NORTH BEACH PLACE, 475 BAY STREET
(Building No. 3)
475 Bay Street
San Francisco
San Francisco County
California

HABS CA-2727-C
CA-2727-C

HABS
CA-2727-C

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700
Oakland, CA 94607

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

North Beach Place District, 475 Bay Street **HABS No. CA-2727-C**
(Building No. 3)
San Francisco
San Francisco County
California

Location: 475 Bay Street

U.S.G.S. San Francisco North 7.5' Quadrangle

Present owner: San Francisco Housing Authority

Present use: Demolished during December 2001 to January 2003

Most recent use: Public housing project

Significance: North Beach Place was a public housing project that occupied two city blocks in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco for fifty years. Designed in 1941-1942, delayed by World War II, and constructed in 1950-1952, it was one of the early housing projects in the city. Originally, occupancy was intended to be restricted to Caucasians, according to a neighborhood patterning policy then in place; but a successful lawsuit by the NAACP overturned this policy. For many years the housing project was occupied by a mix of Asian, African-American, and Caucasian residents. Generally harmonious relations existed among residents, staff, and the surrounding neighborhood until the crack cocaine epidemic of the mid-1980s. The project has long had ties with a non-profit service organization, the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center.

Architecturally, the housing project was an early example of modernism in San Francisco. Strongly horizontal in its lines, with balconies curved at the corners, and nearly devoid of ornament, the buildings that make up this project were a blend of the Streamlined Moderne and International styles.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2727.

B. Historical Context

Please refer to the " Narrative " report, HABS No. CA-2727.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2727.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions

The dimensions of Building 3 were identical to those of Building 1. Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

2. Foundations

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

3. Walls and structural system

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

4. Balconies, stairwells, stoops, and garbage chutes

In Building 3, balconies ran along the full width of the upper stories of the Bay Street side of the building. At their ends, they connected with stairwells at the junctions of Building 3 with buildings 8 and 9.

The balconies, as well as the stairwells, stoops, and garbage chutes of Building 3, were identical to those of Building1. Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

5. Openings

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

6. Roof

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

C. Description of Interiors

1. Floor plans

a. Basement

The basement of Building 3 contained a storage room that measured roughly eleven by twenty feet. The balance of the basement was unused. All floor, wall, and ceiling surfaces in the basement were concrete.

b. Apartment floor plans

The plan of Building 3 was identical to that of Building 1. Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

2. Flooring

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

3. Wall and ceiling finish

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

4. Openings and trim

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

5. Bedroom closets

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

6. Kitchen fixtures

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

7. Bathroom fixtures

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

8. Mechanical equipment and fixtures

Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation

Building 3 was located in the more eastern of the two blocks of North Beach Place. It was oriented on an east-west axis, fronted on Bay Street, and was located a short distance east of Taylor Street. It was connected by balconies to buildings 8 and 9, which ran on a north-south axis. By means of such connections, Building 3 and the other buildings in the block formed a series of linked U-shapes.

2. Historic landscape

To a certain degree the original landscaping plan by Thomas Church remained intact through 2001. The courtyard formed by buildings 3, 8 and 9 remained devoted to parking. Please refer to the outline report for Building 1, HABS No. CA-2727-A, for more detail on the historic landscape of North Beach Place.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings

The original plans of 1941-1942 have not been found. Perspective drawings and site plans from that period, however, were published with an article entitled "North Beach Place Housing Project," by John S. Bolles, in *Architect and Engineer* in July 1945.

As-built drawings dated July 1953 were supplied by the San Francisco Housing Authority. These drawings were revisions of plans dated August 1950.

B. Early Views

No early photographic views of North Beach Place have been found.

C. Interviews

The author of this report interviewed Denise McCarthy, Executive Director of the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center, in June 2002. Ms. McCarthy had been

associated with the Center for about twenty years, and has had close contact with residents of North Beach Place during that period.

The author interviewed Susan Cerny in March 2003. Ms Cerny has probably gathered more information on Henry Gutterson, one of the architects of North Beach Place, than anyone else.

D. Bibliography

1. Title history

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2. Design and construction

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"Housing Projects Postponed by High Building Costs." *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 24, 1946, p. 9.

"In the News." *Architect and Engineer*, October 1950, p. 46.

"In the News." *Architect and Engineer*, November 1950, p. 45.

"New Buildings for Old." *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 10, 1950, p. 7.

"North Beach Housing." *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 10, 1950, p. 30.

"North Beach Place to Be Built by 1952." *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 16, 1949, p. 10.

3. Opening and NAACP lawsuit

Calene, John. "North Beach Housing Will Ban Negroes." *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 22, 1952, p. 1.

"Court Acts on Housing Race Issue." *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 4, 1952, p. 1.

"Court Voids S.F. Policy on Housing." *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 27, 1953, p. 1.

"New Housing Project Opens." *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 14, 1952, p. 3.

"S.F. Negro Housing Ban Is Outlawed." *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2, 1952.

"S.F. Housing Segregation Loses Again." *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 23, 1953, p. 1.

4. Ethnic and occupational analysis

The reverse directories at the ends of the 1953, 1962, and 1972 San Francisco city directories listed the names of nearly all residents of North Beach Place. As the housing project had not fully opened when the 1953 directory was canvassed, only 112 names of residents were found in that year. In 1962 and 1972, 217 and 212 names were found, respectively. All of these names were then looked up in the front section of the directories, which listed occupations (if any) of the residents.

5. Crime and drug issues, 1979-1980s

Anders, Corrie, and Leslie Guevarra. "Drug trade booming at S.F. housing projects." *San Francisco Examiner*, October 4, 1995, p. B-1.

D'Emilio, Frances. "Fed-Up Tenants Fight City Hall." *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 26, 1979, p. 6.

