at 2024 San Pablo, one block north of the subject building. A Wikipedia entry for the Varsity acknowledges Borg's then ownership and noted that he also owned a parcel one block to its south, where he had intended to build a larger theater.

At that time, Borg's holdings on the subject block included lots 13-20, thus the 75 foot measurement noted above, which was to the southeast corner of lot 20. He acquired lots 13-20 of block 101 in May of 1922 from two couples, Charles W. and Ruby M. Brock and Ray O. and Dora Bradley Long. Following the development of the 2136-2154 San Pablo Ave. stores, in December 1924, Borg transferred his ownership to a corporation, West Berkeley Theatres, Inc., in which he was listed as the vice president under the president, R. A. McNeil. At that juncture, the parcel, consisting of lots 13-20, was segregated into convoluted front and rear portions. Thus, confusingly, that 1924 deed was specifically for a portion of lots 13-19 measuring 55.9 ft. by 149.9 ft., which appears to correspond to the subject store building's footprint plus 8 feet at its northern end to the northern lot line of parcel 13. In another transaction in early 1925, the building portion of the parcel was deeded back to Borg by the theater corporation. The rearward parcel, which included 18 feet of lot 19 along the south side of the store building, plus all of lot 20, was deeded by Borg to Walter Hardman in November 1925. At this juncture, no subsequent deed for these two parcels has been located nor is it presently known specifically when the subject parcel was remerged. Nonetheless, based on deed and permit records, it appears that Cecilia and Walter Hardman acquired the overall property in 1925.

The earliest directory listing located for the 2136-2154 San Pablo addresses was a 1923 listing of a barber, R. Mazziotto, at 2148 San Pablo. The 1924 directory listed a Varsity Bakery at 2136 San Pablo and with two associated names, C. B. Davis and H. Kosmale. (cont.)

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History (continued):

That bakery remained until c1930 and which use was identified in the 1929 Sanborn map, the first graphic record of this property. The only other use identified in that 1929 map was "paints and oils," which occupied the third and fourth storefronts at the northern half of the building, along with a front store and office that were likely associated with that business, their addresses spanning 2140-2144. That larger space with the two smaller units at the front remains, though no early commercial paint/oil user has been identified.

Based on the this available information, it is understood that the subject building was erected for Lawrence Borg in the first half of 1923 by the contractor C. Texdahl. Additionally, in that same period, the construction news journal, *Building & Engineering News*, listed this store building contract in the January 27 edition. Therein, the architects for the "one-story reinforced concrete (8) store building" were identified as Schirmer Bugbee & Co.

There is no more specific evidence than these several descriptions for the building's original design. Also, there have been multiple alterations, including to the facade and storefronts. The following summarizes the early building permit history (1923-1969):

<i>date</i>	<i>work, use, address</i>	<i>owner/architect/builder</i>
12/22/23	Alterations, store, #2146	Lawrence Borg/--/--
1/30/35	Alts., tire shop, #2144	E.S. Thompson (lessee)/--/--
1/22/36	Alterations, restaurant, #2146	Cecilia Hardman/--/--
9/13/39	Alterations, store, #2146	J.H. Gaskill/--/--
1/17/1946	Alts., store, #2146	Berkeley Renovating Co.(lessee)/--/--same
3/13/1950	Alts., poultry market, #2146	Lloyd L. Baker (lessee)/--/--
2/20/1958	Alts., bar, #2136	Pagones Family/--/Max Scherr
10/29/1963	Alts., Chinese grocery,#2146	Moon Chan (lessee)/--/--
4/15/1966	Add, bar, #2136	Mary Pagones/John A. Bogan/--
6/26/1967	Alts., restaurant, #2146	W. Wish (lessee)/--/--

Miscellaneous permit records additionally record a partial range of specific uses:

<i>year</i>	<i>use, address</i>
1935	tire shop, #2144
1958	bar (The Steppenwolf), #2136
1963	grocery, #2146
1963	pet shop (Lucky Dog Pet Shop), #2154
1964	piano repair shop and music studio (Carlisle's Music Room) , #2146
1967	bar (The Zodiac), #2146

Given how few address numbers are utilized in the early permit records, and the predominance of the addresses #2146 and 2136, along with the lack of any reference to #2140, 2142, 2148, 2150 and 2152, it must be that #2146 was generally used as the building address. (cont.)

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Property Name: 2136-2154 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley

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History (continued):

Architect

William Edward Schirmer (1891-1957) was the son of a San Francisco sea captain who went on to study architecture at San Francisco's Mark Hopkins Institute and who thereafter worked with Willis Polk and then Bugbee and Son. By the early 1920s, Schirmer had his own architectural office in downtown Oakland. Prior to which, Schirmer and Bugbee designed other store buildings in the immediate vicinity including, at the same time as 2136-2154 San Pablo, at 2027-2043 San Pablo.

