

A HISTORY WORTH SAVING:
THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS AND
THE INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY ON A RECONSTRUCTED SITE

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Sara Denise Shreve

May 2006

© 2006 Sara Denise Shreve

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the legacy of the Palace of Fine Arts in the history of San Francisco. The first section is a social history of the site looking at its origins as a site designed by Bernard Maybeck as one of the many palaces constructed for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915. Today, the Palace remains the only site from the Exposition standing in its original location. In the over ninety years since the close of the Exposition the Palace has undergone various preservation campaigns. Most notably, the structures of the site were reconstructed in concrete from 1964-1974.

The second part of this work explores the Palace's present situation including discussion of a current large-scale effort to stabilize the structures and landscape of the site. Finally, this thesis addresses the question of how best to provide for the future of the Palace of Fine Arts determining that the major needs of the Palace can be divided into education, interpretation, and physical preservation, and providing recommendations for how to approach the implementation of solutions for each.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sara Denise Shreve is the daughter of Cheryl Sayed Shreve and Dennis Shreve. She was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and grew up along with her brother James in the sunshine of Tucson, Arizona. After completing her Bachelor of Arts degree in American Studies and History at Mills College in Oakland, California, she entered the Historic Preservation Planning Program at Cornell University in 2002. Since then she has worked as a historic preservationist from 2003-2004 for the Maybeck Foundation in San Francisco and in New Orleans on the Hurricane Katrina recovery effort in 2005.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At several points since I began writing this thesis, I have doubted its eventual conclusion. Were it not for many people those doubts may have won out. I am grateful for this opportunity to thank them.

First and foremost, my committee chair, Sherene Baugher has been a truly great advisor, offering me freedom when I needed it and encouragement throughout the process. Dan Krall's amazing eye for detail and great sense of humor has resulted in far fewer typos and a much more enjoyable experience than would have been possible otherwise. And I don't understand how anyone would ever graduate without Donna Wiernicki who managed to keep track of me and keep me on track from the day I applied to Cornell.

While my committee members and I had to read my thesis probably more times than any of us can still count, Naomi Wood voluntarily read the entire first half. She offered feedback then as well as encouragement and inspiration at so many points in the past three years.

Much of my research and writing was supported by an internship with the Maybeck Foundation that provided an eye opening experience in addition to access to research materials and the ever important funding that made this thesis possible.

I would also like to thank everyone who participated in long conversations about the Palace of Fine Arts, graduate school, and my utter shock at the length of Ithaca winters (many of whom also offered me comfortable places to stay in various warm locales during breaks) these generous and patient supporters included my family, my mom, dad, James, and Aunt Joyce— all of whom got this whole process started so long ago by

always making me feeling like I could do anything—and the wonderful people I have met along the way: Alice Kaminski, Hatzune Aguilar, Steve Mikulencak, Aniela Micek, Gary Morgan, Melissa Brill, Craig Tuminaro, Leanna Struzziery, Tamsen Wojtanowski, and Sabine Haenni.

Of course some of the greatest support has come from those most equipped to offer it: Cornell University Historic Preservation Planning classes 2003-2006. I feel extremely lucky to have had the opportunity to interact with all of the people in these classes. Thanks to them my graduate school experience has been filled with memories of group projects, trips, classes, talks in 102, nights at the Chappy. Sometimes I think Matt Gundy believes in me more than I do. His enthusiasm for spur of the moment adventures and good talks has added both excitement and comfort to my life for the past two years. Not only did Shauna Haas encourage me with “just finish it,” she helped me get my first job, which allowed both the time and opportunity to complete the last section of this thesis. Finally, when Jenny Buddenborg and I found ourselves to be the last Ithacans, her sense of humor, thesis work days, and just general presence made this wonderful yet transitive city feel more like home and helped give me the final push to finish my thesis.

Lastly, I have to especially thank two people who have been constantly supportive in graduate school and life: Bianca Hovda and Theo Hummer. These two, though complete geographic opposites, were both always there for late night/early morning phone calls, chai dates, and weird dinners. It is largely thanks to them telling me I could do it and making sure I did not lose sight of real life that I completed this thesis with a smile on my face.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	
BERNARD MAYBECK	7
CHAPTER TWO	
THE PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION	23
CHAPTER THREE	
THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS AFTER THE PPIE	65
CHAPTER FOUR	
THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PALACES	83
CHAPTER FIVE	
CURRENT STATE OF THE PALACE	90
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY	111

LIST OF FIGURES

1	SITE MAP OF THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS	5
2	PALACE OF FINE ARTS AND ALTAR, 1915	8
3	BERNARD MAYBECK AT BOHEMIA GROVE, 1932	10
4	FACULTY CLUB, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY	16
5	OUTDOOR ART CLUB, MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA	18
6	TOWN AND GOWN CLUB, BERKELEY	20
7	TOWN AND GOWN CLUB, BERKELEY, INTERIOR	21
8	HARBOR VIEW, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA	32
9	PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION (PPIE) MAP	36
10	COLUMN OF PROGRESS IN COURT OF SUN AND STARS	37
11	TOWER OF JEWELS AT NIGHT	38
12	COURT OF THE UNIVERSE	41
13	COURT OF ABUNDANCE	42
14	COURT OF THE FOUR SEASONS	43
15	PALACE OF HORTICULTURE	44
16	THE ZONE	46
17	PALACE OF FINE ARTS AND ALTAR, 1915	47
18	PALACE OF FINE ARTS INTERIOR EXHIBITS, 1915	48
19	AMERICAN GALLERY IN PALACE OF FINE ARTS	49
20	FUTURISTS' ROOM IN THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS	51
21	HAWAIIAN DAY AT THE PPIE	52
22	SITE OF THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS BEFORE CONSTRUCTION	54
23	DREDGING THE LAGOON	55
24	TREE PLANTING AT THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS	56

25	PALACE OF FINE ARTS FACING NORTH, 1915	57
26	ROTUNDA CEILING, 1915	58
27	PALACE OF FINE ARTS, VEIWED FROM AISLE OF SUNSET	59
28	CALIFORNIA BUILDING	62
29	COLUMN OF PROGRESS	63
30	PALACE OF FINE ARTS RUINS	74
31	DEMOLITION OF THE ORIGINAL ROTUNDA	78
32	PARTIALLY DEMOLISHED ORIGINAL ROTUNDA	79
33	MAP OF THE PRESIDIO AND PALACE OF FINE ARTS	92
34	PALACE OF FINE ARTS, 2002	97
35	PALACE OF FINE ARTS WITH GOLD ROTUNDA ROOF, 2005	97

INTRODUCTION

The Palace of Fine Arts is the result of the convergence of specific people and events, from its association with architect Bernard Maybeck, to its glorious reign at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, to the landmark campaign to save the crumbling relic during the 1950s and 1960s (some of the darkest hours for preservation in the United States). The Palace of Fine Arts has always had a special meaning to the people of San Francisco, so much so they noted the value of saving the Palace of Fine Arts long before the historic preservation movement reached its height and did so at a time when the building had no practical use. This above all speaks to the strength and beauty of the site, and is also a testament to the legacy of preservation fostered by civic pride and love of not only the Palace of Fine Arts, but all that it stood for, elevating the site from old relic to cherished heirloom.

Yet, the preservation issues surrounding San Francisco's Palace of Fine Arts present the problem of how to understand and interpret a site with a complex physical past and multiple periods of significance. In order to analyze the possibilities for the Palace of Fine Arts, one must examine the various sources of the Palace's significance. In this thesis, this is done thematically and roughly chronologically. To comprehend the meaning of the site, the Palace of Fine Arts must be understood within its various contexts. In this study, the primary source of the Palace's significance can be roughly divided into two groups: artistic and historic. Artistically, the Palace of Fine Arts is undeniably the work of a master architect; Bernard Maybeck. His contributions to architecture in the Bay Area and the world in general make the preservation of his work of the utmost importance. However, Maybeck's

architecture arose from a larger world philosophy. The Palace of Fine Arts articulates this philosophy in both what it is and what it is not.

The history of the Palace is a far more complex issue. In many ways, the story of the Palace of Fine Arts reflects the story of 20th century San Francisco. The first chapter examines the career of Palace of Fine Arts architect Bernard Maybeck. Maybeck designed the Palace of Fine Arts for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) in 1915, but while this is one of his best known works, it is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of his influence on architecture in the Bay Area and beyond. Analyzing the architect's work is crucial especially given the role of design intent in the preservation questions surrounding the Palace.

The second chapter discusses the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. The first major world's fair on the West Coast, the PPIE served to announce the "arrival" of San Francisco, and in turn, the American Frontier, as a part of the "civilized" Western world. The PPIE also served as an important rallying point for the citizens of San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. The Palace remains the only composition from the Exposition in its original location (on the former world's fair grounds). Indeed, even extant Exposition buildings moved from their original locations are extremely rare numbering no more than a few.¹ With no other architectural pieces of the PPIE extant, the Palace of Fine Arts remains the sole conveyor of this most vital period in the history of San Francisco and the nation, if not the world.

After the Fair, the Palace continued to adapt to the changes of its hometown. This is the focus of the third chapter. Thanks to the dedication of

¹ The San Francisco City Hall was also constructed for the PPIE, however, its location in downtown San Francisco, is nearly three miles outside the Exposition gates. Steve Sanders, Remnants of a Dream. <http://www.remnantsofadream.com>.

prominent citizens such as Phoebe Apperson Hearst during and immediately following the Fair, the Palace of Fine Arts, the most beloved building at the Exposition, was saved and for years served as a park, tennis court, and exhibition hall². However, the buildings of the Exposition were only designed to last for the duration of the Fair. The Palace was constructed of a burlap-based stucco called “staff,” and by the 1950s, deterioration had made the colonnade and rotunda hazardous. The Citizen’s Committee for Preservation of the Palace of Fine Arts formed in 1952 to combat the eminent loss of the architectural treasure³. The efforts of this group combined with the work of Assemblyman Caspar Weinberger and many others culminated in the reconstruction in concrete of the gallery and rotunda in the 1960s and colonnade in the 1970s.

The Palace of Fine Arts preservation effort is highly significant in a national context as it coincides with the growth of the preservation movement in America, and was an early example of a large-scale project gaining funding largely through community support. Many see the demolition of Penn Station in New York City as a watershed in the development of Preservation in America, by finally focusing attention on what could be lost without a dedication to historic sites. It is thus significant that while New York City was demolishing Penn Station, San Francisco was undertaking the painstaking reconstruction of the Palace of Fine Arts, the rationale of which was more that of civic pride and historic and aesthetic respect than any pragmatic concerns.

The mid-century preservation efforts fell short of their ideal, and the decorative exterior of the gallery building was never replaced. Aside from this

² Carey & Company, Architects, “Historic Structures Report: Palace of Fine Arts” (San Francisco, California, 1993), 7.

³ Ruth Newhall, *San Francisco’s Enchanted Palace* (Berkeley: Howell-North, 1967), 76.

aesthetic problem, a financial shortfall prevented the establishment of a Trust for the continued maintenance of the Palace. As a result, over the last 40 years the Palace has received only minimal care as one of San Francisco's more than 150 city parks. The Palace of Fine Arts actually consists of three component parts: The lagoon and landscape, the colonnade and rotunda, and the gallery, or main building (Figure 1). Today the lagoon and landscape, not included in the mid-century preservation, are in need of serious rehabilitation and the rotunda and colonnade both require seismic strengthening and general cleanup including graffiti, biological growth, and animal deposit removal. Finally, moisture in the rotunda roof has caused significant loss in structural integrity as portions of the ceiling have begun to dislodge and fall to the ground.

After examining the history of the site, it is possible to discuss the current state of the Palace and make decisions about its future needs. The Palace of Fine Arts is currently a San Francisco Historic Landmark, but is not listed nationally. This is in part because the rotunda, colonnade, and gallery building are reconstructions only recognized by the National Register criteria as dating to the 1960s and 70s, and thus do not meet the fifty year requirement.

Given its complex history, the Palace of Fine Arts has several possible paths to listing on the National Register, one of which is listing under the category of cultural landscape. Chapter four discusses process by which the Palace has been nominated to the National Register. It also examines the role of cultural landscapes in historic preservation, posing questions about the definition of cultural landscapes, and suggesting possible draw-backs and benefits to the application of this preservation category.

Sources: 2000 aerial photograph,
2002 topographic survey, 1963
reconstruction plans.

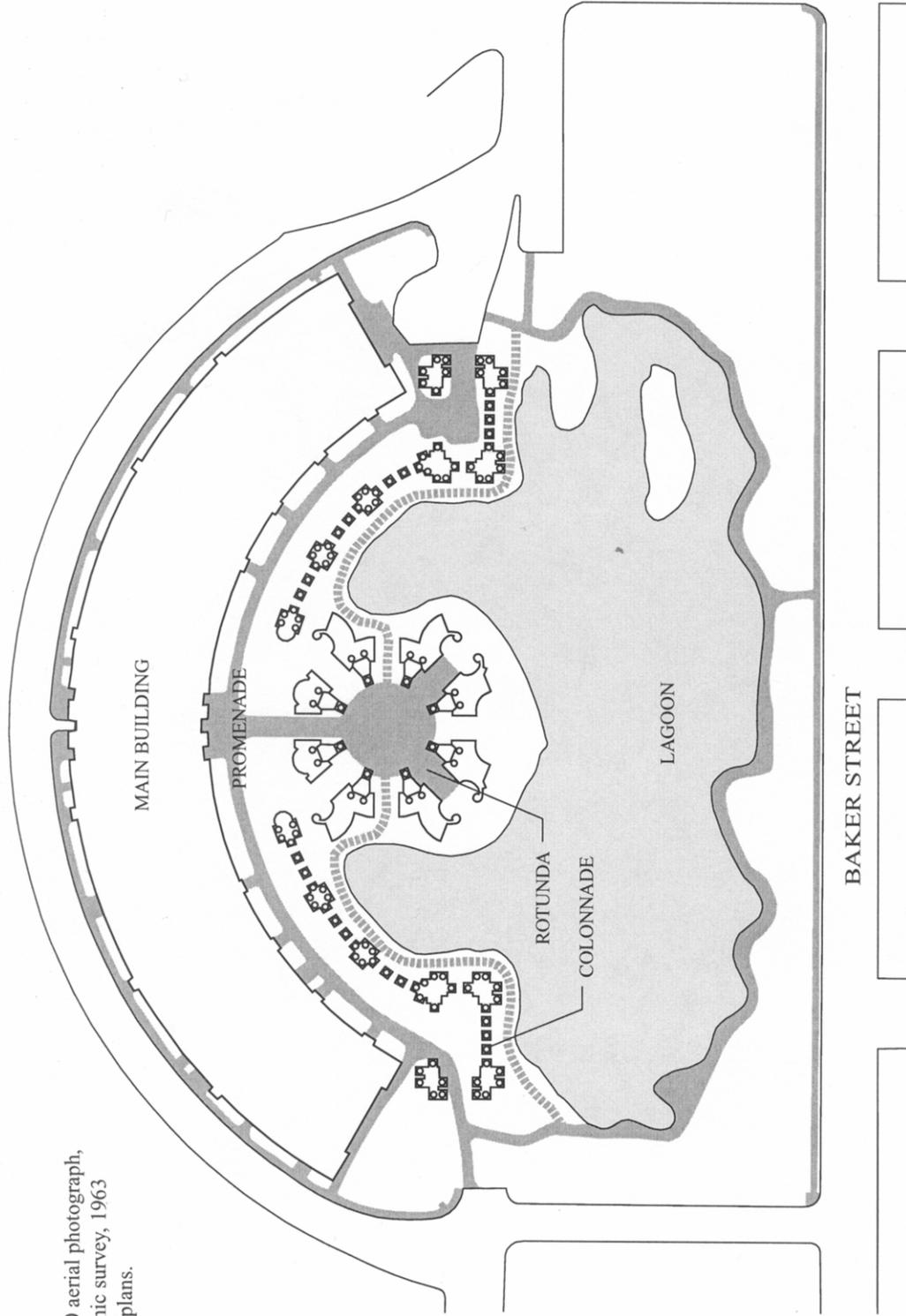


Figure 1. Site Map of the Palace of Fine Arts, 2003 (photo: Historic Landscape Report)

Chapter five explores the current physical state of the Palace of Fine Arts. This state, however, is rapidly changing as yet another campaign is presently underway to provide structural stabilization, landscape “improvements,” and various other treatments to the site. This chapter therefore also analyses these efforts in terms of their progress and relationship to the historic elements of the Palace.

Chapter six presents the conclusions of this study. In order to provide a context for these conclusions, this chapter first supplies a brief summary of the thesis. Finally, drawing from the conclusions, the thesis offers recommendations for the future.

CHAPTER ONE

BERNARD MAYBECK

“Ever free in spirit: Ever seeking a sad feeling. A hunger of an artists after beauty. A hunger that is never satisfied”.—He has created the sturdy beginnings of an architecture truly representative of American life in a civilization, we hope, to be ever pioneering. Inspired to further seekings “We too take ship, O Soul!”

--Dedication on American Institute of Architects’
Gold Medal of Honor, awarded to
Bernard Maybeck, 1951

Introduction

When discussing the historic and aesthetic merit of the Palace, it is essential to note its status as the “work of a master,” to study the work of its creator, and examine the relationship between the master and the masterpiece. Upon first seeing the Palace of Fine Arts (Figure 2), Thomas Edison commented, “The man that designed that building is a genius.” This is quite a compliment coming from the man who invented the phonograph and the electric light bulb. At the time of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, Bernard Maybeck was still a virtually unknown architect. Even after the unveiling of his masterpiece, subsequently visited by hundreds of thousands of people during the fair, Maybeck never became the household name that relative contemporaries, Fredrick Law Olmsted, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Louis Sullivan, were. The preservation of his masterpiece, the Palace of



Figure 2. Palace of Fine Arts and Altar, 1915. There is no record of when the altar was removed (photo: San Francisco Public Library Historic Image Archive)

Fine Arts, can be only very slightly attributed to it being “A Maybeck;⁴” however, both the adoration of the Palace and its resulting preservation are directly linked to the emotional effect of the of the site. Few other sites possess the emotional power of the Palace of Fine Arts, and this, the key strength of the Palace, cannot be viewed independent of its architect. In writing about the Palace, Bernard Maybeck spoke of music and art, solemnity and beauty. Nearly ninety years later, that Palace still strikes visitors with these same abstract yet powerful sentiments. Maybeck was both a transcendentalist and medievalist (Figure 3). His commitment to these ideals in architecture set him apart as a master. The Palace of Fine Arts represents one of the most highly developed and certainly the most well-known examples of the fascinating work and thought of Bernard Maybeck. Thus, it would be impossible to understand the Palace without first examining its creator. This chapter will provide a brief overview of Maybeck’s career.

In one photograph of all the architects of the PPIE in fashionable evening dress, top hats, and fancy suits, Bernard Maybeck hardly stands out until ones examines the feet of the illustrious crowd to note that a man on the far left is not wearing the same black leather shoes as the other men, but instead, sandals. Jefferey Limerick comments that early on that Maybeck’s “odd suits cut to his own design...his vegetarianism and idea about healthful living, and the odd rustic north Berkeley farmhouse he was remodeling for his family all gained him a reputation as an eccentric.”

⁴ Maybeck’s other masterpiece, First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Berkeley, CA, tends to have a somewhat greater association with the Maybeck name. First Church is designated as a National Historic Landmark (N #77000283, Dec 22,1977). Susan Cerny, “First Church of Christ, Scientist,” Berkeley Landmarks, Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, http://www.berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/landmarks1-100.html.

