



UTILITAS • FIRMITAS • VENUSTAS

Northern California Chapter
Society of Architectural Historians

The Newsletter

Volume 13, Number 1
May 2010

SAN FRANCISCO'S FEDERAL BUILDING ARCHITECTURE PAST & PRESENT June 11-12th, 2010

The Spring, 2010 NCCSAH tour on June 11th and 12th will focus on Federal Building architecture past and present in San Francisco. The three buildings on the two tours - The James R. Browning U.S. Court of Appeals, the San Francisco Federal Building and the Old U.S. Mint - represent three distinct periods of architecture covering 140 years of the city's history.

Friday June 11, 2010

The June 11, 2010 tour (1:30 PM - 4:00PM) will include the two federal buildings at the corner of 7th and Mission Streets: The (new) San Francisco Federal Building and the James R. Browning U.S. Court of Appeals. The Italian Renaissance style Court of Appeals building is recognized as one of the most beautiful Federal court buildings in the United States.

The innovative Southern California firm Morphosis (Thom Mayne, design director) designed the San Francisco Federal Building constructed between 2003-2007.

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Top and bottom: Old Mint in 1958 (photograph courtesy of HABS) and the San Francisco Federal Building (photograph courtesy of the General Services Administration).

UPCOMING EVENTS & NEWS

BAHA's Annual Spring House Tour

Looking at Julia Morgan
Berkeley, CA
<http://berkeleyheritage.com/>
May 2, 2010

National Preservation Institute

Section 106: Agreement Documents
Sacramento, CA
www.npi.org
May 3-5, 2010

National Preservation Institute

GIS: Practical Applications for Cultural
Resource Projects
San Francisco, CA
www.npi.org
May 4-5 or 6-7, 2010

National Preservation Institute

Identification and Management of
Traditional Cultural Places
Sacramento, CA
www.npi.org
May 6-7, 2010

California Preservation Foundation

Annual Conference Spring 2010
Nevada County, CA
www.californiapreservation.org
May 12 - 15, 2010

Vernacular Architecture Forum

2010 Annual Conference
Washington, DC
www.vernaculararchitectureforum.org
May 19-22, 2010

National Preservation Institute

Cemetery Preservation
San Francisco, CA
www.npi.org
September 28-29, 2010

National Preservation Institute

Cemetery Landscapes: A Practical
Guide to Care and Maintenance
San Francisco, CA
www.npi.org
September 30, 2010

APTI

Annual Conference 2010
Denver, CO
www.apti.org
October 6-9, 2010

National Preservation Institute

Section 106: A Review for Experi-
enced Practitioners
San Francisco, CA
www.npi.org
October 19-20, 2010

National Preservation Institute

Native American Property Law
San Francisco, CA
www.npi.org
October 21-22, 2010

**National Trust for Historic
Preservation**

2010 Conference
Austin, TX
www.preservationnation.org
October 27 - 30, 2010



Appellate Court Arch (photograph courtesy of General Services Administration).

SAN FRANCISCO'S FEDERAL BUILDINGS

Continued

The building has received numerous design awards and is considered a model of sustainable building.

The brilliant and witty Warren Sitterley will lead the tour on June 11. During his thirty-five years with the General Services Administration, a significant portion of it spent in historic buildings. Mr. Sitterley has been the Chief Engineer and manager of the San Francisco Customs House (555 Battery Street), which was designed by Eames & Young and completed in 1911. Later, he served as the Federal manager of the Old Mint before the building was transferred to the City of San Francisco. He re-opened the James R. Browning United States Courthouse after the Loma Prieta earthquake. In addition, he opened the San Francisco Federal Building in 2007.

Continued, Page 5.

