



L A N D M A R K S  
P R E S E R V A T I O N  
C O M M I S S I O N  

---

S T A F F R E P O R T

FOR COMMISSION ACTION  
APRIL 3, 2025

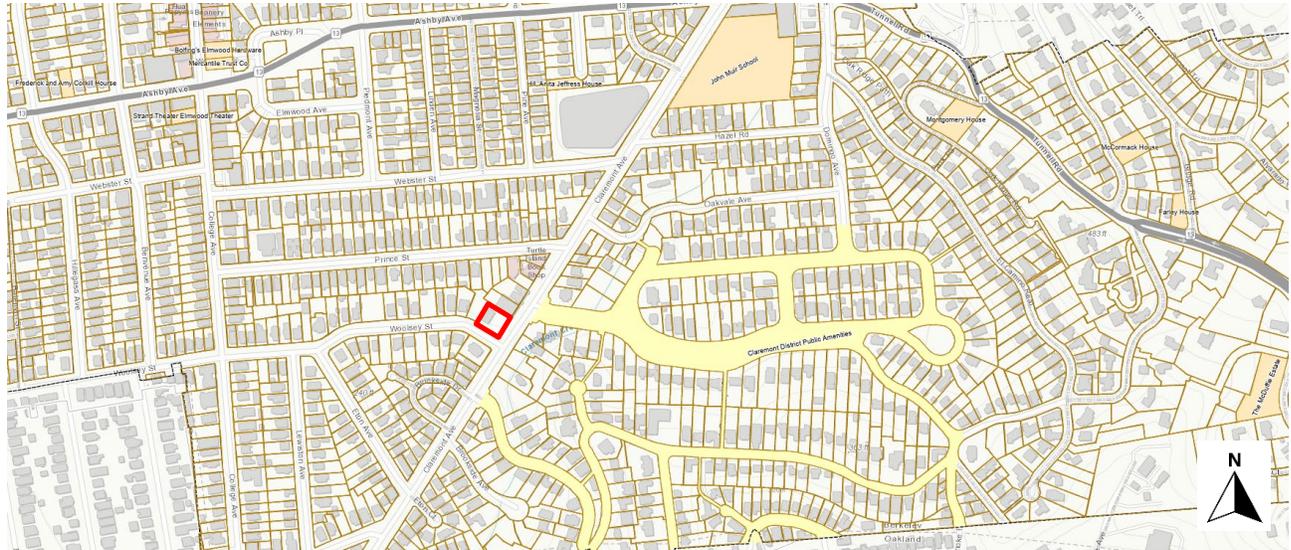
## 2845 Woolsey Street – F.B. Norton House

Landmark application #LMIN2025-0001 for the consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation status for a residential property constructed in 1908 (APN 052-1563-006-00)

### I. Application Basics

- A. Land Use Designations:** Low Medium Density Residential (R-2)
- B. CEQA Determination:** Exempt from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3) for Review Exemptions.
- C. Parties Involved:**
- **Application Author:** Caitlin Hibma  
Left Coast Architectural History  
P.O. Box 70415  
Richmond, CA 94807
  - **Property Owner:** Michael Pearson  
2169 Folsom Street M301  
San Francisco, CA 94110
- D. Staff Recommendation:** Hold a public hearing and consider final action on this request.

**Figure 1:** Vicinity Map – highlighting nearby City Landmarks and Structures of Merit



	Landmarks / Structure of Merit; LM,		Parcels		Subject Property
	Features		Demolished		
	Districts		Partially Demolished		

**Figure 2** Subject property, current condition of 2845 Woolsey Street – view of primary (east) façade (source: Landmark application)



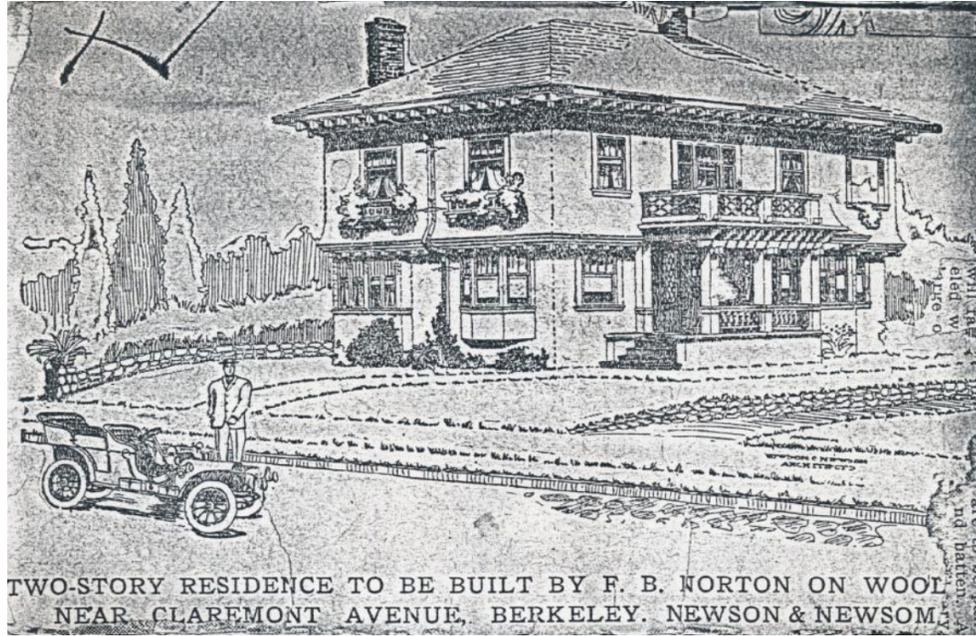
**Figure 3** Subject property, current condition of 2845 Woolsey Street – view of rear (west) and south façades from Woolsey Street (source: Landmark application)



**Figure 4** Subject property, current condition of 2845 Woolsey Street – view of primary (east) and north façades from yard (source: Landmark application)



**Figure 5** Rendering of 2845 Woolsey Street, published in *Oakland Tribune*, 1908 (source: application)



**Figure 6** South façade of 2845 Woolsey Street, 1950s (source: application)



## II. Application Chronology

On January 10, 2025, the City received a Landmark or Structure of Merit application petition for the subject property, and is provided in Attachment 2 of this report. In accordance with Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.120, the application initiated consideration of the property for designation status.

On March 24, 2025 staff mailed and posted 10-day advance notices for tonight's meeting, in accordance with BMC Section 3.24.140.

## III. Historic Resource Status

The subject property is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR) or the California Register of Historical Resources (CR).

Nearby City Landmarks include the Anita Jeffress Hill House (2944 Elmwood Court) and John Muir School (2941 Claremont Avenue), Figure 1, above.

## IV. Property Description

The following description of 2845 Woolsey Street is based on the research presented in the Landmark Application for this consideration.

The subject property is an approximately 11,242-sq. ft, rectangular parcel at the northwest corner of Woolsey Street and Claremont Avenue. The parcel is oriented southwest-northeast with street frontage facing Woolsey Street Avenue (southwest) and Claremont Avenue (southeast). The property is located in a densely developed residential setting of large-scale houses, with a row of commercial buildings located to the immediate north, along Claremont Avenue. The lot is flat and elevated slightly above street level, with a low, cast stone retaining wall bordering it on the south and east. The subject residence is the only building on the property and is set back from Claremont Avenue with a large front yard, and sits very close to the western lot line, resulting in no rear yard. Narrow margins exist between the house and the north and south lot lines. The lot is landscaped with hardscaping and small plantings. Four mature trees stand at the eastern edge of the lot, while others surround the house but are not located within the subject property.

Constructed in 1908, the F.B. Norton House is a two-story First Bay Tradition style residence with a concrete foundation and wood frame. The house has a hip roof with overhanging flared eaves, shaped rafter tails, and composition shingles. The exterior of house is clad with wood shingles. The second story's base flares outward, creating a small overhang, with wood molding and/or block modillions in most locations. Fenestration consists of vinyl-sash, double-hung windows with vertical faux muntins in the upper sashes. Most windows and other openings have wide flat wood trim, projecting sills, and simply molded hoods representative of First Bay Tradition architecture (Figure 2).

The primary elevation faces east toward Claremont Avenue and represents the long side of the house's rectangular plan. It has an entry porch to the left of center and a projecting bay to its immediate right; both are topped by an intermediate hip roof with slightly flaring eaves, while a flat roof projects to cover the balance of the porch. The porch is accessed

by concrete steps, has a shingled base, metal railings with solid shingled railings at the sides, and thick square wood posts that the porch's flat roof. The flat porch roof features decorative rafter tails with shaped ends, supported by cross beams with shaped ends. Within the porch, the ceiling, back wall, and interior of the solid side railings are clad with simple wood paneling and battens. The entry door is paneled and has a leaded-glass oval window at its center. It is flanked by partial height, diamond-pattern, leaded-glass sidelights. The projecting bay to the right of the porch features a three-part window, with a narrow middle sash flanked by wider sashes, all separated by wood mullions. Standard windows are located at the far left and right sides of the facade and at the second story level, where a three-part window (wide sash flanked by narrower sashes) is flanked by single windows. These three openings are regularly spaced from one another, but set off-center to the left, leaving a blank wall plane at the right side of the second story.