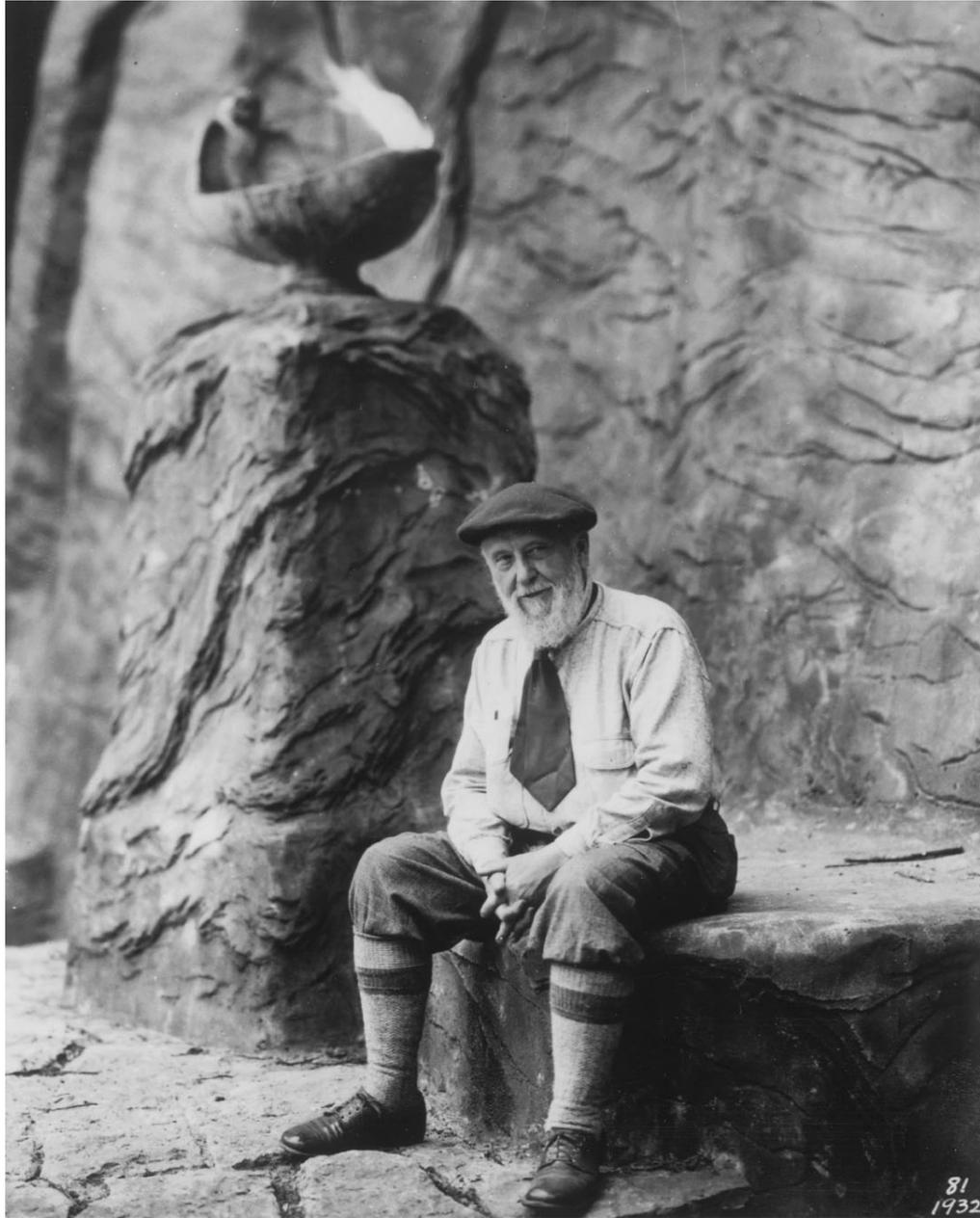


Figure 3. Bernard Maybeck at Bohemia Grove, 1932.
(photo: San Francisco Public Library Historic Image Archive)

The eccentricity noted in so many Maybeck anecdotes, is also a driving force behind Maybeck architecture. Maybeck's ingenuity and individuality mark nearly all of his work and are evident in virtually every aspect of his design.

Early Years

The son of German immigrants in New York, "Ben's" artistic inclinations received encouragement from an early age. In describing Maybeck's youth, historian Kenneth Cardwell says:

He was backed by a broad liberal education, which had been supplemented by discussions of art, politics, and philosophy at home with the friends of his father and grandfather. He had skills in drawing and sketching through the constant practice required by his father, and his apprenticeship...taught him the fundamentals of descriptive geometry, plus the invaluable experience of seeing drawings take three-dimensional form in the shop. Perhaps most important, his philosophical idealism was established. All that he would see, all that he would learn in Europe, would be tempered by the prevailing German transcendental metaphysics that he had been exposed to in his youth.⁵

After pursuing a college education at the College of the City of New York, Maybeck apprenticed at the firm of Pottier and Stymus "running errands and making tracings of shop drawings. However, his propensity for daydreaming and his youthful enthusiasm for improving the designs put before

⁵ Kenneth Cardwell, *Bernard Maybeck: Artisan, Architect, Artist* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1977), 17.

him” enhanced the dissatisfaction of both Maybeck and his supervisor. Seeking to help his son, Bernhardt Maybeck arranged for Ben to go to Paris in order to study with Pottier’s brother.⁶

In 1882, one year after arriving in Paris, Maybeck entered the École des Beaux-Arts. At the École, Maybeck studied under historian Henri Lemmonier who espoused the virtues of medieval architecture and Jules Andre, who encourage Maybeck to follow the example of former pupil H. H. Richardson in adapting his work to “use the École method of design and modern technology to create new buildings suited to American conditions.”⁷

Five years later, he would return to New York City having completed enough work to merit the *diplome* from the École and gained invaluable training and experience.⁸ Upon returning to America, Maybeck worked sporadically in various parts of the country before finally departing for San Francisco and getting a job in the office of Wright and Sanders.⁹ Thus, in 1890, Bernard Maybeck arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area and began to revolutionize regional architecture.

An Architecture of Ideals

Harold Kriker, author of *California’s Architectural Frontier* goes so far as to claim that “the tradition of California immigration...attracted a body of architects to California...Chief among these was Bernard Maybeck, a graduate of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts [sic], recipient of the Gold Medal of the American

⁶ Jeffrey Limerick, “Bernard Maybeck,” in *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts and Crafts Architects of California*, ed. Robert Winter (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley Press: 1997), 51. Cardwell, 23.

⁷ Limerick, 52.

⁸ The École did not award the *diplome* to foreign students until the following year. Cardwell, 19.

⁹ Cardwell, 26.

Institute of Architects, and creator of the Bay Area style.”¹⁰ The claim of Maybeck as originator of the “Bay Area style” is a somewhat common one. In the notes for an exhibition of Maybeck’s work by the California Redwood Association in 1973, architectural historian James Ackerman stated that “No one has done more to give form to the special culture of central California: his testament is far more than the buildings he left us; it is a language that has inspired the architectural development of the entire region.”¹¹

In the preface to his 1904 work, *The Simple Home*, Charles Keeler comments that “a simpler, a truer, a more vital art expression is now taking place in California.” The book advances the notion of a specific California (perhaps, more specifically, Bay Area or even Berkeley) style of architecture related to the Arts and Crafts movement. Keeler’s aim is “to emphasize the gospel of the simple life, to scatter broadcast the faith in simple beauty, to make prevalent the conviction that we must live art before we can create it.”¹²

The Arts and Craft’s mission, as stated by Keeler is:

Let the work be simple and genuine, with regard to proportion and harmony of color; let it be an individual expression of the life which it is to environ, conceived with loving care for the use of the family. Eliminate in so far as possible all factory-made accessories in order that your dwelling may not be typical of American commercial supremacy, but rather your own fondness for things that have been created as a response to your love of that which is good and simple

¹⁰ Harold Kriker, *California’s Architectural Frontier: Style and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1970), 88.

¹¹ As quoted in Gray Brechin et al., National Register Nomination for the Palace of Fine Arts, 2004.

¹² Robert Winter, *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts and Crafts Architects of California* (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley Press, 1997), 3-4.

and fit for daily companionship. Far better that your surroundings be rough and crude in detail, provided that they are a vital expression conceived as part of a harmonious scheme, than that they be finished with mechanical precision and lacking in general character. Beware the gloss that covers over the sham.¹³

Charles Keeler dedicated *The Simple Home* to Bernard Maybeck as “my friend and counselor,” and lived in a Maybeck-designed home. While architectural historian Robert Winter argues that Keller’s book is not wholly in agreement with Maybeck’s “peculiar style,” many of the ideas behind the Arts and Crafts movement in the Bay Area both affected and were influenced by Bernard Maybeck.

Maybeck’s work embodied a unique combination of modernism and anachronism. According to architect Jeffrey Limerick, Maybeck “considered himself to be a modern architect, using modern materials and adapting his work to the patterns of modern life, he believed that the cause of beauty was best served by putting new technology into the capable hands of good craftsmen.”¹⁴ Other sources, however, claim that Maybeck saw himself as a medieval architect.¹⁵ Given Maybeck’s particular style, these seemingly contradictory interpretations are indeed simultaneously possible. Architectural historian Marcus Whiffen states that Maybeck and the Greene brothers were

¹³ Charles Keeler, *The Simple Home* (San Francisco: Elder, 1904), 2.

¹⁴ Limerick, 51.

¹⁵ Architectural Resources Group. Historic Structures Report: First Church of Christ, Scientist, Berkeley, California (2003), 4.

hailed as pioneers of modern architecture—somewhat to their dismay, since they had no liking for most of what went under that name.”¹⁶

It is also interesting to note that while Bernard Maybeck is known primarily for his work that is closer to the Arts and Crafts style, Whiffen claims that only, “two architects of real originality did work in the Mission style...Bernard Maybeck[’s] Men’s Faculty Club at the University of California, Berkeley, designed in 1900, is one of the few masterpieces of the style (Figure 4).”¹⁷

Richard Longstreth presents one of the best descriptions of Maybeck’s approach to design in his book, *On the Edge of the World*,¹ which can be best summed up in the statement “More important to him than any aesthetic objective was how people responded to architecture.”¹⁸ Longstreth also links Maybeck with Charles Keeler, a member of the Hillside Club, a local group that endorsed a specific vision for the planning and architecture of Berkeley. Maybeck himself worked with and for the Hillside Club, in 1906 designing its headquarters, in 1907 writing a pamphlet “on hillside residential architecture,” and in 1909-1910 as the organization’s president. According to Longstreth, the Hillside Club promoted the notion that “the Berkeley home should be...rustic, picturesque, commodious, unobtrusive” and was one that “respected the setting and reflected a moralistic attitude toward life.”¹⁹

Despite this difficulty in locating the architecture of Bernard Maybeck within a particular style—or perhaps because of it—on a stroll through the hills

¹⁶ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), 211-212.

¹⁷ Whiffen, 216.

¹⁸ Richard Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World: Four Architects in San Francisco as the Turn of the Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 316.

¹⁹ Longstreth, 313-314.



Figure 4. (Men's) Faculty Club, University of California, Berkeley, 1902. (O. V. Lange Photographer, Cardwell, 78)

of Berkeley or the Forest Hill area of San Francisco, it is not difficult to pick out a “Maybeck.” Notable aspects of Maybeck’s architecture include exposed structural components on the interior, contrasted by what Longstreth characterizes as an exterior that provides “no hint to the structural form, a major break with historical precedent. Speaking of the Keeler House, Longstreth goes on to describe the interior, “few examples of wooden architecture in the United States have a structure that is so integral and intricate a part of the spatial order...the posts and connecting rafters, extending well below the wall plates, create a veritable forest of timberwork, at once elemental and elegant, lofty and compact, structural and decorative.”²⁰

Marcus Whiffen classifies what others dub the Bay Area or Bay Region style, as the Western Stick Style. About the adoption of former term, he states “geographically it was hardly accurate, but there was much talk about the desirability of regionalism at the time and the term soon achieved international currency.” Whiffen sees the Western Stick Style as simultaneously a “development from the Shingle Style” and “a continuation of the Stick Style,” as well as possibly “an application of the principles of the Picturesque to the special conditions of the West.”²¹

According to Whiffen, “emphatic expression of wood-framed structure in conjunction with accentuation of the horizontal” are key characteristics of the Western Stick Style (Figure 5). The roofs of these buildings tend to have “broad and gentle pitch; the eaves are of great projection” highlighted by exposed, overhanging rafters and purlins and “more or less elaborate brackets constructed of straight stick work.” Western Stick structures are usually clad in

²⁰ Ibid., 319.

²¹ Whiffen, 210-212.

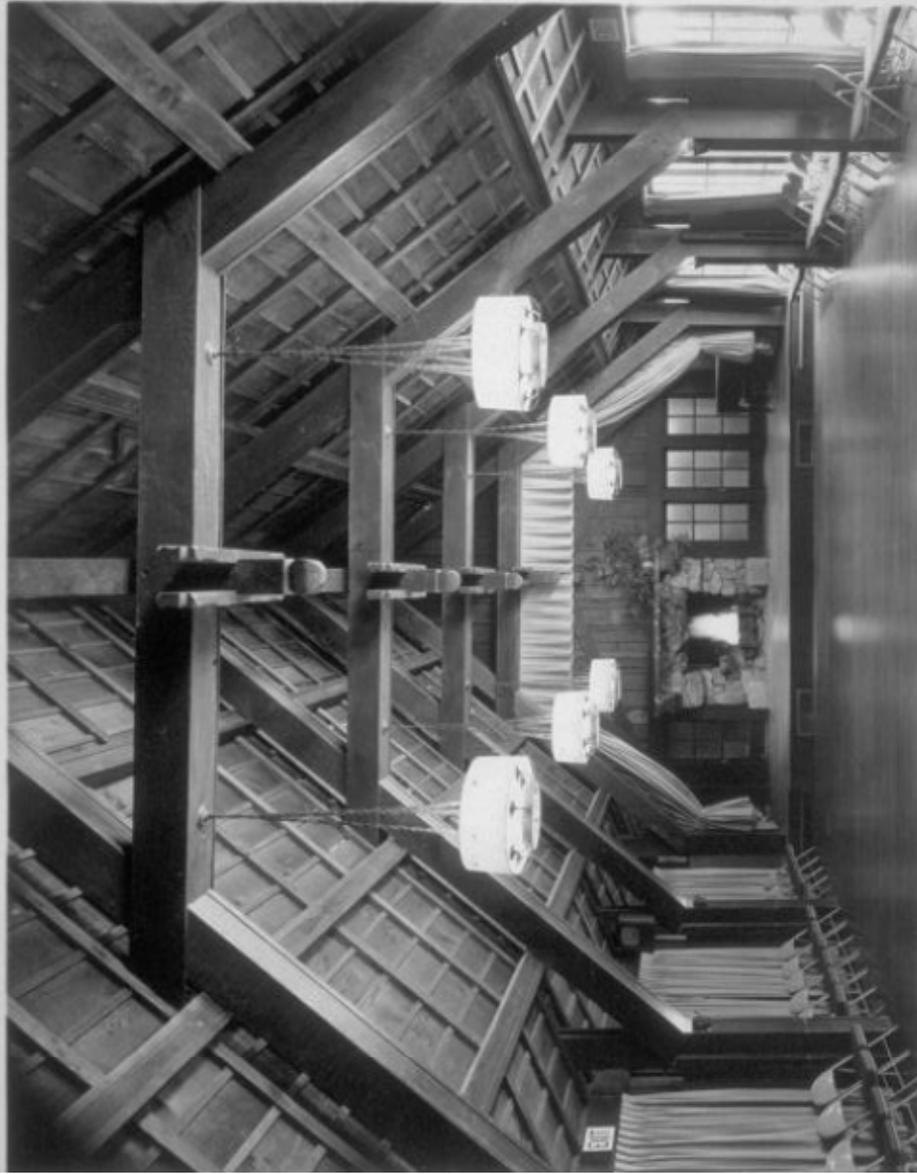


Figure 5. Outdoor Art Club, Mill Valley, California, 1904 (Roy Flamm Photographs of Buildings Designed by Bernard Maybeck, ca. 1950-1955, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

either wood shingle (in older examples) or “vertical boards and battens in the more recent.” Whiffen further finds, “departures for the rectilinear, in either plan or elevation, are rare,” but notes, “this does not...preclude a free adaptation of the plan to the site.”²²

This description of the Western Stick Style does indeed ring true for much of Bernard Maybeck’s architecture, and thus it is not surprising that Whiffen hails Maybeck as “the leading master of the style in the San Francisco region.” He also cites specifically the “extreme lightness of membering” prominent in many Maybeck buildings, especially the Berkeley Town and Gown Club, as a marker of the outstanding work of Bernard Maybeck (Figures 6 and 7).²³

Maybeck and the PPIE

Today, the genius of Bernard Maybeck is a matter of very little debate. In 1951 he was awarded the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects. In a 1948 *Life* profile of Maybeck, Winthrop Sargeant wrote, “In the international architectural world, his reputation nudges Frank Lloyd Wright’s. European theorists of building have long considered him one of three or four architects worth talking about.”²⁴ However, while he was practicing (through the late 1930s) Maybeck’s “striking individuality”²⁵ was less well received; thus Maybeck was excluded from the list of architects for the PPIE. Until this point,

²² *Ibid.*, 209.

²³ *Ibid.*, 211.

²⁴ Cardwell 235. Winthrop Sargeant, “Bernard Maybeck” *Life* (17 May 1948), 45.

²⁵ William Warren Ferrier, *Berkeley, California: The Story of the Evolution of a Hamlet into a City of Culture and Commerce* (Berkeley: Published by the author, 1933), 249.

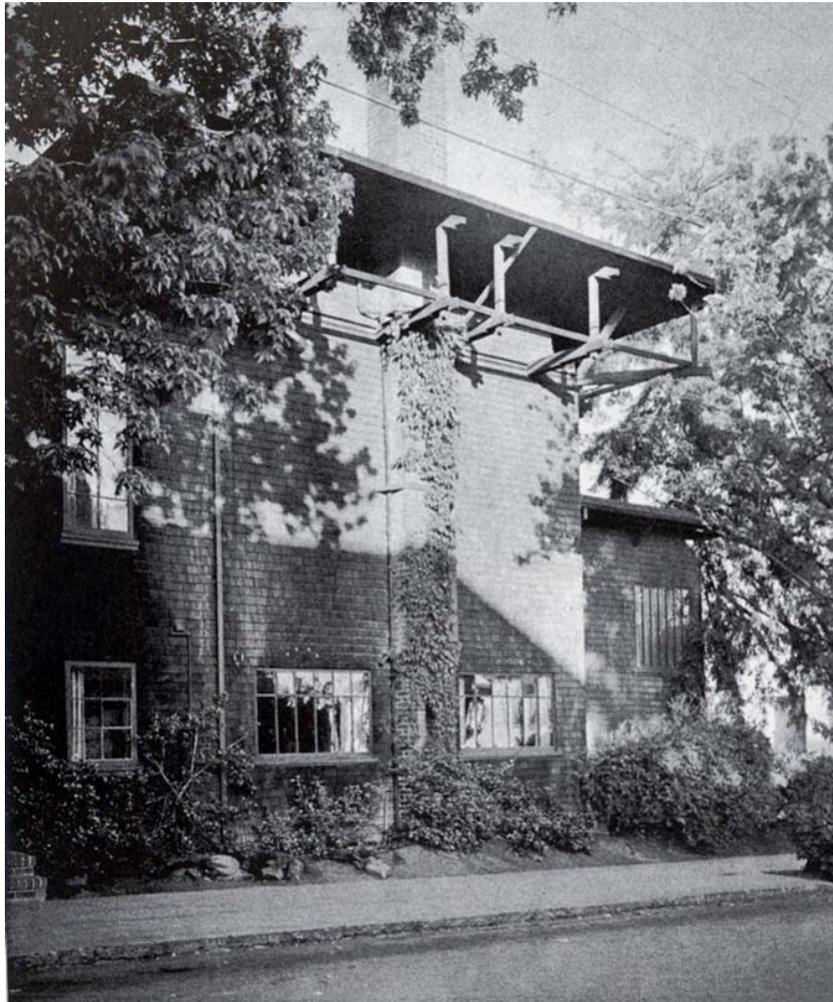


Figure 6. Town and Gown Club, Berkeley, California, 1899
(Stone and Stecatti photographers, Cardwell, 62)



Figure 7. Interior, Town and Gown Club, Berkeley, California, 1899 (Stone and Stecatti photographers, Cardwell, 63)

Maybeck had no real large-scale experience—his work was primarily residential in scale. As he told Kenneth Cardwell in 1950, “I hadn’t even done a warehouse.”²⁶

As is often true with Bernard Maybeck, the story of how he came to design the most beloved and only surviving architectural composition of the PPIE is filled with contradictions, and at once the culmination of random circumstances while also the result of fate. Of course, the true impetus for the creation of the Palace of Fine Arts was the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, an event at once celebrating the connection of the Atlantic and Pacific and the independence and ability of the West, specifically the city of San Francisco. In many way it seems only fitting that Bernard Maybeck, a pioneer of an architectural style combining national design trends, and a classical vocabulary with local materials and spirit would create the crowning jewel of the Exposition simultaneously celebrating these same ideas of current events, tradition, and the City of San Francisco.

²⁶ This is not wholly true. For a chronological listing of Maybeck’s work see Cardwell.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

To San Franciscans the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915 is more than a memory. Something of transcendent beauty was created—an ideal for a few months became a reality. And about the accomplishment grew sentiment and pride that have lasted through the years, through the magic city itself long since vanished into the realms of memory and dreams...Of all that man-made wonderland of architecture and landscaping...this lone relic, but loveliest of them all, remains.

--SF Chronicle November 16, 1931

Introduction

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 ranks with Chicago's 1893 Colombia Exhibition, St. Louis' 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the 1939 Century of Progress Fair in New York, and a select few others, as one of the largest, most successful, and influential of all World's Fairs. The PPIE also holds the distinction of being the first World's Fair to be a financial success. The PPIE remains a significant event in the history of the City of San Francisco, the United States, and the 20th century.

This is true for many reasons. First, all of the changes in technology, art, architecture, and city planning that had been gaining momentum during the waning years of the Victorian Era were demonstrated in their advanced states at the Exposition. The function of World's Fairs as showcases of the

new and exciting facilitated the dissemination of knowledge about the developments and thus allowed for a clear shift from old to new.

