

Stanford Brothers Store
1203 Front Street
Sacramento
Sacramento County
California

HABS No. CAL-1253

HABS,
CAL,
34-SAC,
40-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

HABS
CAL
34-5A-
112-

THE STANFORD BROTHERS STORE
Sacramento, Sacramento County, California

Address: 1203 Front Street
Occupant: Unoccupied
Use: Warehouse

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The existing brick warehouse at 1203 Front Street is of architectural interest as it was typical of such facilities built during the 1850's, and its historical significance stems from its original owner, Leland Stanford, Governor of California, U. S. Senator, President of the Central Pacific Railroad, and founder of Leland Stanford University.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Leland Stanford became the most prominent and best known of the Stanford brothers. He was born March 9, 1824, in Watervliet Township, Albany County, New York, the fourth of the eight sons of Josiah Stanford, a prosperous farmer and hotel keeper, six of whom eventually wound up in California.

Leland grew up on his father's farm and studied law in Albany. In 1848, he was admitted to the bar, married Jane Lathrop, and moved west to Port Washington, Wisconsin, to practice his profession. In 1852, all of his office equipment, law books, and other personal property were destroyed by fire, whereupon he returned to Albany.

Four of Leland's brothers, Josiah, Charles, Philip, and Elijah, followed the Gold Rush to California; Josiah in 1849, the others in 1850. They had successfully established stores catering to the miners' needs at Mormon Island and in several of the mining camps. Leland decided to join in their business ventures; and, leaving his wife in Albany, proceeded by steamer to California, arriving in July 1852.

Three years after joining his brothers, Leland had accumulated a small fortune from stores he had himself started in Cold Springs and Michigan Bluff. He had never intended to remain in California once his fortune was made; and, in 1855, he pocketed his profits and once again returned to Albany, New York. Stanford's profits had been considerable, and he returned home a wealthy man. Although he had never personally engaged in mining, his early wealth was derived from the mines: grub-staking miners by advancing supplies in exchange for shares in their mining prospects, etc. From one such transaction alone, he is credited with eventually realizing over half a million dollars.

The novelty of return soon wore off; and, unable to resist the tremendous opportunities for quick profits he had known in the mining camps, Stanford again turned his eyes west and, this time accompanied by his wife, returned to California in the fall of 1855.

By 1852, Leland's brothers had purchased the easterly half of Lot No. 4 in the block bounded by Second and Third, "K" and "L" Streets in Sacramento.

The property measured 40' x 160' with the 40' frontage on the south side of "K" Street. Under the old street address numbering system, that maintained until 1880, the numbers 56 and 58 were assigned the property. Upon this "K" Street site, the Stanford brothers established their first Sacramento store.

Leland returned to California at an opportune time; as, in 1856, brothers Josiah, Charles, and A. P. had acquired business interests in San Francisco and established residence there.

The brothers' "K" Street property seemed a logical investment as the ground floor supported a going merchandising business, and all of the second floor office space was rented. Leland bought out his brother's interest and took over the "K" Street store, retaining the original name of Stanford Brothers.

Leland Stanford is mentioned for the first time in a Sacramento Directory of 1856, page 121, as living on Second Street, between "O" and "P" Streets and being "of the Stanford Brothers, Wholesale Merchants, 56 and 58 "K". This establishment may be ranked among the oldest and most extensive in the city. The building which they occupied was, with the exception of that known as the "Lady Adams", the only one which wholly escaped the conflagration of November 1852". (We know now that several others also weathered the 1852 fire). In a classified advertisement on page 125 of this directory, the name of Leland Stanford alone appears; the building still being described as the "White Brick Warehouse, Nos. 56 and 58, "K" Street, near Third".

After 1856, the Stanford Brothers Store at 56-58 "K" Street is no longer listed in any subsequent directory as, by the end of that year, the store activities were transferred to a new building Leland had built on the SE corner of "L" and Front Streets.

The new building occupied the northerly half of Lot No. 1 in Block 290, bounded by Front and Second "L" and "M" Streets, with a 42'6" frontage on Front and 150' on "L" Street. It was described thus in the California Times of November 14, 1856;

"The new store of Stanford Brothers at the corner of "L" and Front Streets is nearly completed and is truly a splendid building. It is 42 feet on Front Street and 150 feet long on "L" Street. The main story is 15 feet high and runs back the entire length of the building. The walls of the basement story are laid in pure cement. The entire cost of the building will be about \$14,000.00."

The Front Street building is listed for the first time on page 89 of the 1857-58 Directory as "Stanford Brothers, Wholesale Merchants, Corner "L" and Front".

In March of 1858, Stanford formed a partnership with David Meeker, a pioneer merchant of Sacramento who had been in business there since 1849. The partnership lasted but a year, but long enough to be listed in the 1858-59 Directory, on page 67, as "Stanford Brothers & Meeker, Wholesale Merchants, "L" and Front Streets."