The south facade, facing Woolsey Street, represents the short side of the rectangular plan. It features a shallow projecting square bay with a pair of standard windows at the left and a shallow angled bay window with three standard sashes at the right. Two symmetrically placed standard windows at the second story have decorative paneled-wood flower boxes supported by projecting beams and short cross beams.

The north facade also represents the short side of the rectangular plan and faces a small side yard and neighboring property. It has two fully-glazed wood doors spaced widely at the first story. The second story has a large, single-lite fixed window on the right side. The east facade represents the long side of the rectangular plan and faces a narrow passage between the house and the neighboring property. There are three irregularly placed windows on the first story, one of which has a sliding aluminum sash. The second story features a shallow, flat topped, projecting rectangular bay that is located to the right of center. The bay is supported by decoratively shaped projecting beam ends and has a large three-part window with diamond-pattern leaded glass. Elsewhere on the second story are three standard windows. A narrow clinker brick chimney rises up the right side of the facade and projects through the eaves to rise above the roofline.

**Construction/Alteration and Ownership History.** The subject property is located in Berkeley's Park Claremont neighborhood.

The F.B. Norton House was designed by the San Francisco-based architectural firm Newsom & Newsom as a single-family residence for wholesaler/merchant Frank Butler Norton (1849-1931) and his spouse Cora B. Whiteman (1862-1950). Newsom & Newsom were comprised of two generations of brothers and sons collaborating on some of the Bay Area's best known architecture of the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Newsom & Newsom's work initially focused on Victorian architectural styles before turning to popular revival styles. The residence at 2845 Woolsey Street was designed during a brief period when the Newsom & Newsom firm consisted of both generations of the Newsom family, including father Samuel, and sons Sidney and Noble.

Norton's family previously resided at 6441 Benvenue Avenue and at addresses in Oakland and San Francisco prior to their occupancy of 2845 Woolsey Street. The *Oakland Tribune* published an article on the house's design in 1908 noting heavy beam work, a front porch, shingles, and balcony that would face north toward the Berkeley hills. The interior was to include a living room and library with fireplace and paneled board and batten walls, as well as heavily beamed ceilings in the entry vestibule and dining room. The second story would feature five well-lit bedrooms with large closets.

Members of the Norton family continued to reside at 2845 Woolsey Street (addressed 2827 until the late 1930s) into the early 1950s, with daughter May Norton the last family member to occupy the property in 1951. In that year, May, a schoolteacher, moved to 2844 Woolsey Street (directly across the street). During this period May, and her professional associate, Rhoda Nichols, petitioned for rezoning the subject property to permit a nursery school use. Although initial attempts failed, Rhoda succeeded in petitioning for rezoning in 1952. After a period of illness, May died in 1953 at age 59 and the ownership of the property appears to have passed to Luther and Rhoda Nichols. Between 1952 and 1976, Rhoda Nichols ran the Claremont Day Nursery out of 2845 Woolsey Street and remained a resident of the property. During this period Rhoda opened two additional nursery branches. In 1976, the subject property and Claremont Day Nursery business were sold to Tom and Frances Morabito. The Morabitos operated the nursery school until 2021. In 2021, the property underwent remodeling prior to its sale to current owners Michael A. and Annette Pearson in 2022. The Pearsons intend to return the property to a single-family use and reverse earlier, incompatible alterations.

## V. Analysis and Evaluation

The analysis section of this report will refer to the research and information provided in the Landmark application (Attachment 2). This section analyzes the extent to which the property appears to meet significance criteria set forth in the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO), Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Chapter 3.

**Historic Context.**<sup>1</sup> Given its architectural design and representation of distinctive aspects of First Bay Tradition styling, and association with the historically prominent architectural firm Newsom & Newsom, the F.B. Norton House is linked to early twentieth century architectural trends and design professionals who contributed significantly to the built environment. Its period of significance correlates to its year of original design and construction, 1908.

**Landmarks Preservation Ordinance Significance Criteria.** When it designates a property as a Landmark, Historic District, or Structure of Merit, the Commission must find that the property meets one or more of the required criteria codified in LPO, BMC Section 3.24.110. These criteria are relatively specific and appear to align with California Register and National Register criteria. The significance criteria for a Structure of Merit are broader than those for Landmarks status, and include properties that qualify individually as good

---

<sup>1</sup> National Register Bulletin #15, Item V: *How to Evaluate a Property within its Historic Context* (2002); National Register Bulletin #16A, Section III: *How to Complete the National Register Registration – Period of Significance* (1997).

examples of architectural design, or that qualify as contributors to the context of a larger streetscape or area.

Staff completed a review of information provided in the Landmark application and compared the evidence against the criteria for designation consideration. A summary of findings is provided below.

Landmark criterion – *Architectural Merit*. Based on the research and evidence presented in the Landmark application, the residential property at 2845 Woolsey Street appears to meet designation criterion for *architectural merit* as a property that is an outstanding example of the First Bay Tradition style and exemplifies one of the best surviving examples of the work of the architecture firm Newsom & Newsom (1b). Additionally, the property is an architectural example worth preserving as it adds exceptional value to its neighborhood's fabric, given its representation of aspects of First Bay Tradition style, an important architectural mode that was important to the development of regional, residential architecture in the Bay Area between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1c). As an example of First Bay Tradition architecture, the house retains a sufficient degree of architectural features representative of its historical design including: plan, form, exterior materials, detailing, and fenestration pattern that represent distinctive aspects of First Bay Tradition architecture and the work of Newsom & Newsom. As noted in the application, the residence's design occurred during a period of Newsom & Newsom's existence when both generations of the Newsom & Newsom firm (father and sons) were practicing together.

This finding aligns with the designation criterion of BMC Section 3.24.110.A.1 (b) and 1(c).

The subject property retains many of the character-defining features of its First Bay Tradition style including: two-story height combining a first story and second story with sloped overhang; hip roof with flared, overhanging eaves and wood rafter tails; fenestration arranged in single and three-part configurations with wood casing and sills; main entrance porch with flat roof, molded rafters, and entrance with glazed wood door and sidelite panels; shingled exterior; clinker brick chimney, and an original cast stone (concrete) property wall.

At the hearing, staff will provide the Commission with a recommended list of Features to be Preserved for such a designation.

The Commission has received sufficient evidence to take favorable action to designate the subject property as a City Landmark. Draft Findings for Approval are provided for the Commission's consideration in Attachment 1. This draft includes a list of character-defining physical features of this historical resource that should be preserved as required under BMC Section 3.24.100.A for Procedures Required – Controls and Standards.

LPO Structure of Merit criteria. As discussed above, staff believes the subject property could meet the criteria for designation as a City Landmark. However, if the Commission

concludes that it does not (in whole or in part), then the Commission may consider the extent to which it meets the criteria for designation as a Structure of Merit, in accordance with BMC Section 3.24.110.B.2.c. The subject property is an excellent example of First Bay Tradition style and the work of Newsom & Newsom, and exhibits integrity of design. As such, 2845 Woolsey Avenue would meet both of the following Structure of Merit criteria:

Section 3.24.110 B.2.a (2) – *“The age of the structure is contemporary with...an historic period or event of significance to the City, or to the structure’s neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings.”*

Section 3.24.110.B.2. c – *“The structure is a good example of architectural design.”*

No draft findings for approval as a Structure of Merit are provided with this report, however the Commission can direct staff to prepare such findings if needed to support action under these provisions.

## VI. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission consider the extent to which this property meets the criteria for City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation pursuant to BMC Section 3.24.110.A.1, and then take favorable action.

### Attachments:

1. **Draft Findings for Approval**
2. **Landmark Application.** 2845 Woolsey Street prepared by Caitlin Hibma, Left Coast Architectural History

**Prepared by:** Josh Bevan and JulieAnn Murphy, Architectural Historians, Rincon Consultants, Inc.

**Reviewed by:** Anne Hersch, Land Use Planning Manager; [heahersch@cityofberkeley.info](mailto:heahersch@cityofberkeley.info) (510) 981-7410



# ATTACHMENT 1

---

## DRAFT FINDINGS FOR DESIGNATION

APRIL 03, 2025

### **2845 Woolsey Street – F.B. Norton House**

**Landmark application #LMIN2025-0001 for the consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation status for a residential property constructed in 1908 (APN 052-1563-006-00)**

---

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

City Landmark designation of the property at 2845 Woolsey Street

---

#### CEQA FINDINGS

1. The project is found to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Public Resources Code §21000, et seq.) pursuant to Section 15061.b.3 of the CEQA Guidelines (activities that can be seen with certainty to have no significant effect on the environment).