SAN FRANCISCO'S FEDERAL BUILDING ARCHITECTURE PAST & PRESENT

Registration for June 11th and 12th Events

[please print]

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email address: _____

Registration Options

June 11, 2010 tour:

US Courthouse & Federal Building

NCCSAH members- \$20

Non-members - \$ 30

June 12, 2010 tour (includes lunch):

Old Mint and lunch at Chez Papa Resto

NCCSAH members- \$30,

Non-members - \$ 40

Tours both days (June 11-12) & lunch:

NCCSAH members - \$45,

Non-members - \$65

Total Enclosed: _____

Please make checks payable to "Northern California Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians" (NCCSAH) and mail to: Richard Sucre, Page and Turnbull, NCCSAH Tours, 417 S. Hill St., Suite 211, Los Angeles, CA 90013 For more information please contact Ward Hill at whill@pacbell.net



Section drawing of the Old Mint by supervising architect A. B. Mullett.

SAN FRANCISCO'S FEDERAL BUILDING ARCHITECTURE PAST & PRESENT

ITINERARY

Friday, June 11

1:30 to 4pm Tour of the James R. Browning United States Courthouse (Appellate Court, 5th Circuit) and San Francisco Federal Building, 7th and Mission Street. Warren Sitterley, Chief Engineer and property manager with General Service Administration, will lead the tour.

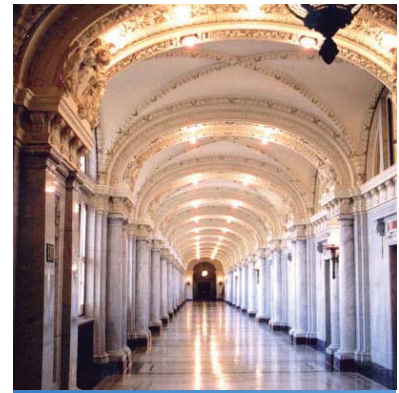
Saturday June 12

9:30 to 10am Coffee and pastries at Blue Bottle Coffee, 66 Mint Plaza (in back of the Old Mint)

10am-12pm Tour of the Old Mint led by

- Katherine Petrin, Architectural Historian with Architectural Resources Group (ARG) and author of the Old Mint Historic Structures Report
- Jason Wright, material conservation expert with ARG, and author of the conservation plan for the exterior stonework for the Old Mint
- Sean Fine, a designer with Page & Turnbull, who is evaluating the conservation issues at the Old Mint's interior
- Deborah Frieden, Project Director of the Mint Project (www.themintproject.org).

12-1:30pm 3-course lunch at Chez Papa Resto (www.chez-papasf.com/resto) adjacent to the Old Mint at 4 Mint Plaza



CHEZ PAPA
Resto

San Francisco Mint Historical Tour Luncheon: Three Courses & Unlimited Iced Tea or Soda

Starters

Soupe du Jour
Butter Lettuce Salad, Fines Herbs, Shallots, Mustard Vinaigrette
Snake River Kobe Beef Tartare with Dijon Mustard, Capers, Shallots, Garlic, Toast Points

Entrées

Sautéed Salmon with Fingerling Potatoes, Spinach, Brown Butter, Capers
Grilled Hanger Steak with Sauce Béarnaise and Pommes Frites
Assiette of Market Vegetables with Ratatouille, Potato and Fennel Gratin

Desserts

Cocoa Nib Profferoles, Pistachio Gelato, Toasted Almonds, Warm Chocolate Sauce
Season Panna Cot

SAN FRANCISCO'S FEDERAL BUILDINGS *continued*

Saturday, June 12, 2010

The Saturday (10 AM to 12 PM) will be of the National Historic Landmark U.S. Mint at 5th and Mission Streets. Designed by Alfred Mullett and constructed between 1866 and 1870, the Old Mint is recognized as a major monument of the Greek Revival Style in the United States. The building's history and design will be the focus of the tour in addition to the ambitious re-use plan for a San Francisco History Museum and Visitor Center in the building (www.themintproject.org). The tour will be led by: Katherine Petrin, architectural historian with Architectural Resources Group; Jason Wright, designer with Architectural Resources Group; Sean Fine, designer with Page & Turnbull; and Deborah Frieden, Project Director of the Mint Project.