Second, the Exposition was held as the Great War (World War I) ravaged Europe. This War has often been portrayed as that in which the innocence of the world was lost. This theme is reflected in the publicity and even design of the Exposition. The War had a terrific impact on nearly every aspect of life in America and Europe, and even two years before direct American intervention in the Great War; this was the case with the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

Finally, the 1915 Exposition confirmed the full maturity and technological ability of the American West. San Francisco, non-existent seventy years earlier and devastated by the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake was able to rebuild itself in less than a decade. The 1915 Exposition was an important rallying point for the city and certainly facilitated at least part of the westward migration of Americans in the post-Victorian Era.

Perhaps the best articulation of the pride, hope, and meaning of the PPIE for Californians comes from Bernard Maybeck in the conclusion to a 1915 booklet titled "The Palace of Fine Arts and Lagoon:"

This paper was written to point out one of the phases of the Fair, in the hope that people will realize that such a group is not a conglomeration of soulless buildings dolled up in holiday attire like the palatial palace of Broadway pictures, but that in the Panama-Pacific International Exposition is expressed that life of the people of California. It has its geographic stamp just as the architecture of Tibet has its geographic reason for being. This same group could not have happened in Boston or India

When people of California visit the grounds they should think of the fact that the Fair is an expression of future California cities, and although the columns of the courts will not appear in the buildings on Market street, nor the triumphal arches appear in the residence part of their towns, the future city of California will have the same general feeling; because it will be a California city.²⁷

This pride was very much a guiding principle behind the entire organization of the Fair and evident not only the advertising rhetoric hoping to draw people to attend, it was also used as a means through which to attract financial support. Ultimately, the notion of civic pride became part of the Exposition itself as it inspired the architecture of the PPIE. This chapter chronicles the history of the PPIE from its initial proposal through its final closure in December of 1915.

The Beginnings of World's Fairs

The first true "World's Fair" was held in London's Hyde Park in 1851. The entire fair was contained in the nineteen-acre Crystal Palace. According to historian Burton Benedict:

The Palace itself was a product of mass production, with its twenty-four miles of guttering, 330 standardized iron columns, 250,000 sash bars, and 293, 655 panes of glass. Some thirty nations sent exhibits, and more than six million people were admitted during the 141 days the Exhibition was open.²⁸

The Crystal Palace Exhibition sent the precedent for all subsequent World's Fairs of grand displays highlighting the vitality of the host city

²⁷ Bernard Maybeck, *Palace of Fine Arts and Lagoon* (San Francisco: Elder, 1915), 4.

²⁸ Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs* (Berkeley: Scolar, 1983), 1

and of society as a whole. With such an impressive beginning, it is understandable that World's Fairs soon became events of international import.

Benedict describes World's Fairs as "phenomena of industrial capitalism," and sites where both goods and ideas were actively bought and sold. The ideas sold at the Fairs were as diverse as the products, but Benedict characterizes them as "ideas about the relations between nations, the spread of education, the advancement of science, the form of cities, the nature of domestic life, the place of art in society."²⁹ The designers often advanced these ideas through the physical makeup of the Fairs. Perhaps above all else, World's Fairs advanced the notion of an orderly society and an ideal world. This was certainly the case for the City of San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915.

Celebrating a City

The idea of celebrating and showcasing their city was paramount in the minds of San Franciscans even before the Great Earthquake, when in 1904 the Panama-Pacific International Exposition was first proposed by R.B. Hale to the Merchant's Association of San Francisco. Hale suggested the use of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis as a financial model for a San Francisco Exposition to commemorate the completion of the Panama Canal in 1915. In a book published in 1915, John D. Barry explains the development of the Fair. Outlining Hale's proposal, Barry suggests the financial plan was that "five million dollars should be raised by popular

²⁹ Ibid.

subscription, five million dollars should be asked for from the State, and five million dollars should be provided by city bonds.”³⁰

According to Barry, the plan was immediately embraced, a board of governors formed, and a bill for the appropriation of \$5 million was drafted in the U.S. Congress. Eventually, however, the bill died in committee. Seemingly undaunted, Hale rethought the 1915 Exposition and changed the proposed date, pushing it up two years to 1913 in order to coincide with the four hundredth anniversary of the Francisco Balboa’s “discovery” of the Pacific Ocean.

All plans came to a halt with the Great Earthquake and fire in 1906. In the wake of the disaster, San Franciscans’ redirected all of their energies to the rebuilding of the city. However, this halt was only momentary. While most predictions saw the completion of this task at least ten, but it was more likely to be 25 years in the future. Only nine months after the disaster the Panama-Pacific Company incorporated. Within three years, Hale had marshaled the support of many local business leaders, and the date was set for the San Francisco Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915.³¹

Louis Christian Mullgardt, architect of the Court of Ages and member of the Exposition’s Architectural Commission, saw the pre-1906 inhabitants of the city as members of distinct groups. Mullgardt classifies one group as “the great number of men and women [who] packed their goods and chattels and hastily bade farewell to the still smoking ruins of the City That Was, firmly

³⁰ John D. Barry, *The City of Domes: A Walk with an Architect About the Courts and Palaces of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition with A Discussion of Its Architecture, Its Sculpture, Its Mural Decorations, and Its Lighting, Preceded by a History of Its Growth* (San Francisco: Blair-Murdock, 1915), 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*

believing that it should remain forever buried in its own ashes.”³² Mullgardt sites the coexistence of strong class of optimists who predicated the renaissance of the city—in twenty to thirty years. Fortunately, there was also a third group “who knew by observation that it required no more time to build ten buildings than one, provided the Spirit of Energy and Determination existed, to fortify the desire.”³³

John D. Barry reports that in 1909, “as many as twenty-five hundred letters were sent out to businessmen, asking if they favored the idea of holding an exposition. Out of eight hundred replies only seven were opposed.”³⁴ Straight to the point, local architect Ernest Coxhead stated the city’s primary goal in hosting the Exposition was to “interest the world in our resources, we want them to stay here, invest their money here, and help us to develop the untouched unparalleled resources that lie at our hands.”³⁵ Indeed, it was excitement surrounding the Exposition and the opportunity it offered to showoff the city that rushed the completion of the Civic Auditorium, then called the Exposition and City Hall.³⁶ Thus, early on the enthusiasm surrounding the coming Exposition served to rally the spirits of San Franciscans hoping to return to the growth and prosperity so prominent in their city only a few years earlier.

³² Louis Christian Mullgardt, *The Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition: A Pictorial Survey of the most Beautiful of the Architectural Compositions of the Panama-Pacific Exposition*, (San Francisco: Elder, 1915), 3.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Barry, 2.

³⁵ As quoted in Gray Brechin, “Sailing to Byzantium” in *The Anthropology of World’s Fairs*, ed. Burton Benedict (Berkeley: Scholar, 1983), 98.

³⁶ Ibid., 97.

Planning the Jewel City

Before the physical planning of the Exposition could take place, Panama-Pacific Company had to determine its administrative structure and, specifically, select a president. The selection of the president was certainly reflective of the times. The concern that the operations of the company be clean and free of graft and patronage is understandable given the Progressive Era politics and rhetoric of the early twentieth century. San Francisco businessman, Charles C. Moore was chosen by the Exposition Company for reasons that include, as John D. Barry contends, “besides being able and energetic, he was agreeable to the factions created by the graft prosecution of a half dozen years before.”³⁷ Moore stipulated that as president he would insure that “in the conduct of the work there should be no patronage” and agreed with the directors that appointments would be based on “merit alone” (another fairly new concept given the relatively recent rise of industrialism).³⁸

The next item to be determined was the selection of the site. There was much debate surrounding this issue and three sites were initially determined: Lake Merced, Golden Gate Park that had held the Midwinter’s Fair of 1894, and Harbor View in what is now the Marina district of the City. Lake Merced was soon dismissed for its location which simultaneously made transportation of materials difficult and seemed too distant from both the ocean and the bay to hold an Exposition celebrating the Pacific Ocean. The original plan drafted by the directors of the Exposition in July 1911 “caused general surprise” says Barry, as it proposed three sites:

³⁷ Barry, 4.

³⁸ Ibid.

Harbor View and a strip of the adjoining the Presidio, Golden Gate Park and Lincoln Park, connected by a boulevard, specially constructed to skirt the bay from the ferry to the ocean. The plan proved to be somewhat romantic. The boulevard alone, it was estimated, would cost eighteen million dollars.³⁹

Although this design was not ever adopted, the influence of the city beautiful movement on the planning of the exhibition is significant. The inclusion of a boulevard without any serious regard for the cost it would incur certainly hints at the influence of the Beaux Arts Movement that celebrated order, wide boulevards and the centralized power they represented.

Assistant city engineer, Harris D. H. Connick, eventually named the Exposition's Director of Works, made a preliminary survey of the Harbor View site and determined it to be the most "economical" of the proposed sites and the best option for many reasons. It was determined to be within walking distance (two miles) of nearly half of the citizen of San Francisco. The Harbor View location also drastically reduced the cost of transporting materials, primarily lumber, through the city as the site had its own docks. The one trouble of the Harbor View site would be filling the ponds in the swamp-like area, but this was minimal compared to the estimated cost of clearing Golden Gate Park. Harbor View and the Presidio were soon adopted as the site of the Exposition.⁴⁰

Louis Christian Mullgardt, architect of the Court of Ages and member of the Exposition's Architectural Commission, comments in his introduction to The Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition that initially

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Harbor View seemed a poor choice. While he echoes the beliefs of Connick stating that the site was “beautiful in its surroundings and most convenient alike to its citizens and visitors,” he also noted that “it was disorderly and uninteresting to look at...It consisted of a pond and a strip of waste land, apparently destined to remain unfilled and disorderly for years to come.”⁴¹ In order to make the site usable, nearly 150 buildings had to be removed (Figure 8).⁴² In addition, more than three hundred acres on the 635-acre site had to be filled. This spanned a full year, cost nearly \$9 million, and required “two million cubic yards of mud and sand, and the building of an elaborate system of sewers.”⁴³ The Exposition made the land permanently usable and today the Marina district contains some of the most expensive and highly coveted land in San Francisco, the nation’s most expensive real estate market.

During this time, Charles C. Moore went to work determining the architects and thus the eventual design of the Exposition. To this end, he called a meeting with the more than 250 members of the San Francisco Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and asked them to select twelve representatives. From this number, he proposed to appoint five as the Exposition’s architectural board. Moore indeed completed this process of selection, but the board evolved into what was finally the Architectural Commission. The Commission consisted of W.B. Faville, Arthur Brown, George W. Kelham, Louis Christian Mullgardt, and Clarence R. Ward of San Francisco; Robert Farquhar of Los Angeles; Carrere & Hastings, McKim, Mead, & White, and Henry Bacon, all of New York. The Commission drafted

⁴¹ Mullgardt, 4.

⁴² According to Ruth Newhall, these buildings ranged “from squatters’ shacks to a fifty-room guest house, from bars to a shipyard.” Newhall, 10.

⁴³ Barry, 6. Brechin, 97.

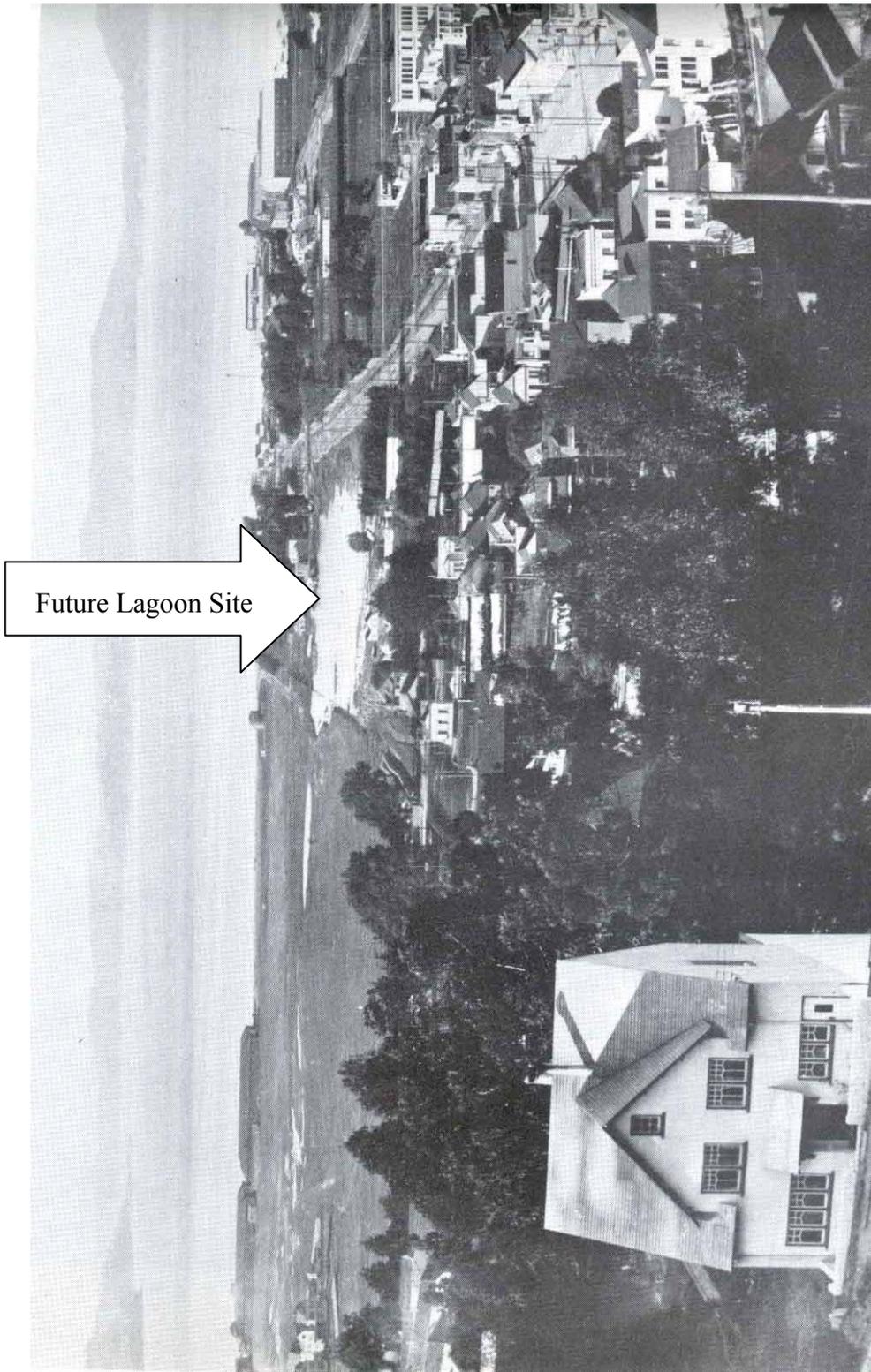


Figure 8. Harbor View, future site of the PPIE c1913. Central swampy area would become the Palace of Fine Arts' Lagoon (photo: Newhall 10)

the initial plans for the Exposition, and afterward George W. Kelham was named the Exposition's Chief of Architecture.⁴⁴

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition's design is often called the block or court plan. The Architectural Commission selected this layout for several reasons. First, President Charles C. Moore held the common belief that the buildings of the St. Louis Fair had been too far apart.⁴⁵ This was significant in that San Francisco even today is only slightly more than 50 square miles, and the need to maximize space within the City is a never-ending concern.

In addition, the increasing impact of the City Beautiful Movement influenced the tastes of leaders involved in architecture and planning. Indeed, upon visiting the Exposition in 1915, Edmund Wilson, who would eventually write a vast study of the movement, commented to a friend that the Exposition "is architecturally so successful that it at once raises the question why, if American architects can build temporary buildings as good as this, can't they build permanent ones of the same kind." Finally, City Beautiful minded Wilson states that "a great lesson should be learned from this Exposition! I look forward to the regeneration of America by means of architecture."⁴⁶

Architects of the Exposition also took the climate of San Francisco, with its seemingly ceaseless wind and fog as well as frequent rain, into consideration. Wishing to downplay these aspects of the city, the architects devised a plan utilizing the structures of the Exposition as a shield from the elements.

⁴⁴ Barry, 6. Mullgardt, 5.

⁴⁵ Barry, 6.

⁴⁶ Brechin, 95.

The plan that was finally accepted, called for “buildings arranged in four blocks, joined by covered corridors and surrounded by a wall, with three central courts and two half-courts in the south wall.”⁴⁷ Finally, the Exposition Company contracted twelve buildings with “each designed to illustrate an epoch of architecture, ranging from the severity of the early classic to the ornate French Renaissance of to-day.”⁴⁸ Barry asserts that in order to unify such diverse architectural styles, the architects purposed the used of color inspired by the Asian, Mexican, and Spanish influences within the region.⁴⁹

According to Gray Brechin, architectural historian and professor of geography at the University of California, Berkeley, the court plan of the 1915 Exposition was “one of the most brilliant layouts ever created for a world’s fair.”⁵⁰ Brechin cites the Chicago exposition of 1893, with its use of the Beaux-Arts style architecture, and plan along major and minor axes as influential in the City Beautiful thought, and there is no question that this plan affected the layout of many subsequent fairs. Brechin however states that at 1915 Exhibition “eight major exhibition palaces were tightly arranged around three major inner courts and five minor forecourts.” He asserts that “this compact plan, in which space becomes the positive element and buildings simply a neutral infill” was an innovation in its own right.⁵¹

Realizing the Dream

The overall layout of the Exposition divided the space mainly according to function. The central area held the Palaces of Agriculture, Liberal Arts,

⁴⁷ Barry, 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Brechin, 97.

⁵¹ Ibid, 99.

Manufacturers, Transportation, Education and Social Economy, Food Products, Mines and Metallurgy, and Varied Industries (Figure 9). The major axis of the Exposition ran roughly east-west along the Aisles of Spring, the Setting Sun and the Rising Sun with the Palace of Fine Arts and Lagoon on the west end and the Palace of Machinery to the east.

Standing on the north and south end of the wide cross axis were the Column of Progress and Tower of Jewels respectively (Figures 10 and 11). Other major structures located within this area, but less prominently featured include the Palace of Horticulture, the Fountain of Energy, and Festival Hall, all on the south end. Many of the building not included in the central eight Palaces were topped with domes to add visual cohesion and tie them in with the eight main Palaces. This central region was labeled “The City of Domes” or “Jewel City.”⁵²

Spanning the space between the palaces, at the intersections of the major and minor axes were elaborate courts. At the heart of the district was the Court of the Universe. Surrounding this main courts were the Courts of Ages (later renamed the Court of Abundance), Flowers, Palms, and the Four Seasons. Commenting on the design of the Exposition, Morton Todd, the official historian of the Exposition stated that “adornment commonly associated with interiors of buildings was lavished on the exterior to make courts, so that the plan presented the aspect of an Exposition ‘turned inside-out.’”⁵³

⁵² Juliet James, “Ground plan of the 1915 San Francisco Panama Pacific International Exposition,” Palaces and Courts of the Exposition. San Francisco, 1915.

⁵³ As quoted by Brechin, 97-98.

