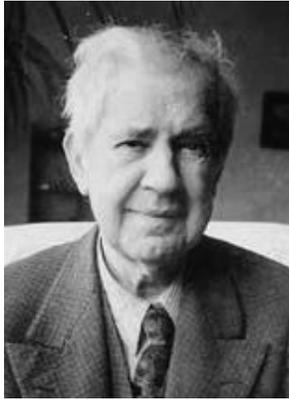


Pacific Heights Architects #30 - Bernard J. S. Cahill



The focus of this series is architects who had an influence over the way Pacific Heights looks today. The work of this influential architect extended beyond Pacific Heights to help shape the Civic Center the way we see it today.

Bernard Joseph Stanislaus Cahill was born in London, England on January 30, 1867. He arrived in San Francisco in the late 1880's and joined the firm of George P. Aston and Louis S. Stone as a draftsman. By 1892 he was obtaining commissions of his own, although he continued working with Stone through Stone's subsequent partnership with Harry S. Munson, and then as Stone's partner from 1894 to 1896.

Surviving examples of Cahill's early San Francisco residential work can be seen in Lower Pacific Heights at 2004-06 Steiner (1892, an innovative 2 flat building) and in Pacific Heights at 2025 Baker (designed in 1896). A later home at 2498 Broadway on the corner of Pierce (from 1901) was profiled by Anne Bloomfield 15 years ago and that article will be rerun next month. The pair of flats at 2004-06 Steiner is highly unusual duplex designed in 1892 for Johanna Mahoney. The windows are very distinctive in their triangular shape, contrary to the Stick and Queen Anne styles in transition at the time. More recently the attic in the building has been developed into a second story for the upper unit and a garage has been added.



2004-06 Steiner, built in 1892
Note the unusually shaped windows

In the 1890's, Cahill was tempted by developers with the possibility of planning three new towns, two in the Bay Area (Port Townsend and Tiburon) and one in Southern California. Although none of the opportunities materialized for him, the experiences took Cahill into the realm of town planning.



The IOOF Columbarium, a San Francisco Landmark

A parallel thread in Cahill's work was mortuary architecture. A crematorium he had designed with Louis S. Stone (and T. P. Ross) for Cypress Lawn led to an 1895 commission for him to build one for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) in San Francisco. In 1897 the IOOF turned again to Cahill (by then in partnership with civil engineer Daniel E. Condon) for a repository for cremated remains. This building, still called today the Columbarium, was to serve the needs of the IOOF for 15 years, after which others were intended to be built to Cahill's designs. However, cremation was banned in the City in 1910, and an anti-cemetery movement grew, until by 1935 all that was left of the original

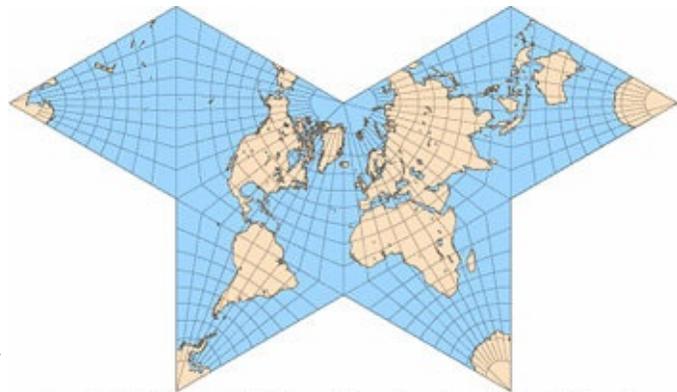
IOOF cemetery was the Columbarium in its small landscaped park at the end of Loraine Court, off Anza, west of Stanyan. Now San Francisco Landmark #209, it is one of the finest examples of Roman-inspired classical architecture in the City.

In 1907 Cahill entered a partnership with compatriots George Alexander Wright and George Rushforth. Their design work included the Terbush Building at 515-19 Bush (1907) and a building on Market Street which became the temporary City Hall after the 1906 earthquake and fire, later the

Hotel Whitcomb, and today a Ramada Hotel, 1231 Market at 8th (1911).

