

MISSION TURN HALL (The Women's Building)  
3543 18th Street  
San Francisco  
San Francisco County  
California

HABS No. CA-2348

HABS  
CAL  
38-SANFRA,  
173-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94107

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

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## MISSION TURN HALL (THE WOMEN'S BUILDING)

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**Location:** 3543 18th Street; San Francisco; San Francisco County; California

**Significance:** The structure known as Mission Turn Hall (1910 to 1935), Dovre Hall (1935 to 1976) and the Women's Building (1978 to present ) is significant as a clear expression of San Francisco's social history. In the post-earthquake era of construction, the German Turn Verein Society ( reflective of the city's active German American population) commissioned A. Reinhold Denke to design and build a Turn Hall. Denke utilized a primarily Mission Revival Style for the Mission Turn Hall, which opened its doors in 1910. Many other groups used the facility from its earliest years, including the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West. Even as the building changed owners in 1935 to the Sons and Daughters of Norway, this community usage of the building persisted as its raison d'ete. The Women's Building also follows this tradition of community involvement by mixed ethnic and social groups.

**Description:** The architectural uniqueness of this building stems from Denke's use of Mission Revival style combined with his own Teutonic heritage. The tile trim, the stucco, and the particular massiveness of the building all denote the Mission Revival architecture of that time. Yet the balconies, consoles and entrance hint of Denke's Germanic background. His classical training also can be seen in the arched windows, especially in the adapted Palladian format of the middle window in the top row while there are round headed, arched windows with pseudo-lunettes on the second and fourth floors. The third and fourth floor windows are double hung except for the triple-hung widows over the entrance; the first and second floor windows are all triple-hung. The balconies on both the street facades and the fire escape on the Lapidge Street facade have wrought iron railings. There is stucco decoration outlining the main entrance which consists of pilasters on either side ending in finials. The Sons of Norway remodeled the main entrance in the 1930's by eliminating the steps and stairs of the original entrance and adding a decorative tile curved wall into the building.

The building is a four story high unreinforced masonry structure divided into seven bays on the north facade and six bays on the east facade. The exterior finish is painted stucco on the North and East facades, and common bond bare brick on the South and West facades. The building is built to a lot line on the north (front) along 18th Street, the east side along Lapidge Street, and the west side adjacent to the neighboring building. There is an exit corridor at the rear (south) of the building within the property line.

**Historical Context:** This Mission Turn Hall was constructed in 1910 as an exercise club by the Turne Verein Society, a German-American organization dedicated to the philosophy of "sound mind" and to the development of physical education. The architect for the building was A. (August) Reinold Denke who practiced in San Francisco in the 1900's. The 1911 edition of Davis' commercial Encyclopedia of the Pacific Southwest state that August Reinhold Denke...having taken post-graduate courses in engineering, construction, and architecture at University of California...was a member of the San Francisco Chapter of American Institute of Architects and the San Francisco architectural Club. The Davis Encyclopedia particularly noted, "He has just finished the Mission Turn Verein Halle, which is one of the most imposing edifices of its kind in the city." Denke oversaw each step of its construction. The Water Company turned on the water on September 19, 1910. Two months later, on November 17, 1910 the Mission Turn Halle officially opened its doors with a gymnastic exhibition.

In 1935 two lodge groups of the Sons of Norway and the Daughters of Norway purchased the building. It was renamed "Dovre Hall", after a mountain range in Norway. Over the years these groups renovated much of the building by converting the gymnasium into a dance hall stage with an adjacent area for refreshments, adding new stairwells and an elevator. It is believed that the

members did much of the work themselves. In 1978 the building was purchased by the San Francisco Women's Centers Inc. and renamed The Women's Building. A wide variety of women's organizations serving different women's needs have their offices in the building. The building also provides meeting and activity space to the community for events, meetings and support groups.