---

#### LANDMARK PRESERVATION ORDINANCE FINDINGS

1. Pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.110.A.1.(b) and (c) of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO), the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley (Commission) finds that the property at 2845 Woolsey Street meets the architectural merit criterion for City Landmark designation as an outstanding example of the First Bay Tradition style. It also exemplifies one of the best surviving example of the prominent Bay Area architecture firm Newsom & Newsom. As an example of First Bay Tradition architecture, the house retains a sufficient degree of architectural features representative of its historical design including: plan, form, exterior materials, detailing, and fenestration pattern that represent distinctive aspects of First Bay Tradition architecture and the work of Newsom & Newsom.

---

#### FEATURES TO BE PRESERVED

This designation shall apply to the subject property and the following distinguishing features of the property shall be preserved, and missing features shall be restored to the extent possible:

##### Property

- Location at northwest corner of Woolsey Street and Claremont Avenue.
- Setting in a densely development residential area.
- Cast stone (concrete) perimeter retaining wall.

##### Residence

- Two-story height.

- Hip roof with flared, overhanging eaves.
- Second story overhang with sloped profile.
- Wood architectural features expressing structure:
  - Rafter tails;
  - Molded rafter ends;
  - Molded modillions beneath eaves.
- Front entrance porch with square wood posts, wood beams, wood rafters and molded trim.
- Wood architectural details:
  - Wood trim at second story and cornice line;
  - Exterior wood trim at windows.
- Original window openings on south, east, and elevations.
- Original leaded-glass windows.
- Projecting bays and associated three-part window openings.
- Wood planter boxes at second-story windows fronting Woolsey Street.



# PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Land Use Planning 2120 Milvia Street, Berkeley, CA 94704  
 Tel: 510.981.7410 TDD: 510.981.6903 Fax: 510.981.7420 Email:  
[Planning@cityofberkeley.info](mailto:Planning@cityofberkeley.info)

DATE STAMP HERE

## Landmarks Application Form

For:  Alteration / Sign Permit  
 Landmark Designation

Effective April 3, 2013

Intake Planner \_\_\_\_\_

Project Address: 2845 Woolsey Street Zone: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Description: Application for Landmark designation.

Date Use Permit or Zoning Permit was applied for: n/a

Associated Permit number: n/a

• **Property Owner Name** (Print) Michael Pearson

Owner's Mailing Address: 2169 Folsom St M301  
San Francisco, CA. 94110

Daytime Phone # 415.832.9160 E-mail: michael.a.pearson@gmail.com

• **Applicant Name** (Print)  SAME as Above: Caitlin Hibma, Left Coast Architectural History

Applicant's Mailing Address: PO Box 70415  
Richmond, CA. 94807

Daytime Phone # (415) 745-1906 E-mail: caitlin@leftcoastarchitecturalhistory.com

*Under penalties of perjury, I certify that the information above and in any attachments hereto, is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.*

Applicant Signature:  Date: 12/16/2024

Owner's Signature:  Date: 12/16/2024

Does the project include:	No	Yes	Handout / Application Requirement
1. Demolition of, or exterior modifications to, a designated City of Berkeley landmark, structure of merit, or structure in a historic district?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refer to the "Landmark Preservation Commission: Structural Alteration Permit and Design Review Submittal Requirements"
2. Application to designate a landmark, structure of merit or historic district?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Refer to the "Landmark, Structure of Merit or Historic District Designation Form"

City of Berkeley  
Ordinance #4694 N.S.  
**LANDMARK APPLICATION**

---

**1. Street Address** 2845 Woolsey Street

**City** Berkeley

**County** Alameda

**Zip** 94705

**2. Assessor's Parcel Number:** 52-1563-15

**Block and Lot:** Block 1563, Lot 15

**Tract:** Parkside Claremont

**Dimensions:** 100' (southwest) x 95' (southeast) x 113' (northeast) x 99.65' (northwest)

**Cross Streets:** Woolsey Street and Claremont Avenue

**3. Is property on the State Historic Resource Inventory?** No

**Is property on the Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey?** Yes

**Form #** 11425

**4. Application for Landmark includes:**

**a. Building:** Yes (1)      **Garden:** No      **Other features:** No

**b. Landscape or Open Space:** No

**c. Historic Site:** No

**d. District:** No

**e. Other:** No

**5. Historic Name:** F.B. Norton House

**Commonly Known Name:** None

**6. Date of Construction:** 1908

**a. Factual:** Yes

**Source of Information:** *Daily Pacific Builder*, 18 May 1908

## 7. Architects: Newsom & Newsom (Samuel, Sidney, and Noble Newsom)

Architecture was the Newsom family trade, with two generations of brothers and sons collaborating on some of the Bay Area's, and California's, best know architecture of the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Newsom family came to Oakland from Canada in 1860; a horticultural nurseryman, his wife, and eight children. Eldest son, John, was apprenticed to an architect by 1870<sup>1</sup> and, eventually, four of the five Newsom sons gravitated toward that profession. By 1880, Thomas, Samuel, and Joseph C. Newsom were all listed as architects in census records. None of the Newsom brothers appear to have been formally educated as architects, but gained their training through apprenticeships and from each other.

The four Newsom brothers initially worked together, but in 1878, Samuel and Joseph went out on their own, naming their practice Newsom & Newsom, which became a much better-known and widely-respected firm than that of their brothers'.<sup>2</sup> They began in San Francisco, but by 1884, had moved their practice back to their hometown of Oakland. A few years later, they opened an office in Los Angeles and Joseph C. Newsom relocated to Southern California to lead it.

Newsom & Newsom's work initially focused on Victorian architectural styles, especially Queen Anne, and was known for being elaborately decorative, although it was primarily designed for middle-class clients. They designed around 650 buildings ranging from single-family houses to apartments and hotels. They designed the iconic Carson Mansion in Eureka, California (1884-1886), the original Berkeley City Hall (1884), the T.H. Boyd House in Eureka (1884), the 30-room Pinney House hotel in Sierra Madre (1887), and the Sessions House in Los Angeles (1888).<sup>3</sup> A number of their works are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or otherwise designated as significant historical landmarks.

Maintaining offices at opposite ends of the state ultimately resulted in Samuel and Joseph parting ways professionally in 1888, with Joseph continuing his own solo-practice in Los Angeles. For a time, from 1889 to 1901, Samuel partnered with Frederick Herman Meyer, under the name of Newsom & Meyer. During that time, in 1893, Samuel's son Sidney joined his father's practice, becoming the second generation of Newsoms in architecture. He was 16 years old at the time and the initial arrangement was likely an apprenticeship of sorts, as he also trained with various architecture firms on the East Coast before returning to the Newsom firm full-time.<sup>4</sup> In 1906, after graduating from U.C. Berkeley's school of architecture, Samuel's second son, Noble Newsom, joined the firm, which had returned to being known as Newsom & Newsom.

As father and sons worked together around the turn of the twentieth century, the firm's design aesthetics evolved along with prevailing architectural fashions, away from the Victorian and toward newly popular styles like Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival, French Provincial, Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman. In 1905, their wildly fanciful and overstated design of Gilroy City Hall seems to illustrate this transition, while also symbolizing a "last hurrah" as they moved away from the decorative exuberance of the Victorian period and toward more quietly understated houses of high quality and

---

1 U.S. Federal Census, 1870.

2 Daniella Thompson, "Berkeley's City Hall Was Inspired by a Mairie on the Loire," [http://www.berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley\\_landmarks/city\\_hall.html](http://www.berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/city_hall.html).

3 Pacific Coast Architecture Database (PCAD), "Newsom and Newsom, Architects," <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/architect/partners/446/>.

4 David Weinstein, "Quiet Pleasures, Newsom brothers created homes with a timeless appeal," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 February 2005.

highly-livable designs. By then, the Newsom & Newsom name had become prominent and popular. Their clients included the affluent as much as the middle-class.<sup>5</sup>

Samuel Newsom died of a coronary while onboard a ferry from San Francisco to Alameda on the first of September 1908; just three and a half months after the building contract for the house at 2845 Woolsey Street was published.<sup>6</sup> Presumably, he never saw the finished house. Sidney and Noble continued in business without their father and Newsom & Newsom continued to be known for high-quality residential design that followed current architectural tastes, but often playfully mixed styles while using restraint in applying historical details. Later Newsom & Newsom buildings were noted to have relatively symmetrical forms and simple rooflines, lending to the sense of understated luxury that became the firm's signature aesthetic.<sup>7</sup>

In 1911, Newsom & Newsom designed the Berkeley Inn at 2501 Haste Street, a four-story brick Classical Revival building, which was damaged by fires and eventually demolished in 1990. Prior to its destruction it was the only Newsom & Newsom building to be designated as a City of Berkeley Landmark (#118).

