



Architectural  
Resources Group

Architecture  
Planning  
Conservation



# 34-50 E. Third Avenue Historic Resource Evaluation

*Prepared for*

City of San Mateo

*Prepared by*

Architectural Resources Group, Inc.  
San Francisco, California

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project Background

At the request of the City of San Mateo Planning Division, Architectural Resources Group (ARG) completed this Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) for the property at 34-50 E. Third Avenue (APNs: 034-143-240, -280, -290) in downtown San Mateo, California (Figure). The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the historic integrity and significance of the property under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including identification of which aspects of the property contribute to that significance. In 1926, prolific local architect William Henry Weeks designed the commercial building at the request of original owners A.C. Franklin and Benjamin Getz. The building served as the Benjamin Franklin Hotel from 1926 to 2003, was vacant from 2003 to 2011, and has since been used by Draper University. The property was previously surveyed as part of the City of San Mateo's historic resources survey completed in 1989. The building was assigned Status Code 3/3D indicating it appears individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and as a contributor to the locally designated San Mateo Downtown Historic District.<sup>1</sup>



*Figure 1. Aerial photograph of the subject property and immediate vicinity  
(Google Earth, amended by author)*

<sup>1</sup> San Mateo County Historical Association, *City of San Mateo Historic Building Survey Final Report*, September 1989, accessed December 4, 2017, <http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/DocumentCenter/View/47850>.

## 1.2 Methodology

To complete this HRE, ARG visited the subject property on December 13, 2017 to photograph the building and the surrounding setting and to document the architectural features, and condition of the commercial property. ARG also reviewed the building permit history provided by San Mateo Planning Division staff and conducted archival research at the following repositories:

- San Mateo Public Library
- San Mateo County Historical Association Archives
- San Mateo County Recorder's Office
- San Francisco Heritage Archives
- digital repositories, including the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map collection, David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, United States Geological Survey (USGS) EarthExplorer, Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, *San Francisco Chronicle* database, Online Archive of California, Internet Archive, Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals, and Pacific Coast Architecture Database

The background research included a review of historic photographs, maps, newspaper clippings, and primary and secondary documents regarding the development of the subject property and the surrounding downtown commercial district as well as the original owners, A.C. Franklin and Benjamin Getz.

## 2. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

A physical description and construction history of the subject property are presented below; additional photographs are provided in Appendix A.

### 2.1 Property Description

The subject property at 34-50 E. Third Avenue is located at the western edge of San Mateo's downtown commercial district, on a rectangular parcel (APNs: 034-143-240, -280, -290) in the block bounded by E. Third Avenue, S. El Camino Real, E. Fourth Avenue, and S. San Mateo Drive. Other businesses, including restaurants, jewelers, spas and salons, bars, and retail stores, line the commercial corridor to the east and west along E. Third Avenue.

The subject property contains a large, mixed-use eight-story plus penthouse concrete building that is flush with the sidewalk. The building is largely symmetrical, contains a flat roof and parapet, and is clad in stucco. The north façade of the building (facing E. Third Avenue) is divided into eight bays. The façade is relatively simple in design, with the exception of Churrigueresque ornamentation at the second and uppermost stories. The corners on the north façade, from the ground level to the roof, are set in from the face of the building, contributing to its overall vertical emphasis.

The penthouse, located within the central bays of the building, rises one story above the hotel block and features a silhouetted plaster ornament that projects above the parapet. The penthouse's north windows consist of a central wood sash double-hung window flanked by blind windows. These windows feature elaborate lintels and surrounds in the Churrigueresque style.

Three entrances, none of them original, are located on the ground floor of the subject property. The main entrance, a recessed entry located at the center of the façade, consists of two metal fully-glazed doors with metal transom and sidelights. The entry also features terrazzo flooring with “Benjamin Franklin” inscribed in the center of the floor. Additional features include recessed lighting, two display cases/lightboxes on either side of the entrance, and a large canopy projecting over the entry and sidewalk surmounted by letters reading “DRAPER UNIVERSITY.” A second entrance, located to the west of the main entrance, is slightly recessed and consists of two fully-glazed metal doors flanked with fixed metal sidelights. An overhead canopy extends from the entry. A third entrance, located to the east of the main entrance, is also slightly recessed and contains a single fully-glazed wood door with wood sash divided sidelights. A metal canopy extends above the entry.

Ground floor fenestration consists of wood sash casement windows, fixed wood sash divided-light windows, fixed wood sash windows, and fixed metal windows. Fenestration on the second through eighth floors consists of three-over-three, double-hung, wood sash divided-light windows. The windows on the second floor contain elaborate window surrounds in the Churrigueresque style. A molded stringcourse runs along the top of, and between, the second story windows. A second molded stringcourse runs along the north façade, between the seventh and eighth floors. The eight-floor windows of the second and seventh bays are flanked by paired colonettes and curved parapets, also in the Churrigueresque style.



*Figure 2. North façade, view south (ARG, December 2017)*



### *South Façade*

Similar to the north façade, the south façade is largely symmetrical and contains elaborate Churrigueresque ornamentation that provides definition to an otherwise simple stucco façade. Additionally, there are double-height single-story wings projecting from the main eight-story building at the rear.

Fenestration on the south façade is symmetrical and consists of three-over-three, double-hung, wood sash divided-light windows and fixed six-light wood-sash windows. Window openings include both arched and squared openings. Additionally, the rear double-height single-story wing contains three sets of wood fully-glazed doors flanked by divided sidelights and transoms. Other entrances on the south façade consist of paired fully-glazed divided-light wood doors.

On the south façade of the rear wing extension is an entrance to a cafeteria. The entrance is recessed, clad in brick, and contains a set of fully-glazed divided-light wood doors. An additional entrance on the roof of the projecting wing consists of a single fully-glazed wood door flanked on the right by a wood sash window.

Additional features of the south façade include a chimney topped with a clay-tile cap, exterior wall vents located within the penthouse, a fan-shaped pool, various light fixtures, a metal pergola, two metal staircases, and a metal gate that encompasses the rear portion of the property.



*Figure 3. South facade, view north (ARG, December 2017)*

### *East and West Façades*

The east and west façades are mirror images, rising eight stories in height with simple planar walls that are clad in stucco. The façades contain symmetrical fenestration, which consists of three-over-three, double-hung, wood sash divided-light windows, smaller double-hung wood sash windows, and several blind windows. There are Churrigueresque panels located above the seventh story windows. Atop the east façade is a slightly-projecting sign spelling “DRAPER UNIVERSITY.” The first two floors of the west façade are obscured by an adjacent property. The west façade includes a metal fire escape with platforms located at each floor of the building accessed via windows; these windows consist of wood sash casement windows flanked on one side with a wood sash sidelight.

The east façade also contains a pedestrian walkway that runs along the façade to a rear alley, connecting to E. Fourth Avenue via Ben Franklin Court. The walkway also connects to a secondary service entrance, which is located behind a metal gate and cinderblock wall. The service entrance consists of a single metal door. Additionally, there are sets of metal divided-light pivot and fixed windows on the ground floor of the east façade, some of which contain vents.



*Figure 4. East façade, view southwest (ARG, December 2017)*



*Figure 5. West façade, view southeast (ARG, December 2017)*

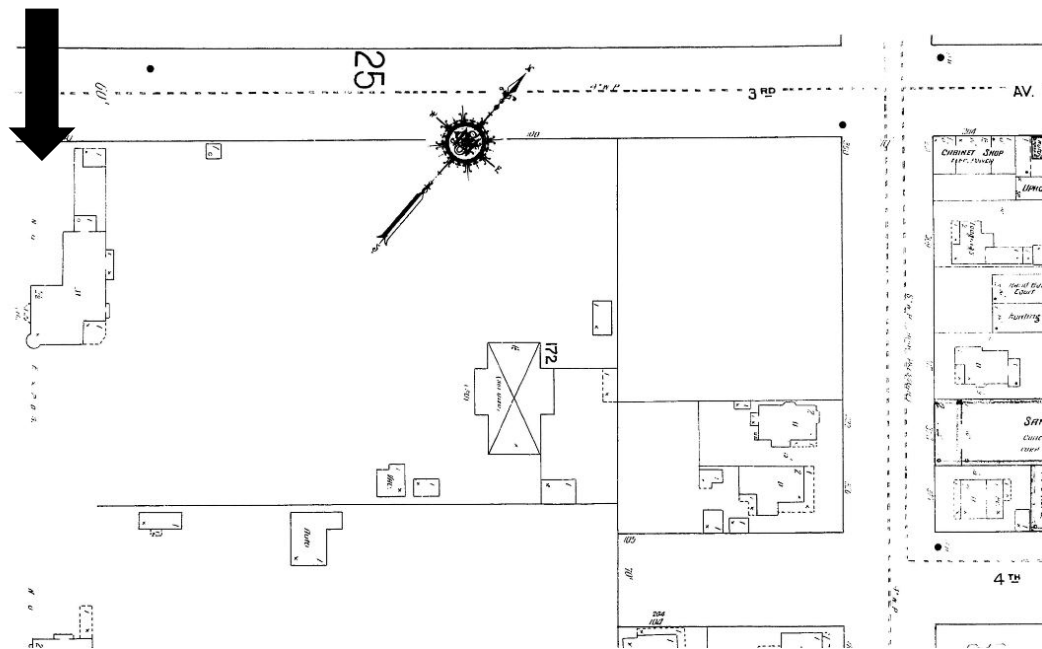
## **2.2 Construction Chronology**

The following construction chronology was compiled using building permits, architectural drawings, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, archival research, and aerial photographs.