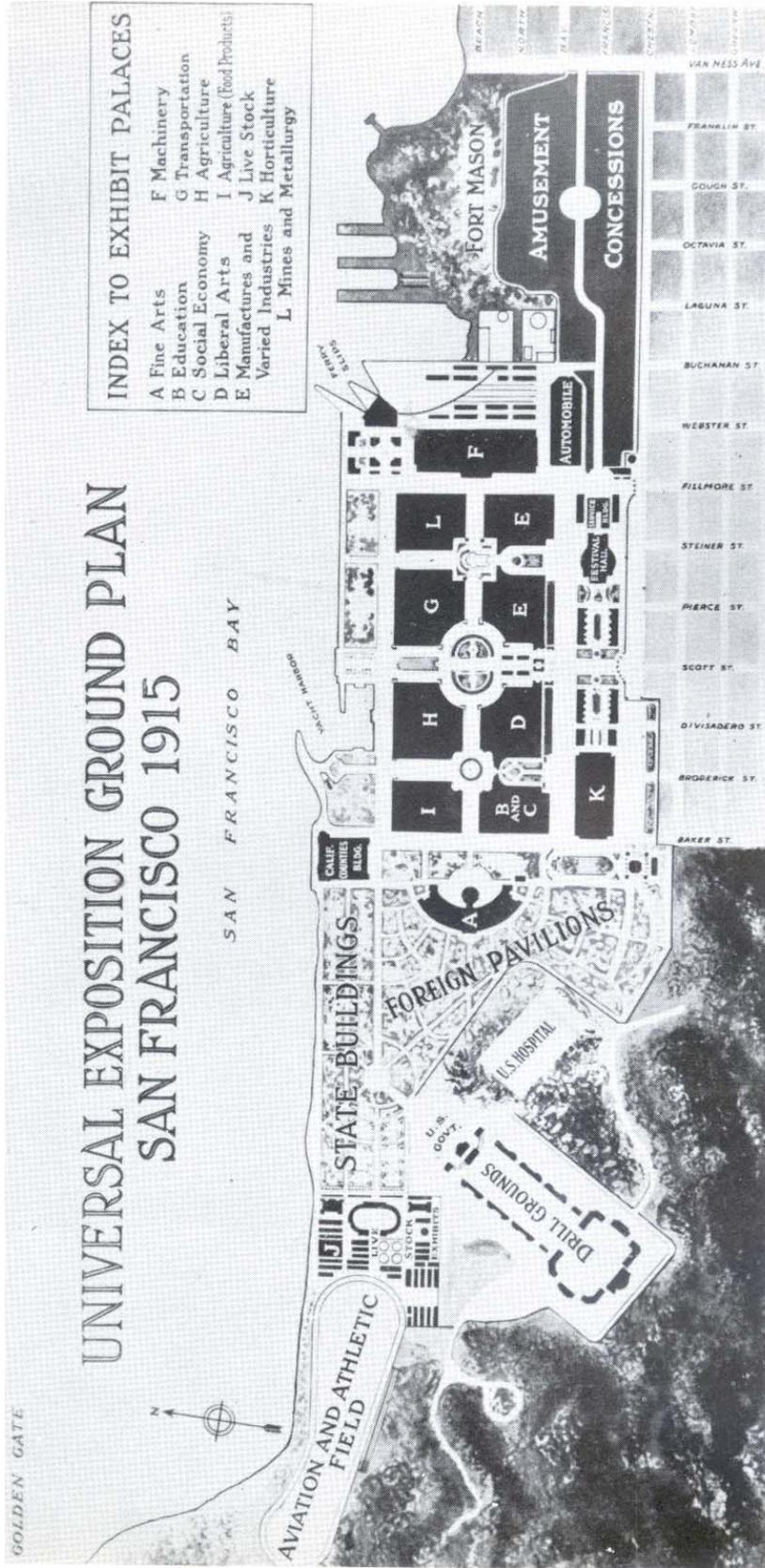


Figure 9. Plan of the PPIE, 1915 (Newhall 12)



Figure 10. Column of Progress in Court of Sun and Stars, open North End of Court of the Universe, PPIE, 1915 (photo: San Francisco Public Library Historic Image Archive)



Figure 11. Tower of Jewels, 1915 (photo: San Francisco Public Library Historic Image Archive)

Each Palace was actually a large industrial shed; only the exterior was architect designed. In order to allow the variety of architectural vision the Exposition Company sought and yet remain a sense of visual cohesion, individual architects were commissioned to design the five courts and the exteriors of the four building exteriors that framed that court. Structures not corresponding to a specific court such as the Tower of Jewels and the Palace of Fine Art were designed independently.

The PPIE was able to make use of the newest technology to awe visitors. Most significant in this endeavor was the use of lighting. The Panama-Pacific International Exposition was the first to make use of indirect lighting. The task of lighting the Exposition was handed to William D'Arcy Ryan. Ryan, the Exposition's Chief of Illumination, was an established veteran having managed the lighting of the Hudson-Fulton Celebration and the Niagara Falls Exposition and devised a revolutionary scheme for illuminating the Panama-Pacific. Barry deems the design "veiled lighting" whose benefits included the lack of shadows at night. He further describes Ryan's imaginative plan "of ornamenting the main tower with large pieces of cut glass, of many colors, to shine like jewels, created wide-spread interest on account of its novelty," noting that this idea was considered "a highly original and sensational feature of the Exposition."⁵⁴

The entire lighting scheme of the Exposition had what Gray Brechin describes as a "theatrical" flare. Tall Venetian masts topped with shields and banners directed light from powerful magnesite arcs at the walls of the palaces, bathing them with a soft, shadowless radiance. Perfect reflections were thus assured in still pools in the courtyards. Searchlights on the roofs of the

⁵⁴ Barry, 20.

palaces and the towers raked the sky and spotlighted heroic sculpture on the skyline, casting their silhouettes through the fog.⁵⁵ At night, each court had a specific lighting scheme, and many guidebook counseled visitor to make sure and visit the Exposition at night.⁵⁶

Each of the courts were designed by a separate architect or firm following the guidelines provided by the architectural committee. The Court of the Universe, designed by firm McKim, Mead, and White of New York was the largest and most prominent (Figure 12). At night “the fountains in the Court of the Universe were a stellar white.” This scheme extended to Adolph A. Weinman’s statues of “The Rising Sun” and “The Setting Sun” which “were mounted on sixty-foot columns of dense glass that glowed soft white” in the darkness. Louis Christian Mullgardt was the architect of the Court of Abundance (Figure 13). According the Brechin, the nighttime color scheme was an “infernal red,” and “featured ‘altars’ decorated with serpents from which rose clouds of red steam.”

Henry Bacon designed the Court of the Four Seasons (Figure 14). The lighting scheme of the Court of the Four Seasons placed lights underwater, which created “glowing green pools” at night. Bakewell and Brown designed the Palace of Horticulture (Figure 15). The Palace, with its prominent green glass dome, glowed at night from searchlights hidden within

⁵⁵ Brechin, 98

⁵⁶ The highlight of the lighting effects was clearly the “scintillator,” which used the famous San Francisco fog as a backdrop for fireworks and a battery of colored spotlights to create “scenes” including “Aurora Borealis,” “Parade,” and “Devil’s Fan.” In the absence of natural fog, Ryan had a steam locomotive installed on a pier in the Bay to produce the same effect. For a contemporary description, see Mullgardt, Louis Christian. Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition. San Francisco: Elder. 1915. 200-203.

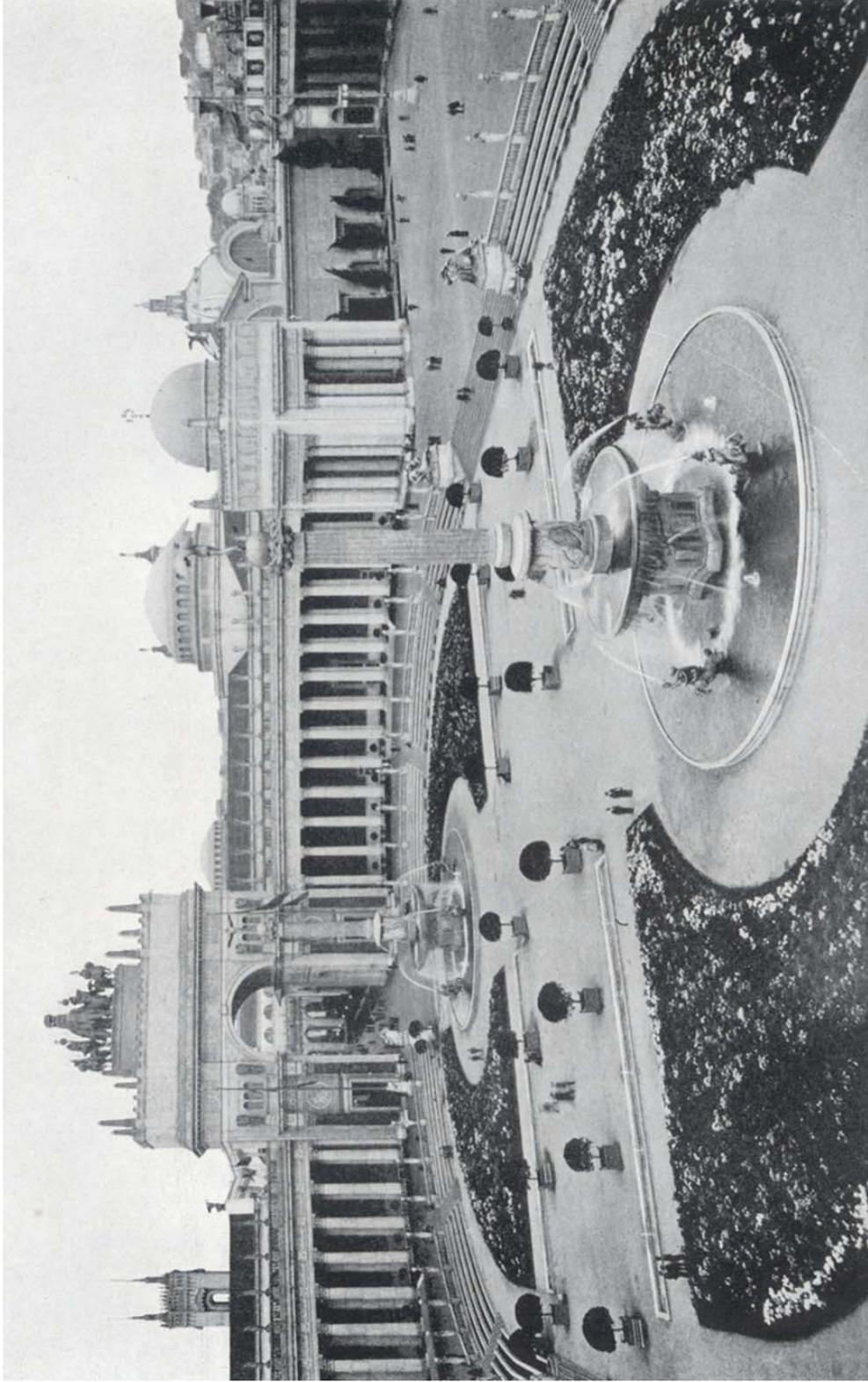


Figure 12. Court of the Universe, PPIE, 1915 (Todd, 303)

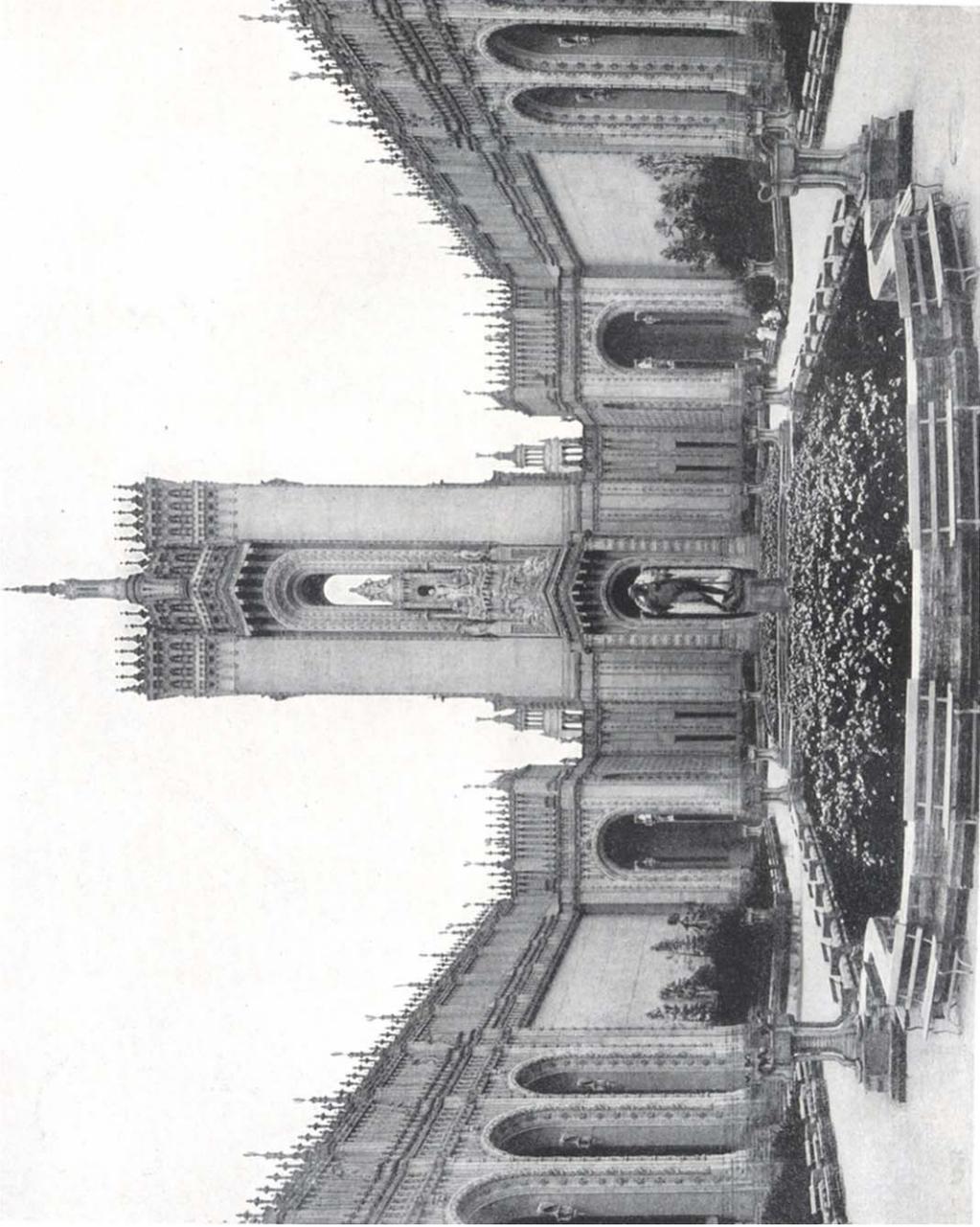


Figure 13. Court of Abundance, PPIE, 1915 (photo: Todd: 274)

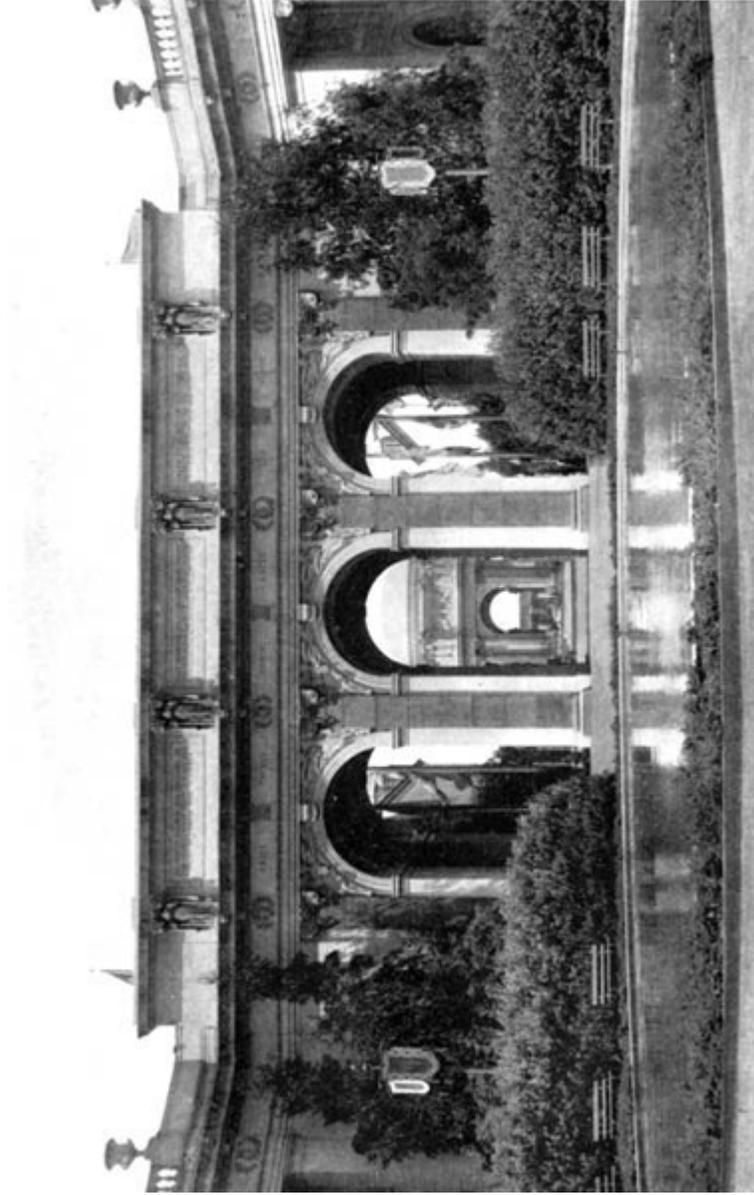


Figure 14. Court of the Four Seasons, PPIE, 1915. The Palace of Fine Arts is visible through the archway (photo: Paul Elder, *The Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition*, 1915)

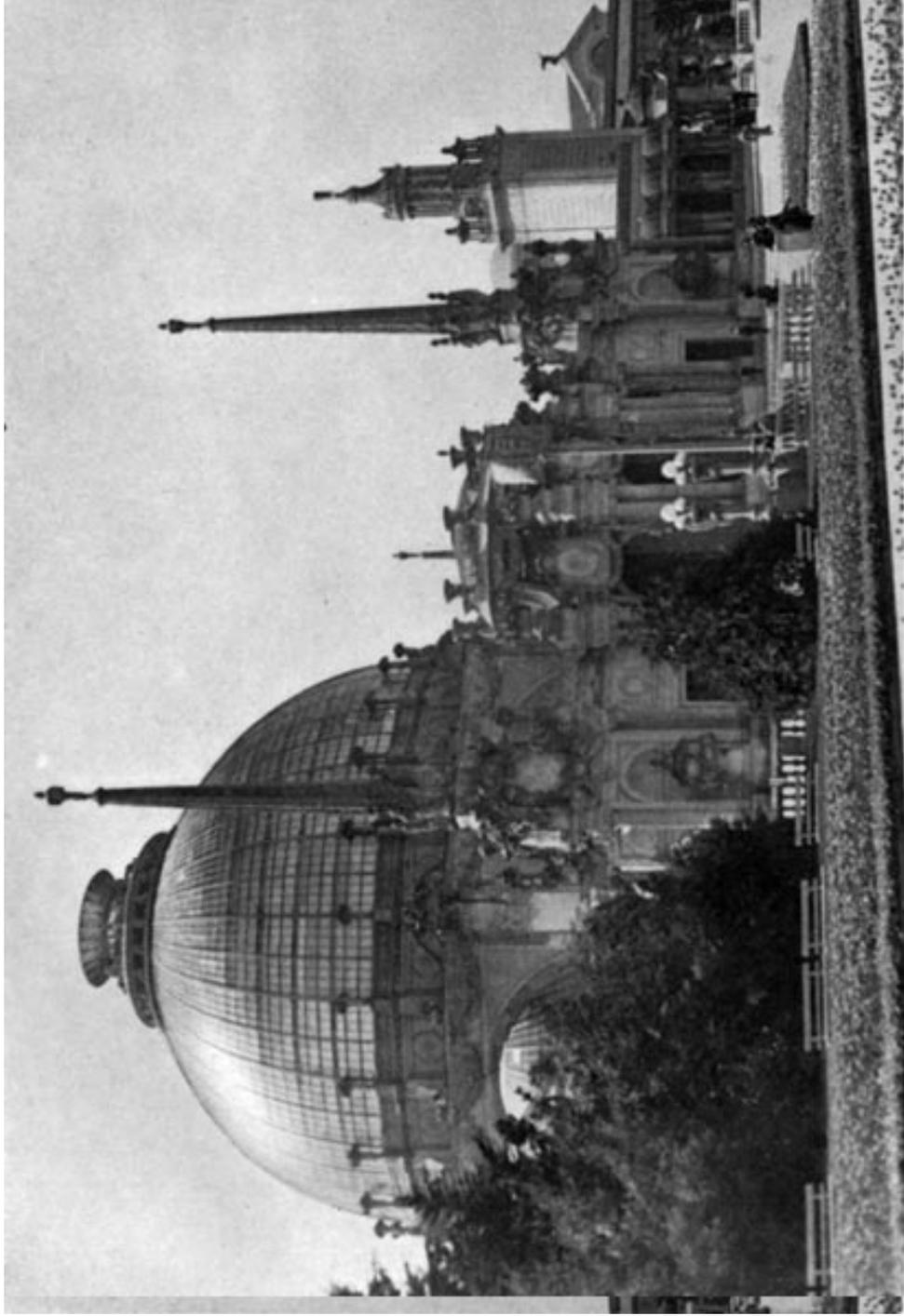


Figure 15. Dome and East Entrance, PPIE, Palace of Horticulture, 1915. (photo: Paul Elder, *The Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition, 1915*)

the building that illuminated the dome from the inside. “Revolving lenses and colored screens, simulating an immense fire opal,” intensified this effect.⁵⁷

West of the central district, the buildings and pavilions of the States and foreign countries sat on pathways arranged in a semi-circle radiating from the Palace of Fine Arts. Other important regions of the Exposition included the amusement “Zone,” livestock exhibits, an aviation field and a racetrack. According to Barry, the separation of these activities was logical in that many visitor would be interested “chiefly, if not wholly, with the central buildings (Figure 16). If they chose, they could visit this section without going near the other sections, carrying away in their minds memories of a city ideal in outline and in coloring.”⁵⁸ Indeed, of all the areas within the Exposition, the layout of the central district mostly clearly represented the notion of order and ideal of grandeur the Panama-Pacific, and all World’s Fairs, worked so hard to evoke.

