

ANGUS McSWEENEY

Architect

(1900-1971)

Angus McDonald McSweeney was born in Pittsburgh, Pa., the second of two sons born to Anthony McFarland McSweeney, a U. S. Army engineer, and his wife Eugenie. The family relocated to San Francisco in 1920 where Angus and his elder brother, Ward, found employment as draftsmen. In 1921 Angus moved to Sacramento to work for the State of California, then to L. A., returning to San Francisco in 1924 to join Willis Polk & Co. Some time after Polk's death, Angus became a partner in the firm. He is credited as the designer of the Willis Polk & Co. building on:

- Russian Hill - 1090 Chestnut (1927, the 'Marine View' cooperative, 12 apts.).

His father Anthony had qualified for his State Architectural license (B1253) in 1923 and was living in Corte Madera and working for P. G. & E. Angus got married, and in 1926 he and his wife Beryl moved into a new house designed by Angus at 250 Santa Paula Way in St. Francis Wood. Angus finally obtained his own State license in 1929 (B1683) and he kept the Willis Polk & Co. business name alive into the mid-1930's, gradually evolving it into his own practice. He designed a number of houses on the Peninsula, including 2900 Ralston Avenue in Hillsborough (1933).

Angus moved his office in 1935 from 277 Pine to 604 Mission, and he and Beryl moved to Burlingame. In 1940 Anthony came to work for Angus for a few years, leaving in 1942 to practice independently. In 1949 Anthony attracted local publicity by submitting a proposal to Mayor Elmer Robinson for a 440-story 'San Francisco Tower', 5280 feet (one mile) high, four times taller than the Empire State Building, which would have had a foundation covering 16 city blocks. It was to contain 100,000 apartments and numerous offices, schools, stores, theaters, hospitals and other services. 300 elevators were specified (the Empire State has 74). Although his father was convinced the plan was structurally and economically feasible, not surprisingly, it went nowhere. By 1951, Anthony was back working for Angus, which he continued to do until he died in 1957. By 1951, Angus was living in Hillsborough and had moved his office to 612 Howard. In 1957 he built a new office for himself at 2960 Van Ness and in 1960 he established Angus McSweeney Inc.

On a somewhat less ambitious scale than his father's 'San Francisco Tower', Angus was selected as the architect for a number of residential high-rises built in the 1950's and 1960's, including the four 10-story and ten 3-story apartment buildings at Stonestown (1950, 683 apts.), and on:

- Nob Hill - 1190 Sacramento (1954, 11 apts.), **1200 California** (1962, 92 apts.);
- Russian Hill - 1000 Chestnut (1955, 84 apts.), 1080 Chestnut (1960, 58 apts.);
- Pacific Heights - 2288 Broadway (1957, 10 apts.).

1200 California was McSweeney's largest and finest residential building, incorporating the best ideas from his earlier ones. There are four corner apartments per floor, each with a terrace (many since enclosed). On the west side there are two mirror-image two bedroom, two bath apartments; on the east side each floor has a three bedroom, three bath and a one bedroom, one bath apartment.

McSweeney is also remembered in San Francisco for his collaboration with Paul Ryan, John Lee, Pietro Belluschi and Pier Luigi Nervi on the building of St. Mary's Cathedral, Gough at Geary. This is a striking design, with four 190 ft. hyperbolic paraboloids, which McSweeney lived to see completed in 1971. After Angus died, on December 23, 1971, his Requiem Mass was held there.