In 1861, the year Stanford became Governor, he sold the Front Street property to Booth & Company.

In 1858, the "White Brick Warehouse" at 56-58 "K" Street was demolished; and Leland Stanford erected on the site a new two-story building -- again with meeting rooms on the second floor, retaining the name "Stanford Hall". (It was this second floor space of the 1858 building that, in 1862, Stanford converted to offices for the Central Pacific Railroad.)

An item of Sept 15, 1862, in the Sacramento Union records Governor Stanford letting a contract with W. F. Knox, contractor, for remodeling the second floor at 56-58 "K" Street to accommodate the offices of the Central Pacific Railroad; and here they remained until the main office was moved to San Francisco in 1873.

Leland Stanford retained ownership of the "K" Street building until 1878 when he sold the property to Huntington and Hopkins. Hopkins died that same year, but Huntington continued the business under the old firm name; and, in 1880, combined the former Stanford building with his own.

The entire complex of the "K" Street Stanford, Huntington, and Hopkins buildings was demolished in 1966 to make way for the construction of Interstate Freeway No. 5.

Enough of the original brick was salvaged, cleaned, palleted, and stored in the Municipal Warehouse to serve as face brick, wherever brick work will be exposed, in the proposed reconstruction of the buildings on "I" Street.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

In 1858, Seth Babson, the pioneer Sacramento architect, had designed the 8th Street house for Charles Crocker, Stanford's associate in the Central Pacific Railroad; and the same year Babson designed the Shelton C. Fogus residence at 8th and "O" Streets which Stanford bought in 1861 and used for his own residence, until moving to San Francisco in 1874. Babson may also have been the architect, for the 1858 "K" Street store and the 1856 Front Street store.

The Front Street store, as it presently exists, is quite similar to the Brannan stores on the SE corner of "J" and Front Streets. Both buildings have their narrow frontage on Front Street, the facades of each consisting of four arched openings separated by brick piers; the tympanum above the arch spring-line being closed by a recessed brick panel. On the long facades of both buildings, the arches of the Stanford store are again separated by brick piers; on the Brannan store by cast-iron pilasters. On the Front Street facade, a good portion of the brick cornice with dentil course remains; and it is more than likely that the Stanford store also originally had a similar cornice.

After the flood of 1861-62, Front Street was raised a full story height in 1864. To bring the Brannan and Stanford stores up to grade, it is more than likely that an additional floor was added, rather than that the buildings were raised. If this is so, the existing facades date from 1864 rather than 1853 and 1856.

In 1893, W. R. Knight, a dealer in hides and furs, occupied the old Stanford Building; and a second floor was added around 1890. Sometime in the 1920's, a fire destroyed this second floor addition; and the building reverted to its present appearance and condition.

Prepared by

Clyde F. Trudell, Architect

April 1969

REFERENCES:

1. Sacramento Directories; 1850 - 1870
2. " The Big Four " ; Oscar Lewis, 1946
3. The Sacramento Guide Book; Sacramento Bee, 1939
4. " Old Sacramento " ; Part II; State of California, 1958
5. The Centennial Edition; Sacramento Bee, 1957

THE STANFORD BROTHERS STORE,
1203 FRONT STREET,
SACRAMENTO, SACRAMENTO COUNTY,
CALIFORNIA

HABS NO. CAL-1253

STANFORD BROTHERS,

Importers and Wholesale Dealers in

PROVISIONS, GROCERIES,

WINE, LIQUORS, CIGARS,

FLOUR, GRAIN, PRODUCE,

MINING IMPLEMENTS,

MINERS' SUPPLIES, ETC.

WHITE BRICK WAREHOUSE,

Nos. 56 and 58 K Street, near Third,

SACRAMENTO CITY.

By importing our own Merchandise, and one of the firm being constantly in the Atlantic States, shipping goods by clipper vessels expressly for this market, we offer superior inducements to the Country Dealer or Trade in general, and invite an inspection of our stock.

Prices will be found as low as those of San Francisco.

Orders put up with the utmost care and dispatch.

J. STANFORD, C. STANFORD, A. P. STANFORD.
LELAND STANFORD.

FROM SACRAMENTO DIRECTORY OF 1856
AFTER LELAND STANFORD HAD BOUGHT OUT HIS
BROTHERS AND WAS SOLE OWNER OF THE STORE

STANFORD BROTHERS,

Importers and Wholesale Dealers in

PROVISIONS, GROCERIES,

WINE, LIQUORS, CIGARS,

FLOUR, GRAIN, PRODUCE,

MINING IMPLEMENTS, Miners' Supplies.

WHITE BRICK WAREHOUSE,

Nos. 56 and 58 K St., near Third,

SACRAMENTO.

By importing our own merchandise, and one of the firm being constantly in the Atlantic States, shipping goods by clipper vessels expressly for this market, we offer superior inducements to the Country Dealer or Trade in general, and invite an inspection of our stock.