Subsequent to the tour, we will have lunch (12 PM - 1:30 PM) at Chez Papa Resto at 4 Mint Plaza (www.chezpapasf.com/resto). The 3 course lunch is included in the registration fee. The San Francisco Chronicle food critics recently voted Chez Papa Resto as one of 100 best restaurants in the Bay Area. It was also voted one of the top 10 new restaurants of 2008.



Old Mint after 1906 earthquake and fire (photographs courtesy of the National Archive Records Administration).

INTRODUCTION TO TOUR LEADER WARREN SITTERLEY

As I sit here thinking back on a 35-year career with the GSA, it occurs to me that a significant portion of it has been spent in historic buildings. I was the Chief Engineer for the San Francisco Custom House at 555 Battery Street for most of the 1980s. I came to love it for its beauty and its history. Interestingly, I took from that experience a fondness for low-pressure, single-pipe steam heating systems that I'm sure is not shared by any living mechanical engineer.

Later I moved out of the trades and into property management. In past years, I have been honored to have been the last Federal manager of the Old Mint. This was just prior to our sale of it to the City & County of San Francisco. For one dollar. Don't worry; we got it in cash.

I also re-opened what is now the James R. Browning United States Courthouse after an extensive renovation following the Loma Prieta earthquake. I managed the JRB Courthouse for ten years and was privileged to come to know Judge Browning himself.

Additionally, I opened the new San Francisco Federal Building and have managed it for the first three years of its operation. Very few property managers have opened even one new (or newly-reconstructed) building. And probably for a good reason. As a process, it is remarkably akin to having mechanics still assembling your wings as you lift your aircraft off the ground and retract the wheels. It requires a unique skillset; the ability to tolerate high levels of chaos, a near immunity to stress, a certain comfort with the idea that your typical business day is roughly 15 hours long now, the ability to instantaneously switch from skilled politician to complete technowee-ney as circumstances dictate, and a well-developed sense of humor. Particularly that last one. Without it, you're doomed.

SAN FRANCISCO'S OLD MINT: FOUNDRY AND FORTRESS

Designed by Alfred B. Mullett, Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, the second United States Mint in San Francisco, California, now known as the Old Mint, occupies its own city block bounded by 5th, Mission, Mint, and Jessie Streets. Completed in 1874 at a cost of \$2 million, this classically inspired building is often cited as “the last major example of classical revival architecture” built in America.

From the outset the Mint served the diverse functions of foundry, fortress, and highly ornamented interior spaces worthy of ceremonial public use. The public was admitted to certain rooms on the first floor: the Office of the Mint, later the Cashier's Office (Room 121), and the Office of the Assistant Treasurer (Room 122). Suited to a federal building of this stature, these spaces were very well-appointed, nearly deluxe. Decorative cast iron and early gold-toned paint schemes were entirely appropriate choices for a facility in the business of metals. By contrast, as an industrial and manufacturing facility, the building required solid foundations and durable surfaces to withstand high temperatures and molten metal. On the exterior, the chimneys clearly express the industrial nature of the Mint and contrast to the building's elegant temple front portico. Though a highly trafficked building, by both numerous employees and citizens, the structure stored gold and silver, requiring stringent security measures and design. The building's impressive granite and masonry construction, and extensive use of cast iron as a building material, gave the impression of a secure stronghold.

Architecturally, the structure itself is significant for three reasons. Designed by a recognized master architect, the Old Mint serves as a rare monumental example of the late Greek Revival period. The original construction epitomizes late 19th century “fire-proof” building technologies, construction

techniques, and noteworthy craftsmanship. And, finally, it is an excellent example of an innovative use of materials, especially ornamental and structural cast and wrought iron.



Bullion balance scales in the Old Mint c. 1910 (photograph courtesy of National Archives Records Administration).