Both Newsom brothers served in World War I, applying their building expertise in the Army Corps of Engineers. Like many other architects and builders, they brought back a new appreciation for Old World architecture that inspired further design work in European-influenced revival styles. Post-War, Archie Newsom (no relation) joined the firm as an interior architect and designer. With skyrocketing reputations, the Newsoms were in demand by clients like the Ghirardellis (of chocolate fame) and the Hills (of Hills Coffee), many of whom commissioned houses in wealthy enclaves like Piedmont. Both brothers eventually designed houses for themselves in or near Piedmont.<sup>8</sup>

Sidney was a partner in the firm until the Depression, when business slowed drastically and he retired to Walnut Creek. Noble and Archie Newsom continued the firm, designing some grand houses that belied the economic hardships of the 1930s. In 1933, Noble fractured his skull in a car accident, but survived. When World War II erupted, he joined the war effort as a designer at the Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond. During the war years, Sidney died of a stroke at the age of 65. Noble had hopes of reopening a Newsom & Newsom office in San Francisco after the war, but died only a few short days after the Kaiser Shipyards closed in 1945 and never got back to private practice. He was 58.<sup>9</sup>

The house at 2845 Woolsey Street, built in 1908, was designed during a brief period when the Newsom & Newsom firm consisted of both generations of the Newsom family (from 1893 to 1908); father Samuel, and sons Sidney and Noble. One or all three of the Newsoms may have had input in the house's design.

Other Berkeley residential buildings designed by Newsom & Newsom during that period or later (when Sidney and Noble made up the partnership, 1908 to the 1930s), include:

- 45 El Camino Real; 1907, First Bay Tradition
- 2540 (2538) Ellsworth; 1908, First Bay Tradition
- 2241 Parker Street; 1908, First Bay Tradition
- 2815 Benvenue Ave.; 1908, Craftsman Bungalow

---

5 David Weinstein.

6 *Daily Pacific Builder*, 18 May 1908.

7 David Weinstein.

8 David Weinstein.

9 David Weinstein. Pacific Coast Architecture Database (PCAD).

- 3121 Claremont Ave.; 1909, First Bay Tradition
- 20 Hillcrest Road; 1909, First Bay Tradition/Craftsman
- 1749 Allston Way; 1912, Craftsman
- 2610-1612 Parker St.; 1913, altered, possibly First Bay Tradition
- 3201 Claremont Ave.; 1914, Classical Revival
- 1924 Yosemite Road; 1916, Tudor Revival
- 1923 Thousand Oaks Blvd.; 1922, Classical Revival
- 1963 Yosemite Road; 1925, Tudor Revival, altered
- 38 Somerset Place; 1925, Spanish Colonial Revival
- 1430 Le Roy Ave.; 1928, Spanish Colonial/Monterey Colonial Revival
- 686 San Fernando Ave.; 1930, Tudor Revival
- 702 San Luis Road; 1931, style unknown<sup>10</sup>

Three of these houses were built the same year as the house at 2845 Woolsey Street and in the First Bay Tradition style, but with markedly different character. The following year and in 1914, Newsom & Newsom designed three houses within the same neighborhood as the subject house; two in a First Bay Tradition aesthetic, the latter in the Classical Revival style. This suggests that the house at 2845 Woolsey Street could have influenced some nearby neighbors to commission Newsom & Newsom for their Parkside Claremont or Uplands neighborhood homes. From 1913 onward, Newsom & Newsom's designs began a marked move away from the First Bay Tradition and Craftsman aesthetics, toward Revival styles of later popularity.

#### **8. Builder:** Henry Newton

In addition to identifying the house's architects, the *Daily Pacific Builder* building contract notice for the property identifies the builder; Henry Newton. The notice and a 1909 Oakland city directory indicate that Newton was based in downtown Oakland, with an office in the Bacon Building. A city directory from 1908 specifies that he was employed as the manager of the Newton-Sanford Construction Company. No census records or other vital information were found to provide a biographical account of Newton.

Around the time that he was building the house at 2845 Woolsey Street, the *Daily Pacific Builder* notes a few other projects that the Newton-Sanford Construction Company completed, including two four- and five-room bungalows in Berkeley (10 January 1907); a 24 bungalow tract in Fruitvale (11 April 1908); and a two-story mixed use building containing three shops and 15-room flats on San Pablo Avenue in Oakland (1 June 1908). In February 1908, they built a house at 81 Hillcrest Road, nearby the subject house.

#### **9. Style:** First Bay Tradition

Stylistically, the house at 2845 Woolsey Street can be classified as First Bay Tradition. The

---

<sup>10</sup> This list represents a sampling of properties designed by Newsom & Newsom, as identified on Berkeley Architectural Heritage's "41 Walking Tours" (2009) index; [https://berkeleyheritage.com/docs/41\\_Walking\\_Tours.index.pdf](https://berkeleyheritage.com/docs/41_Walking_Tours.index.pdf)  
Other Newsom & Newsom designs likely exist in Berkeley beyond what is listed here.

Bay Tradition was an ongoing regional architectural trend spanning from around 1880 through the 1960s, and was the only dominant regional style of architecture to emerge in the San Francisco Bay Area. Buildings of the Bay Tradition can be classified within three different periods, but the designs of each period tended to perpetuate the common characteristics of modest, straightforward, distinctive design that responded to the Bay Area's climate, geography, and relatively informal cultural attitudes. The First Bay Tradition style was a derivation of the East Coast's Shingle style, while the Second Bay Tradition style was inspired by the International and Ranch styles, and the Third Bay Tradition style was a synthesis of the earlier two that combined rustic materials with strikingly modern forms. The stylistic trend as a whole was noted and perpetuated by publications of the day, such as *Architect and Engineer*, *Sunset* magazine, *California's Arts & Architecture*, *Magazine of Art*, and *Pencil Points*.<sup>11</sup>

The First Bay Tradition style was popular around the turn of the twentieth century, between about 1880 and 1917. "The houses of the Eastern Shingle Style with their large living areas and wide openings between rooms, when mixed with the Craftsmen [sic], Swiss Chalet, some Queen Anne and Art Nouveau Styles with a Japanese influence in detailing, formed the basis of the work of early practitioners in the San Francisco Bay region."<sup>12</sup> Bay Area architects such as Ernest Coxhead, Willis Polk, John Galen Howard, Bernard Maybeck, and Julia Morgan were known for honing the style. The aesthetic is in great evidence and beloved in Berkeley, where it is commonly referred to using the "brown shingle" moniker, which simply referenced the often unpainted wood shingle cladding, although painted shingle can also qualify for the First Bay Tradition classification. Houses of the First Bay Tradition style are characterized by:

- Tall narrow profiles of 2-3 stories
- Asymmetrical plans and facade organization that includes projecting and recessed bays and porches
- Prominent porches
- Steeply pitched roofs with gable and gambrel forms, often with cross-gables and dormers
- Wood windows with small divided lights and double-hung or casement sashes
- Wood shingle cladding, sometimes incorporating wavy patterns or diamonds
- Wall planes that flare and/or overhang at the bottom, especially between stories; or that bulge or bow above windows
- Tall, prominent brick chimneys and other brick elements; brick is often of the clinker variety
- Ornamentation that tends toward the Classical or Gothic, applied in an eclectic way that referenced no style directly but created an overarching historical sense

At 2845 Woolsey Street, the house's mixture of shingled aesthetics dating to 1908, places it within the appropriate time period and stylistic genres to be considered First Bay Tradition. As is said of Bay Tradition buildings of all sub-types, "although they have certain common characteristics... every good Bay Region house is unique in design. This is because each one, unlike most U.S. homes, represents a tailor-made solution to the particular living problems of the owner."<sup>13</sup> Therefore, a wide range of aesthetic influences are typically present in Bay Tradition buildings and can account for the subject house's mixture of Shingle, Craftsman, Tudor, Classical Revival, American Four Square, even

---

11 San Francisco Planning Department, *San Francisco Modern Architecture and Landscape Design, 1935-1970, Context Statement* (2010)

12 Lester Walker, *American Shelter* (New York: Overlook Press, 1996) 192.

13 "San Francisco Houses: They embody a new U.S. Regional architecture," *Life Magazine*, 5 September 1949.

Prairie styles, all of which amount to an eclectic and unique First Bay Tradition design that Newsom & Newsom likely crafted with strong input of the Norton family who would live in it.