Linn, Amy. "Politics '84 – the view from the projects." *San Francisco Examiner*, July 23, 1984, p. A-1.

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McCarthy, Denise. Telephone interview by William Kostura, June 3, 2002.

O'Connor, John D. "Crack gangs at war in S.F." *San Francisco Examiner*, January 4, 1989, p. A-18.

_____. "S.F. cops on trail of gang gunplay." *San Francisco Examiner*, December 2, 1988, p. A-1.

6. Demolition and replacement of North Beach Place

Hatfield, Larry D. "S.F. gets millions to redo housing." *San Francisco Examiner*, August 25, 1993, p. 1.

Karakasevic, Laura. "Reconstruction of North Beach Housing Development Under Reconsideration." *North Beach Now*, April 1997.

Lelchuk, Ilene. "North Beach project residents ready to fight eviction." *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 9, 2001.

_____. "Strapped tenants hesitant to move." *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 23, 2001.

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7. Early history of housing project construction in the United States

Robinson and Associates, Inc., and Jeffrey Shrimpton. "Historic Context: Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1939" (Draft). Prepared for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1997.

8. Early Housing Projects in San Francisco

Andreini, Don. "San Francisco Marks 50 Years of Public Housing." *Heritage Newsletter*, Vol. 17, no. 3 (1989).

"Chinatown Project First of Six Local Developments." *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 3, 1949, p. 2.

"San Francisco Builds Low Rent Homes." *Architect and Engineer*, July 1942.

9. Henry Gutterson

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_____. Telephone interview by William Kostura, March 15, 2003.

10. Ernest Born

"Ernest Born, 1898-1992." *California Monthly*, December 1992.

"In Memory." *AIA/SF*, October 1992, p. 15.

"Milestones." *CED News* (University of California), Fall 1998, p. 41.

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Joncas, Richard, et. al. *Stanford University*. New York: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Woodbridge, Sally. "From the Large-Small House to the Large-Large House." In Woodbridge, ed., *Bay Area Houses*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1988.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

San Francisco city directories for the years 1953-1982 could reveal how long residents of North Beach Place lived at that housing project. A random sample of names can be obtained from the reverse index at the rear of the directory. These names could be looked up in the front of directories and the dates of residency could thus be established. It might be useful to compare how long early residents of North Beach Place lived in the housing project, compared to how long residents from later in the building's history lived there.

No residents of North Beach Place were interviewed for this report. Interviews with long-time residents would certainly provide useful information.

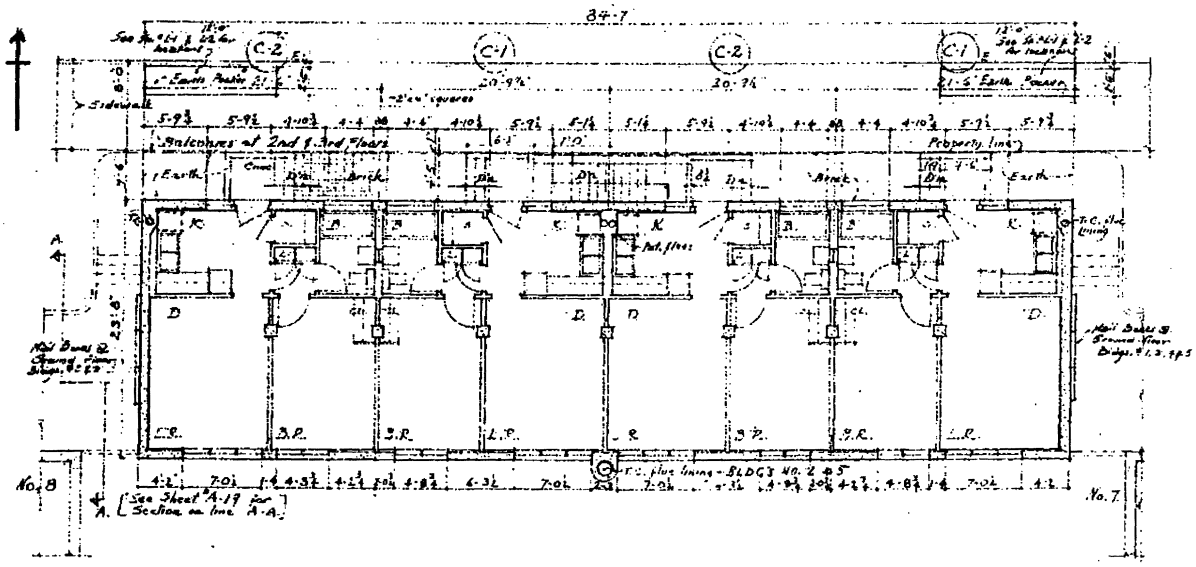
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

In 2000, William Kostura, of Oakland, and Carey and Co., of San Francisco, produced *Historic Architecture Survey Report for the Replacement of North Beach Place Housing Project, San Francisco, CA* for Robert Shaw and Associates, BRIDGE Housing Corporation, and the Mayor's Office of Housing. The demolition and replacement of North Beach Place is using federal funds, and is subject to NEPA and CEQA. The 2000 report was produced to satisfy the historic preservation elements of NEPA and CEQA.

The 2000 report found North Beach Place to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C, for its design and for its association with two important Bay Area architects, Henry Gutterson and Ernest Born. It was significant at the local level, within the broader

historic context of public housing in the United States before and shortly after World War II.

This HABS report was written in 2003 as mitigation for the demolition of North Beach Place. The author was William Kostura, an architectural historian. In addition to this written report, large-format archival photographs have been taken to document the appearance of this housing project.



Plan of first through third stories
Building 3, North Beach Place