

## Pacific Heights Architects #15 - Conrad Meussdorffer

*The focus of this series is architects who had a strong influence over the way Pacific Heights looks today. Conrad Meussdorffer was probably San Francisco's finest apartment house architect and some of his best work, including the most expensive co-operative apartment building in the City, is in Pacific Heights.*



Conrad Alfred Meussdorffer was born in San Francisco on October 25, 1871, the son of German immigrant parents who had settled here as pioneers in 1853. His father Konrad was an importer and a retailer of hats, with a store on Kearny Street.

Meussdorffer started work in 1892 for the architectural firm of Salfield & Kohlberg, first as a draftsman and promoted to architect after two years. In 1895 he entered into a partnership with Victor de Prose, mainly designing commercial buildings. By 1897 he had opened his own practice.

Meussdorffer lived on Laurel Grove in Ross in a home he designed. He was responsible for several other homes in Ross for clients. In Pacific Heights fine examples of his early work may be seen at 3016-18 Clay (1897), 3051-55 Clay (1902), and 3295 Clay (1904). Just across Presidio Avenue into Presidio Heights, one particular block has three remaining buildings - a home at 3320 Jackson and two pairs of flats, 3353-55 Jackson (1906) and 3349-51 Jackson (1908). Another early building of his on Russian Hill at 870-74 Chestnut (1904) was recently placed on the market. Few properties east of Van Ness survived the fire which raged for 3 days after the April 18, 1906 earthquake, so this is a rare example.

Just prior to the 1906 earthquake, Meussdorffer had designed the St. Regis apartments at 1925 Gough, which has the distinction of being the only building which projects into Lafayette Park. Finally opened in 1908, the (originally 12, now 15) large apartments set a new standard for luxury. The building was ahead of its time in its classical style and incorporation of Beaux-Arts influences and established Meussdorffer as the architect of choice for luxury apartment buildings in the City. Examples of his designs can be seen in several prime areas of the City, including Nob Hill and Russian Hill, but particularly noteworthy in Pacific Heights are 2135 and 2205 Sacramento (both built in 1908, containing 36 and 16 units respectively), 1824 and 1830 Jackson (built in 1916, a matching pair of buildings across a courtyard entry, each consisting of 9 half-floor apartments), 2145 Franklin (1917, 7 apts.), 1810 Jackson (also 1917, 8 apts.), 2000 Washington (1922, 7 apts.), 2100 Jackson (1923, 10 apts.), 1800 Gough (also 1923, 8 apts.), 2006 Washington (1924, 11 apts.), 2500 Steiner (1927, 13 apts.), and 2299 Pacific (1928, 15 apts.).

2006 Washington (pictured) represents Meussdorffer's best known legacy to San Francisco architecture and is widely regarded as the finest cooperative apartment building in Pacific Heights. It was designed to take advantage of 100 feet of open space to the west by facing towards the Golden Gate and so looks down on the George Applegarth-designed Spreckels Mansion. Each of the main floors is about 5500 square feet; larger than most Pacific Heights homes. Every level has magnificent views. Originally ten apartments, the 2200 square foot penthouse has been separated from the tenth floor to create an eleventh apartment. Shimmering in the afternoon light, it reflects well on the quality of



Meussdorffer's work and may be favorably compared to the finest apartment buildings in New York, London or Paris.

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*May 2003*