The Crowning Jewel

While many pavilions at the PPIE were dedicated to showcasing technology, industry, and civic (both national and state) advancements and achievements, the Palace of Fine Arts was devoted to displaying examples of fine art (Figure 17). The 1100 foot curved gallery divided art work into National Sections, the Historical Section, “One-Man Rooms,” and occasionally by type with some displaying miniatures, photos, and etchings and prints (Figure 18). Each nation was to present contemporary art of which Impressionism was the most common style (Figure 19). Nearly all artists

⁵⁷ Brechin, 97-105

⁵⁸ Barry, 8.

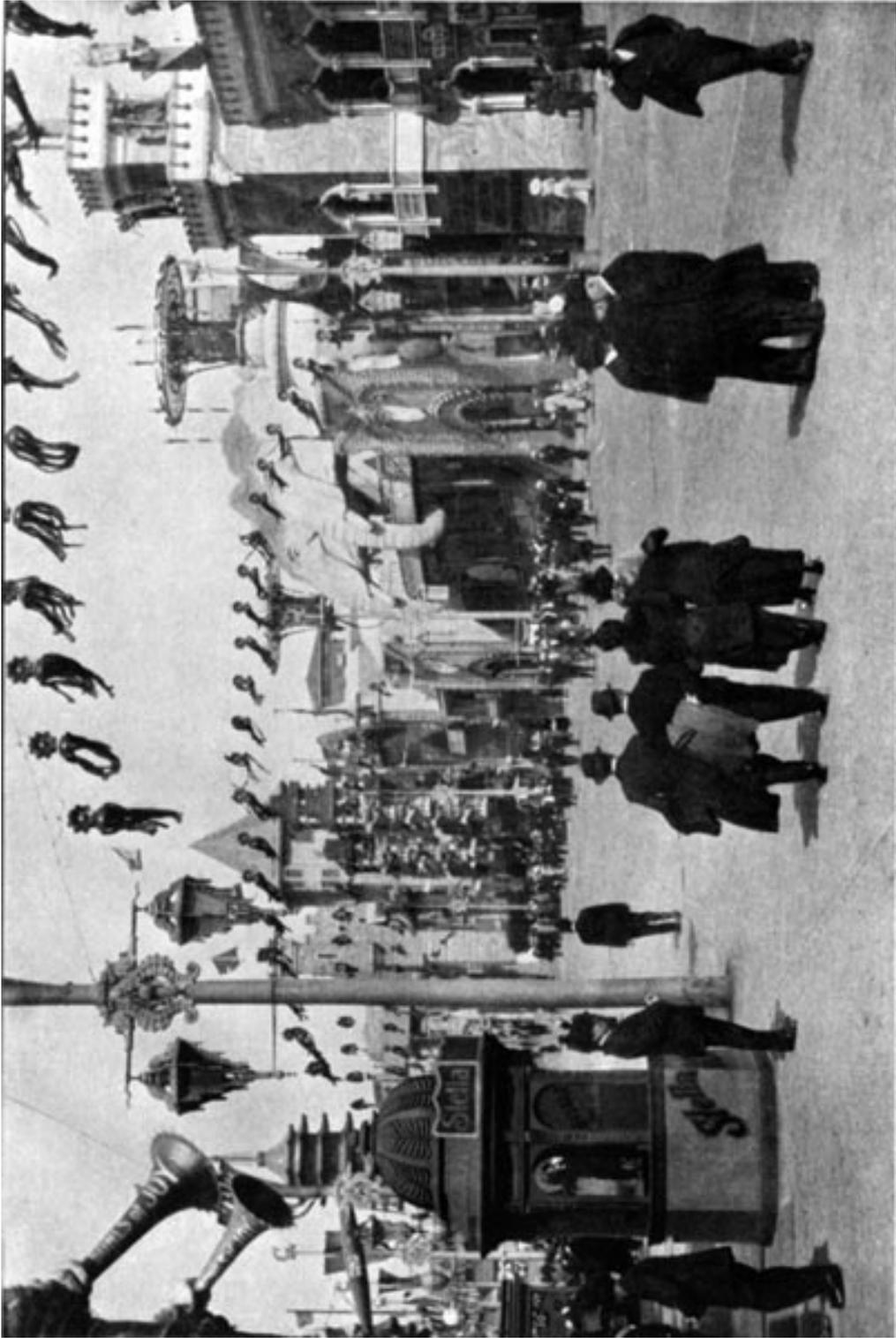


Figure 16. The Zone, PPIE, 1915. (photo: Elder, 94)



Figure 17. Palace of Fine Arts and Altar, 1915. There is no record of when the altar was removed. (William Hood Collection Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

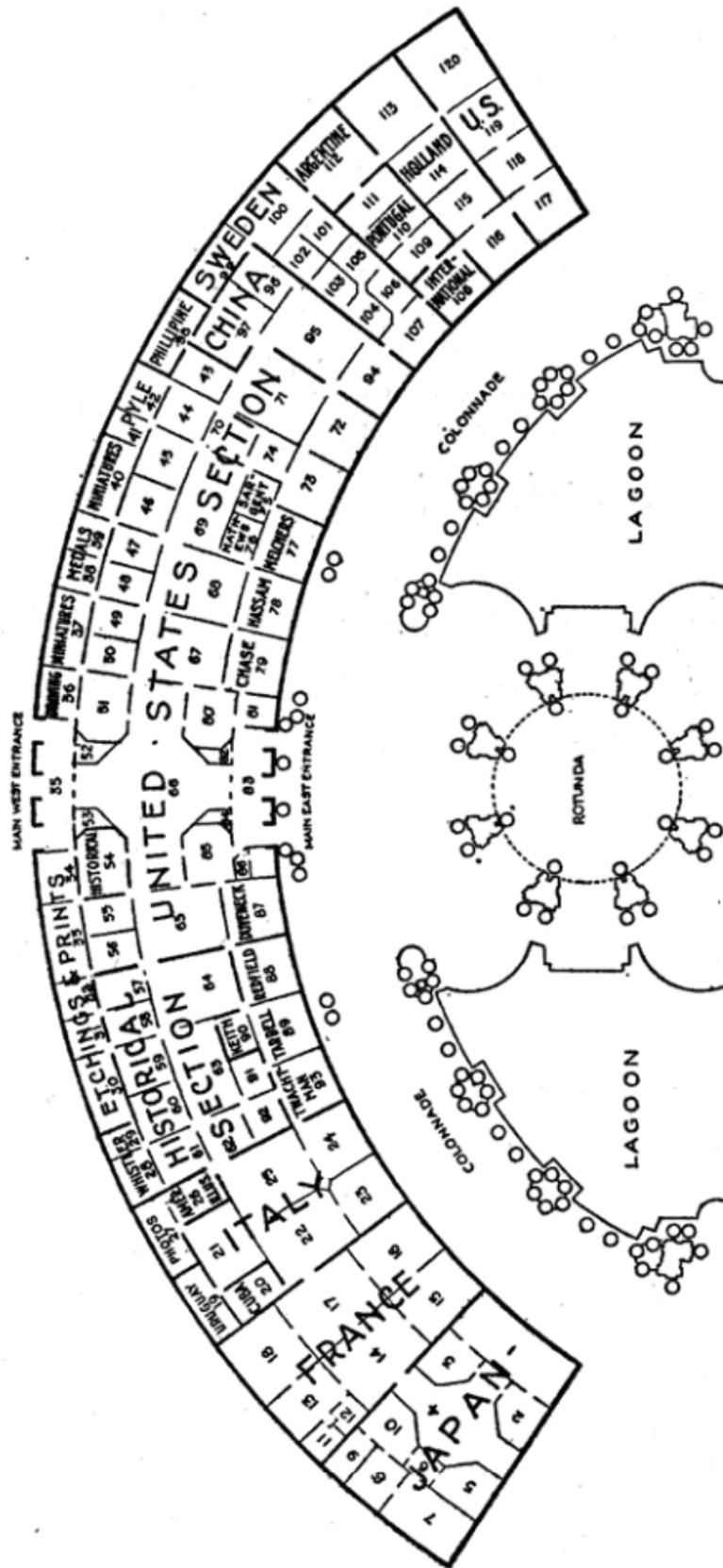


Figure 18. Map of the Palace of Fine Arts Exhibits, 1915 (from Ben Macomber, *The Jewel City*, 1915)



Figure 19. American Gallery in Palace of Fine Arts, 1915 (photo: Newhall 43)

whose work was displayed were living at the time of the Exposition. The Palace of Fine Arts also provided many visitors with their first look at newer artistic movements, including Futurism (Figure 20). The Futurist exhibit, referred to as the “chamber of horrors” by many critics, was described by Frank Morton Todd: “it is impossible by the wildest flight of the imagination to ascribe any reason why an alleged artist would spoil good canvas and waste valuable paint unless these frightful, distorted apologies for human beings were invented for the purpose of curing man from the drink habit.”⁵⁹

Far more universally popular was the sculpture displayed at the Exposition. The entire grounds of the Palace of Fine Arts were essentially a sculpture garden, thus extending the experience beyond the confines of the gallery building itself. In fact, it was the exterior and the architecture of the Palace of Fine Arts that most affected many PPIE visitors (Figure 21).

Maybeck, the PPIE, and the Palace of Fine Arts

When the planning committee of the PPIE began considering which architects should be commissioned to design the various buildings of the Fair, Bernard Maybeck, a relative unknown, was not given an assignment. In need of work, Maybeck took a job as a draftsman in the office of his former student, prominent architect Willis Polk, who had been entrusted with the duty of overseeing the construction of various parts of the Fair as well as holding the plum commission of the entire Exposition: Polk was to design the Palace of Fine Arts. The site had already been chosen to be at the terminus of the main axis of the Fair.

⁵⁹ Newhall, 43



Figure 20. Futurists' Room in the Palace of Fine Arts, 1915 (photo: Newhall 43)



Figure 21. The Palace grounds hosted many popular events including Hawaiian Day at the PPIE, 1915 (William Hood Collection Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

With such a myriad of duties, Polk had little time to savor his prestigious assignment, and asked the draftsmen in his office to come up with conceptual drawings. Maybeck had been working in Polk's office coordinating the construction of the Joy Zone, allowing him familiarity with the site of the Palace of Fine Arts. Maybeck decided to base his entire concept on a depression in the land on the site that collected water, to dredge this area and form a lagoon to foreground the structure as a reflecting pond (Figures 22-24). This was apparently as strikingly novel as it was stunningly beautiful, and when Polk presented the design to the committee, it was received with such enthusiasm that Polk handed the entire commission to Maybeck. The Maybeck designed Palace of Fine Arts unified the elements of landscape and architecture creating a multifaceted composition that was immediately became the hit of the Exposition (Figures 25 and 26).

The Palace of Fine Arts had the difficult task of attracting visitors and creating the appropriate mood for the viewing of works of art, a mood in stark contrast to that of the rowdy fair atmosphere nearby (Figure 27). Maybeck sought to create a "gradual transition from the exciting influences of the Fair to the quiet serenity of the galleries."⁶⁰ Ruth Newhall describes Maybeck's creative process for the Palace of Fine Arts saying, "everyone's favorite building was the Palace of Fine Arts. Maybeck had done the unbelievable: he had started with a mood and successfully expressed it in solid form."⁶¹ In a booklet published at the time of the Fair, Maybeck, ever the intellectual, begins his discussion the Palace, "omitting construction, we will only discuss the architecture as a conveyor of ideas and sentiments," and briefly categorizing

⁶⁰ Maybeck. *Palace of Fine Arts and Lagoon*, 1915. 4

⁶¹ Newhall, 41.



Figure 22. Site of the Palace of Fine Arts before construction, facing west, 1913 (William Hood Collection Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)



Figure 23. Dredging the Lagoon, 1914 (William Hood Collection Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)



Figure 24. Tree Planting at the Palace of Fine Arts, 1914. It is speculated that some of the trees on the northeastern side of the lagoon may be from the PPIE planting. (William Hood Collection Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)



Figure 25. Palace of Fine Arts facing north, 1915. (William Hood Collection Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)



Figure 26. Rotunda Ceiling, Palace of Fine Arts, 1915 (William Hood Collection Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

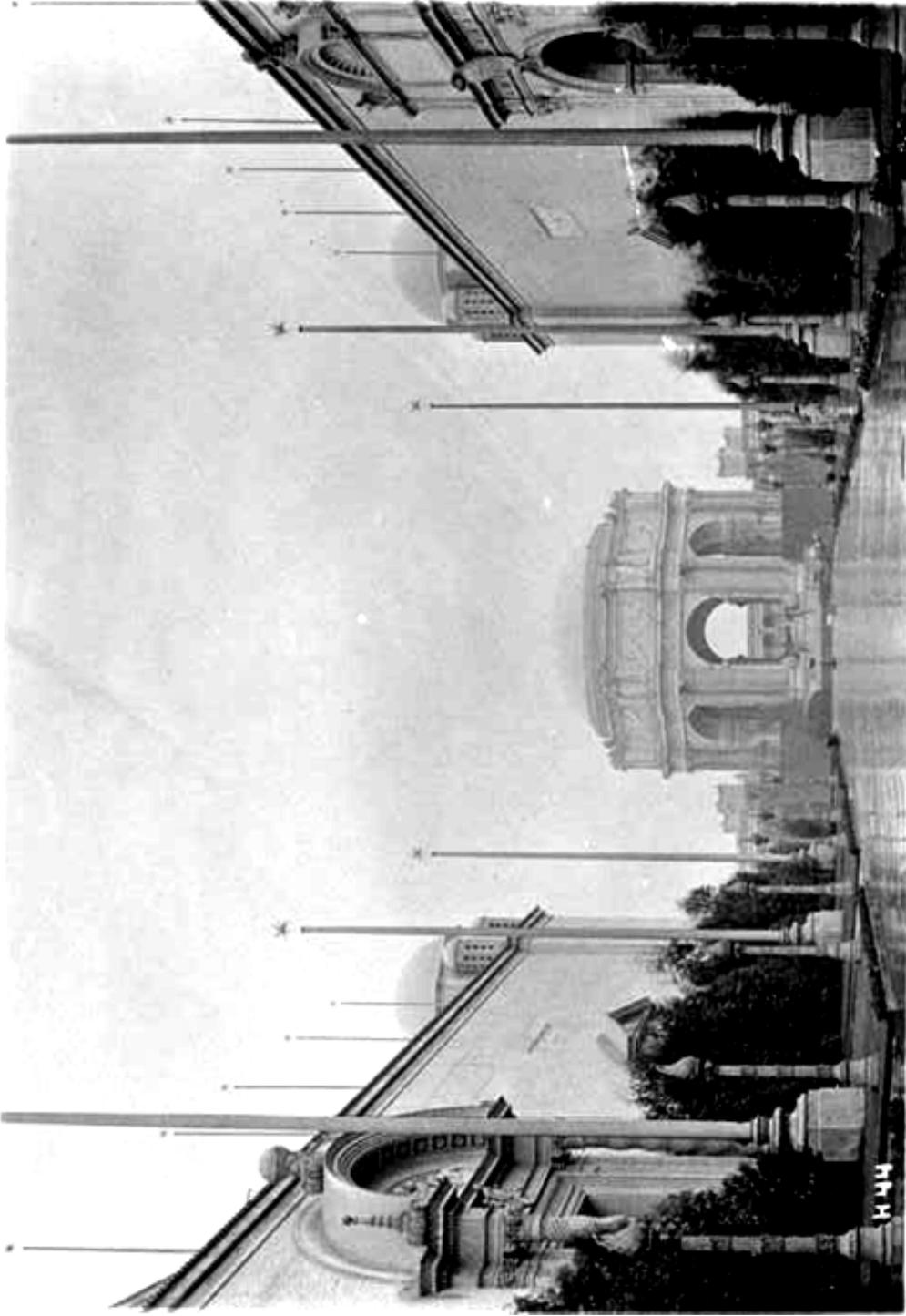


Figure 27. Palace of Fine Arts, viewed from Aisle of Sunset, PPIE, 1915 (William Hood Collection Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

the Palace of Fine Arts Palace as “romantic, of the period after the Renaissance.” The architect then determines that the Palace should be analyzed “not from the physical but rather from a psychological point of view with reference to the effect of architectural forms on the mind and feelings, and discuss the various elements which influence the composition of the architecture and landscape.”⁶² The rest of the thirteen-page essay follows this same intangible even mystical reasoning, with Maybeck asserting, “an art gallery is a sad and serious matter” and thus determined “that the keynote of the Fine Arts Palace should be that of sadness modified by the feeling that beauty has a soothing influence.”⁶³ The closest Maybeck ever comes to a physical description is to suggest his vision, “an old Roman ruin, away from civilization, which two thousand years before was the center of action and full of life, and now is partly overgrown with bushes and trees...[where] nature outgrew the gardener’s stiffening care...that gives us just this note of vanquished grandeur”⁶⁴

Waking from the Dream

On the night of December 4, 1915, the lights of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition were extinguished forever. Visitor Milla Logan commented:

The night it went out, the Fair never looked lovelier. Every jewel in the Tower flashed for the last curtain call. Then a paralyzing dimness fell on the scene. The darkness drained the glow from the domes and palace bleeding them slowly to death. The walls turned cold and stiff. The last

⁶² Maybeck, 1-6.

⁶³ Ibid., 8-9.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

feeble lights gasped and then there was a dark void where a few moments ago there had been a vision.”⁶⁵

The next day the destruction began. The palaces, all built to last only for the duration of the Exposition were reduced to rubble. A few buildings were saved from such a fate. The Ohio Building was floated on a barge down to San Carlos where it served as a hunting club, dance hall, “rum-runner headquarters,” machine shop, and radar factory before being destroyed in the 1956.⁶⁶

The only three structures to remain standing on the Exposition grounds were the California Building (Figure 28), the Column of Progress (Figure 29), and the Palace of Fine Arts. The State Legislature voted to establish a normal school in the California Building, built to look like a Mission. According to Ruth Newhall, “the matter dallied along for a couple years, until a legislator called attention to the fact that a building so close to all those soldiers at the Presidio would not be suitable for young ladies.” The California Building, along with the Column of Progress, essentially a purely decorative piece of sculpture that had begun to show wear, were eventually demolished.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 59, Newhall claims it was demolished in the 1940s, but the building actually burned down on October 1956, photograph, SFPL historic image archive image: AAD-7421.

⁶⁷ Newhall, 60. The Column of Progress stood until the 1930s, but the actual date of demolition is unknown.



Figure 28. California Building, PPIE, 1915 (photo: Newhall, 60)



Figure 29. Column of Progress, Panama-Pacific International Exposition, 1915
(photo: San Francisco Public Library Historic Image Archive)

The highly emotional approach to architecture represented by the Palace of Fine Arts was successful in capturing the imagination of the hundreds of thousands of PPIE visitors and inspiring a loyalty that would ultimately save it from eminent destruction. In October of 1915, the PPIE held a “Fine Arts Preservation Day” during which the Fine Arts Preservation League raised \$350,000 and 33,000 signatures in support of the saving the Palace. San Francisco Chronicle writer, Ben Macomb summed up the sentiments of the behind such an outpouring commenting, “to duplicate the Palace in lasting materials would cost much, but it would be worth while. San Francisco owes it to itself and its love for art to see that this greatest of Western works of art does not pass away.”⁶⁸

By 1920, the Palace of Fine Arts had become the only real remnant of the Panama-Pacific Exposition. However, its survival was no accident. Morton Todd, historian of the PPIE, described the Palace of Fine Arts, calling it, “symbolic of the glory of architecture that had suddenly burst forth at San Francisco.”⁶⁹ Indeed, in choosing to maintain this one structure out of all those originally erected, the early preservationists recognized and exhaled it as the icon of the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

⁶⁸ Newhall, 55.

⁶⁹ Todd, vol II, p. 315

CHAPTER THREE

THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS AFTER THE PPIE

To San Franciscans the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915 is more than a memory. Something of transcendent beauty was created—an ideal doe a few months became a reality. And about the accomplishment grew sentiment and pride that have lasted through the years, through the magic city itself long since vanished into the realms of memory and dreams...Of all that man-made wonderland of architecture and landscaping...this lone relic, but loveliest of them all, remains.

--SF Chronicle November 16, 1931

Introduction

Immediately after the close of the PPIE, the San Francisco Museum of Art took up residence in the Palace of Fine Arts. When the San Francisco Museum of Art left the Palace of Fine Arts on June 1, 1924, the San Francisco Chronicle stated that this “most beautiful of the Exposition buildings” would be “deserted to the ravages of time,” and even at this early date cited the expense of necessary repairs as the Palace’s greatest liability.⁷⁰ Indeed, the Chronicle saw the museum closing as a “defeat” for the Palace preservation effort that had been underway since 1917.⁷¹ With this shift into uncertainty, the Palace entered into a phase of its history marked by questions of ownership, utility, preservation, and, even occasionally, of its continued existence. This chapter examines the history of the Palace of Fine Arts since the close of the PPIE.

⁷⁰ “Palace of Arts to Close Doors,” SF Chronicle, May 30, 1924.

⁷¹ “Senate O.K.’s Bill to Save Arts Palace,” SF Chronicle February 26, 1925.