The parcel at 34-50 E. Third Avenue was originally developed in the 1880s as part of the de Guigne Estate. According to a 1920 Sanborn map (Figure 6), the parcel consisted of a dwelling at the center of the site, as well as a number of vacant buildings situated on the southeast corner of the parcel. During this time, Fourth Avenue ended abruptly near today’s San Mateo Drive, and other single-family residences occupied adjacent lots to the south and east. By the mid-1920s, the de Guigne Estate was sold and subdivided, Fourth Avenue was expanded west to El Camino Real through the de Guigne Estate, and San Mateo Drive was extended through the eastern end of the former estate. In 1926, A.C. Franklin and Benjamin Getz commissioned architect W.H. Weeks to design the Benjamin Franklin Hotel on the subject property. In

the early 1950s, the Best family purchased the property and conducted several renovations and refurbishments including redoing the Willow Room, the Fireside Room, and the Club Seville.

In 1985, Westin Hotels, a subsidiary of UAL Inc., purchased the property from the Best family and performed a \$3 million restoration of the hotel, which included remodeling the guest rooms, bringing the lobby back to its original condition, making improvements in the swimming pool area, installing air-conditioning, installing a new telephone system, upgrading the life-safety system, remodeling the kitchen, and painting the interior and exterior.<sup>2</sup> Four years later, in 1989, the Empire Group (listed as Benjamin Franklin Associates and Empire 44 Inc. on San Mateo County assessor records) purchased the property from Westin Hotels, and in 1993 the building underwent repairs to the exterior walls, corbels, panels, and medallions.



*Figure 6. 1920 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, San Mateo, California, Sheet 26; the arrow indicates the approximate location of the subject property.*

In 2005, AF Evans Co. (listed as AFE-Benjamin Franklin, LLC. on county assessor records) purchased the property with plans to convert the hotel into condominiums. AF Evans' project was never realized, and in 2007, the company sold the property to CitiSuites, a subsidiary of the Lembi Group (listed as Trophy Properties XI LLC. on county assessor records). In 2008, the company began a major renovation on the hotel that was never completed due to the real estate market crash. The property was subsequently sold to UBS Financial Services, and in 2011, the property was purchased by Tim Draper, doing business as Heart of San Mateo LLC, who began operating Draper University out of the former hotel. In 2013, Heart of San Mateo LLC replaced the storefront and exterior doors and windows, installed a new entrance canopy, installed new second floor court exterior stairs, painted the exterior of the building, and completed interior partition work.

<sup>2</sup> This project is not on file with the city of San Mateo's building permit record for the subject property. Information on this project was gathered through archival research.

The following table summarizes permit records regarding the building available at the San Mateo County Recorder's Office.

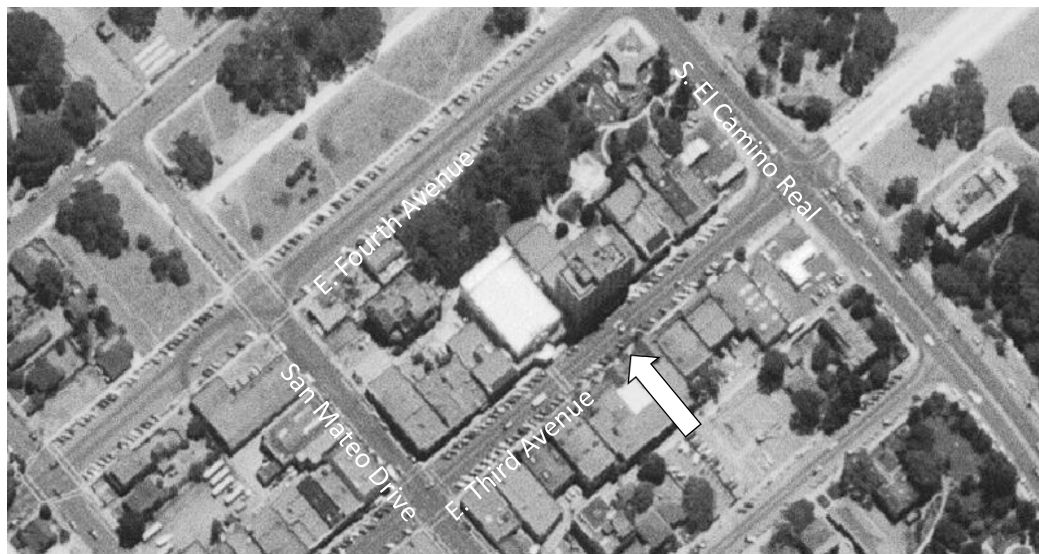


Figure 7. 1946 aerial photograph; the arrow indicates the location of the subject property. (USGS EarthExplorer, amended by author)

Table 1. Construction Chronology

Year	Permit No.	Architect/Builder	Description of Work
1954	25945	Leonard Michaels, architect	Remodeling of banquet room (cafeteria), including door and window replacements (footprint remained unchanged)
1993	30134	The Bentley Company, engineers and architects	Replace projecting watertable, replace additional anchorage of watertable, replace medallion panel, provide additional anchorage of wall panels, patch corbel, repair pilaster, anchor loose finial, provide additional anchorage of finial, repair crack
1996	34415	Architecture & Light, architects	Interior renovations for Lark Creek Cafe restaurant
2008	231514	Timothy John Murphy, architect	Paint exterior, install new lighting fixtures, repair and preserve the "Benjamin Franklin Hotel" signs at the top of the building, remove existing storefront awnings/canopies and install new storefront awnings/canopies, upgrade storefronts and the hotel entrance, and interior remodeling of the hotel's lobby and fireside lounge areas
2013		TMDA	New exterior paint, new entrance canopy, new storefront/exterior doors and windows, new exterior screen banners, new second floor court exterior stairs, new fence at second floor court, interior partition work



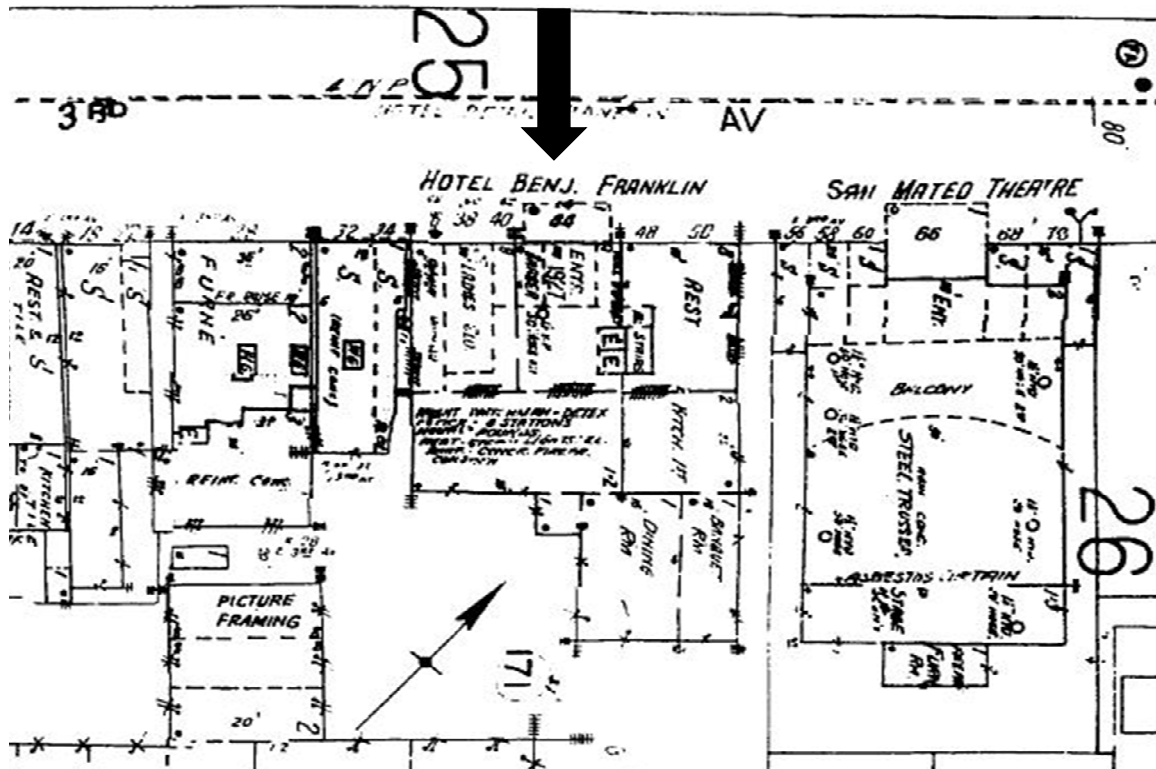


Figure 8. Detail of 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, San Mateo, California, Sheet 27; the arrow indicates the location of the subject property.

All three entries on the building's north façade have been replaced with fully glazed doors and sidelights. The following April 2011 photograph shows the state of the storefronts prior to the 2013 restoration of the west storefront to generally match the windows and transom at the east storefront.



Figure 9. View of north façade storefronts, looking southeast (Google Street View, April 2011).



*Figure 10. Penthouse at north façade, view south (ARG, December 2017).*

The permit record for the building does not address modifications that may have been made to the penthouse. Regardless, the penthouse's historically important features consist of those features that are visible on the building's north façade, including the elaborate Churrigueresque window surrounds and parapet, along with the penthouse profile rising one story above the adjoining roofline. The east and south walls of the penthouse are not visible from the public right-of-way, and the south façade consists of a plain wall with two small windows.