**Source:** The citations from this report come from a renovation feasibility study being conducted for The Women's Building by Bogatay Architects. Bogatay Architects' bibliography includes: Final Case Report, Landmark #178, San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Board, September 5, 1984; "Turn Hall", Landmarks of San Francisco, Patrick McGrew, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York: 1991; Denke Bros., Architects. Private Files of The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, 2007 Franklin Street, San Francisco, CA 94109: Summer 1993.

**Project Information:** The Women's Building is sponsoring a mural designed by a prestigious team of multi-cultural mural artists, representing a multi-generational effort, Jauna Alicia, Miranda Bergman, Susan Cervantes, Edythe Boone, Meera Desai, Yvonne Littleton and Irene Perez. The mural will be a historic depiction of women's multi-cultural history. The historic emphasis will illuminate the unrecognized history of women and girls and help inspire pride and self-knowledge. This documentation is being carried out by Shoshana Rosenberg, renovation Project Manager for the San Francisco Women's Center Inc./ The Women's Building in accordance with a Memorandum of agreement among the Mayor's Office of Community Development, the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. There will be no alterations to the building as the mural will be painted on the existing facade.

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(page 3)

**Data pages 1-2 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.**

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**Interior Description and Condition:** The interior of the building is substantially altered from its original design. Most of the alterations appear to have been done in the 1930's. On the first floor, the present Auditorium is located in approximately the same space as the former Gymnasium. The gym did not have a stage, not did it have access to the balcony, both of which the Auditorium now has.

The original main stair, a straight run from the very small main Lobby to the "First Mezzanine Floor" (now the Second Floor) ran perpendicular to 18th Street. This stair was replaced with an elevator in the 1930's, the Lobby expanded, and a new C-shaped stair running parallel to 18th Street installed.

The Second Floor was originally called the "First Mezzanine Floor". A substantial portion remains open to the Auditorium below, but the Gym Balcony which formerly ran along the north (18th Street) side was extended along the west side when the space was converted from Gymnasium to Auditorium. Both legs of the Balcony have a stair down to the main Auditorium.

The Third floor was originally called the "Second Floor". It consisted primarily of a Ball Room which extended from east wall to west wall of the building along the south wall. It had a curved-front stage on

the west side, and platforms one riser high along its south and east walls. In its present configuration there is no stage, and the Harriet Tubman Room occupies the western half of the former Ball Room. Platforms and benches were added to this room along the east and west sides, probably by the Sons of Norway.

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**Project Information:** The Women's Building is undertaking a major seismic renovation in which a braced frame is being added to the interior of the building. The frame is being held to the interior of the building and will not be visible through the windows; in most cases it will be contained within existing wall locations. A structural diaphragm is being added at the third floor to support the two-story brick walls where the original Ball Room, now the Harriet Tubman room, is located. This diaphragm will double as a mezzanine to increase the amount of office space the Women's Building can provide to other non-profit organizations. While the building is going through this major renovation, some interior spaces are being reconfigured to better serve the needs the organizations and community groups who use the building.

The Historic areas that are being impacted are as follows:

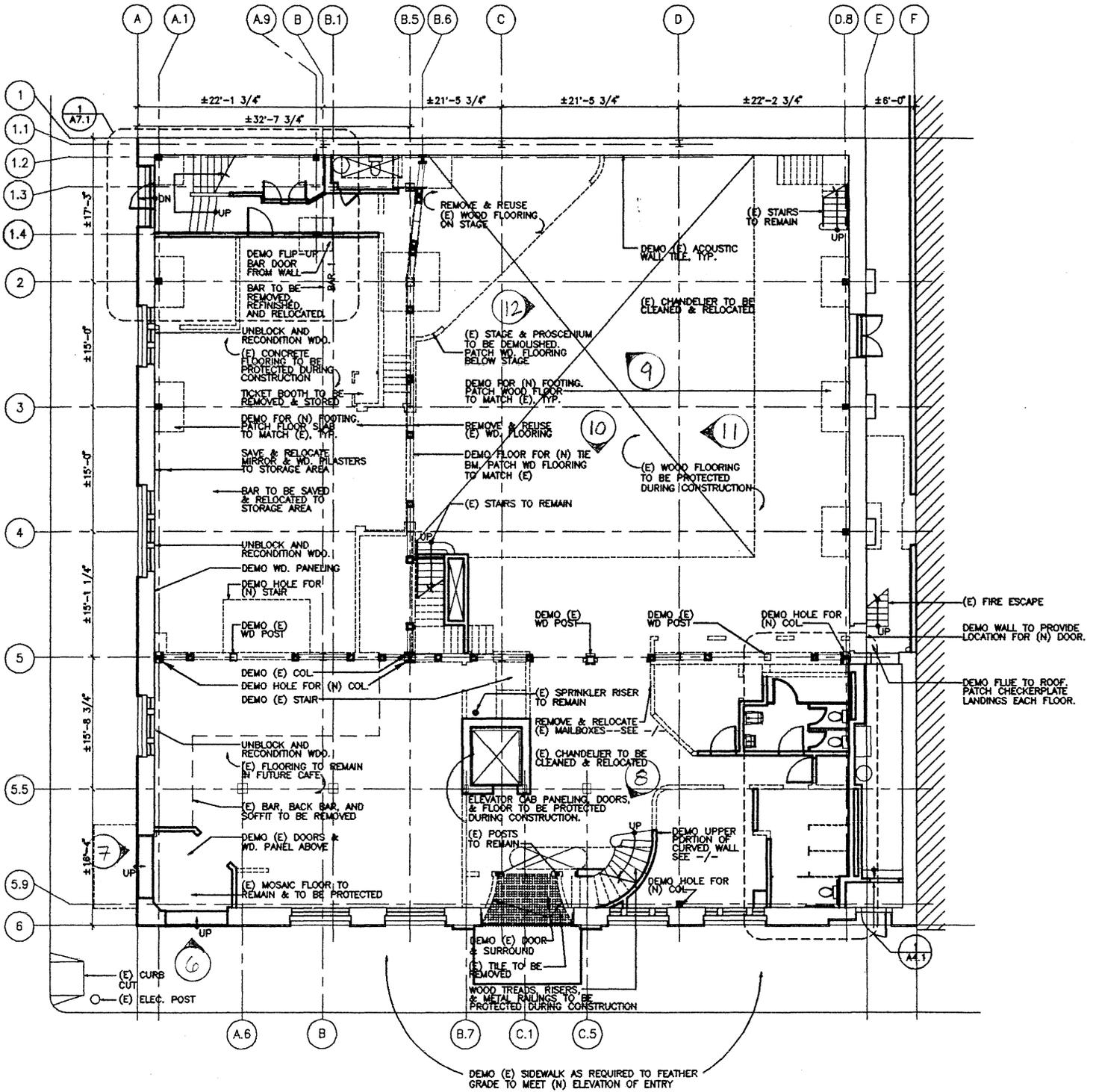
The main entrance is being moved toward the street and being replaced with new glazed doors and sidelights. This will improve security of the building since the current recessed entry is frequently used as a bathroom and site of illicit activities.

The entrance to the Dovre Club (future cafe) is being replaced with glazed doors and a transom above.

The historic side panels are remaining. This will improve security at the entrance to the cafe.