The form of the house differs somewhat from the identified tall narrow profile, but does not detract substantially from the overall aesthetic. It is two stories high and has a regular, rectangular plan that results in a less asymmetrical plan and less articulated facades. The more boxy massing can be attributed to Classical and American Four Square influences, however. Projecting bays, bay windows, the (original but currently not-extant) recessed second story balcony/porch at the northeast corner, and the main entry porch all lend to subtle articulations that are typical to the First Bay Tradition style. The entry porch's prominent and obvious visual indication of a formal entrance to the house is also characteristically First Bay Tradition.

The hip roof, though relatively shallowly pitched, has distinctly flared eaves that make strong reference to the Japanese influences described, and the prominent, decoratively shaped, exposed rafter tails at the eaves are either – or both – distinctly Craftsman and referential to Classical modillions, as are the projecting shaped beam ends between stories.

Most of the current windows are not original, but maintain a double-hung configuration typical of the style. Original windows are known to have been multi-lite-over-one double hung sashes with vertical muntins, extremely appropriate to the First Bay Tradition style. Also extremely appropriate to the aesthetic is the three-part, diamond pattern, leaded glass feature window on the rear (west) facade that relates to the interior stair.

Of course, the house's wood shingle siding is a strong indicator its First Bay Tradition identity, and includes the characteristic flared shingle-work at the base of the second story walls. Other typical ornamental elements include traditional wood moldings; pronounced trim around openings, especially with prominent hoods and projecting sills; decorative flower boxes, which were an often-borrowed signature of Maybeck's work; and original but no longer extant Classical balustrades and diamond pattern railings at the porch. A clinker brick chimney is also present, tall and slender, and although placed less prominently on the rear facade, is quite visible from the street.

**10. Original Owners:** F.B. Norton

**Original Use:** Single-family residence

**11. Present Owners:** Michael A. Pearson & Annette Blum

**12. Present Use:** Single-family residence

**Current Zoning:** R-2

**Adjacent Property Zoning:** C-N (to northeast), and R-2 (to northwest, west, and southwest), RH-1 (across Claremont Ave. to east)

**13. Present Condition of Property:**

**Exterior:** Good

**Interior:** Good

**Grounds:** Good

**Has the property's exterior been altered? Yes**

Building permit records indicate the following exterior alterations:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Permit #</b>	<b>Description of Work/Notes</b>
10/10/1945	57983	Reroof entire house with composition shingles.
12/31/1958	85721	Replace front steps (4) with brick steps on 8" slab. [Altered again at a later date; steps now concrete and located on east side of porch.]
1/22/1969	113371	Add new stairway and exit door, close front porch. [Stairway and exit may refer to western portion of northern addition.]
5/30/1973	ID# 053073839	Deck addition for exiting door, 6 x 14. [Located at second story, east side of north facade; associated with the two-story addition already located on west side of north facade. All since removed.]
12/30/1980	0130807340/ UP# 9109	Close in porch.
7/20/1987	720874645	Repair rear stairway.
11/30/2000	00-00005015	Reroof with composition shingle.
7/14/2021	B2021-03100	Removal of dry-rot shingles, installation of vapor barrier, and installation of new cedar shingles.
12/1/2021	B2021-04972	Dry rot repair. Roofing repair, shingles, and chimney removal. [Main chimney remains, may have referred to a secondary kitchen chimney.]
1/04/2022	B2022-00014	Replace windows in like kind (26). [Current vinyl sash]

Other substantial alterations that have been observed, but which are not reflected or fully elaborated upon by above records, include:

- The house originally had an integral open balcony at the northeast corner of second story. At some point, a large opening related to the balcony, at the right side of the second story of the primary facade, was fitted with an aluminum sliding sash window. Openings on the left side of north facade were also altered by an addition to the north facade. In 2021-2022, the opening on the primary facade was infilled entirely.
- A shallow, shed-roofed, two-story addition with a substantial exterior stair, was made to the north facade, possibly in 1969. In 1973, an additional deck was added to the east side of the addition, which itself was, or became, enclosed. The entire addition was

removed in 2021-2022, but all fenestration on the north facade remains altered and non-original.

- The front porch was originally open with brick entry steps oriented toward Woolsey Street to the south. There were three thick square porch posts along the east side and the railings in between were Classical balustrades. A diamond-patterned railing surrounded the roof deck. The porch was later enclosed, in 1969 and/or 1980, new brick steps and an exterior door were installed on the south side, while the rest was enclosed with glazing. The roof deck railing remained. In 2021-2022, the porch was reopened, but oriented to the east. Three original porch posts were replaced with four of somewhat smaller dimension, while concrete steps, non-original railings, interior finishing, and a new entry door were added (original leaded glass sidelights appear to remain). The roof deck railing was removed and the integral hip roof over the projecting bay to the right of the porch appears to have been extended across the width of the porch. Structural beams may have been altered, as the porch roof now exhibits a distinct slope to one side.

#### **14. Description:**

The parcel and house are oriented on a diagonal axis, with Woolsey Street to the southwest and Claremont Avenue to the southeast. For the purposes of this report, the primary facade, which faces Claremont Avenue will be referred to as facing east, the rear facade facing west, etc.

##### *Site*

The property is located in a densely developed residential setting of large-scale houses, with a row of commercial buildings located to the immediate north, along Claremont Avenue. It is set in close proximity to neighboring buildings on an almost square lot, measuring 100 feet along Woolsey Street and 95 feet along Claremont Avenue. The lot is flat and elevated slightly above street level, with a cast stone site wall bordering it on the south and east. The house is set back from Claremont Avenue with a large front yard, and sits very close to the western lot line, resulting in no rear yard. Narrow margins exist between the house and the north and south lot lines. The lot is landscaped with hardscaping and small plantings. Four mature trees stand at the eastern edge of the lot, while others surround the house but are not located on the property, itself.

##### *House*

The house has a rectangular plan, sits on a concrete foundation, is two stories high, and topped by a hip roof. The roof is clad with composition shingle and features broad flared eaves with closely-spaced, decoratively shaped rafter tails on all sides. Exterior wall cladding is wood shingle that flares out at the base of the second story wall, creating a small overhang that is ornamented with a horizontal wood molding and/or block modillions in most locations. Current fenestration consists of vinyl-sash, double-hung windows with vertical faux muntins in the upper sashes. Most windows and other openings have wide flat wood trim, projecting sills, and simply molded hoods.

The primary facade faces east toward Claremont Avenue and represents the long side of the house's rectangular plan. It features an entry porch to the left of center and a projecting bay to its immediate right. Both are topped by an intermediate hip roof with slightly flaring eaves, while a flat roof projects to cover the balance of the porch. The porch is accessed from the east by concrete steps. It has a shingled base, metal railings with solid shingled

railings at the sides, and thick square wood posts that support the flat roof that extends from the intermediate hip roof. The flat porch roof features decorative rafter tails with shaped ends, supported in turn by cross beams with shaped ends. Within the porch, the ceiling, back wall, and interior of the solid side railings are clad with simple wood paneling and battens. The entry door is paneled and has a leaded glass oval window at its center. It is flanked by partial height, diamond-pattern, leaded glass sidelights. The projecting bay to the right of the porch features a three-part window, with a narrow middle sash flanked by wider sashes, all separated by wood mullions. Standard windows are located at the far left and right sides of the facade and at the second story level, where a three-part window (wide sash flanked by narrower sashes) is flanked by single windows. These three openings are regularly spaced from one another, but set off-center to the left, leaving a blank wall plane at the far right side of the second story.

The south facade, facing Woolsey Street, represents the short side of the rectangular plan. It features a shallow projecting square bay fenestrated with a pair of standard windows at the far left side, while a shallow angled bay window with three standard sashes is located on the right side. Two symmetrically placed standard windows at the second story have decorative paneled wood flower boxes beneath that are supported by projecting beams and short cross beams.

The north facade also represents the short side of the rectangular plan and faces a small side yard and neighboring property. It features two fully-glazed wood doors spaced widely at the first story. At the second story there is one large window on the right side that has a single-lite, fixed sash.

The east facade represents the long side of the rectangular plan and faces a narrow passage between the house and the neighboring property. There are three irregularly placed windows on the first story, one of which has a sliding aluminum sash. The second story features a shallow, flat topped, projecting rectangular bay that is located to the right of center. The bay is supported by decoratively shaped projecting beam ends and is fenestrated with a large three-part window that has diamond-pattern leaded glass. Elsewhere on the second story are three standard windows. A narrow clinker brick chimney rises up the right side of the facade and projects through the eaves to rise above the roofline.