### 3. HISTORIC CONTEXT

#### 3.1 Settlement of San Mateo

In 1856, the California State Legislature passed the Consolidation Act creating San Mateo County from the southern portion of San Francisco County, which originally extended from the northern tip of the peninsula south to Palo Alto. The following decade, the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad began offering train service along the peninsula, connecting its namesake cities by rail in 1864. San Mateo developed into a small village at the crossroads between this north-south railroad (which ran approximately three blocks east of the subject property) and a stagecoach road extending east-west from San Francisco Bay to the Pacific.<sup>3</sup>

The new rail connection, which was absorbed by the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1868, provided easy access to San Mateo County for both tourists and wealthy San Franciscans who desired weekend and summer residences in the countryside. A particular tourist highlight was Crystal Springs Canyon, located approximately 3.25 miles west of the subject property. San Francisco businessmen and their families,

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<sup>3</sup> Mitchell Postel, *San Mateo: A Centennial History* (San Francisco: Scottwall Associates, 1994), 19, 27; Alan Hynding, *From Frontier to Suburb: the Story of the San Mateo Peninsula* (Belmont, California: Star Publishing Company, 1982), 57-58.

such as the Howards, Taylors, and Parrotts, purchased large parcels of land along the railroad, erected grand mansions, and employed villagers as servants and skilled craftsman to maintain their estates.<sup>4</sup>

Concurrent with the establishment of San Mateo County and the construction of the railroad, Charles B. Polhemus established one of the earliest commercial districts in San Mateo. In the 1850s, Polhemus, a director of the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad, began buying up land along San Mateo Creek assuming that the future railroad would increase the property value. Polhemus was able to steer the location of the railroad tracks through the eastern portion of his holdings in San Mateo. He commissioned a survey to plot a new subdivision roughly bounded by the creek to the north (approximately at present-day Baldwin Avenue), Fifth Avenue to the south, A Street (present-day Ellsworth Street) to the west, and D Street (present-day Delaware Street) to the east. Although the area, expected to be the first official business district in San Mateo, consisted of a wheat field at that time, Polhemus listed 176 lots for sale. In 1865, one year after the opening of the railroad, Polhemus had sold 40 of the 176 lots, establishing what would become the new commercial center of San Mateo.<sup>5</sup>

Over the next several decades, residential development continued in San Mateo. One of the earliest residences in San Mateo belonged to the de Guigne family. In 1879, Mary Katherine Parrott, daughter of preeminent John and Abby Parrott, married Christian de Guigne, the agent of a French banking firm. The couple established their estate after purchasing a block of land from the Husing Brothers. The property extended roughly from today's El Camino Real to San Mateo Drive, between today's Third and Fourth avenues. In the 1880s, the de Guignes constructed their residence at approximately the site of the subject property.<sup>6</sup> Other San Mateans during this time similarly purchased large parcels of land and established grand estates, including the adjacent estates of the Paysons, the Parrotts, and the Haynes.

As early as 1890, efforts were underway to incorporate San Mateo, and on September 3, 1894, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors voted in favor of incorporation. By this time, the city of San Mateo benefited from a bustling business district centered along B Street, a reliable source of water from the newly constructed Crystal Springs Dam, a thriving newspaper, and many civic institutions, such as a volunteer fire department, library, churches, and schools. The boundaries for the new town extended from Peninsula Avenue on the north, the bay to the east, Ninth Avenue on the south, and a line one thousand feet west of the County Road on the west.<sup>7</sup> In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the lands surrounding San Mateo changed dramatically; salt-harvesting operations dominated the bay lands, nurseries spread across the hillsides, and a country club was established for wealthy weekenders. Residential areas of the town expanded through new subdivisions such as San Mateo Heights, while the business section of the town developed more slowly.<sup>8</sup>

Around the turn of the twentieth century, San Mateo had approximately 1,800 residents and was linked to San Francisco by an interurban electric railway. The new trolley service, coupled with an influx of San Francisco refugees following the 1906 earthquake and fires, resulted in the construction of numerous residences in San Mateo, with California bungalows among the most popular style. From 1900 to 1910, the population more than doubled to approximately 4,300 and by 1920, close to 6,000 people resided within the city limits. Through the 1930s, the city continued to expand as the large, late nineteenth

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<sup>4</sup> Postel, *San Mateo*, 40-41.

<sup>5</sup> Postel, *San Mateo*, 40.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 112.

century estates were subdivided and developed with smaller commercial and residential properties. The new residential development spread south from the downtown area, expanding the city's boundary to Belmont and solidifying its suburban, middle class character. By 1930, San Mateo's population had again doubled to 13,500 residents. A new suburban shopping district separate from the B Street corridor developed to the south at El Camino Real and Twenty-Fifth Avenue.<sup>9</sup>

Transportation improvements oriented toward the automobile followed. By 1920, El Camino Real (now State Route 82) had been transformed from a dusty, two-lane dirt road into a modern paved thoroughfare lined with motels, gas stations, drive-in restaurants, and suburban shopping complexes. Construction of the Bayshore Highway between South San Francisco and San Mateo was begun in 1924 to alleviate traffic along El Camino Real. By the 1930s, the highway linked San Francisco south through San Mateo County to Santa Clara Valley.<sup>10</sup>

San Mateo survived the Great Depression relatively well as local government officials efficiently balanced the annual budget and continued to fund critical services, such as the fire, police, library, and park departments. While unemployment reached 20 percent in California, it hovered around three percent countywide at the height of the Depression. San Mateo also benefited from several large developments, including the construction of the Bay Meadows Racetrack in 1934 by William P. Kyne, a prominent equestrian enthusiast.<sup>11</sup>

Following World War II, San Mateo County began to grow at a remarkable pace; its population had grown from 36,000 in 1920 to 200,000 people by the 1950s.<sup>12</sup> The city of San Mateo experienced similar growth; just prior to World War II, the city's population was approximately 20,000 residents, which doubled by 1950 to approximately 42,000. This influx of residents led to new development, including the construction of numerous single-family homes and garden apartments, led in part by prolific developers L.C. Smith and David Bohannon. Bohannon also specialized in developing suburban shopping complexes with large parking lots designed to accommodate the automobile. The most prominent of his developments was the Hillsdale complex, which opened in 1952 as a 42-acre commercial center with three department stores and 75 shops located at El Camino Real and W. Hillsdale Boulevard (just over two miles south of the subject property). The complex took over a decade to complete and shifted much of the commercial activity away from the established B Street commercial district.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.2 Downtown Development in San Mateo

In the early 1860s, San Mateo's railroad station was built within the new commercial district along the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks. Although it was the sole building on Polhemus' wheat field for a period of time, additional commercial properties were erected along both sides of the tracks, on Main Street, and Railroad Avenue between 1865 and 1870. Located just one block to the west of the station, B Street

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<sup>9</sup> Postel, *San Mateo*, 125-127, 137, 175; Hynding, *From Frontier to Suburb*, 239-240, 250-251, 255-256.

<sup>10</sup> Frank M. Stanger, *South from San Francisco: the Life Story of San Mateo County* (San Mateo, California: San Mateo County Historical Association, 1963), 198-200; Postel, *San Mateo*, 137; Hynding, *From Frontier to Suburb*, 256-259, 266-267. Bayshore Highway is now part of U.S. Highway 101.

<sup>11</sup> "Fiesta Looks Back on History of Progress," *The Times*, June 25, 1969.

<sup>12</sup> Hynding, *From Frontier to Suburb*, 239; Stanger, *South From San Francisco*, 161.

<sup>13</sup> Postel, *San Mateo*, 229-235.



developed as the new major thoroughfare for those arriving to the community, helping foster easier access to the emerging commercial district.<sup>14</sup>

By the 1870s, the district contained two hotels – the Railroad House and Edward Walker’s Hotel at the corner of Third Avenue and B Street. There were two general stores, one operated by the Husing Brothers and the other by James R.S. Bickford. Other businesses by this time included two tin shops, a harness shop, a meat market, two livery stables, two bakeries, one lumber yard, a carpenter and upholster, a barber shop, two shoemakers, three blacksmiths, and two real estate offices.<sup>15</sup> The business district changed little in the following two decades. It was still centered largely around B Street and included six stores, four saloons, two butchers, two hotels, two blacksmiths, two drug stores, two plumbing shops, two barber shops, two shoemarkers, a machinist, a livery stable, a tailor, a jeweler, a bakery, a harness shop, a doctor, a lumber yard, and a newspaper office.<sup>16</sup> Into the early years of the twentieth century, residential development in San Mateo continued to significantly outpace commercial development.

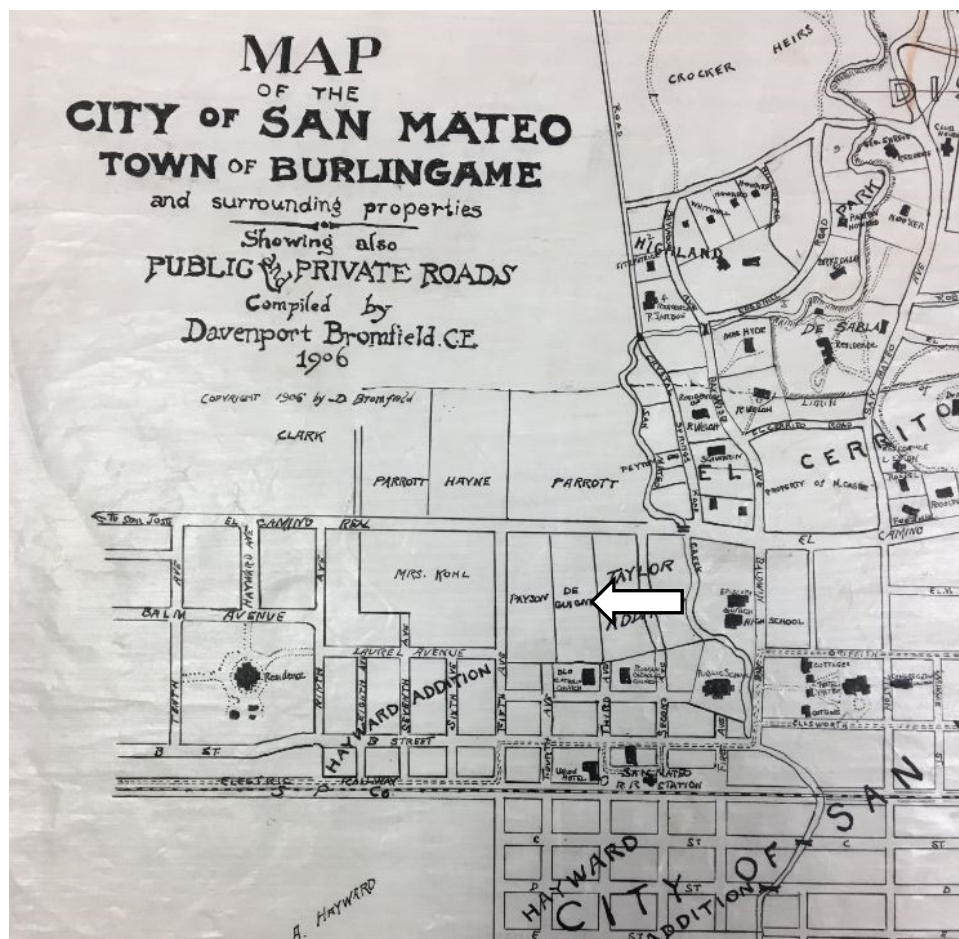


Figure 11. 1906 Map of San Mateo. The arrow indicates the approximate location of the subject property.  
(San Mateo County Historical Association)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>15</sup> Postel, *San Mateo*, 77.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 102.