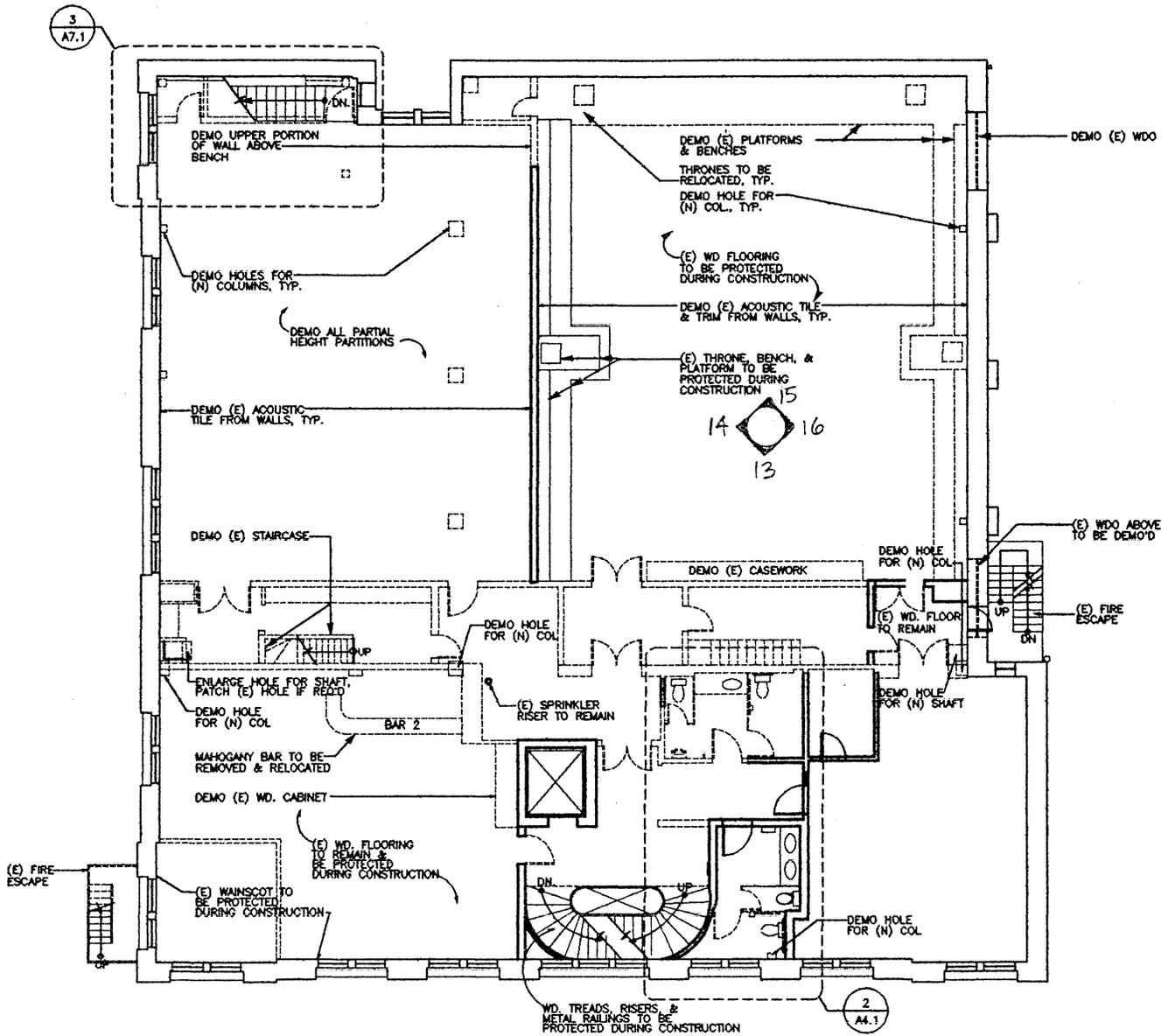
The stage and proscenium are being demolished in the Auditorium. The current stage is very small, too high, and awkwardly located in the room. Demolishing it will greatly improve the usability of the room.

One wall of benches and two walls of platforms are being demolished from the Harriet Tubman room. This part of the building is being turned into office and the benches and platforms make the space unusable. This space can no longer be used as an assembly space, since we are required to remove assembly spaces from the upper floors of the building.



1ST FLOOR DEMO PLAN

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



3RD FLOOR DEMO PLAN

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"