## 15. History:

The first owners and residents of the house at 2845 Woolsey Street were the Frank Butler Norton family. Frank Norton was born in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, in 1849, the son of a New Bedford whaling ship captain. In 1870, he went west to San Francisco at the age of 21, where he found work as a bookkeeper in the offices of a provisions wholesaler. By 1884, he had started his own provisions wholesale business and had a number of partners over the years, until the the firm finally became known as Norton, Teller & Company. The company sold wholesale produce, meat, and dairy products and acted as a commission merchant, selling goods for other purveyors. Its offices were in San Francisco.<sup>14</sup>

In July 1877, Frank married Eliza J. Mayhew in Santa Barbara.<sup>15</sup> They had three children: Mayhew, Frances Amelia, and Charles Worth. Eliza died in 1886 at the age of 31, and the

---

14 "F.B. Norton, Pioneer, Dies," *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 December 1931. San Francisco city directories.

15 Ancestry.com; California, U.S., County Birth, Marriage, and Death Records, 1849-1980.

following year Frank remarried. His second wife was Cora B. Wightman of Sonoma.<sup>16</sup> Cora was born in Plainfield, Illinois in 1862 and grew up in Sebastapol, where her father was a bank president. The couple had three children of their own: May Elizabeth, Frank B. Jr., and William Wightman (often known as Wightman). Frank's three oldest children were grown and living on their own by the time that Frank and Cora built and moved into the house on Woolsey Street. Prior to living at 2845 Woolsey Street, the family had lived only a few blocks from the subject property, at 6441 Benvenue Avenue and had addresses in Oakland and San Francisco prior to that.<sup>17</sup>

In 1908, the Nortons commissioned the architecture firm of Newsom & Newsom to design a handsome residence for them at 2845 Woolsey Street. Living nearby on Benvenue Avenue likely led to their purchase of the large empty parcel at the corner of Claremont Avenue and Woolsey Street. There appears to be no documentation of how or why the Nortons came to select the Newsoms' firm or any of the client-architect interactions that likely went into the design of the house. An article and illustration (see attached) ran in the 19 April 1908 edition of the *Oakland Tribune*, however; which reported on F.B. Norton "putting up a pretty house." The article noted that the "home will be roomy and have all the latest improvements." It went on to say:

F.B. Norton, of Norton & Teller Co., San Francisco, is building a two-story residence... It is to be located on the north side of Woolsey Street, sixty feet west of Claremont avenue, Berkeley. Newsom & Newsom, 526 Larkin Street, San Francisco, are the architects. The house will cost about \$6,000, complete.

The feature of the exterior will be heavy beam work on the front porch and cornice. The house is to be shingled. The living-room and library will face the south and are to be paneled with burnt board and batten. A large open fireplace is in the library. The vestibule and dining-room are to have heavily beamed ceilings. A large kitchen, pass pantry, laundry and servant's room are in the rear.

On the second story are five large sunny bedrooms, all having large closets. There are also linen closets and cases which are always needed. Facing the north is a balcony, commanding and excellent view of the Berkeley hills.

Two years after the house was built, the 1910 federal census recorded the Nortons at 2827 Woolsey Street, as the property was originally addressed. Frank was 61 and employed as a commission merchant. Cora was 48, and their three children – Wightman, May, and Frank Jr. – lived at home. Their ages ranged from 12 to 22. Wightman was old enough to work and was employed as a commission merchant, likely by his father's firm. The family employed Mary Anderson, a 40 year old household servant from Sweden, although in late 1911, numerous want ads for a new "girl for general housework," ran in the newspaper.<sup>18</sup>

Ten years later, in 1920, the occupancy of 2845 Woolsey Street (then still 2827) was much the same. Wightman had married and moved away from home, but May and Frank Jr. remained. Both in their early 20s, May worked as a school teacher, while Frank was not

---

16 Ancestry.com; U.S. Select Marriages, 1850-1945.

17 Oakland city directory, 1908.

18 *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, October 1911.

employed. The Norton's household servant was Nellie Haupt, a 40 year old woman from California.

In 1930, the address of the house remained 2827 Woolsey Street on census records, and the property was valued at \$20,000 (about \$380,000 today). Frank Norton, at age 81, was retired. Cora was 63. The Norton's three children still lived at home or had returned. Wightman, age 41, had divorced and moved back home. He worked as a distributing agent for a furnace manufacturer. May, 31, remained unmarried and continued to work as a public school teacher. Frank Jr., 30, was also unmarried and was a dentist in general practice. The family employed Marie Moen, a 19 year old servant from Norway.

Frank Norton died in 1931. His obituary noted that he had retired several years before his death, but at one time had served as president of the San Francisco Dairy Exchange. In his personal time, he was active in the Alameda County Sportsmen's Club, the oldest duck hunting club in the West, and was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution.<sup>19</sup>

In the late 1930s, address renumbering occurred in the neighborhood and 2845 Woolsey Street was finally assigned its current address. In 1940, the house was occupied by Cora, then a 77 year old widow. Daughter May, who never married, lived with her. She was 40 and employed as a kindergarten teacher. The census also shows that Wightman Norton had remarried and lived next door with his wife, Violet, and daughter, Nancy. The Wightman Norton house (presumably built 1937<sup>20</sup>) was located to the rear (northwest) of 2845 Woolsey Street and had been assigned the subject house's old address, 2827 Woolsey Street. The Nortons also appear to have owned the house at 2823-2825 Woolsey Street (now 2823 Woolsey Street), which was a duplex that they rented out.<sup>21</sup>

In August 1944 a one-alarm fire was reported at 2845 Woolsey Street. It was caused by an electric heater and caused \$100 in damages.<sup>22</sup>

Cora Norton died in February 1950 at age 90. Later the same year, the census indicates that May Norton was living at the subject house by herself, still working as a public school kindergarten teacher. Her brother and sister-in-law continued to live next door and eventually had three children.

Around 1951, May Norton moved to 2844 Woolsey Street, directly across Woolsey Street from the subject property. The details of her move are unclear, but Planning Department records indicate that she petitioned to have the zoning of the subject house changed a couple of times without success. As early as November 1950, Rhoda Nichols, a playground director for Berkeley city schools, and very likely a professional acquaintance of May's, was associated with the rezoning attempts and change of use converting property to a nursery school. It may be that May Norton's professional interests as a kindergarten teacher led her to devote her family home to become a nursery school, with her associate Rhoda Nichols heading the establishment. May Norton died shortly thereafter, in 1953. She was 59 years old and succumbed to a month-long illness in an Oakland hospital.<sup>23</sup> Ownership of the house presumably passed to Luther and Rhoda

---

19 "F.B. Norton, Pioneer, Dies," *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 December 1931.

20 Alameda County Assessor.

21 "Houses for Rent," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 2 May 1936.

22 "Heater fire causes \$100 damage here," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 2 August 1944.

23 "May E. Norton" (obituary), *Berkeley Gazette*, 24 August 1953.

Nichols around this time.

In 1952, use permit records indicate that Rhoda Nichols was granted the change-of-use for the property and permission to create a playground area in the front yard. Later records indicate that part of the house was retained as the Nichols' residence; occupied by Rhoda, her husband Luther, and at some point her elderly father. Rhoda Nichols grew up in Petaluma and attended U.C. Berkeley. Luther had grown up in Berkeley and also attended U.C. Berkeley, then went to work as a newspaper reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The couple were married in 1950.<sup>24</sup>

On 16 December 1952, an announcement ran in the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* that the Rhoda Reed Nichols Nursery School, located on Prince Street, had moved around the corner to 3090 Claremont Avenue (an alternate address for 2845 Woolsey Street) and would be known as the Claremont Day Nursery. It was noted that “the lovely garden is much larger and the play area inside and out, is more spacious.” It has “pleasant surroundings and thoroughly trained and experienced supervision.” By 1958, Rhoda Nichols had opened another branch of the Claremont Day Nursery at 5830 College Avenue, and in 1962, she opened yet another at 912 Ensenada Avenue.

Rhoda Nichols owned the property and ran the nursery school until 1976, when both the property and the nursery school business were sold to Tom and Frances Morabito. Tom Morabito was a teacher, who worked in private and public schools prior to taking over the Claremont Day Nurseries.<sup>25</sup> Around 2021, due to failing health, the Morabitos decided to close the nursery school. At that time, they remodeled the house prior to selling it, which resulted in a number of the recent changes noted under item 17, above. In June 2022, the property was sold to the current owners, Michael A. and Annette Pearson, who will return it to single-family residential use and wish to reverse a number of the earlier incompatible alterations.

**Chain of Title**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Owners</b>	<b>Occupants</b>
1908 – 1950	Frank B. & Cora Norton	Norton family
1950 – ca.1952	Mary Elizabeth Norton	Mary Elizabeth Norton
ca.1952 – 1976	Luther & Rhoda Nichols	Nichols family Claremont Day Nursery
1976 – 2022	Tom & Frances Morabito	Claremont Day Nursery
2022 - present	Michael A. & Annette Pearson	Michael A. & Annette Pearson

<sup>24</sup> “Marriage of Rhoda Reed to Berkeley man is announced,” *Petaluma Argus Courier*, 13 February 1950.