It was not until the 1920s and the 1930s that commercial development in San Mateo began to increase significantly. With the growth in popularity and affordability of the automobile, the business district also began to shift back to its original location along the El Camino Real highway. However, the de Guigne family's ownership of several large plots of land between A Street (now Ellsworth Avenue) and El Camino Real initially stunted development of the area.<sup>17</sup> Subsequent commercial development in this area was due largely to the efforts of realtor D. A. Raybould.

Raybould, born in Salt Lake City in 1888, moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1911 and briefly worked for the *San Francisco Chronicle* as well as the *San Mateo Times*. In 1917, he served in WWI as a first lieutenant. Upon his return from the war, Raybould worked in the real estate industry. Alongside M. J. Conway, Raybould worked out of an office at 155 B Street in San Mateo. In 1922, a third partner, Frederick M. Johnson, joined the firm.<sup>18</sup>

Raybould envisioned a connection from the El Camino Real highway to San Mateo's railroad station to the east. In order to accomplish this, he planned to turn the unpaved Third Avenue into an 80-foot-wide thoroughfare filled with shopping opportunities, a restaurant, a hotel, and a movie theater. Further, Raybould planned to extend San Mateo Drive through the de Guigne property, and extend Fourth Avenue to El Camino Real.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 12. 1912 Map of San Mateo. The arrow indicates the approximate location of the subject property. (Earth Sciences and Map Library, UC Berkeley)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>18</sup> Postel, *San Mateo*, 170.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

As a first step, Raybould arranged for the sale and subdivision of the de Guigne estate. By 1923, Raybould had organized for Christian de Guigne's daughters, the Countess de Tristan and the Countess de Dampierre, to sell their estate and surrounding land through Raybould, Conway, and Johnson to the B. Getz Company of San Francisco for \$80,000.<sup>20</sup> At the time of sale, Raybould already had confirmed tenants for the theater and financing for the hotel. In June of 1924, he arranged for a 10-foot strip donation on Third Avenue from Ellsworth Avenue to El Camino Real, providing the necessary space to create an 80-foot-wide street. This accommodated diagonal street parking, and created the widest business street on the peninsula at the time.<sup>21</sup>

By 1925, Third Avenue was dotted with a handful of commercial properties. The first building to be constructed along this new business corridor was the Caldwell Building (149 Third Avenue). This would be the only commercial building in the original development of Third Avenue that was not sold by Raybould's firm. The next store to be erected was Noah's Ark, a grocery store, at Third Avenue and San Mateo Drive. The third project was a Standard Oil service station at the intersection of Third Avenue and El Camino Real (not extant).<sup>22</sup>



*Figure 13. 1920s image of E. Third Avenue in San Mateo. The subject property is to the right of the image.  
(San Mateo County Historical Association Archives)*

In order to accommodate the larger projects along Third Avenue, the de Guigne mansion was moved to San Mateo Drive. (It was demolished shortly thereafter.) This freed up land that would be used for the San Mateo Theater. The theater was completed in 1926 at a cost of \$250,000, and was considerably improved upon in the following three years.<sup>23</sup> Located to the west of the theater was the new site of the Benjamin Franklin Hotel (the subject property). Constructed in 1926, the hotel replaced the recently destroyed Peninsula Hotel as the San Mateo "country" hotel. Following the completion of the south side of Third Avenue, Raybould began developing the northern side of the street. The first building on the north side was the Medical Arts Building, located on the east end of Third Avenue. In 1931, the Levy brothers moved their department store into a new building located on the north side of Third Avenue.

<sup>20</sup> Postel, San Mateo, 170.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



Designed in the Tudor Revival style, the building exhibited class and sophistication that mirrored the emerging refined character of Third Avenue.<sup>24</sup>

In 1936, Raybould chose a new partner for his firm, Frank M. Bartlett, who previously was in the Army Air Corps between 1917 and 1928. Raybould, also an aviator, worked well with Bartlett and the two were able to develop several commercial properties on Second Avenue to the north and Fourth Avenue to the south of the already established Third Avenue commercial corridor.<sup>25</sup> These developments were the catalyst for the expansion of the new downtown business district of San Mateo.

Though the city of San Mateo fared better than other American cities during the years of the Great Depression, the 1930s did have an impact on the success of business development in the city. Third Avenue, with its many new buildings, appeared to be healthy. However, businesses began to flounder, leading to several companies, including a number of long-standing establishments, going out of business. In the following years, vacant storefronts would begin to comprise much of the new business district.<sup>26</sup>

Following the Great Depression, the business district in San Mateo slowly regained businesses. In later years, the rural nature of the surrounding community of San Mateo quickly gave way to residential subdivisions, gaining considerable prominence following World War II.<sup>27</sup> Parcels along Third Avenue were further subdivided and filled with new commercial properties. By the 1950s and 1960s, the community of San Mateo emerged as a rapidly developing post-war suburb, with its commercial district extending from approximately El Camino Real on the west to S. Railroad Avenue on the east, and from E. Fifth Avenue on the south to approximately Baldwin Avenue on the north. Together with the 1950s Hillsdale Shopping Center, as well as several smaller shopping centers, the city experienced an annual \$200 million in retail sales during this era.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.3 Benjamin Franklin Hotel

Prior to the construction of the Benjamin Franklin Hotel on Third Avenue, the site was home to the de Guigne residence. Named “Minne-haha,” the estate occupied the block between today’s El Camino Real and San Mateo Drive, and Third and Fourth avenues.<sup>29</sup> In the 1920s, the estate was purchased by B. Getz, Inc., a San Francisco-based real estate company. The purchased property extended from Third Avenue to Fourth Avenue, as well as from El Camino Real to a “180 foot westerly from Ellsworth Avenue,” and contained 5,675 acres of land.<sup>30</sup>

Arthur Chester Franklin (A.C. Franklin), born in 1880 and working as a merchant in the real estate industry by the 1920s, found the rural nature of San Mateo to be an excellent location for a new luxury hotel in San Mateo.<sup>31</sup> Though the community still reflected country charm and quaintness, transportation developments by the early 1920s allowed Franklin to embark on his new luxury hotel project. There were

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Postel, San Mateo, 172-173.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 232-239.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Svanevik, and Shirley Burgett, “Benjamin Franklin Hotel Anchored San Mateo,” *The Daily News*, July 16, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> “Benjamin Franklin Hotel has Historic Background,” *The Post*, June 26, 1963.

<sup>31</sup> United States Federal Census, 1920, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.ancestry.com>.

approximately 68 trains daily connecting San Mateo to San Francisco, in addition to electric trolley service. Mills Fields, the local airport, was in close proximity to the site, and the drive from San Mateo to San Francisco via automobile was just over thirty minutes.<sup>32</sup>

In the mid-1920s, Franklin formed a partnership with Benjamin Getz called the Vision Realty Company and began constructing the Benjamin Franklin Hotel from a bond issue underwritten by Schwabacher and Company of San Francisco.<sup>33</sup> The original owners intended the hotel to be a peninsula “resort,” marketing it as a sunny retreat from the San Francisco fog to the north, though the hotel would still be located in the commercial core of San Mateo.<sup>34</sup>

The owners of the hotel commissioned noted San Francisco Bay Area architect W.H. Weeks to design the property. By the time of the construction of the hotel, Weeks had made a name for himself by designing several well-received public schools, libraries, banks, and single-family residences throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. The hotel was to be eight stories tall and designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, capped with a luxurious penthouse. Construction broke ground in July of 1926 with nearly half the town watching with excitement.<sup>35</sup> The builder for the project was Anton Johnson, a well-known San Mateo contractor at the time, who utilized a unique construction technique called the “Pacific Wall.” A 1927 *Oakland Tribune* article describing the “Pacific Wall” technique wrote:<sup>36</sup>

“Pacific Wall” is composed of two parts of rice hulls and one part of aerated stucco, with sufficient water added to permit pouring into forms. Trolle collapsible steel forms are used, being installed straight and plumb to insure practically straight walls. The walls are poured to any desired thickness, from two inches up, door bucks and nailing blocks are installed and poured in place thereby insuring rigid construction throughout, and when finished they produce a practically smooth surface which can be plastered in the regular way. An unusual feature that aids in applying plaster and gives a permanent smooth plaster surface is the adhesive qualities of the material. [...] “Pacific Wall” has been used extensively in hotels and hospitals in various California cities, including the Benjamin Franklin hotel, an eight-story, 159-room hotel, at San Mateo.