Nationally significant for its role in government and economics, the Old Mint was pivotal in the financial history of the United States during a 63-year period, from 1874 until 1937. By 1877, three years after its inauguration, it minted about \$50 million of the total \$83.9 million in gold and silver coins produced by the United States that year. As a repository for the United States' gold reserve, the building was responsible for protecting the nation's wealth and in 1934, the Mint stored one-third of the nation's supply.

On the local level, the Old Mint is significant as a heroic survivor of the 1906 earthquake, and as one of the oldest buildings in San Francisco, a stone structure from an era of wood-framed construction. Symbolically, the Mint has been a source of pride to San Franciscans, who from the start saw the monumental and elegant federal building as an affirmation that the City had come of age and the State of California. The Old Mint was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1961.

JAMES R. BROWNING U.S. COURT OF APPEALS BUILDING



U.S. Court of Appeals main entrance (photograph courtesy of General Services Administration).

The James R. Browning U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco is considered one of the nation's most beautiful public buildings. Built as the U.S. Courthouse and Post Office at the turn of the twentieth century, it was intended to represent the affluence and increasing importance of the United States as it became a world power.

By the 1870s it became apparent that San Francisco was in dire need of a federal building to house the federal courts and the post office that were located in various downtown buildings. In 1887 a commission delegated to select a site reported that the \$350,000 allocated by the U.S. Congress was insufficient and the sum was raised to \$1,250,000. The property chosen at Seventh and Mission Streets was more than a mile from the central business district and surrounded by a working-class neighborhood of Irish and German immigrants. Although many disapproved, the lot was purchased in 1891. In 1893 \$2,500,000 was appropriated for construction.

U.S. Treasury architects worked on designs for the building, with Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor (1857-1929) playing a lead role. Taylor selected a design influenced by Italian Renaissance

architecture with magnificent Beaux Arts grandeur. To achieve the high level of craftsmanship specified for the interior, skilled artisans were brought from Italy. Groundbreaking took place in 1897 and the building opened in 1905 to acclaim as "a post office that's a palace."

On April 18, 1906, an earthquake devastated San Francisco. The U.S. Courthouse and Post Office and the 1874 U.S. Mint designed by Alfred B. Mullett were the only buildings south of Market Street to survive the earthquake and resulting fires. While repairs were made, the Post Office set up collection points around the city with the U.S. Courthouse and Post Office serving as a symbol of hope in the weeks following the earthquake. Restoration was completed in 1910.

The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. In 1989 the Loma Prieta Earthquake severely damaged the U.S. Courthouse and Post Office. Engineering evaluation started immediately and in 1993 restoration work began, including seismic retrofitting to protect against future earthquakes. The building reopened in 1996 as the U.S. Court of Appeals.

The James R. Browning U.S. Court of Appeals Building reflects the Beaux Arts classicism adopted by the U.S. Treasury Department for early twentieth-century federal buildings. The stylized building is a steel-framed structure clad in white Sierra granite. The magnificent building, with its opulent ornamentation and surface treatments, was exceptionally lavish even at the time of its construction.

The imposing building, echoing the Italian palazzos designed by Bramante and Raphael during the Renaissance, is ornamented with enclosed pediments, balustrades, and rows of arched windows. (Text from <http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/buildingView.do?pageTypeId=17109&channelPage=/ep/channel/gsaOverview.jsp&channelId=-25241&bid=600>.)

Please send your ideas or comments concerning The Newsletter to:
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Page and Turnbull

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The mission of the NCCSAH is to further the objectives of the Society of Architectural Historians of which the Northern California Chapter is an official affiliate; promote the study and discussion of our region's architectural history and its related fields; visit significant works of architecture; and increase public awareness and appreciation of our architectural heritage. Membership is open to anyone interested in architectural history and its related fields who agrees to pay the annual dues and subscribe to the by-laws of the organization.