Prices will be found as low as those of San Francisco.

Orders put up with the utmost care and dispatch.

J. STANFORD, C. STANFORD, A. P. STANFORD.

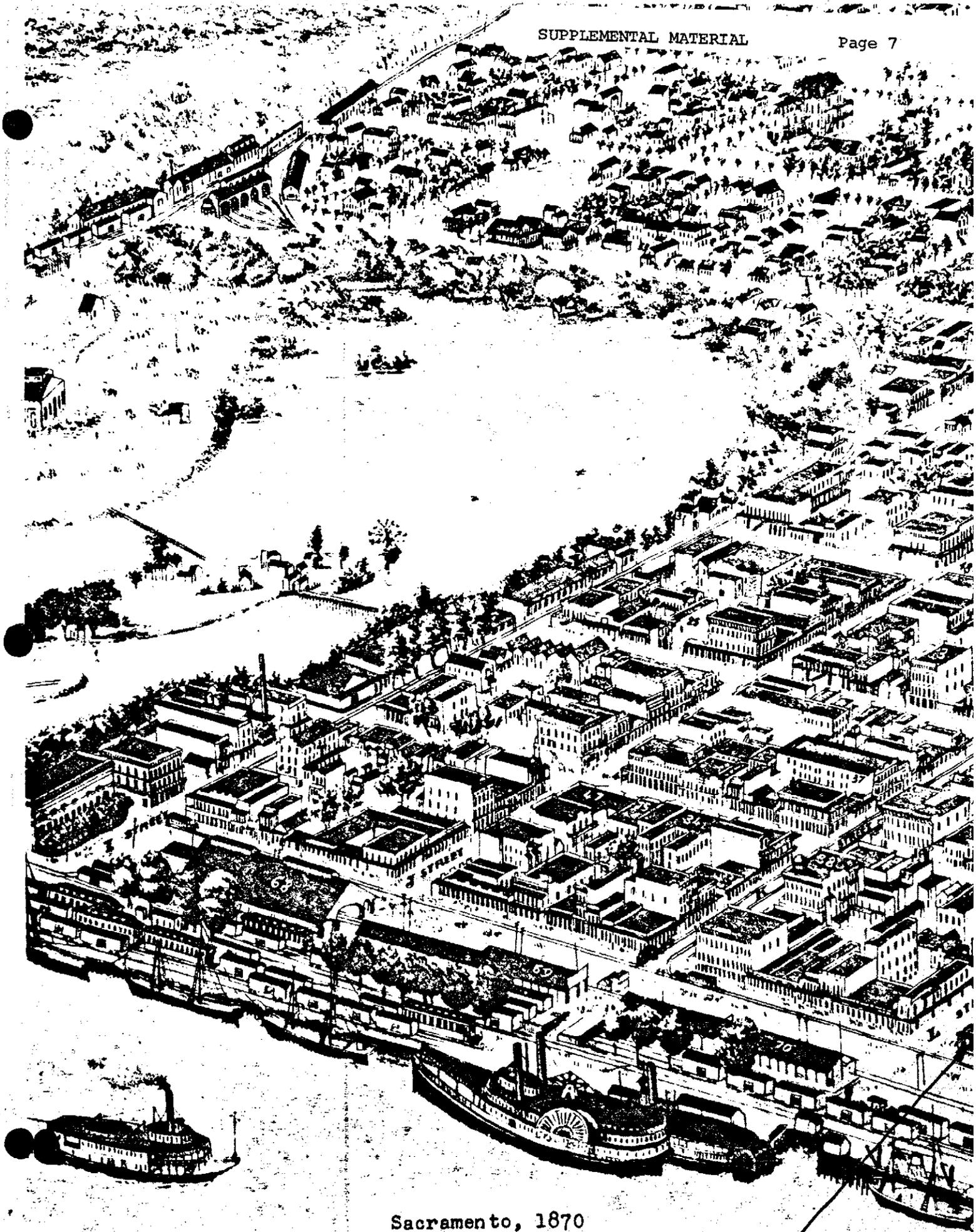
FROM SACRAMENTO DIRECTORY OF 1855 WHEN
STANFORD BROTHERS OWNED AND OPERATED STORE.

THE STANFORD BROTHERS STORE,
1203 FRONT STREET,
SACRAMENTO, SACRAMENTO COUNTY,
CALIFORNIA.

HABS NO. CAL-1253

STANFORD BROTHERS & MEEKER,
Importers and Wholesale Dealers in
Provisions, Groceries, Wines,
LIQUORS, CIGARS,
Flour, Grain and Produce,
MINING IMPLEMENTS,
MINERS' SUPPLIES, ETC.,
CORNER FRONT AND L STREETS,
SACRAMENTO.

FROM SACRAMENTO DIRECTORY OF 1858



Sacramento, 1870