The hotel was completed at a cost of \$250,000, and was soft opened on June 23, 1927 during a formal dinner banquet.<sup>37</sup> Even before the hotel was completed, promoters were boasting the property as the jewel of San Mateo, featuring 150 luxurious accommodations, each with its own bathroom.<sup>38</sup> Following widespread praise, the Benjamin Franklin Hotel officially opened to the public on July 2, 1927. In a 2011 *Daily News* article, the hotel and its reception is described:<sup>39</sup>

Local residents were unprepared for the elegance. A Maitre d’hotel made all the reservations, and the July 2 opening was the “smartest affair ever held in San Mateo.” Elegantly dressed guests

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<sup>32</sup> Svanevik and Burgett, “Benjamin Franklin Hotel Anchored San Mateo;” Research on Benjamin Getz has yielded little information.

<sup>33</sup> “Benjamin Franklin Hotel has Historic Background.”

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Svanevik and Burgett, “Benjamin Franklin Hotel Anchored San Mateo.”

<sup>36</sup> “Rice Hulls and Stucco Used to Build Walls,” *Oakland Tribune*, November 27, 1927.

<sup>37</sup> Paul D. Buchanan, “The Benjamin Franklin: San Mateo’s Grand Hotel,” *San Mateo Daily Journal*, March 10, 2001.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Svanevik and Burgett, “Benjamin Franklin Hotel Anchored San Mateo.”

were seated in the loft lounge in front of a crackling fireplace, where they listened to music provided by Victor Weinberg and his orchestra. There was seating for 250 in the central dining room and a banquet hall on the mezzanine. Some walked the hallways, closely examining the guest rooms.

Many of the evening's guests wandered meandering paths through the exquisite gardens marked by spacious lawns punctuated with 600-year-old oaks, marveling that the wonderful gardens that had once characterized the de Guigne estate were carefully preserved. Colorful Chinese paper lanterns, strung between the trees, provided illumination. There were swings, benches, and for the romantically inclined, intimate nooks. And, as if this weren't enough, one of the major attractions was the hotel's outdoor swimming plunge. The entire ambiance offered an air of quietude, "inviting complete relaxation and forgetfulness of the world outside."

The top floor of the hotel boasted a two-bedroom, two-bath penthouse, the only such unit south of the city of San Francisco. The penthouse included a kitchen and a meeting room, and was noted for hosting presidential candidate Christian Herter's campaign headquarters in 1956.<sup>40</sup>



*Figure 14. 1920s image of the recently completed Benjamin Franklin Hotel, looking east on the largely undeveloped corridor of E. Third Avenue. (San Mateo County Historical Association)*

From its opening, promoters touted the Benjamin Franklin Hotel as a "Rendezvous for Smart People."<sup>41</sup> The hotel drew countless visiting socialites, automobile clubs on excursion, and weddings, many of which were highlighted in the local press. The hotel also hosted a number of local and national celebrities including Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, Ginger Rogers, California governor Friend W. Richardson, and singer Bing Crosby.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Svanevik and Burgett, "Benjamin Franklin Hotel Anchored San Mateo."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> "Benjamin Franklin Hotel has Historic Background."; Sara Gaiser, "Old Ben Had Rich History," *The Daily News*, August 6, 2003.

In the first few years of operation, newspapers touted the Benjamin Franklin Hotel as the “center of the city’s civic life.”<sup>43</sup> Within a few years, however, the hotel suffered financial issues stemming from the Great Depression. The allure of the hotel declined further when the former grounds surrounding the property were subdivided and developed with other buildings.<sup>44</sup> As most of the city’s rural qualities disappeared following the emergence of San Mateo as a post-WWII suburb, the hotel struggled to maintain its original reputation as an elegant country hotel.

In the early 1950s, hoteliers Max and Erwin Best purchased the property and began operation of the hotel. They had learned their trade from their father who was also in the hotel management field, with establishments in Los Angeles and Bakersfield, as well as the East Coast and other locales. During their ownership, the Best brothers embarked on several renovations and refurbishments including redoing the Willow Room, and Fireside Room, and the Club Seville.<sup>45</sup>

The hotel was host to several dinner dances in the post-WWII years and even hosted an event to celebrate the opening of the San Mateo Bridge in the 1960s.<sup>46</sup> It also hosted overflow guests from the local Peninsula Golf and Country Club, and was a meeting space for several San Mateo civic organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, and the Lions Club until the 1960s.<sup>47</sup> In 1960, United Airlines began using the hotel for its layover flight crews, occupying approximately eighty percent of the hotel’s ninety-nine rooms.<sup>48</sup>

In 1985, Westin Hotels, a subsidiary of UAL Inc. (owner of United Airlines and Hertz Rent-a-Car), purchased the property from the Best family.<sup>49</sup> Four years later, in 1989, the Empire Group purchased the property from Westin Hotels and began exclusively hosting United Airlines layover crews rather than accommodating the general public.<sup>50</sup> However, in 2003, United Airlines abruptly filed for bankruptcy and pulled out of its lease with Empire Group, at which time the hotel became vacant.<sup>51</sup> AF Evans Co. purchased the property in 2005 with plans of converting the hotel into condominiums. However, the plan was aborted, at which point AF Evans hired Collier International Hotels to sell the property.<sup>52</sup> In 2007, CitiSuites purchased the property from AF Evans Co. CitiSuites planned to reopen the Benjamin Franklin Hotel as a plush but competitively priced hotel featuring a number of corporate suites to accommodate business travelers.<sup>53</sup> When the real estate market crashed in 2008, the Lembi Group sold the property to UBS Financial Services. In 2011, the property was purchased by venture capitalist Tim Draper who currently owns and operates Draper University out of the building.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> “San Mateo’s Biggest Hotel,” *San Mateo Times*, October 7, 1936.

<sup>44</sup> Gaiser, “Old Ben Had Rich History.”

<sup>45</sup> “Ben Franklin Hotel’s Erwin and Max Best,” *The Times*, May 3, 1974.

<sup>46</sup> Postel, *San Mateo*, 252-253.

<sup>47</sup> Tara Ramroop, “San Mateo’s Big Ben Stands Empty as City Seeks Owner,” *San Mateo County Times*, March 16, 2005; Barry Kaye, “Sale of Benjamin Franklin Hotel to Empire Group Reportedly ‘Very Close,’” *The Times*, February 21, 1989.

<sup>48</sup> Joshua Melvin, “New Owner for Hotel,” *San Mateo County Times*, April 16, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Kaye, “Sale of Benjamin Franklin Hotel.”

<sup>50</sup> Melvin, “New Owner for Hotel.”

<sup>51</sup> Aaron Kinney, “City Sees Boost in Revival of Hotel,” *San Mateo County Times*, February 15, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Dana Yates, “Historic Benjamin Franklin to Remain Hotel,” *Daily Journal*, June 3-4, 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Kinney, “City Sees Boost in Revival of Hotel.”

<sup>54</sup> “An Empty Space for Ideas,” *San Mateo County Times*, June 25, 2011.



Figure 15. 1986 image of the Benjamin Franklin Hotel rising above Third Avenue.  
(*The Times*, September 13, 1986)

### 3.4 W.H. Weeks, Architect

William Henry Weeks, born on January 18, 1864 in Charlottetown, Canada, was an early twentieth-century architect known for his school, library, residential, and bank designs. While other well-known architects of the time often designed high-styled grand estates, commercial properties, and civic institutions, Weeks was considered an architect of the everyday man.<sup>55</sup> His clients typically consisted of religious institutions, public schools, and libraries in rural towns and villages. Though he designed dozens of Carnegie libraries throughout Northern California, for which he gained prominence, Weeks designed even more high schools, many of which are still extant today.

Weeks studied architectural design at the Brinker Institute in Denver before working in his father's construction firm in Wichita, Kansas as a designer and builder.<sup>56</sup> In 1894, Weeks relocated to Watsonville, California, where he would begin his career as an independent architect.<sup>57</sup> After settling in Watsonville, Weeks open his first office in the same city, while also working on the town's first high school.<sup>58</sup> His first property designed in Watsonville was a home for Judge Julius Lee at 128 E. Beach Street (1894). Designed in the Queen Anne style, the house was described by the local newspaper, *The Pajaronian*, as "reaching up into the air" and being "up-to-date in every way."<sup>59</sup>

Weeks quickly experienced success in Watsonville, and in an effort to expand his operations, he opened a second branch office in the nearby city of Salinas in 1897.<sup>60</sup> It was during this time that Weeks began to be chosen for several commercial projects throughout the central and northern coasts of California. Through the early 1900s, Weeks designed several of his earliest well-known commercial buildings such as

<sup>55</sup> B. J. S. Cahill, A.I.A., "The Work of Mr. William H. Weeks, Architect," *The Architect and Engineer of California* Vol. XLI, No. 2, May 1915, 39.

<sup>56</sup> Betty Lewis, *W.H. Weeks: Architect*, (Fresno: Panorama West Books, 1985), 1.

<sup>57</sup> According to the 1900 United States Census, the Weeks family resided on Jefferson Street in Watsonville, CA.

<sup>58</sup> Betty Lewis, "W.H. Weeks: California School Architect," *California History* Volume LXIV, No. 3, Summer 1985, 227.