<sup>25</sup> “Owner to close beloved day care schools because of failing health,” *Berkeleyside*, 28 June 2021; <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/06/28/tom-morabito-owner-child-care-claremont-day-nurseries-to-close>

## 16. Significance:

**Historic Value:** City and neighborhood

**Architectural Value:** City and neighborhood

The property at 2845 Woolsey Street is eligible for designation as a Berkeley Landmark; meeting Landmark criteria 1B and 1C in relation to its architectural merit.<sup>26</sup> The following provides an evaluation of the significance of 2845 Woolsey Street.

In accordance with Landmark criterion 1B, 2845 Woolsey Street is an outstanding example of early-twentieth century residential architecture in the First Bay Tradition style and is a notable example of design by the renowned Bay Area architecture firm of Newsom & Newsom.

The house presents a unique and complexly crafted example of the First Bay Tradition style. The style has certain typical traits (especially wood shingle exterior cladding), but is intrinsically varied in individual design and stylistic influence, often responding to customization for the specific homeowner-client and resulting an eclectic presentation of form and ornament. The house at 2845 Woolsey Street is most strongly identified as First Bay Tradition by its wood shingle cladding and Classical Revival ornamentation; however ornamentation and other features also hint at Craftsman, Tudor Revival, American Four Square, and Prairie aesthetics, and even some Japanese influence. The mixture of popular styles of the day and their amalgam into a completely unique iteration of the locally significant First Bay Tradition style makes 2845 Woolsey Street a significant example of the style. The deft adaptation of the style by architects Newsom & Newsom, presumably with the input of the Norton family who commissioned the house, makes it a prime example not only of the style but the way the style was made unique to every project.

The firm of Newsom & Newsom consisted of two generations of the Newsom family and, as it was built in 1908, 2845 Woolsey Street falls within the brief period when both Samuel Newsom and his two sons were designing together. A transitional period in the firm's history, this was also a time when the firm's design aesthetics shifted with prevailing architectural fashions, away from the exuberant Victorian and toward newly popular styles that included the increasingly popular First Bay Tradition style and its many eclectic aesthetic influences. The house at 2845 Woolsey Street showcases the evolution that the Newsoms' work took toward more quietly understated houses of high quality and highly-livable designs during this period. While the Newsoms worked throughout the Bay Area, their most recognized work is primarily found in San Francisco and Piedmont. They were active in Berkeley, however; and a selection of their residential designs illustrate both the progression of their stylistic aesthetics and their work in particular areas of the city as they became known and presumably referred among clients. The house at 2845 Woolsey Street represents a time during the first decade of the twentieth century when the Newsoms adhered strongly to the First Bay Tradition style, while making each house unique. It stands out from their earlier houses of the style in having more Classical overtones and influences from a wide variety of other styles, perhaps indicating the shift the Newsoms would make toward later Revival styles. It was also the first of three Newsom & Newsom projects in the Parkside Claremont and Uplands neighborhood, suggesting that the firm may have been introduced to the area with their work at 2845 Woolsey Street and then

---

<sup>26</sup> City of Berkeley Municipal Code, Chapter 3.24.110, Landmarks, historic districts and structures of merit – Designation – Criteria for consideration.

were eagerly hired by nearby neighbors.

In accordance with Landmark criteria 1C, the house at 2845 Woolsey Street is worth recognizing and preserving for its exceptional contribution to the historic and aesthetic fabric of the Parkside Claremont neighborhood. The house is sited on a prominent corner, at the intersection of Woolsey Street and Claremont Avenue; surrounded by other architecturally interesting houses, adjacent to a bustling neighborhood commercial row, and opposite the entrance to the Uplands neighborhood which is enhanced by historic stone pillars and transit shelters, creating a rich surrounding built-environment. The house is a highly visible and noteworthy element of a residential neighborhood that has many good and varied examples of early-twentieth century architecture, including similar, but always unique, examples of what is colloquially and fondly referred to as Berkeley's "brown shingle" architecture (i.e. the First Bay Tradition style identified by its ubiquitous siding material). The house represents the First Bay Tradition style, designed by renowned architects, that contributes strongly to both the visual and historical context of the area.

#### **17. Is the property endangered?**

No. On the contrary, Landmark designation will make the property eligible for Mills Act benefits that will facilitate rehabilitation and restoration of the house, including the reversal of a number of previous inappropriate alterations.

#### **18. Photographs:**

**Date:** 7 November 2024

**Repository:** Left Coast Architectural History

**Photographer:** Caitlin Hibma, Left Coast Architectural History

#### **19. Bibliography/Sources:**

Alameda County Assessor.

Ancestry.com; federal census and other vital records.

Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assoc., "41 Walking Tours" (2009) index;  
[https://berkeleyheritage.com/docs/41\\_Walking\\_Tours.index.pdf](https://berkeleyheritage.com/docs/41_Walking_Tours.index.pdf)

*Berkeleyside*, 28 June 2021.

City of Berkeley, Municipal Code, Chapter 3.24.110.

City of Berkeley, Planning & Development Department; building permit and planning records.

*Daily Pacific Builder*.

Historical Information Gatherers, Fire Insurance Maps *online* (FIMo) .

*Life Magazine*, 5 September 1949.

NewspaperArchive.com

Newspapers.com

Pacific Coast Architecture Database (PCAD). "Newsom and Newsom, Architects,"  
<https://digital.lib.washington.edu/architect/partners/446/>.

San Francisco Planning Department, "San Francisco Modern Architecture and Landscape Design, 1935-1970, Context Statement," 2010.

Thompson, Daniella. "Berkeley's City Hall Was Inspired by a Mairie on the Loire,"  
[http://www.berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley\\_landmarks/city\\_hall.html](http://www.berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/city_hall.html).

University of California Riverside, California Digital Newspaper Collection.

University of California Santa Barbara, Library Geospatial Collection.

Walker, Lester. *American Shelter*. New York: Overlook Press, 1996.

Weinstein, David. "Quiet Pleasures, Newsom brothers created homes with a timeless appeal," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 February 2005.