What to Do with a Temporary Treasure?

First, and perhaps foremost, the actual ownership of the Palace had to be determined, and this was by no means a straightforward matter. While the majority of the PPIE was constructed on land leased by the City of San Francisco from private land holders, the Palace of Fine Arts was only partially on such land. At least part of the land recognized as constituting the Palace grounds stood on land belonging to the Presidio, and thus the War Department of the United States government. This issue was seemingly resolved in June of 1927 when the Federal government deeded the Palace to the city of San Francisco in exchange for the right to “lay a spur track from Fort Mason to the Presidio.” In the agreement, the City obtained a total of ten acres of land, including the structures; the estimated value of these assets approximated \$10 million. The City placed the Palace’s management under the jurisdiction of the Park Commission.⁷²

The City was to receive two surprises in the course of the next few years that threw the Palace’s ownership back into question. First, in November of 1927, the eighteen trustees, lead by Walter S. Martin, of the Palace of Fine Arts, an organization created by the PPIE,⁷³ appeared before the City Finance Committee to demand repayment of \$60,000 they claimed to have paid out-of-pocket for the Palace’s upkeep in the years since the closing of the PPIE. One member of the Finance Committee recognized the merit of the claim and stated that the group held equity of at least \$15,000 “the approximate salvage value of the Fine Arts Palace prior to the recent

⁷² “Art Palace Owned by S.F.” SF Chronicle, June 11, 1927. The “Park Commission” has since been renamed the “Recreation and Park Department”

⁷³ It is also possible this group was created by the PPIE Preservation League.

improvement.”⁷⁴ The improvement cited apparently consisted of the replacement of structure foundations and some rehabilitation work on the exterior, work which the Park Commission said would begin immediately after the City obtained the land in June.⁷⁵ Martin and fellow trustees stated, “unless some recognition of the trustees’ ownership is made by the city, court actions will ensue to force a settlement or authorize demolition of the building.”⁷⁶ The dispute with the trustees of the Palace of Fine Arts’ is never again mentioned, but it is obvious that the City remained in possession of the Palace.

In March 1929, the City found itself in a similar predicament when the trustees of the San Francisco Museum of Art claimed ownership of the Palace and served notice to the Board of Supervisors of their intention to wreck the building and sell it for salvage.” The Trustees based their claim on expenditures they had laid out during their tenure on the site from 1916-1924 and later claimed that the PPIE deeded the Palace to them for \$70,000 in April 1921⁷⁷; however, the trustees seem only to claim ownership of the structures and not the land itself. The City placed armed guards around the Palace to prevent demolition.⁷⁸ This disagreement continued for over a year and finally escalated on October 21 with the attorney for the trustees accompanying W.M. Symon, “head of a wrecking company to the site. Symon apathetically picked at one of the now-shabby front columns of the structure whereupon two policemen stepped forward and formally ordered him to stop.” The matter was

⁷⁴ “Art Trustees, Supervisors in Argument” SF Chronicle, November 1927

⁷⁵ “Art Palace Owned by S.F.” SF Chronicle, June 11, 1927.

⁷⁶ “Art Trustees, Supervisors in Argument” SF Chronicle, November 1927

⁷⁷ “City Fights to Hold Fine Arts Palace” SF Chronicle October 1929.

⁷⁸ “Board Warns Wreckers of Arts Palace” SF Chronicle March 14, 1929.

finally settled in May, 1931 with the trustees relinquishing all claim to the structures of the Palace of Fine Arts.⁷⁹

All of the uncertainty caused some members of the community to question the value of the Palace and its preservation. In what seems to be an editorial dated April 11, 1929, the Chronicle expresses the opinion:

“It is difficult tot see any value in the Palace as it now is. It will cost money to keep is going and there is no definite purpose for it in sight.

Beautiful as the Palace was during the Exposition it was not meant to be permanent. Neither was it located to have any value after the Exposition was over. It may turn out to be unfortunate that it was not wrecked with the rest of the Exposition buildings. Better a beautiful memory than a shabby ruin.”

It is of course impossible to tell how prevalent these feelings were among the general populous, The site was preserved, which seems to suggest that this was a minority opinion. Yet, it is difficult to image that this thought was not at least in the back of many a San Franciscan’s mind.

Despite both questions of ownership and the onset of the Great Depression, the City of San Francisco continued the rehabilitation work it had begun upon gaining control of the site in 1927. By October 19, 1927, the Park Commission had already spent the \$100,000 appropriated by the Board of Supervisors for the “repair and rehabilitation” of the Palace of Fine Arts.⁸⁰ The City invested an addition \$70,000 in 1929 and intended to spend \$50,000 in 1930. Some of the work funded by these allocations included some landscape

⁷⁹ “Palace of Fine Arts Putting on New Dress” SF Chronicle, November 1916, 1929

⁸⁰ “Art Trustees, Supervisors in Argument” SF Chronicle, November 1927

rehabilitation including refilling the dry lagoon, “new concrete foundations under the building” and the “restoration of the rotunda,” and the re-casting of the peristyle.⁸¹ Even after all of this work, in November of 1931, Park Commissioner Captain B. P. Lamb estimated that \$100,000 of additional funds would be needed to complete the restoration.⁸² In a 1947 editorial, the total City expenditure on the Palace of Fine Arts was estimated at \$596,000 (the vast majority of this being spent on the 1920/30s rehabilitation).⁸³

Rehabilitating the Palace was one thing, and as the work neared completion, exclamations of its wonder abound. Yet, although so much had been invested, and the rehabilitation was completed on April 2, 1932, the site still had no clear purpose. It was thought the main building measuring 1000 feet in length, 137 feet wide with its 50 foot ceiling⁸⁴, could be used as a gallery, but no contracts nor even specific potential tenets existed. Indeed, the first event in the newly rehabilitated Palace of Fine Arts was a General Motors Exhibition. The exhibit lasted nine days, and it was clear to the Park Commission that while opportunities like this might provide some use for the Palace, an interim scheme was necessary. Captain Lamb thus decided to install twenty lighted tennis courts in the main building to be used at night, stating on behalf of the Commission, “it is our hope to make this building not only a beauty spot but also to make is self-supporting.”⁸⁵ This multi-use plan was in use for the rest of the decade and was so successful that in 1941 when

⁸¹ “Palace of Fine Arts Putting on New Dress” SF Chronicle, November 16, 1931. The recasting of the peristyle was done using “blue molds.” This last item is interesting given the later questions about the authenticity of the 1960s reconstruction of the peristyle, specifically; however, there is very little existing documentation of the extent of the 1930s work beyond the brief reports provided by Park Commission minutes.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ “What About the Fine Arts Palace?” SF Chronicle August 30, 1947

⁸⁴ “Palace of Fine Arts Work Nears Completion” SF Chronicle March 10, 1932.

⁸⁵ “Palace of Fine Arts to Reopen Next Month” SF Chronicle March 14, 1932.

impending war needs claimed the Palace's interior space for army storage, the Chronicle described it as "normally a playground for hundreds of the city's tennis players." An emergency clause in the 1927 deed from the War Department of the Federal government provided for the reclaiming of the property on March 5, 1941 "for the duration of the emergency."⁸⁶

Toward a More Permanent Palace

The City of San Francisco regained the Palace of Fine Arts in the summer of 1947. But, by late 1946, questions of its deterioration and possible use had begun to surface once more.⁸⁷ On November 23, 1946, Park Commissioner Lloyd Wilson held a meeting of "more than a score of civic and cultural organizations leaders...to plan a program for rehabilitation and preservation of the Palace." At this meeting groups "passed resolutions declaring they wished the building be preserved permanently [in permanent materials] and for constructive uses" as well as requesting that the Federal government return the property to the City. The Palace's deed did not require the government return it in the condition which the obtained it, and thus it was stated that \$20,000 was necessary to complete an assessment of the site and a "curbstone guess" of the permanent restoration (i.e. reconstruction) estimated at a cost of \$600,000.⁸⁸

Over the next few months, the Department of Public Works made an assessment of the Palace and determined it to be unsafe due to "loose plaster and ornamental work," but encouraged the Park Commission to call for bids to

⁸⁶ "Palace of Fine Arts to Be Army Storage House" SF Chronicle March 1, 1941;

"The Army Will Take Over Fine Arts Palace Today" SF Chronicle March 5, 1941

⁸⁷ "The Palace or the Pickle Works" SF Chronicle March 25, 1946

"Downtown Group Would Preserve Fine Arts Palace" SF Chronicle September 16, 1946

⁸⁸ "Permanent Palace Backed" SF Chronicle November 24, 1946

“determine the exact nature and cost of repairs.”⁸⁹ For a site whose value is chiefly reliant on the power of memory, the Palace now had to deal with the negative effects of that force. Namely, San Franciscans had already fought for and funded the costly rehabilitation of Palace once before, and after a few exhibitions and just under a decade of public use, the Army reclaimed the building, and under its supervision, the site was now in the same, if not worse condition that when previous rehabilitation had begun a mere twenty years earlier. San Franciscans now wanted to make sure that any investment they made now would last both physically and in terms of ownership, as there was considerable concern about investing large sums of money only to lose the site to the government again. The immediate post-WWII period was a most inopportune time to ask the US military to relinquish military property on the Pacific Coast, and the repeated attempts to secure permanent ownership met with decided opposition.⁹⁰

The uncertainty of ownership put on hold all plans for rehabilitation or public use. This situation was aggravated in late-December, 1951, when Fire Marshall Frank Kelly suspended all public use of the site due to hazards caused by deterioration. This seems to have been a rallying point for all factions within the City. The Palace of Fine Arts, which is mentioned only occasionally by the San Francisco Chronicle between 1922 and 1951, is the subject of almost weekly articles throughout 1952, and in several months is discussed nearly every day. As historian Grey Brechin has noted, 1952 marks a shift in the public portrayal of the Palace. Prior to 1952, the Palace was

⁸⁹ “Fine Arts Palace May Be Restored” SF Chronicle October 23, 1947

⁹⁰ “Restore Fine Arts Palace Downtown Association Asks” SF Chronicle, March 1948.

. “City’s Fight for Palace of Fine Arts” SF Chronicle April 13, 1948.

Kilpatrick, Carroll, “Bay Crossing Problem Goes To President,” SF Chronicle December 15, 1948.

seen as an architectural relic, a monument commemorating an event, but not really as an entity with a history of its own. With this shift, the story of the Palace post-PPIE gains significance in its own right.⁹¹

By February 1952, the cost of a complete rehabilitation was an estimated \$3,500,000, nearly seven times the amount estimated just five years earlier, and the price tag for even basic repairs had ballooned to \$800,000.⁹² Even the Parks Commission, once the savior of the Palace rehabilitation, refused to allocated funds for the gradual rehabilitation of the site.⁹³ A Citizens' Committee for Preservation of the Palace of Fine Arts was formed, and this group, joined by the Marina Improvement Association, worked endlessly for the cause and proposed a city bond to fund the work.⁹⁴ But once again, the idea of demolition began to spring up, and on March 6, 1952 Mayor Elmer Robinson went so far as to claim restoring the Palace would be a "waste of money," and stated that he could not "feel justified in spending the city's money for patchwork repairs or for complete restoration of the building."⁹⁵ A week later, the Chronicle reported that the Marina Civic Improvement Association's appeal to the Department of Interior to designate the site (then 37 years old) a national monument was denied.⁹⁶

The status of the Palace was described in an article dated May 4, 1952:
Great chunks of plaster have fallen from the...columns and walls of the
Palace. The Heads of stature have hurtled to the ground and Grecian

⁹¹ SF Chronicle, 1952. Grey Brechin, margin notes, discussion October 25, 2003.

⁹² "Plan Offered for Vote on Saving Fine Arts Palace" SF Chronicle February, 1952.

⁹³ "Falling Palace Still Has Beauty" SF Chronicle, May 4, 1952

⁹⁴ Newhall, Ruth. San Francisco Enchanted Palace" Berkeley: Howell-North. 1967. 76

⁹⁵ "Mayor Calls for Destruction of Fine Arts Palace" SF Chronicle March 7, 1952.

⁹⁶ "U.S. Apathetic In Restoration of Arts Palace" SF Chronicle March 14, 1952.

vases are cracked and askew. Nature and man have continued to tear down the old Palace piece by piece (Figure 30).”

Despite its sympathy, this article, perhaps fairly characterized the Palace as a “Money Eater,” and estimated with original construction costs, San Francisco had spent more than \$1,500,000 on the Palace (not adjusted for inflation).

The Palace’s end, seemingly imminent, was stayed by two very different factors. First, and most ironically, with a demolition price tag of \$50,000, the city was unwilling to allocate funds for the razing of the Palace.⁹⁷ This delay would have been meaningless had the Palace not found a champion in young Assemblyman Caspar Weinberger (who later became Secretary of Defense). Weinberger took up the cause with conviction and carried it to the State level with the original goal of transferring control of the Palace to the State to be operated as a state park. This plan, approved at various levels at various times, failed to become a reality. This was due in part to a provision in the bill proposed by Weinberger to “appropriate an unstipulated amount of money from the State park fund for rehabilitating the main hall.”⁹⁸ The State was also slow to approve any measure before San Francisco allocated the \$100,000 approved by voters in November 1952. This first attempt at State assistance for the Palace was ended when Governor Earl Warren (who later became Chief Justice of the United States) vetoed the Weinberger bill.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the City was still weary of making any real investment without some assurance of the Palace’s future. It continued looking into

⁹⁷ “Architect’s Plan on Fine Arts Palace” SF Chronicle December 20, 1952.

⁹⁸ “Plan to Give State Palace of Arts Snags” SF Chronicle December 21, 1952. This article also notes that the cities of Santa Clara and San Mateo had each pledged \$50,000 for the Palace.

⁹⁹ Ibid.



Figure 30. Palace of Fine Arts Ruins c.1960 (photo: Exploratorium History Collection)

options, which now moved from looking for viable uses for the Palace as originally constructed to the idea of redesigning the site to meet contemporary needs. To this end, a committee of the American Institute of Architects created a “plan” for the Palace of Fine Arts that essentially consisted of demolishing the decorative features and reconstructing the main building.¹⁰⁰

In a now infamous article, Bernard Maybeck, reflecting on the Palace, told columnist Herb Caen:

“I think the main building should be torn down...and redwoods planted around—completely around—the rotunda. Redwoods grow fast, you know. And as they grow, the columns of the rotunda would slowly crumble at approximately the same speed. Then, I would like to design an altar, with the figure of a maiden praying, to install in that grove of redwoods...I should like my Palace to die behind those great trees of its own accord, and become its own cemetery.”¹⁰¹

Opponents of the Palace’s preservation almost invariably quote this statement as part of their reason. Maybeck, however, noted for his eclecticism, also began experimenting with plastic coatings for application on the exterior in hopes of slowly or stopping its decay. An article dated August 12, 1953, quotes Maybeck, “I’m studying what can be done to leave the Palace just as it is...If I can keep the Palace for 100 years, to guide future students of architecture, I’ll have done all I want to do.”¹⁰²

Finally, just before his death in 1957, Bernard Maybeck sent the following telegram to Governor Knight:

¹⁰⁰ “Architect’s Plan on Fine Arts Palace.” SF Chronicle December 26 (?), 1952

¹⁰¹ Caen, Herb “Ten Second Interview” SF Chronicle Jan 18, 1953.

¹⁰² Calene, John “The Palace of Fine Arts: A Case of Falling Arches” SF Chronicle August 12, 1953.

"The Palace of Fine Arts is probably the last of the traditional pieces of architecture to survive the modern age. Because of its beauty it has become a tourist attraction for the State of California. Kindly sign the bill for its restoration and I will be thankful. I have the honor to remain, Very truly yours, Dr. Bernard R. Maybeck, Architect."¹⁰³

The various Palace debates continued for the next few years while the building served as a warehouse for the Recreation and Park Department, "a telephone book distribution center, a flag and tent storage depot, and even during the rebuilding of a fire house, the headquarters of the Fire Department's Engine Company No. 20 and Truck Company No. 6. The firemen slept in tents around their engines [inside the main building]"¹⁰⁴

Finally, in 1957, things started coming together, as Caspar Weinberger succeeded in assuring up to \$2 million of State funds for the restoration of the Palace of Fine Arts provided a matching amount of local funds could be secured.¹⁰⁵ After a failed bond measure in 1958, things look bleak again, until at a press conference on May 25, 1959, Walter Johnson, president of the Palace of Fine Arts League, announced his intention to provide \$2 million of his own money for the preservation of the Palace of Fine Arts. Johnson, "a corporate owner and executive (box manufacture, business machines) had been a struggling young lawyer when the Panama-Pacific Exposition opened" and by the 1950 lived across the street from the Palace. In November of that same year, San Francisco voters approved a \$1,800,000 bond, for a total of

¹⁰³ Exploratorium Website section devoted to the history of the Palace of Fine Arts. http://www.exploratorium.edu/history/palace/palace_3.html#portico

¹⁰⁴ Newhall, Ruth. "San Francisco Enchanted Palace" Berkeley: Howell-North. 1967. 76

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

\$5.8 million toward the Palace restoration.¹⁰⁶ Over the next five years, The Palace of Fine Arts Preservation League raised \$750,000, over \$600,000 of which also came from Johnson, and the City allotted an additional \$850,000.¹⁰⁷ With funding in place, it was time to begin the design and execution of the Palace of Fine Arts restoration and reconstruction.

Reconstruction

After years of fighting and speculating, when the money for the preservation of the Palace of Fine Arts was finally secured, another reality set in: it wasn't enough. Estimates for the full reconstruction of the Palace of Fine Arts in permanent materials came to nearly \$13million, but the total amount of funds raised was \$7.4million. In the early 1960s, as it became clear that this would most likely be the case, builder John C. Cahill set to work devising plans for various budgets, from the ultimate dream of unlimited funding to the "bare-bones" scheme eventually adopted. This plan involved completely reconstructing the rotunda and colonnade in concrete, resheathing the galley building while retaining the original steel frame,¹⁰⁸ excluding the decorative elements on the exterior of the galley building, and minimal planting around the lagoon (Figures 31 and 32).¹⁰⁹

To ensure the accuracy of the reconstructions, Maybeck's original drawing were consulted. Since the architect had died before the commencement of the building phase of the project, William Merchant,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 78.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 79.

¹⁰⁸ Hans Gerson reports that "the main building was stripped down. Therefore, only structural framing, fireplace, and doors remain, also louvers in the main roof. No original sky lights were retained." Carey & Co., 73.

¹⁰⁹ Newhall 82.

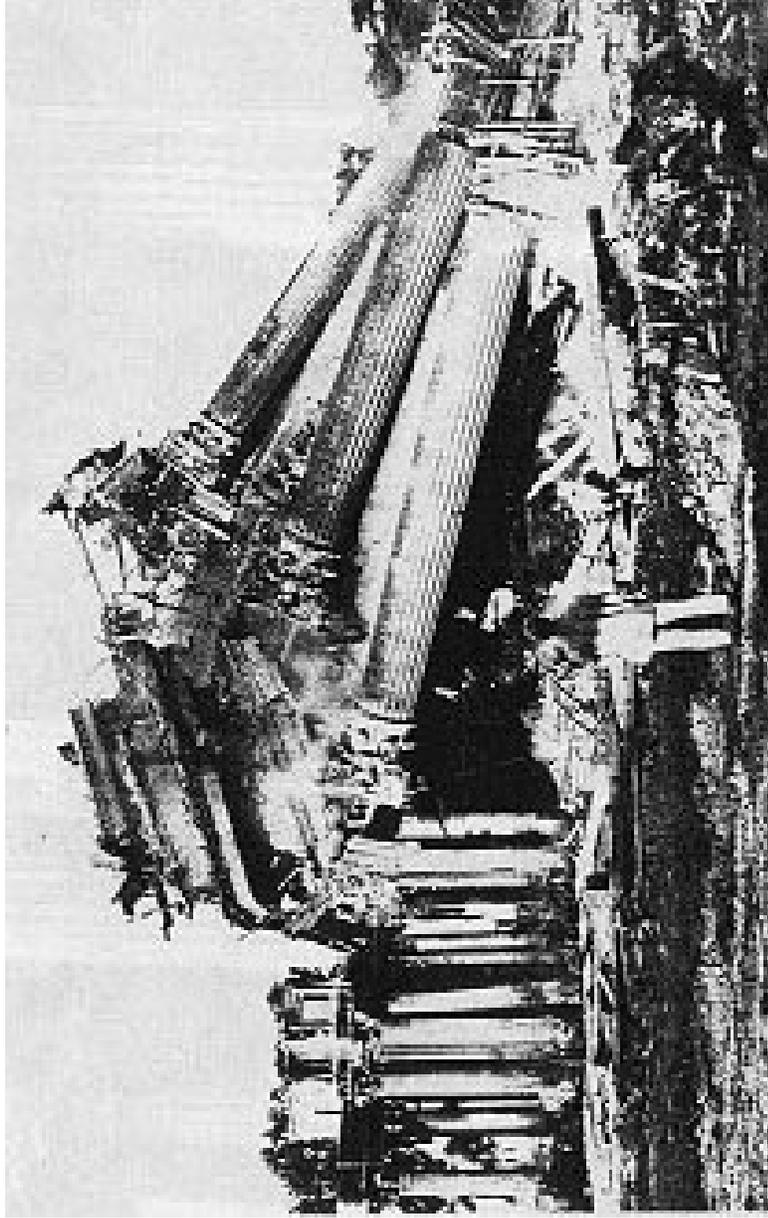


Figure 31. Demolition of the original rotunda, 1967 (photo: Exploratorium History Collection)



Figure 32. View of the original rotunda, partially demolished, from across the lagoon, 1967 (photo: Exploratorium History Collection)

Maybeck's assistant during the PPIE oversaw the endeavor until his death in 1962 at which time Hans Gerson took over. Gerson was born in 1915 and had worked with Merchant since 1949. Perhaps the most significant resource used in the reconstruction was the remaining structure. Joseph Minutoli, the contractor for decorations and sculpture, "supervised what was probably the most complex single casting and molding operation in modern times." Original drawings were consulted, but the bulk of the decorative elements were cast from extant pieces.¹¹⁰

While the structures of the Palace of Fine Arts were demolished and reconstructed in the 1960s and 1970s, the lagoon and landscape experienced markedly fewer changes. While San Francisco Department of Public Work's landscape architect, H. C. Schmidt was the landscape architect assigned to the project, according to the 2003 Historic Landscape Report, "the landscape around the lagoon was not disturbed." This statement refers to the north, south and east sides of the lagoon, as the report does note the occurrence of "extensive planting of shrubs, trees, and groundcovers around the colonnade and rotunda...upon the completion of the reconstruction." There is extensive documentation of these plantings (all along the western edge of the lagoon and surrounding the colonnade and rotunda).¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ This process ensured a high degree of accuracy because in the example of the "weeping women" surround the planting box atop the colonnade, it did not known until the process of casting began that the statues actually had faces. By the 1960s, of the fifty original that adorned the colonnade, only one remained. Unfortunately, they present incarnations of the "weeping women" were not actually cast from the original, but from studies done of her demolition of the colonnade—the sole survivor of the 1915 Fair succumbed to a fire in the workshop in 1966. Newhall 89.