<sup>59</sup> Lewis, *W.H. Weeks: Architect*, 5-6.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



the Yolo County Savings Bank (Woodland, 1903), the Monterey Hotel (1904), the Weeks Block (Watsonville, 1905), and the Paso Robles Municipal Bath House (Paso Robles, 1905).<sup>61</sup>

In 1905, with business burgeoning, Weeks opened a third branch office located at 251 Kearney Street in San Francisco, California.<sup>62</sup> By the 1910s, Weeks began to gain considerable prominence as a local architect and was chosen to design several Carnegie libraries throughout Northern and Central California.<sup>63</sup> Weeks catered to each respective community by utilizing diverse architectural styles depending on the local context. Some of the architectural styles employed by Weeks in his designs included Romanesque, Craftsman, and Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival. However, his most often used style consisted of a modest Classical Revival design, as seen in his Gilroy (1910), Richmond (1910), and Roseville (1912) Carnegie libraries.<sup>64</sup>



Figure 16. W.H. Weeks designed both the Monterey Hotel (left, 1904) and the Goldstine Block Building (1906) on Alvarado Street in downtown Monterey. (Architectural Resources Group)

In the 1910s and 1920s, Weeks began specializing in the design of public schools, with his work ethic and portfolio praised by several architectural critics. In a May 1915 *Architect and Engineer* article, Weeks is applauded for having a remarkable level of work output with “no architect in California ha[ving] planned anywhere near as many buildings throughout the state as Mr. W. H. Weeks of San Francisco.”<sup>65</sup> Upon

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>63</sup> A Carnegie library is a library that was constructed through funds donated by businessman and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Between 1883 and 1929, more than 2,500 Carnegie libraries were constructed throughout the world, with 1,689 constructed in the United States.

<sup>64</sup> Pat and Bernie Skehan, “Carnegie Libraries of California,” accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.carnegie-libraries.org/california/architect/weeks.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Cahill, A.I.A., “The Work of Mr. William H. Weeks, Architect,” 49.

completion of his high school in Piedmont, the property was noted as “probably one of the most complete school buildings in the state of California as regards to equipment and appointments.”<sup>66</sup> Weeks would continue to design over 100 public schools throughout the San Francisco Bay Area during the course of his career.

In 1924, Weeks opened a fourth office in Oakland, California and two years later, in 1926, Weeks opened his final office in San Jose, California. By the opening of his office in San Jose, his firm was one of the largest and oldest architectural firms in the state of California.<sup>67</sup> His staff included several architects in addition to a number of engineers and other design and construction specialists. Additionally, during the 1920s, Weeks designed a number of hotels throughout the Bay Area. Two notable hotels designed by Weeks include the Hotel Palomar (Santa Cruz, 1929) and the Hotel De Anza (San Jose, 1931), that latter of which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>68</sup> Both of these hotels are markedly similar in massing and design to the Benjamin Franklin Hotel.



Figure 17. Hotel Palomar, Santa Cruz  
(localwiki.org)



Figure 18. Hotel De Anza, San Jose (City of San Jose)

Weeks continued to design several properties through the 1930s. In the spring of 1936, William Henry Weeks died at the age of 72.<sup>69</sup>

#### Select Weeks Commissions:

- Julius Lee House – Watsonville, California (1894)
- Spreckels Sugar Company Beet Factory – Spreckels, California (1898, non-extant)
- Yolo County Savings Bank – Woodland, California (1903)
- Monterey Hotel – Monterey, California (1904)
- Goldstine Block Building – Monterey, California (1906)

<sup>66</sup> “An Architectural Achievement in California: Some Recent Schools of Wm. H. Weeks, Architect,” *The School Board Journal*, November 1923, 1.

<sup>67</sup> Lewis, *W.H. Weeks*, 35.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-86.

<sup>69</sup> Lewis, *W.H. Weeks*, 41.



- Nevada City Carnegie Library – Nevada City, California (1907)
- Paso Robles Carnegie Library – Paso Robles, California (1908)
- First Presbyterian Church – Monterey, California (1910)
- Gilroy Carnegie Library – Gilroy, California (1910)
- A.R. Underwood Building – Monterey, California (1912)
- Yolo County Jail – Woodland, California (1915)
- Winters City Hall – Winters, California (1916)
- Piedmont High School – Piedmont, California (1921)
- Benjamin Franklin Hotel – San Mateo, California (1927)
- Medico-Dental Building – San Jose, California (1927)
- Wheeler Hospital – Gilroy, California (1928)
- Hotel Palomar – Santa Cruz (1929)
- Hotel De Anza – San Jose (1931)
- Monterey County Bank – Monterey, California (1931)
- Campbell High School – Campbell, California (1936-1938)<sup>70</sup>

### 3.5 Spanish Colonial Revival Architecture

The property at 34-50 E. Third Avenue was completed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The following context for Spanish Colonial Revival architecture is quoted from the *1989 City of San Mateo Historic Building Survey*:<sup>71</sup>

The Spanish Colonial Revival style represents another chapter in California's search for a regional architecture appropriate to its climate, topography, and traditions. Many believed that the Mission Revival style, derived as it was from ecclesiastical architecture, was inappropriate to secular buildings. Yet Spanish sources still seemed better than the architecture of the American East Coast. In 1906 Herbert Croly suggested that California architects look directly at Mediterranean houses, which he characterized as the most "valuable and imitable local domestic style." He believed that Mediterranean houses represented California's true heritage because the Franciscan friars would have built such houses if they had had the knowledge, skills, tools, and materials. Since no such houses were ever constructed in California, Croly actually proposed a form of architectural mythmaking – the recreation of a California past that never really was.

The Spanish Colonial Revival, also known as the Mediterranean or Spanish Eclectic, was popularized by the Panama-California Exposition (which celebrated the opening of the Panama Canal) held in San Diego in 1915. Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, who designed the exposition buildings, drew inspiration from the Spanish Colonial architecture found throughout Latin America. More and more architects began to look directly at Spanish architecture as well as the architecture of the entire Mediterranean area. The result was a style that is an eclectic mix of Spanish, Spanish Colonial, Northern Italian, and North African Islamic elements.

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<sup>70</sup> Although Weeks died prior to the completion of the Campbell High School campus in 1938, his designs were utilized throughout the entire campus project.

<sup>71</sup> San Mateo County Historical Association, *City of San Mateo Historic Building Survey Final Report*, 59-61.

The style was popular mainly in states with a Spanish heritage, but there are examples sprinkled throughout the United States. By the 1920s, according to art historians Gebhard, Witner, and Sandweiss, it was *the* style in coastal California. It not only was a link with California's Spanish past, but it also may have seemed suitable to a climate and landscape similar to that of the Mediterranean. Hollywood stars constructed Spanish Colonial mansions, and the style appear in movie sets. It was used for a considerable range of building types, from railroad stations, public buildings, and theaters, to mansions and cottages.

Grand houses combined plain stucco walls with convoluted Churrigueresque ornamentation around doorways, wrought-iron details, decorative tiles, spiral columns, and arches. But developers also used the style extensively for smaller houses. [...] Spanish Colonial Revival buildings tend to be irregular in their massing, often consisting of a cluster of blocks that look almost as if they had been constructed over a long period of time against a Mediterranean hillside overlooking the sea.

The Spanish Colonial Revival style was particularly popular for buildings of all types in San Mateo during its boom years of the 'twenties and 'thirties.

#### *Spanish Colonial Revival Character-Defining Features*

- Low pitched or flat roofs without much eave overhang
- Red tile roofs and tiled parapets
- Multi-level roofs
- Usually faced with stucco, occasionally brick
- Asymmetrical massing
- Arches, pointed, round, or with a slight peak (cf. Islamic arches), triple arched, or parabolic
- Ornamental details derived from Spanish, Byzantine, Gothic, Italian, and Spanish sources
- Spiral columns
- Multi-pane windows
- Window grilles in iron or wood
- Elaborate chimney tops
- Round or square towers
- Decorative tiles
- Decorative iron work
- Ornamentation around doorways

## **4. EVALUATIVE FRAMEWORK**

### **4.1 California Register of Historical Resources**

The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is the authoritative guide to the State's significant historical and archeological resources. It serves to identify, evaluate, register, and protect California's historical resources. The California Register program encourages public recognition and protection of resources of architectural, historical, archeological and cultural significance, identifies historical resources for state and local planning purposes, determines eligibility for historic preservation

grant funding and affords certain protections under the California Environmental Quality Act. All resources listed on or formally determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) are automatically listed on the California Register. In addition, properties designated under municipal or county ordinances are eligible for listing in the California Register.

### *Significance Criteria*

The California Register criteria are modeled on the National Register criteria discussed above. An historical resource must be significant at the local, state, or national level under one or more of the following criteria:

1. It is associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values.
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, state or the nation.

Like the National Register, evaluation for eligibility to the California Register requires an establishment of historic significance before integrity is considered. California's integrity threshold is slightly lower than the federal level. As a result, some resources that are historically significant but do not meet National Register integrity standards may be eligible for listing on the California Register.<sup>72</sup>

### *Integrity*

Second, for a property to qualify under the National Register's Criteria for Evaluation, it must also retain "historic integrity of those features necessary to convey its significance."<sup>73</sup> While a property's significance relates to its role within a specific historic context, its integrity refers to "a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance."<sup>74</sup> Since integrity is based on a property's significance within a specific historic context, an evaluation of a property's integrity can only occur after historic significance has been established. To determine if a property retains the physical characteristics corresponding to its historic context, the National Register has identified seven aspects of integrity:

*Location* is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.

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<sup>72</sup> California Office of Historic Preservation, *California Register and National Register: A Comparison (for the purposes of determining eligibility for the California Register)*, Technical Assistance Series #6 (Sacramento: California Department of Parks and Recreation, n.d.), accessed December 4, 2017, <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1069/files/technical%20assistance%20bulletin%206%202011%20update.pdf>.

<sup>73</sup> National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, accessed December 4, 2017, [http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15\\_8.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_8.htm).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

*Setting* is the physical environment of a historic property.

*Design* is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.

*Materials* are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

*Workmanship* is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.