Significance (continued):

Per the *California Register of Historical Resources* evaluation criteria:

Criterion 1 – Events

Though a range of identified commercial tenants and users may have been of cultural interest, specifically the bars and clubs that occupied the north end of the building in the 1960s-1970s, those former uses are not embodied or expressed in the existing building. Proof of which is an on-line historical plaque entry for one of those former bars and clubs, The Steppenwolf, the entry for which states that the building that housed that bar is no longer standing (@berkeleyplaques.org).

Consequently, as there are no identifiably historic events associated with the subject property, it does not meet CR criterion 1.

Criterion 2 – Persons

The building's developer, Lawrence Borg, was associated with moving picture theaters and, in particular, the Varsity Theater, which he owned and managed for the same period in which he developed and owned the subject building. No other specific information is available for or about Borg. His importance, if any, would be directly related to the theater, not to commercial development, which there is no evidence he pursued elsewhere.

Numerous persons were associated with this building as tenants and subsequent owners. Of interest are the several bars and clubs that leased and occupied several of the spaces in the 1960-1980 period. Per permit records, one – The Steppenwolf – occupied the northernmost unit, no.2136, to which they made the existing rear addition for a kitchen and restrooms in 1967.

Re: 2136 San Pablo, the Berkeley plaque project noted above states:

"In the 1960s it was home of the Steppenwolf bar, a well-known night spot run by local activist Max Scherr... Max Scherr was best known for his *Berkeley Barb*, a counter-cultural New Left voice of everything from politics to sex to rock music that circulated both locally and nationally." (cont.)

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Significance (continued):

While Scherr may have been behind the Steppenwolf, in city permit records, the relatively voluminous documentation about the club – the majority, from the perspective of civic officialdom, highly negative, including numerous reports, complaints and violations as well as a contentious permit revocation – identify the applicants and operators as Martin Dangott and Carolyn Ann Silvan, dba The Steppenwolf. Scherr is listed only on the original permit record for the bar, in 1958, as the builder.

Following the closure of The Steppenwolf, c1970, no. 2136 became a “private lodge,” Club D’Elegance, operated by “The Elegant East Bay Lounge, Inc.”. They also ran afoul of the community and authorities and appear to have also had their use permit revoked c1975.

In that period, there were also other bars and clubs, including the Zodiac at no. 2146 under an operator by the name of William Wish, which permit records indicate operated and made alterations in the 1960s without any use or building permits.

While there may be historical interest related to these several c1960s clubs, they were tenants whose uses have been absent for some 50 years and for which there is no evidence upon which to base a finding of historical importance. Clear proof of which is provided in the historical e-plaque entry for The Steppenwolf, which states that the building that housed that bar is no longer standing: *“On west side of San Pablo Ave., a few blocks south of University Ave., there was once a one-story, nondescript building that is now gone.”*

Other persons identifiably associated with this building were its several subsequent owners, While deed searches have not fully succeeded with specifics, permit records appear to identify three owners other than Borg: from c1925-35, Cecilia and W. Hardman; in the late 1930s, J. H. Gaskill; and from c1958 until at least early 2000, George and Mary Pagonos/the Pagonos family/Nick Pagonos.

Subsequent owners lend no identifiable importance to the resource since they were later landlords without direct involvement in the property’s historical development.

Thus, as there are no identifiably historic persons associated with the subject property, it does not meet CR criterion 2.

Criterion 3 – Design/Construction

Relative to its c1920 period, the subject building is generally and contextually interesting, in particular its original street-facing architectural façade along with remaining original/early storefronts. While no original permit has been located, based on news reports and County records, the building can be clearly traced to its origins, including identification of the original developer/owner, architect and builder. While many changes have been made to the building, outside and in, physical evidence of the building’s original/early design and construction remains. (cont.)

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Significance (continued):

Architecturally, the subject building as a whole is a non-descript rectangular concrete box. Yet, generally, the largely intact, elongated façade and partially intact storefront designs are distinctive of their c1920 period. Altogether providing a sufficient basis for a finding of historical significance under California Register criterion 3.

Alternatively, the original architects, Schirmer and Bugbee, have not been identified as having historical importance, nor is any artistry in evidence.

In conclusion, the subject building meets CR criterion 3 as its architecture embodies distinctive characteristics of its type and period.

Criterion 4 – Relative to potential historic architectural resources, the subject property has not yielded and at this juncture, beyond the contents of this report, does not appear to have any potential to yield additional information of any historical importance.

In conclusion, the subject building at 2136-2154 San Pablo Ave. in Berkeley has potential historical architectural significance per California Register criterion 3.