

WILLIAM W. WURSTER

Architect
(1895-1973)

William Wilson Wurster was born in Stockton, California. He graduated high school at 17 and enrolled at U. C. Berkeley to study architecture under John Galen Howard. First an illness and then World War I interrupted his studies, but Wurster graduated with honors in 1919. He joined architect John Reid, Jr. designing San Francisco schools, and then worked in Sacramento for 2 years. In 1922 he got his State license, went to Europe for a year, and then joined Delano and Aldrich in New York for 2 years, studying Eastern regional architecture at weekends.

In 1926 Wurster opened his own office at 260 California. From 1927 to 1942 he designed over 200 houses. His most provocative work was accomplished in the 1930's and he is credited, along with Gardner Dailey, with creating a Bay Area version of the International Style which had developed in Europe in the 1920's. Fine examples of his earlier San Francisco residences include:

- Telegraph Hill - 60-64 Alta (3 apts., 1935), 173-75 Chestnut (2 apts., 1940);
- Presidio Heights - 3598 Jackson (1935), 3580 Jackson & 250 Locust (both in 1938),
- 3655 Clay (1941);
- Pacific Heights - 2600 Pacific (1936), 2560 Divisadero (1938), 2666 Broadway,
2516-18 Gough (2 townhouses), 2633 Green (all in 1939),
- 2514 Gough, 1641 Green (both in 1940);
- Russian Hill - 737, 757-63, & 765 Bay (all in 1937), 1116 Greenwich (1941);
- St. Francis Wood - 17 San Andreas Way (for himself in 1937);
- Sea Cliff - 12 25th Avenue North (1941).

Wurster started teaching at MIT and in 1944 was appointed Dean of its School of Architecture. That year he made Theodore C. Bernardi a partner. Bernardi, a U. C. Berkeley graduate had worked for him 1934-1942. In 1946 Donn Emmons joined them as a third partner. Emmons, a Cornell graduate, had also worked for Wurster 1938-1942. In 1950 Wurster returned to the Bay Area as Dean of the School of Architecture of U. C. Berkeley. The firm's residential work continued with:

- Pacific Heights - 25 Raycliff Ter. (1949), 2590 Pacific (1950), 2870 Pacific (1951),
- 2795 Vallejo (1952), 10 Normandie Ter. (1953),
- 2850 Broadway, 3095 Pacific (both 1958), 2580 Broadway (1962),
- 2841 Divisadero (1963), 2838 Green (1969), 1667 Green (1971);
- Russian Hill - 2745 Larkin (1951), 2424 Jones (1961);
- Presidio Heights - 301 Locust (1954);
- Sea Cliff - 850 El Camino del Mar (1957)
- Eureka Valley - 4015 21st Street (1958).

The firm of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons also established a strong reputation for creative remodeling, turning the former Pacific Gas Light Building at 3640 Buchanan into a showroom for Merryvale Antiques (1958), Ghirardelli Square into stores and restaurants (1962-67), Ice Houses One & Two at 151 Union into offices (1970), and the Galleria at 101 Kansas into an interior design showplace (1973). For Bank of America the firm designed the 1525 Market data center (1960), and the 555 California headquarters (1968, with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill). Major residential projects in the City include the NorthPoint Apartments, Stockton at Bay (1968, 514 units on 1½ City blocks), 1221 Jones (1971, 72 apts.), Parkview Heights (1984, 120 townhouses) and Daniel Burnham Court (1987, 245 condominiums in two towers). In 1965 WB&E was given the Architecture Firm Award by the AIA and in 1969 Wurster was awarded the AIA Gold Medal, its highest honor.