*Feeling* is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

*Association* is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

## 4.2 CEQA and Historical Resources

When a proposed project may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a city or county to carefully consider the possible impacts before proceeding (Public Resources Code Section 21084.1). CEQA equates a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource with a significant effect on the environment (Section 21084.1). The Act explicitly prohibits the use of a categorical exemption within the CEQA Guidelines for projects which may cause such a change (Section 21084).

CEQA Guidelines section 15064.5(b) defines a "substantial adverse change" in the significance of a historical resource as "physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired." Further, that the significance of an historical resource is "materially impaired" when a project:

- "demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources; or
- "demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources... or its identification in an historical resources survey..., unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant; or
- "demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources as determined by a lead agency for purposes of CEQA." (Guidelines Section 15064.5(b))

For the purposes of CEQA (Guidelines Section 15064.5), the term "historical resources" shall include the following:

1. A resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in, the California Register of Historical Resources (Pub. Res. Code Section 5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4850 et.seq.).
2. A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in Section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or identified as significant in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements of Section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, shall be presumed to be historically or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat any such resource as significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that it is not historically or culturally significant.
3. Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California, may be considered to be an historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4852) as follows:
  - A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;
  - B. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
  - C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
  - D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. (Guidelines Section 15064.5)

## 5. EVALUATION

### 5.1 California Register of Historical Resources

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), resources that meet the criteria of the California Register of Historical Resources are considered historical resources. Determinations of historical significance require that several factors are considered including: the property's history (both construction and use); the history and context of the surrounding community; an association with important persons or uses; the number of resources associated with the property; the potential for the resources to be the work of a master architect, builder, craftsman, landscape gardener, or artist; the historical, architectural or landscape influences that have shaped the property's design and its pattern of use; and lastly alterations that have taken place and how these changes may have affected the property's historical integrity.

These issues must be explored thoroughly before a final determination of significance can be established. To be eligible for the California Register historic resources must possess both historic significance and retain historic integrity. The following are the four significance criteria of the California Register. Upon

review of the criteria, if historic significance is identified, then an integrity analysis is conducted. To be eligible for the California Register, an historical resource must be significant at the local, state, or national level under at least one of the following criteria:

*California Register Criterion 1 [Association with Significant Events]*

To be considered eligible under Criterion 1, a property must be associated with one or more events important in a defined historic context. This criterion recognizes properties associated with single events, a pattern of events, repeated activities, or historic trends. The event or trends, however, must clearly be important within the associated context. Further, mere association of the property with historic events or trends is not enough, in and of itself, to qualify under this criterion: the specific association must be considered important as well.<sup>75</sup>

The subject property appears to be eligible under Criterion 1 for its central role in the early-twentieth-century development of downtown San Mateo. San Mateo's downtown commercial/business district developed in approximately three phases. Briefly centered on County Road, the district moved to the San Mateo Creek area in the 1870s. In the early 1920s, D. A. Raybould proposed a new business district closer to the El Camino Real highway via Third Avenue. In 1926, A.C. Franklin and Benjamin Getz constructed the subject property, which was one of the original buildings in the new commercial district. The owners marketed the hotel as a "country" retreat from foggy San Francisco and hosted a number of wealthy residents and visitors, politicians, actors and actresses, singers, and other well-known individuals. Together with the Levy Bros. Department Store across the street and the San Mateo Theater next door, the three flagship buildings on Third Avenue attracted new patrons and clientele that were necessary to establish and expand a new business district, spurring significant new and unprecedented commercial development in San Mateo on E. Third Avenue and adjacent streets, development that would continue during subsequent decades. The property, therefore, conveys the broad trend of downtown commercial development during the 1920s and 1930s. As such, the property appears to be eligible under this criterion.

*California Register Criterion 2 [Association with Significant Persons]*

This criterion "applies to properties associated with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified and documented." It identifies properties associated with individuals "whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, State, or national historic context," and is typically limited to those properties that have the ability to illustrate a person's important achievements.<sup>76</sup>

The subject property is not associated with any individual important to local, California, or national history, and thus does not appear to be eligible under Criterion 2. Although A.C. Franklin and Benjamin Getz established and operated a successful hospitality business in San Mateo, they are not known to have made a broader contribution to the hospitality industry in the local, state, or national contexts. Subsequent owners Max and Erwin Best similarly ran a successful hotel business, but are not known to have made a significant impact on the hospitality industry or other local, state, or national history.

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<sup>75</sup> National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

### *California Register Criterion 3 [Architectural Significance]*

This criterion applies to properties that “embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.” “Distinctive characteristics” are the physical and design features that commonly recur in individual types, periods, or methods of construction. To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular style. A master “is a figure of generally recognized greatness in a field, a known craftsman of consummate skill, or an anonymous craftsman whose work is distinguishable from others by its characteristic style and quality.... A property is not eligible as the work of a master, however, simply because it was designed by a prominent architect.”<sup>77</sup>

The subject property appears to be eligible under Criterion 3 both as a work of master architect W.H. Weeks and as a representative example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Architect W.H. Weeks, a prominent San Francisco Bay Area architect, was commissioned to design the subject property in 1926. Though Weeks gained prominence for his early residential, bank, and school designs, Weeks also specialized in hotel design. Constructed in 1926, shortly after Weeks was commissioned to design several prominent Carnegie libraries throughout Northern California, the subject building represents the peak of Weeks’ career.

Weeks designed the subject property in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. While Spanish Colonial Revival was often used for residential design, especially in California, it was less often implemented in hotel buildings. The subject property is, therefore, a distinctive representation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style through its extensively elaborate Churrigueresque ornamentation (including spandrel panels, corbels, medallions, and an elaborate parapet ornament), flat roof with parapet, stucco exterior cladding, arched window openings, and elaborate clay-tile chimney cap.

### *California Register Criterion 4 [Potential to Yield Information]*

Criterion 4 is generally applied to archaeological resources, and evaluation of the subject property for eligibility under this criterion was beyond the scope of this report.

## **5.2 Integrity Analysis**

In order for a property to qualify for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources, it must possess both significance under one or more of the California Register criteria and sufficient integrity to convey that significance. There are seven aspects of historic integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

An integrity analysis of the subject property is presented below. In general, the property at 34-50 E. Third Avenue retains a high level of integrity, with modifications limited to the ground floor storefronts, rooftop penthouse, and rear portions of the property.

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<sup>77</sup> National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.



### *Location and Setting*

The subject property has not been moved from its original location. As such, it retains integrity of location. Little change has occurred in the property's immediate setting since its construction in 1926. It continues to be surrounded by low-scale, one- to two-story commercial buildings dating from the 1920s and 1930s. While new construction has occurred at the intersection of E. Third Avenue and El Camino Real, the property's setting has essentially remained unchanged since its original date of construction. In addition, the boundaries of the surrounding San Mateo Downtown Historic District have not changed since the District was first identified in 1989. Therefore, the building retains integrity of setting.

### *Design, Materials and Workmanship*

Alterations to the building appear to be limited to storefronts on the ground level, replacement of doors and windows at the cafeteria, and alterations to the rooftop penthouse. All three entries on the building's north façade have been replaced with fully glazed doors and sidelights. The west storefront was restored in 2013 to generally match the windows and transom of the east storefront, which appears to be original. Several doors and windows were replaced as part of the 1954 remodel of the banquet room (cafeteria), though the footprint of this portion of the building does not appear to have been changed. Finally, one or more portions of the penthouse that are not visible from the public right-of-way may be an addition, though this is not clarified in the permit record. None of these alterations should be considered historic in their own right.

The alterations described above are minimal and do not affect the building's ability to convey its historic and architectural significance. In particular, the building's Churrigueresque ornamentation, elaborate window lintels and surrounds, wood sash double-hung divided-light windows, and overall form remain intact. No major exterior renovations or additions have been made to the building, which remains an excellent example of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. As such, the property retains integrity of design, materials and workmanship.

### *Feeling and Association*

Through its intact architectural design features, original materials, and setting within the business corridor of San Mateo, the property continues to express the Spanish Colonial Revival aesthetic and maintains its association with the early development of downtown San Mateo. The limited alterations made to the building – including modifications to the ground floor storefronts, rooftop penthouse, and rear portions of the property – do not compromise the property's ability to convey its architectural and historic significance. As such, the property retains integrity of feeling and association.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The subject property at 34-50 E. Third Avenue appears to be eligible for listing in the California Register for its association with the commercial development of downtown San Mateo, as well as for being a distinctive and intact example of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture designed by master architect W.H. Weeks. Accordingly, the building should be considered a historical resource for purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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Appendix A  
Existing Conditions Photographs



### Main (North) Façade



Figure A1. 34-50 E. Third Avenue, view southwest (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A2. North façade, view south (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A3. Detail of the main entrance on the north façade,  
view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A4. Detail of the main entrance on the north façade,  
view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A5. Secondary entrance and storefront on the west end of the north façade, view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A6. Secondary entrance and storefront on the east end of the north façade, view south (ARG, December 2017)



## East Façade



Figure A7. East and north façades, view southwest (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A8. East façade, view southwest (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A9. Alley along east façade, view southwest (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A10. Detail of east façade, view southwest (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A11. Detail of the secondary entrance on the east façade, view west (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A12. Ground floor of the east façade, view northwest (ARG, December 2017)



### South (Rear) Façade



Figure A13. South façade, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A14. South façade, above the cafeteria, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A15. Detail of ornmentation on south façade, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A16. Detail of a secondary on the south façade, view north (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A17. Secondary entry on the south façade, view east (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A18. Detail of secondary entry on the south façade, view north (ARG, December 2017)