**20. Recorder:** Caitlin Hibma

**Date:** 12 December 2024

**Organization:** Left Coast Architectural History

Historical Images

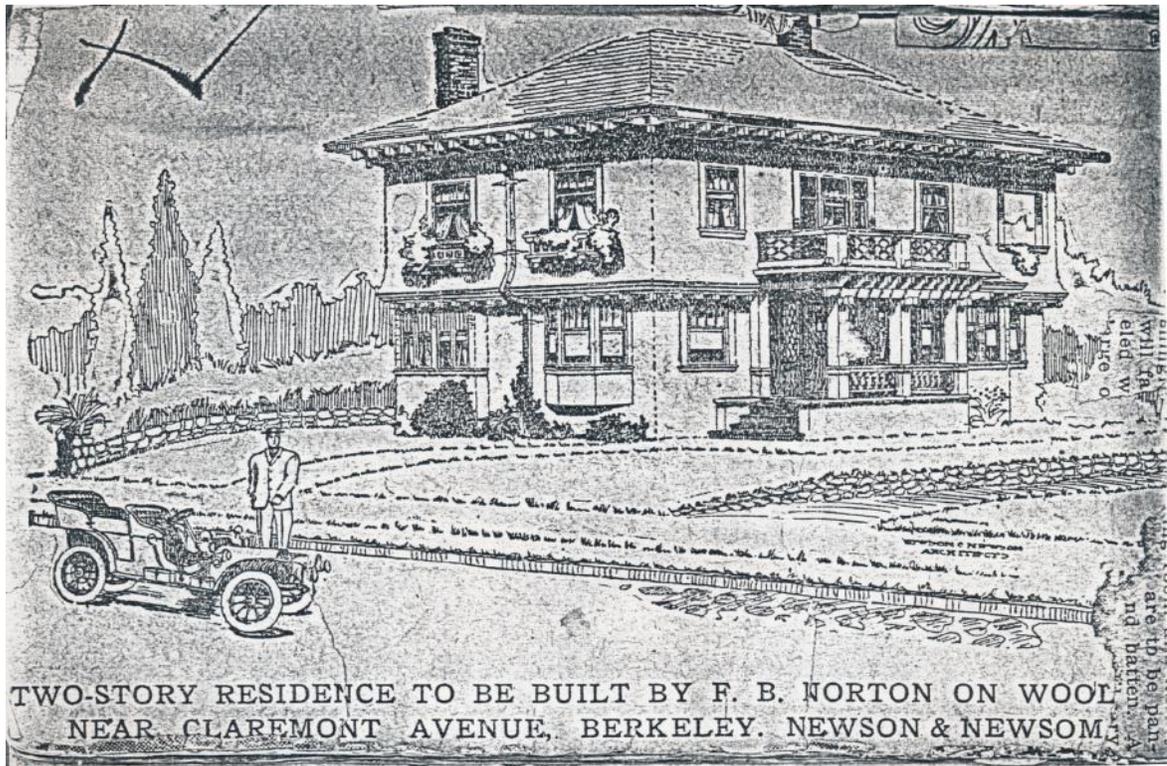


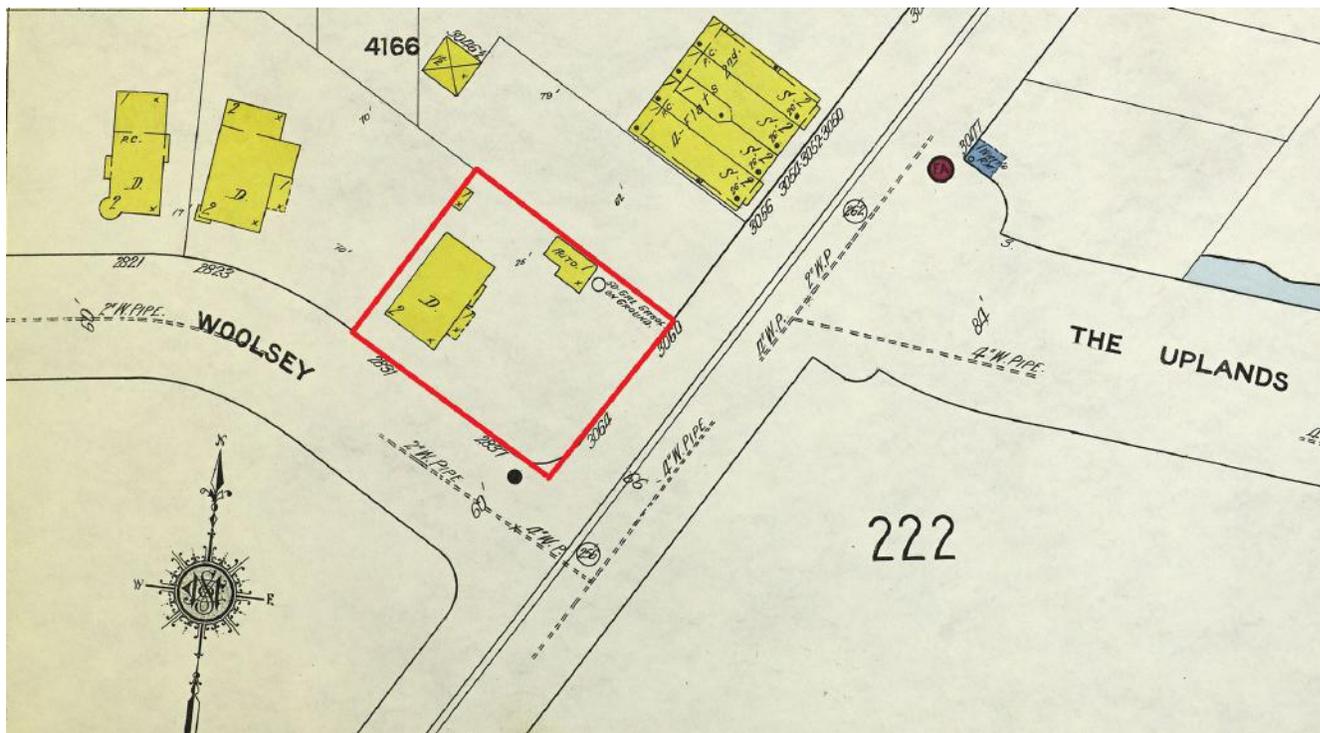
Illustration of F.B. Norton House, 1908. (*Oakland Tribune*, 19 April 1908.)



Interior of 2845 Woolsey Street, 1908; library looking (north) into dining room. (Berkeley Architectural History Assoc.)



Interior of 2845 Woolsey Street, 1908; library looking northwest into stair hall.  
(Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assoc.)



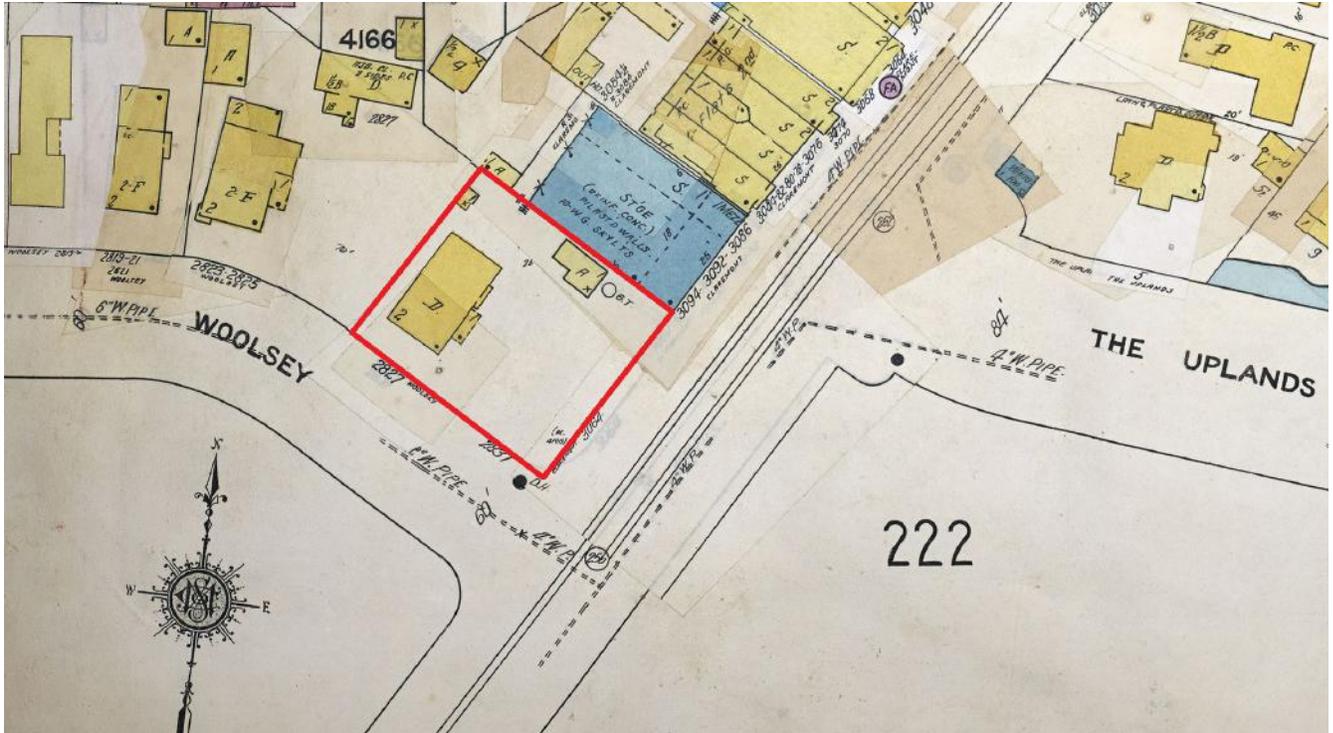
Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1911. Subject property outlined in red.  
(Historical Information Gatherers)



Aerial photograph, 1931. Subject property circled in red.  
(UCSB Library)



Aerial photograph, 1946. Subject property circled in red.  
(UCSB Library)



Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1950. Subject property outlined in red.  
(Historical Information Gatherers)



View of Woolsey Street (south) facade; 1950s.  
(Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assoc., Donough Collection)



Aerial photograph, 1965. Subject property circled in red.  
(UCSB Library)



View of Woolsey Street (south) facade; recent nursery school era, 2000s.  
(Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assoc.)



2845 Woolsey St. south and east facades, looking northwest from Woolsey St., ca. 2014.  
Note original windows and enclosed porch with upper railing intact.  
(Google Streetview)



2845 Woolsey St. south facade, looking north from Woolsey St., ca. 2014.

Note original windows and enclosed porch with upper railing intact.  
(Google Streetview)



2845 Woolsey St. south and east facades, looking northwest from Woolsey St., ca. 2014.  
Note original balcony opening (glazed) and later northern addition at right side of second story.  
(Google Streetview)

**Current Images**



View of primary (east) facade from Claremont Avenue, looking west.



View of south and primary (east) facades from Woolsey Street, looking northwest.



View of rear (west) and south facades from Woolsey Street, looking northeast.



View of primary (east) facade from front of property, looking west.



Detail of entry porch, primary (east) facade, looking west.



View of south facade from Woolsey Street, looking north.



View of primary (east) and north facade from yard, looking southwest.



View of north side of rear (west) facade, looking north.



View along rear facade from southwest corner of house, looking north.



Detail of upper facade, showing flower boxes, looking northwest.



Detail of eaves, southeast corner of house.



Detail of cast stone site wall along south and east sides of property; near corner, looking northwest.