¹¹¹ Carey & Co., 6.

A New Life for the Palace

The reconstruction of the Palace of Fine Arts proceeded in phases, with the last portion—the erection of the colonnade—completed in 1974. By this time the gallery building had already been in use for nearly three years as a hands-on science museum. The Exploratorium, as it is still called today, was founded in 1969 by former University of Colorado physics professor, Frank Oppenheimer, to communicate a conviction that nature and people can be both understandable and full of newly discovered magic.” The museum recounts its own history:

Starting with a few temporary exhibits, the museum grew rapidly. In 1980, cramped for space by its collection of exhibits, the museum built a mezzanine within the exhibition hall, adding another 15,000 square feet of exhibit space. By 1983, the Exploratorium had more than 500 exhibits on light and color, sound and music, patterns of motion, language, and other natural phenomena. In February of 1985, Dr. Oppenheimer died. The Exploratorium, having gained an international reputation for excellence and creativity under his guidance, became his lasting monument, and continued to thrive. By 1991, the staff had grown to almost 200; the exhibit collection to more than 650. ¹¹²

The Palace of Fine Arts still houses the Exploratorium. The other roughly one-third of the gallery building is occupied by the 1000 seat Palace of Fine Arts Theater (originally funded by none other than Walter Johnson himself). Both of these ventures operate independently of the Palace of Fine Arts and

¹¹² Exploratorium website. http://www.exploratorium.edu/history/palace/palace_6.html

the City and Country of San Francisco and do not share the site maintenance responsibilities. They have done the essential job of attracting visitors and media to the Palace since its reconstruction. As with all historic sites, visibility is crucial in the continued efforts of sustain the Palace of Fine Arts and the history that it represents.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PALACES

Introduction

With such a long a rich history, it is understandable that the Palace of Fine Arts should be considered a historic site; but, formal recognition as such depends on more than a general understanding of a site's historic significance. Accordingly, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) created the National Register of Historic Places (Register). The NHPA established the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to develop and maintain standards for listing on the Register. The benefits, and even drawbacks, of local designation vary greatly from place to place, but listing on the National Register of Historic Places is a fairly universal symbol of merit (in the United States), and a sort-of "stamp of approval" that many sites tout and use to promote tourism.

Early in their association, The Maybeck Foundation and the City and County of San Francisco began to look at the Palace's eligibility for listing on the Register in order to solidify its status as a historic site. The chapter traces the Palace's path to Register listing. It then goes on to discuss the issue of cultural landscapes and the Register evaluating the Palace's potential for recognition as a cultural landscape.

National Register Designation

As the only site remaining from the 1915 World's Fair, it was initially believed that the Palace might be eligible for National Historic Landmark status. But as a reconstruction, the site's path toward listing on the National Register of Historic Places has proven complicated. Under the current

National Register guidelines, a reconstructed building is only considered as old as the date of the reconstruction, meaning that according to the National Park Service, the Palace of Fine Arts was built between 1964 and 1974. This left the Palace not only ineligible as a National Historic Landmark, but also as a National Historic Site.

The original Register nomination was submitted to the California Historical Resources Commission on February 6, 2004, for Register listing as a historic district under Criteria A and C with a national level of significance and a periods of significance 1964-1967 and 1973-74. The Palace was nominated “under Criterion A as an exceptional example of Conservation.” Under Criterion C the Palace was nominated for both architecture and landscape architecture “as both a faithful reproduction of the work of a master architect [Bernard Maybeck] and as an ensemble possessing high artistic values.” Finally, given the site’s age of only 40 years at the time of nomination, Criteria Consideration G was addressed in the nomination stating:

The accurately rebuilt elements have exceptional importance as representations of changing attitudes toward historic preservation, architectural design, and urban development. The reconstruction of the Palace of Fine Arts in its original setting by architects and craftsmen closely associated with its designer was a pioneering effort that represented powerful changes in public attitudes in San Francisco and around the country. The reconstruction in permanent materials of this ephemeral ensemble represented the power of a newly awakened public...”

The nomination went on to argue, using the language of National Register Bulletin 15, that “exhibition buildings ‘of any age’ are usual or

nonexistent, the presence of the Palace of Fine Arts in any form—even reconstructed—is extremely rare.”¹¹³

The California Historical Resources Commission found the Palace to be eligible for the Register and on May 24, 2004, it passed the nomination as written to the National Park Service for final approval. After review, the National Park Service returned the nomination to the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) because of the following “technical concerns:”

- the Palace should be listed as possessing local rather than national significance in the Conservation context.
- because the majority of the extant Palace is a reconstruction, and because the reconstruction effort was not formally supervised by Bernard Maybeck, the site is not eligible for listing under Criteria C as the “work of a master.”¹¹⁴

Achieving Register listing for the Palace of Fine Arts was initially expected to be fairly quick due to the seemingly obvious significance of the site. To date, the process has taken over three years and involved numerous reworking and compromises. Finally, on October 10, 2005, the California OHP resubmitted the final nomination to the National Park Service having revised the level of significance and omitted the significance under Criterion C.¹¹⁵

In her letter of support submitted with the Register nomination, San Francisco Beautiful Executive Director, Dee Dee Workman, stated that “...the

¹¹³ National Register Nomination for the Palace of Fine Arts as submitted February 6, 2004.

¹¹⁴ This is particularly given that Bernard Maybeck died on October 3, 1957. While the movement to “preserve” the Palace began to gain steam in the 1950s, it was not determined that reconstruction would be necessary until the 1960s, by which time Maybeck’s oversight of the project was impossible.

Telephone conversation with California OHP representative Cynthia Howse November 28, 2005. Letter dated October 10, 2005 accompanying submission of revised National Register Nomination.

¹¹⁵ National Register Nomination for the Palace of Fine Arts as submitted October 10, 2005.

recognition of this important historical gem [on the National Register of Historic Places] is vital to its long-term preservation and maintenance.” As of February 20, 2006, the nomination is currently under review by the National Park Service and the California OHP expects a positive response.¹¹⁶

Cultural Landscape Designation¹¹⁷

While the Palace of Fine Arts was eventually listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a site, this was neither the only nor necessarily the best option available. It might have been possible for the Palace to gain recognition under the less common cultural landscape category. The nomination process, as it was, often seemed much like trying to fit a square peg in the round hole. Nomination as a cultural landscape might have been a better fit for the Palace site as a whole and accordingly could have simplified the process.

Definition

Formal recognition of cultural landscapes on the National Register of Historic Places began in 1981, and despite over two decades as a category, cultural landscapes still remain a fairly small percentage of all new Register listings. According to the National Parks Service, a cultural landscape includes, “geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife

¹¹⁶ Telephone conversation with California OHP representative Cynthia Howse November 28, 2005.

National Register Nomination for the Palace of Fine Arts as submitted October 10, 2005.

¹¹⁷ In her 2000 thesis entitled, A Mecca for the Masses: Problems and Solutions in the Preservation of Revere Beach, Massachusetts, Christina Prochilo discusses at length the cultural landscape designation process. This section represents a brief overview of her work and its application to the Palace of Fine Arts.

or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.”¹¹⁸

According to Arnold Alanen and Robert Melnick, “cultural landscapes exists virtually everywhere that human activities have affected the land,” stating that most people would describe them as “environments that clearly display the human organization of natural elements.”¹¹⁹ The National Parks Service narrows this definition stating that cultural landscapes consist of “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.”¹²⁰ Further, cultural landscapes are divided into four types:

Historic Site—a landscape significant for its association with a historic event, activity, or person.

Historic Designed Landscape—a landscape that was consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized design style or tradition.

Historic Vernacular Landscape—a landscape that evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape.

Ethnographic Landscape—a landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Charles A. Birnbaum, Preservation Brief #36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes. Washington: Government Printing Office. 1994. 1. As quoted by Prochilo, 64.

¹¹⁹ Alanen, Arnold and Melnick, Robert, editors. Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America. Baltimore: John’s Hopkins, 2000. 3.

¹²⁰ Birnbaum, 1. As quoted by Prochilo, 64.

¹²¹ Alanen and Melnick, 8, 210.

The Palace of Fine Arts is potentially eligible for listing as a historic site for its association with both the 1915 World's Fair and the rise of the preservation movement in the 1960s. Additionally, with the landscape and structures having been designed by Bernard Maybeck, the Palace site qualifies as a historic designed landscape.

Value of Recognizing Cultural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes are significant in their ability to convey the evolution of a site and the history to which the site relates. Christina Prochilo articulates the value of cultural landscapes saying "cultural landscapes exist where the natural and built environments are merged. They form the relationship between the land and how people have historically used the land." Cultural landscapes thus have the ability to convey the historic relationship of people to the land.¹²²

Additionally, the issue of integrity can be a controversial obstacle in the determination of a landscape's eligibility for the Register. Yet, according to Christina Prochilo cultural landscapes "provide an opportunity to physically see the evolution of how people's attitudes and feelings toward their surrounding landscape have changed over generations."¹²³

Conclusion

While the Palace of Fine Arts is expected to achieve National Register listing as a district under Criterion A, the failure to nominate the Palace site as

¹²² Prochilo, 64.

¹²³ Prochilo, 65

a cultural landscape represents a potentially missed opportunity. Reading the Palace of Fine Arts as a cultural landscape allows for an understanding of larger historical movements within the context of San Francisco specifically.

This is especially relevant in terms of the Palace of Fine Arts due to its changing function within the City of San Francisco. A brief sketch of the Palace of Fine Arts' history in this light might include such highlights as the site's role in the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915, its early preservation efforts, its use as a city park and the site alterations made by the CCC during the 1930s, and its function as a storage site during World War II. The historical outline would then move to the reconstruction efforts from the 1950s through the 1970s in the context of the rise of the preservation movement during that era, the gallery's use as one of the first hands-on children's science museums in the nation (also associated with Frank Oppenheimer) and finally the efforts from the early 1990s through the present to establish a long-term preservation plan for the site as well as address the landscape itself. Recognition of the Palace of Fine Arts as a cultural landscape would allow for an appreciation of all of these associations and the mark each has left on the site. Essentially, it would convey the true significance of the Palace of Fine Arts for the City of San Francisco.

CHAPTER FIVE

CURRENT STATE OF THE PALACE

Introduction

Over the course of its near century of life, the Palace of Fine Arts has undergone multiple campaigns to “save” the site. While efforts in the 1920s focused on both the landscape and architectural elements of the site, the more well-known 1964-74 reconstruction addressed only the Palace’s structures. Like the earlier historic preservation operation, the Campaign to Restore the Palace of Fine Arts, currently underway, treats the lagoon and landscape as well as the rotunda and colonnade, and even allows for the eventual treatment of the exterior of the gallery building. This chapter outlines the current state of the Palace of Fine Arts analyzing the development of the Campaign to Restore the Palace of Fine Arts and examining the Campaign’s work as outlined in its agreement with the Palace’s owners, the City and County of San Francisco.

Background

By 2001, the City and County of San Francisco faced two major problems regarding the Palace of Fine Arts. First, the 1960/70s preservation effort failed to provide an endowment for ongoing care, and as one of the over 150 city parks, the maintenance needs of the PFA were simply unmanageable. Second, as part of the seismic retrofitting of the Dudley Street ramp on to the Golden Gate Bridge (California Highway 101), Caltrans, the state transportation department, was also considering widening the highway by two lanes. The Caltrans proposal was highly disconcerting given that the ramp

was already tightly wedged between two historic sites, the Palace of Fine Arts to the northeast and the Presidio to the southwest (Figure 33).

The Presidio, a national historic site now under the control of the National Park Service, spans 1480 acres and encompasses over 500 buildings including a small cluster of warehouses that today include a gym and pool. The City's concern was that the Presidio's status as a national park and also listed on the National Register of Historic Places would give its preservation precedence over that of the Palace of Fine Arts, which was recognized as a city park and local historic landmark only on the local level.¹²⁴

In order to address these two challenges, the City and County of San Francisco signed an agreement in Fall 2002, adopting the Maybeck Foundation as their private fundraising and advocacy partner for the Palace of Fine Arts. The Maybeck Foundation, founded in 1999 with the mission of "advancing through preservation and education, the legacy of Bernard Maybeck," began to organize a capital campaign to fund a major preservation effort.

Though the Caltrans project failed to materialize, it served as the impetus for the Maybeck Foundation, funded by the City, to begin researching the Palace's possible options for national designation. The National Register Nomination process is covered elsewhere in this thesis.

Though many changes are taking place on the exterior, grounds, and management of the Palace, the interior use of the gallery building seems stable. The 1,000 seat Palace of Fine Arts Theater located in the southern

¹²⁴ Information about the Presidio from the National Park Service website <http://data2.itc.nps.gov/parks/prsf/ppMaps/Pad%2DMap%2D1%2D04%5Fcolor%2Egif>. The preservation concerns of the City and Country of San Francisco provided by the Maybeck Foundation. Much of this section is based on first hand-experience working for the Maybeck Foundation, and assisting in the writing of the National Register nomination.

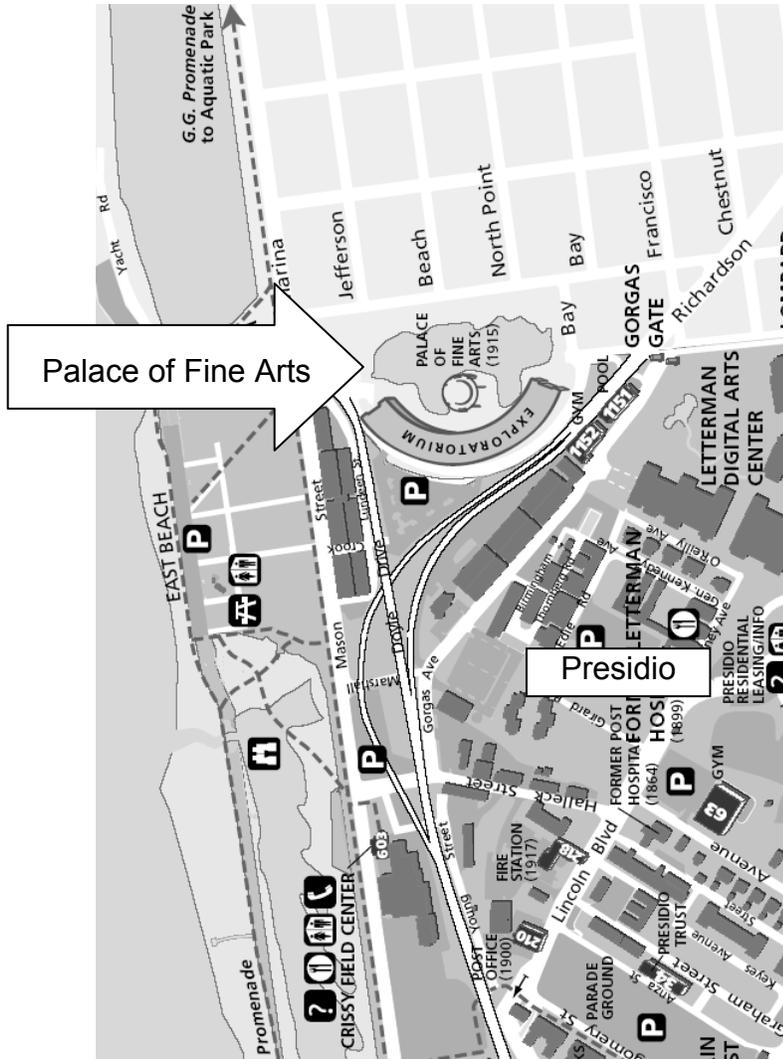


Figure 33. Detail of the Presidio and Palace of Fine Arts (National Park Service)

section of the gallery occupies approximately one-third of the building. Since its inception in 1970, theater programming has included a 1976 presidential debate between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, concerts, trade shows, lectures, television programs, in person tributes, and dance performances. In 2003, the Palace Theater hosted the Maybeck Foundation's educational lecture series "The Secrets of the Palace." The Palace of Fine Arts Theatre is operated by the non-profit Palace of Fine Arts League, Incorporated.

The remaining space in the gallery building is occupied by the Exploratorium, a hand-on children's science museum. Both the Palace of Fine Art Theater and the Exploratorium have long-term leases with the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department for use of the interior, but neither have any responsibility for the building exterior or landscape maintenance.

The Campaign to Restore the Palace of Fine Arts

In 2002, the Maybeck Foundation began The Campaign to Restore the Palace of Fine Arts, a \$21 million capital campaign to rehabilitate the Palace. By December 2005, the campaign had raised \$11.9 million including \$4.9 million in grants from the City and County of San Francisco for repair of the Rotunda roof¹²⁵. The rehabilitation is divided into five phases:

- Phase IA—Historical Structures and Landscape Report
- Phase IB—Rotunda Roof Repair
- Phase IIA—Lagoon Restoration
- Phase IIB—Seismic Retrofit
- Phase III—Restoration of the Peristyle

¹²⁵ San Francisco Recreation and Park Department Press Release, "Rotunda Dome Returns to Original Color"
<http://www.parks.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/recpark/DomeRestoration100404.pdf>.

Phase IA—Historical Structural Report

Phase IA included both a historic structures and a historic landscape report. According to the project status report submitted by the City and County of San Francisco, these documents serve “as the framework for the restoration project and to inform the Nomination of the property to the National Register of Historic Places” and were completed in September 2003.¹²⁶

The Historic Structures Report outlines the current physical state of the structures and landscape of the Palace of Fine Arts. It looks at these in terms of their relationship to the historic appearance of the site using historic documents and photographs as well as interviews with people involved in the 1960s reconstruction. This document was used to determine how the Palace might be best served in a major rehabilitation campaign in terms of which elements were most in need of attention and given the various stages of the Palace’s development, how they might be treated.

Items the Historic Structures Report finds to be “critical” included replacing the Colonnade and Rotunda roofing membrane and repairing the Rotunda ceiling. On the list of “serious” issues are, removal of moss and other types of biological growth, and repairing concrete spalls on the Rotunda and Colonnade. The removal of graffiti and nesting birds are considered of minor importance.

While the historic landscape section of the report does not classify them in terms of significance, it does list four recommendations. These include:

¹²⁶ Project Status Report as of October 31, 2005. submitted by San Francisco Recreation and Park Department to Mayor Gavin Newsom, dated 11/18/2005.

1. The Park has significance as both a part of the 1915 Exposition and as a city park for over 80 years. Many of the details of the Exposition landscape, such as the statues, are long missing; therefore, the period as a city park should be the focus of park rehabilitation efforts.
2. The lagoon edge will be reconstructed similar to its existing appearance. The idea of restoring the natural edge was raised, but it would not be maintainable given the high amount of pedestrian traffic around the lake edge.
3. Some of the older trees were either planted for the Exposition or existed before the creation of the Exposition. Most of the other plants or species are not necessarily considered historic, but the general relationship of turf areas, trees, and shrub planting should be considered historic and preserved. Maybeck's vision was for a well-planted, almost over-grown condition should be preserved [sic]. The particular species are less important than the overall effect of Maybeck's vision.