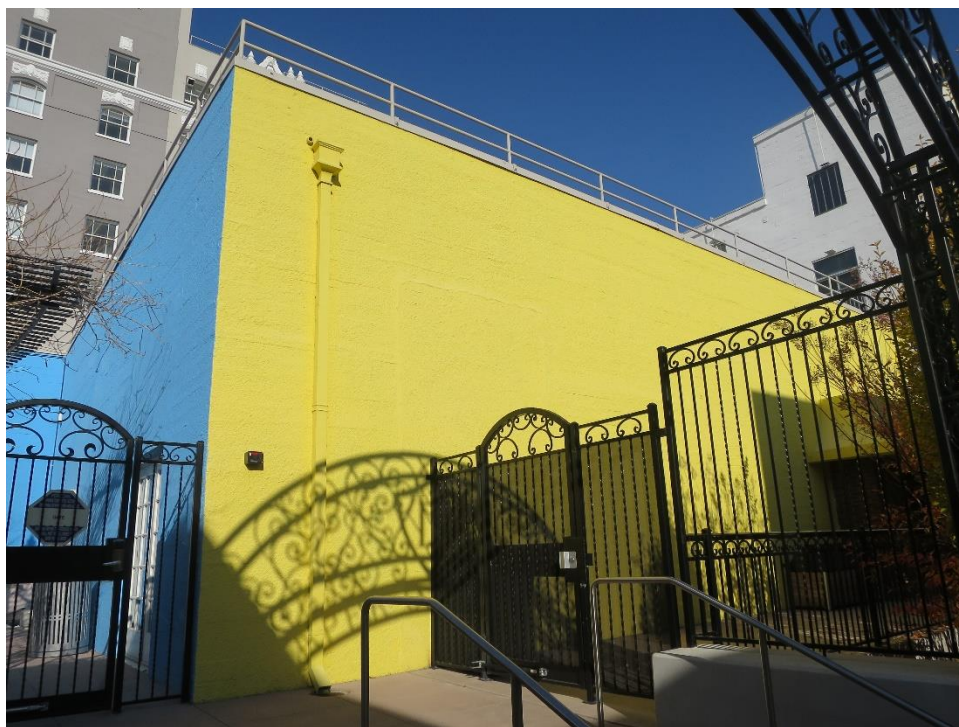


Figure A19. Image of the cafeteria on the south façade, view north (ARG, December 2017)

## West Façade



Figure A20. West façade, view southeast (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A21. Detail of sign and fire escape, west façade, view southeast (ARG, December 2017)

## Penthouse



Figure A22. Penthouse, view west (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A23. Penthouse, view west (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A24. Penthouse, view west (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A25. Penthouse, view east (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A26. Penthouse, view northeast (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A27. Penthouse, view east (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A28. Detail of fire escape, view northwest (ARG, December 2017)



North Side of Third Avenue (West to East)



Figure A29. North side of Third Avenue, view northwest (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A30. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A31. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A32. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A33. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A34. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A35. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A36. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A37. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A38. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A39. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A40. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A41. North side of Third Avenue, view north (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A42. North side of Third Avenue, view northeast (ARG, December 2017)



South Side of Third Avenue (West to East)



Figure A43. South side of Third Avenue, view southwest (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A44. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A45. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A46. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A47. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A48. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A49. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)

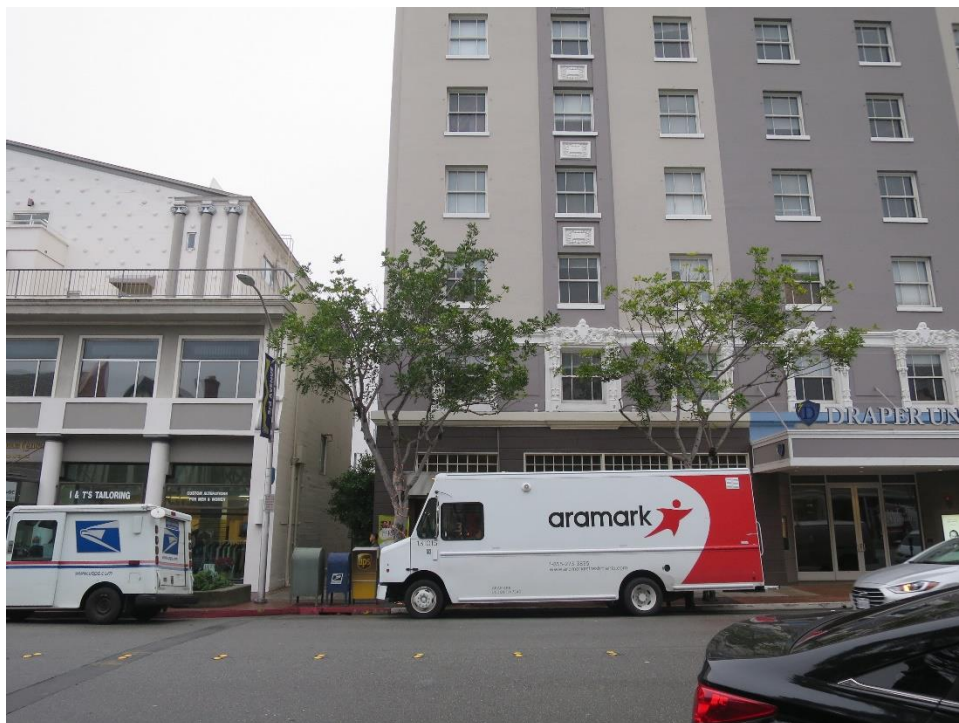


Figure A50. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A51. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A52. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)





Figure A53. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A54. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A55. South side of Third Avenue, view south (ARG, December 2017)



Figure A56. South side of Third Avenue, view southeast (ARG, December 2017)





Appendix B  
Historic Photographs





Figure B1. 1920s image of the recently completed Benjamin Franklin Hotel, looking east on E. Third Avenue. (San Mateo County Historical Association)

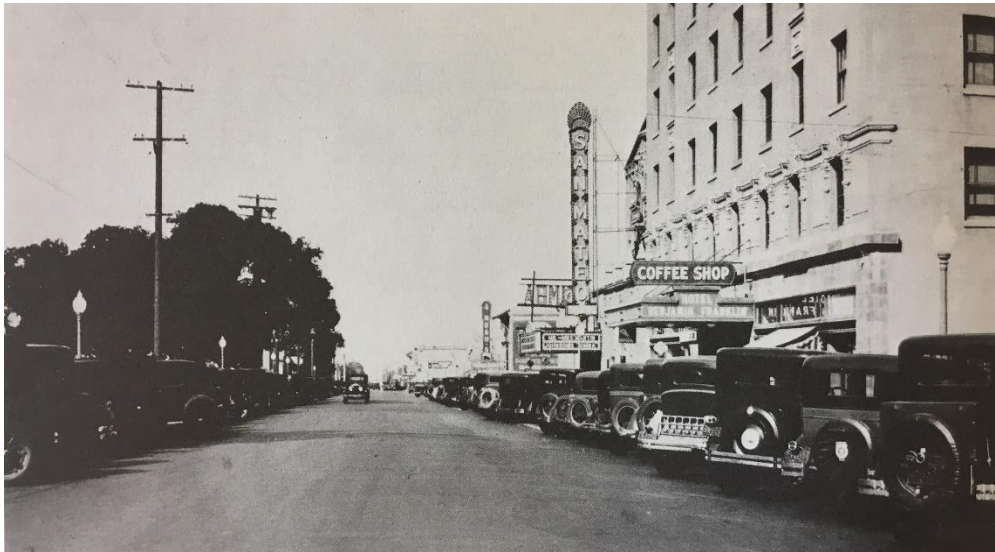


Figure B2. 1920s image of E. Third Avenue in San Mateo. The Benjamin Franklin Hotel is to the right of the image. (San Mateo County Historical Association)

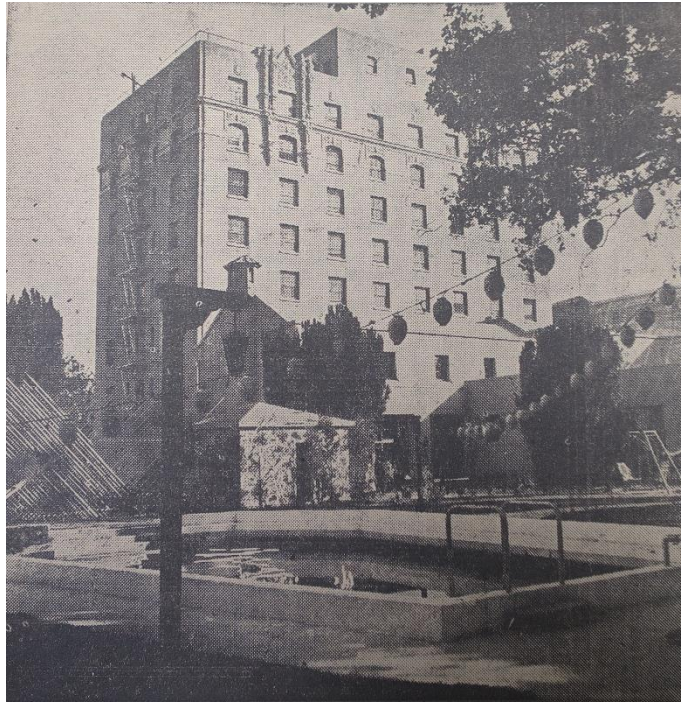


Figure B3. 1936 image of the Benjamin Franklin Hotel from the rear courtyard.  
(*San Mateo Times*, October 7, 1936)



Figure B4. Undated photo of the Benjamin Franklin Hotel from the rear gardens.  
(San Mateo County Historical Association)





Figure B5. Undated image of E. Third Avenue with the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in the background.  
(San Mateo County Historical Association)



Figure B6. 1948 image of E. Third Avenue with the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in the background.  
(San Mateo Public Library)



Figure B7. 1986 image of E. Third Avenue with the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in the background.  
(*Peninsula*, September 13, 1986)