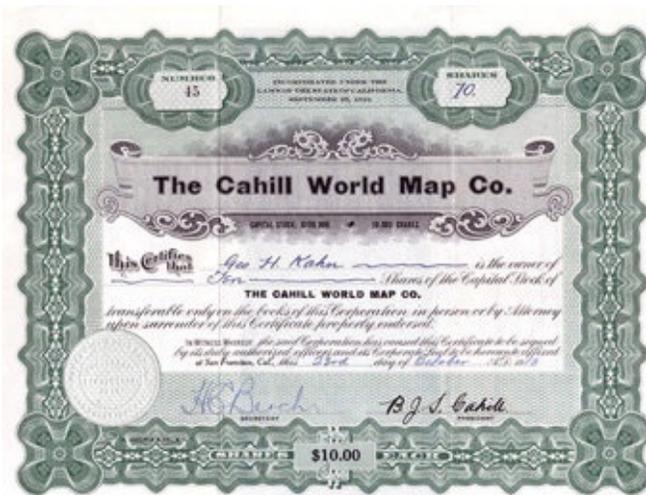
Cahill's town planning experience and global thinking led him to two very significant developments. The first was that he applied the concept and use of the term 'Civic Center' (coined by John De Witt Warner in 1902) to ideas he had been working on since 1899. In 1904, after Daniel Burnham had been asked to develop a City Plan for San Francisco, Cahill revamped his own ideas for a Civic Center, most of which Burnham incorporated. The 1906 earthquake set back development of it for several years, but in 1909 the idea was revived in conjunction with the building of a new City Hall. Cahill had to battle Burnham and Willis Polk's intent to locate the Civic Center across the commercial hub of Market and Van Ness, but with his skill, knowledge, and position as feature writer for the influential monthly magazine, *Architect and Engineer*, Cahill was not only successful in keeping his preferred location, but also in getting the City Hall architectural competition restricted just to San Francisco firms. The competition was won by Bakewell & Brown.

Cahill's second major achievement, which took many years of his life to design and perfect, was the 'Butterfly Map'. His objective was to achieve the same accuracy as a globe in representing the relative sizes of the earth's land masses and the shortest route between any two points on earth, doing so in two-dimensional form. Starting in 1909, Cahill produced and patented several versions of his Butterfly Map, an octahedral projection of the world, working hard to get it established as the defacto standard for navigational maps.



One of Cahill's Butterfly Maps, based on 8 equilateral triangles

It achieved some acceptance and Cahill was recognized world-wide for his idea, including being made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He incorporated the Cahill World Map Company in 1913. A few people became convinced of the value of his ideas, but not enough to make the venture a commercial success and eventually Cahill resigned his membership of the Royal Geographical Society.



Stock certificate for Cahill's World Map Company

For many years Cahill wrote a monthly feature in *Architect and Engineer* magazine, often a review of the works of a fellow architect. He could be counted upon to be perceptive and fair-minded. A brief excerpt from a review he published in April 1913 on the architecture of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (two years before it opened) displays his prescience. Of the Palace of Fine Arts, Cahill wrote: "Mr. Maybeck's first exhibited sketch of the Art Building gave the impression of the most poetic conception to date in my mind of all the drawings on exhibit. The others seemed draftsmanship, this was a creation. Mr.

Maybeck is a staunch believer in the French school, yet could anything be conceived less French in design, in conception, in rendering? Clarity, logic and gaiety are Gallic characteristics. This

design is vaguely, sketchily and romantically drawn; the big octagon rotunda covers nothing and cannot be reached, except at the back; and the whole group is solid and sombre as a Roman Arch of Triumph. In these things it is surprisingly un-French. But the whole thing was a surprise. The most coveted building in the Exposition fell finally to one who least expected it. Mr. Maybeck is one of the most modest men in the profession. That he should have come out with so stunning, so characteristic a design and been entrusted with its realization is one of the most satisfying and agreeable incidents in the history of the Exposition plans. This is one of the few buildings of the Exposition as distinguished from courts and colonnades. It would repay rendering in a plaster model which doubtless in time we shall see. In this building the promise is so high that we shall all look to its adequate realization with sympathy and hope.”

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November 2005