The final recommendation is that the project be in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.

Phase IB—Rotunda Roof Repair

The Rotunda Roof Repair consisted of a number of related projects. The first of these was the installation of safety netting under the Rotunda ceiling, followed by plaster repair on the ceiling panels, roof repair and replacement (as needed), and replacement of the dome's roofing membrane

to prevent water damage. The netting is to remain in place until the completion of phase IIB. The roof rehabilitation also included research into the historic color scheme of the Rotunda and the eventual repainting the roof in a historically sympathetic color scheme (the roof had been a light grey since the 1960s and was restored to a metallic gold described as “brunt-orange”). The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department Acting General Manager, Yomi Agunbiade, characterized the recoloring scheme stating that “several colors were studied at different times of days, different locations on the dome, and in different weather conditions to study the effect of light and atmosphere.” The “color selection process and result” was a multi-agency undertaking by “the Arts Commission, the Landmark Board and the Recreation and Park Commission.” Phase IB was completed in October, 2005 (Figures 34 and 35).¹²⁷

Phase IIA—Lagoon Restoration

The City and County of San Francisco describe Phase IIA as being comprised of “lagoon restoration and associated landscape improvements...treat[ing] the eastern edge of the site and eastern lagoon perimeter including: Reconstruction of the eastern lagoon edge; Landscape treatment at the eastern edge of the site-outside the Colonnade and Rotunda; and Restoration of the Lagoon.” This work was necessary as the eastern edge of the lagoon had been eroding for years, and the erosion had begun to encroach on the adjacent walkway. In addition “the lagoon’s water quality has been

¹²⁷ Press Release “Rotunda Dome Returns to Original Color” <http://www.parks.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/recpark/DomeRestoration100404.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2005).
Project Status Report as of October 31, 2005. submitted by San Francisco Recreation and Park Department to Mayor Gavin Newsom, dated 11/18/2005.



Figure 34. Palace of Fine Arts before repainting of Rotunda, 2002 (Jim Wegryn, personal collection)



Figure 35. Palace of Fine Arts after repainting of Rotunda, 2005 (Zurdogo Destination Guide to San Francisco)

compromised over time by sediment and poor water circulation.” Specifically, the City describes the goals of Phase IIA as “improving water quality of the lagoon and correct/improve eroding lagoon edge...dredging lagoon and installing a water circulation system.” As for landscape improvements, the City planned to install “a new irrigation system, accent planting, ADA accessibility upgrades, new benches and new sidewalks.”¹²⁸

The most recent Project Status Report issued by the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department was dated October 31, 2005. It states that planning and design for Phase IIA have been completed. The construction contract was awarded to Aquatic Environments, Inc. with the architectural firm of Carey and Company consulting. Though construction on Phase IIA began on August 1, 2005, the groundbreaking ceremony was held on August 12, 2005. Sheet piles had been installed to support the new lagoon edge and a new concrete sidewalk along Bay Street was completed. Dredging of lagoon sediment was scheduled to be completed before December, 2005, and site, electrical, and mechanical work were reported as ongoing and construction on the entire Phase IIA was 20% complete with an overall estimated completion date of July 30, 2006.¹²⁹

Phase IIB—Seismic Retrofit

Phase IIB focuses primarily on the west side of the lagoon and though referred to as “seismic retrofit,” actually encompasses a great range of interventions including: “repairs to the steel inner dome frame; seismic upgrade to the

¹²⁸ The benches installed are standard Park Department benches, not modeled after any historic material. San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, “Project Status Report For the Palace of Fine Arts as of October 31, 2005” submitted to Mayor Gavin Newsom, dated 11/18/2005, 1.

¹²⁹ SF RPD, “Project Status Report,” 2.

Rotunda supporting piers; and seismic upgrade to the Colonnade elements including foundations and columns.” Beyond seismic work, Phase IIB also entails “repairs to the stucco inner dome surfaces; re-roofing all lower elements of the Rotunda and all elements of the Colonnade; concrete cleaning; concrete spall repair; removal of paint and graffiti/application of graffiti-coating; and lighting repairs and replacement.” While seemingly similar to Phase IB, this Phase addresses the underside of the rotunda dome; whereas, IB primarily focused on the topside of the dome, working on the underside to stabilize and prevent the continued occurrence of portions of plaster dislodging and falling to the ground. Phase IIB, therefore is both more structurally comprehensive and more cosmetic in its treatment of the underside of the dome.

The design of this phase is scheduled to be completed by mid-April 2006 and the construction shall begin in August 2006 and be completed by mid-September 2007.

Phase III—Restoration of the Peristyle

Phase III is largely a visionary phase that was included in the Historic Structure Report as the “complete restoration” scheme, but is not scheduled as part of the current rehabilitation campaign. This phase would entail restoration of the Gallery exterior to recreate its 1915 appearance including the “elements that mirror the architectural elements of the Colonnade and Rotunda; restoration of the original main entry on the central east-west axis of the site.” Phase III would also allow for the establishment of an interpretive center in the Gallery and “possible recreation of the paintings on the inner dome coffers as designed in 1915; and installation of plant materials in

planters at the west [elevation] of the Exposition Building.” This phase is essentially a “dream phase” and has not been included in the fundraising goal of \$21 million.¹³⁰

Conclusion

The rehabilitation of the Palace of Fine Arts is a multi-faceted project encompassing everything from planning and historic research to seismic retrofitting to landscape and habitat rehabilitation to largely cosmetic repairs such as repainting the dome with the intention of reversing the effects of long-term neglect.

¹³⁰ SF RPD, “Project Status Report,” 3.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction and Summary

The Palace of Fine Arts represents the culmination of several important people and events. Designed by pioneering architect Bernard Maybeck as a showpiece of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, the Palace has gone on to become the only existing representation of the PPIE in San Francisco. Its beauty and singularity have ultimately facilitated a series of historic preservation efforts. The most notable of these being the landmark campaign to save the crumbling relic during the 1950s and 60s. Over the course of its life the Palace has been associated with some notable figures including the media-moguls of Hearst family; future Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren; future Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger; and Manhattan Project physicist Frank Oppenheimer who worked with his older brother Robert Oppenheimer to create the atomic bomb.

The mid-century Palace of Fine Arts preservation effort is especially significant within a national context. It occurred almost simultaneously with the growth of the preservation movement in America, and serves as an early example of a community funded large-scale project. It is also significant that while places such as New York City was demolishing icons like Penn Station, San Francisco undertook the costly and highly meticulous reconstruction of the Palace of Fine Arts.

Though the preservation campaign of the 1950s and 60s produced an amazing reincarnation of the Palace, in another sense it was not as successful as many had hoped. Aside from the fact that the decorative exterior of the

gallery building was never replaced, a budget shortfall prevented the establishment of any sort of maintenance endowment for the Palace. As a result, over the past 40 years, the Palace has not received much of the upkeep a site of its nature and scale requires.

Today the lagoon and landscape, not included in the mid-century preservation effort, are in need of serious rehabilitation and the rotunda and colonnade both require seismic strengthening and general cleanup including graffiti, biological growth, and animal deposit removal. Also, moisture in the rotunda roof has caused significant loss in structural integrity as portions of the ceiling have begun to dislodge and fall to the ground. The Campaign to Restore the Palace of Fine Arts is currently addressing these issues. This final chapter looks beyond this effort

The primary challenge currently facing the Palace of Fine Arts continues to be its need for ongoing maintenance and support. The solutions to this fairly expansive need can be divided into three broad categories: education, interpretation, and preservation. This chapter analyzes these possible solutions and various approaches that might be utilized in addressing each. Ultimately, these recommendations seek to bolster Palace of Fine Arts preservation efforts by developing public knowledge of and association with the Palace.

Issues and Recommendations

Issue 1: Education

There is a general lack of public understanding of the history and significance of the Palace of Fine Arts. Most people are able to recognize

immediately that the site is beautiful and majestic but they do not understand its history and thus its historical significance. While this emotional response has played a key role in inspiring individuals and groups to save the Palace, a better public understanding of the site's history and relationship to other facets of the city's past would give greater weight to these preservation efforts by further activating citizen's sense of civic pride. This increased store of "common knowledge" about the site could also potentially increase the number of visitors and donors to the site.

Recommendations:

- Develop curriculum for school students
- Making effective use of the Internet
- Create educational programs with affiliated organizations

Develop curriculum for school students

As a multi-faced site, the Palace of Fine Arts provides an excellent opportunity for integrated learning involving history, art, life science and mathematics while instilling a sense of civic pride in Bay Area students. An approach similar to this could serve simultaneously to build excitement and knowledge about the Palace of Fine Arts among students, teachers, and their families while also incorporating the Exploratorium, the hands-on children's science museum located in the gallery building.

A curriculum targeted toward elementary students might fall into two broad categories: social sciences/humanities and math and science. The social studies/humanities section could include learning about the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), the countries exhibiting at the PPIE,

and designing and writing about an exhibition hall the student would create for the for the PPIE. The Palace offers many opportunities for math and science curriculum including studying the lagoon as an ecosystem, technology at the PPIE, the cost of attractions at the PPIE, using the Rotunda or columns for geometry lessons, and calculating the volume of the lagoon and the gallery building. The entire unit could culminate in a visit to the Palace of Fine Arts and Exploratorium.

By providing information about the site in a fun and accessible way, the Palace of Fine Arts could help foster a sense of its own importance within San Francisco. Given the Palace's history of preservation based on civic pride and love of the site, this would in turn further aid the cause for its preservation.

Making Effective Use of the Internet

The internet is a powerful tool that can be used to spread information about a site, but has an equal power to discourage and confuse if not properly managed. Many versions of the Palace of Fine Arts' history exist on the internet. The most comprehensive of these seems to be the Maybeck Foundation's website (www.maybeck.org or www.savethepalace.org) and though the Palace of Fine Arts' section is difficult to find, the Exploratorium's website (www.exploratorium.edu). The information about the Palace on Exploratorium's site, while rather extensive, is again difficult to locate. The Maybeck Foundation desires to be a primary repository of online information on the Palace of Fine Arts; yet, currently, the information on their website is mainly in the form of "Scholar's Essays." Being a fundraising organization soliciting donations of over \$1 million each, the site has an understandable

bias, and has yet to fully realize its potential as an educational site with broad appeal.

A truly effective internet presentation would utilize both academic writings and elements of more general interest such as virtual tours of the site, images of original PPIE tickets, and anecdotes about the Palace. It should also incorporate information about rehabilitation efforts and links to affiliated resources such as the Exploratorium, the Maybeck Foundation (though they might be the most logical group to host the site), other San Francisco and PPIE history sites, and preservation groups. Also, in addition to the “Scholar’s Essays,” the site should provide popular essays as well as including a venue through which people might share their memories and thoughts about the Palace of Fine Arts. Finally, the entire site should be visually appealing and include many photographs.

A cohesive internet presence would serve to build awareness in the Bay Area encouraging locals to rediscover the Palace and support its preservation. Also, widespread availability of the information on the site could promote tourism and foster a greater appreciation for the Palace of Fine Arts, Bernard Maybeck, and the PPIE, which again is key in building and maintaining a coalition for the preservation of any site.

Create educational programs with affiliated organizations

Just as the Maybeck Foundation has taken on the Palace of Fine Arts as a major project, the Palace could look to ally with other organizations to develop educational programs that link the organization’s mission with the Palace. In the fall of 2003, the Maybeck Foundation sponsored a series of lectures entitled “The Secrets of the Palace.” This three-part series focused on

Maybeck, the PPIE, and finally, the Palace as a work of art. In spring 2004, the National Parks Service sponsored an exhibit on the history of the PPIE in which the Palace of Fine Arts was featured and the Campaign to Restore the Palace of Fine Arts was discussed. These two events could serve as models for future collaborative efforts with groups such as San Francisco Architectural Heritage, the Exploratorium, the Museum of the City of San Francisco, Berkeley Architectural Heritage (Maybeck was very much a citizen of Berkeley and the architectural style he helped pioneer is very closely associated with Berkeley, no doubt at least partly because so many of his buildings are located there).

Issue 2: Interpretation

While the Exploratorium and Palace of Fine Arts Theater draw large numbers of people to the site, a dearth of on-site interpretation leaves largely unanswered questions about the history and meaning of the site, let alone a clear notion of what the Palace of Fine Arts encompasses physically.

Recommendation: Create an On-site Interpretative Program

A multi-faceted interpretation scheme could help unify the various elements and functions of the Palace of Fine Arts. An effective interpretive program would educate the public while not compromising the site visually or in terms of integrity. The educational goals of such a program should include elements highlighting the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, Bernard Maybeck, the mid-century reconstruction, and the landscape of the site. They might also interpret the myriad uses of the Palace of Fine Arts over the years, the lagoon

as a habitat, and the development of the Marina district from the pre-PPIE era through the present.

Interpretive components might include brochures, signage and tours. Brochures often attract and provide information to visitors who otherwise might not fully understand the site. It would also be possible to create multiple brochures highlighting various aspects of the site. An additional advantage of brochures is that they can be distributed off site to encourage tourism and inform even those who do not physically visit the site.

Signage is often a key component in on-site interpretation; yet, the grounds of the Palace of Fine Arts currently contain no signage. As Christina Prochilo points out, signage should be selected with sensitivity to the landscape's integrity, "a site with a high level of integrity may only need basic signage; a site with low integrity may benefit from exhibits, photographs, and signs to help visitors visualize what may no longer exist." The nature of the Palace of Fine Arts as a landscape with reconstructed built elements provides an excellent opportunity for signage to move visitors through a complex history that might be difficult to visualize without guidance. With this in mind, the signs should contain a mixture of historic photographs, drawings, and text making them informative and engaging to a wide audience.

Both the brochures and interpretive signage could be incorporated into a walking tour. While guided tours might be a draw for special events, the cost of developing and staffing such a tour could prove prohibitive; therefore, self-guided tours informed by brochures and signage could be a cost-efficient method of providing a somewhat scripted experience.

Issue 3: Physical Preservation

Essentially, the two preceding sets of recommendations are important elements in the development of the third: preservation. Preservation as the term is used in this section encompasses the physical maintenance of the site.

Recommendations:

- Establish a maintenance endowment
- Utilize existing programs providing more creative maintenance solutions

Establish a Maintenance Endowment

Critical to the issue of preservation is the establishment of an endowment to provide for the cost of routine maintenance. The Palace has been “saved” from total demolition twice, but both times was then left virtually defenseless against less obvious but equally insidious forces such as rain, animals, biological growth—ranging from vines to fungi—and the effects of time. One goal of the Campaign to Restore the Palace of Fine Arts is the creation of just such an endowment.

Utilize existing programs to provide more creative maintenance solutions

The City of San Francisco Recreation and Park Department in conjunction with the Department of Public Works, Clean City Coalition and community groups coordinate weekend workparties at parks throughout the City to “clean and green parks, playgrounds and recreation centers district by district.” These “parties” are proposed by community members or groups and generally last about three hours on either a Saturday or Sunday. They are open to the public and can be held at any given site as often as once per

month. The City also provides lunch for volunteers. The Recreation and Park Department reports that “in Fiscal Year 2002-2003, 12,000 park volunteer slots were filled and 39,000 hours of physical labor were donated to the Departments parks.”¹³¹ Taking advantage of this program might allow for the regular maintenance of the landscape of the Palace of Fine Arts while lowering the cost associated with hiring additional groundskeepers. A similar arrangement of coordinating work parties for routine landscape maintenance might also be possible through local garden clubs or a Marina (neighborhood) homeowner’s association.

In the first paragraph of his 1915 booklet The Palace of Fine Arts and Lagoon, Bernard Maybeck describes architecture as a vehicle through which to express “our human experience.” He then suggests that the Palace site be analyzed “not from the physical but rather from a psychological point of view with reference to the effect of architectural forms on the mind and feelings.”¹³² Today the burlap-stuccoed Palace Maybeck inspected before the opening of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition is, in a very physical sense, gone. However, the faithful concrete reconstruction standing in its place leaves no doubt about the presence of the Palace in terms of its effect on “the mind and feelings.” While there is, of course, a differentiation to be made between the physical and psychological realities, though Maybeck had no way of knowing it at the time he made the statement, the Palace as it is today

¹³¹ 2005 Volunteer and WorkParty schedule distributed by San Francisco Recreation and Park Department. August, 2005. 3. San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, “Volunteers” http://www.parks.sfgov.org/site/recpark_index.asp?id=21196 (accessed December 3, 2005).

¹³² Maybeck, 1.

represents the embodiment of much of San Francisco's twentieth century history. Seemingly, it will continue to do so for many years to come, with the added benefit of the community's increased historical awareness that will allow for an enhanced understanding and pride in the Palace, and subsequently, the City's past. In this way, the Palace will truly reach its potential as a conveyor of human experience.

Bibliography

Books and Articles

- Alanen, Arnold and Melnick, Robert, editors. *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*. Baltimore: John's Hopkins, 2000.
- Barry, John D. *The City of Domes: A Walk with an Architect About the Courts and Palaces of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition with A Discussion of Its Architecture, Its Sculpture, Its Mural Decorations, and Its Lighting, Preceded by a History of Its Growth*. San Francisco: Blair-Murdock, 1915.
- Benedict, Burton. *The Anthropology of World's Fairs*. Berkeley: Scolar, 1983
- Birnbaum, Charles A. *Preservation Brief #36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1994.
- Brechin, Gray. "Sailing to Byzantium: The Architecture of the Fair." In *The Anthropology of World's Fairs*, edited by Benedict, Burton. Berkeley: Scolar, 1983.
- Cardwell, Kenneth H. *Bernard Maybeck: Artisan, Architect, Artist*. Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1977.
- Ferrier, William Warren. *Berkeley, California: The Story of the Evolution of a Hamlet into a City of Culture and Commerce*. Berkeley: Published by the author, 1933.
- Hammond, John Winthrop. *Men and Volts: The Story of General Electric*. New York: JB Lippincott, 1941.
- James, Juliet Helena Lumbard. *Palaces and Courts of the Exposition*. San Francisco: California Book Company, 1915.
- Keeler, Charles. *The Simple Home*. San Francisco: Paul Elder, 1904.
- Kriker, Harold. *California's Architectural Frontier: Style and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Russell and Russell, 1970.
- Limerick, Jeffrey. "Bernard Maybeck." In *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts and Crafts Architects of California*, edited by Robert Winter. Berkeley: University of California Berkeley Press: 1997.
- Maybeck, Bernard. *Palace of Fine Arts and Lagoon*, 1915.

Mullgardt, Louis Christian. *The Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition: A Pictorial Survey of the most Beautiful of the Architectural Compositions of the Panama-Pacific Exposition*. San Francisco: Paul Elder, 1915.

Newhall, Ruth. *San Francisco's Enchanted Palace*. Berkeley: Howell-North, 1967.

Sargeant, Winthrop. "Bernard Maybeck." *Life*, 17 May 1948, p. 45.

Todd, Frank Morton. *The Story of the Exposition: Being the Official History of the International Celebration Held at San Francisco in 1915 to Commemorate the Discovery of the Pacific Ocean and the Construction of the Panama Canal*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921.

Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*. Cambridge: MIT, 1969.

Winter, Robert. *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts and Crafts Architects of California*. Berkeley: University of California Berkeley Press, 1997.

Woodbridge, Sally Byrne. *Bernard Maybeck : Visionary Architect*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1992.

Websites

Cerny, Susan, "First Church of Christ, Scientist," *Berkeley Landmarks*, Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, http://www.berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/.

Exploratorium. *History*. <http://www.exploratorium.edu/>.

National Park Service. *Presidio of San Francisco*. <http://www.nps.gov/prsf/>.

Palace of Fine Arts Theater. <http://www.palaceoffinearts.org/>.

Sanders, Steve. *Remnants of a Dream*. <http://www.remnantsofadream.net>.

San Francisco Recreation and Park Department.
http://parks.sfgov.org/site/recpark_index.asp.

Miscellaneous Documents and Reports

Architectural Resources Group. Historic Structures Report: First Church of Christ, Scientist, Berkeley, California. 2003.

Brechin, Gray; William Marquand; and Sara Shreve. National Register Nomination for the Palace of Fine Arts, 2004.

-----, National Register Nomination for the Palace of Fine Arts, 2005.
California Office of Historic Preservation. Letter dated October 10, 2005 accompanying submission of revised (2005) Palace of Fine Arts National Register Nomination.

Carey & Company, Architects. Historic Structures Report: Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco, California. 1993.

Carey & Company, Architects and Royston Hanamoto Alley & Abey. Historic Structures and Landscape Report: Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco, California. 2003.

Howse, Cynthia. Interviewed by author. Telephone interview, 28 November 2005.

Prochilo, Christina. "A Mecca for the Masses: Problems and Solutions in the Preservation of Revere Beach, Massachusetts." MA thesis, Cornell University, 2000.