

## Pacific Heights Architects #21 - B. E. Henriksen

*The focus of this series is architects who had an influence over the way Pacific Heights looks today. Bernhardt Henriksen is little-known, but has several distinctions that warrant his inclusion in a Pacific Heights series. He was the first native-born architect to make an impression in San Francisco and designed two properties which are now San Francisco Landmarks.*



Bernhardt E. Henriksen was born in San Francisco on April 19, 1851. His father Benjamin was Norwegian and his mother Henrietta was German. In 1849, his father had built the first steamer to operate on San Francisco Bay. Bernhardt, after leaving high school in June 1866, entered the office of respected French architect Prosper Huerne as an apprentice. His family lived at 328 Kearny, close to Huerne's office at 702 Washington (at the corner of Kearny). Huerne made Henriksen a partner in 1875, and their partnership lasted for six more years. In 1880 Henriksen, who had become an inventor as well as an architect, patented an Automatic Safety Clutch for elevators, which brought them to a halt if a cable broke or vital machinery failed, and for the next few years he traveled the country promoting his invention. An endorsement letter for it was published in *California Architect & Building News* signed by many experienced and reputable San Francisco architects, including William Curlett, David Farquharson, Prosper Huerne, Augustus Laver, William Mooser, Thomas Welsh, James Wolfe, and Wright & Sanders.

Henriksen opened his own architectural practice in 1882 with an office at 126 Kearny. His first major contract noted in *California Architect & Building News* is in October 1882 for a wood-frame building south of Market. In 1883 he moved his office to 218 Post. In 1884 *California Architect & Building News* declared that Henriksen 'has the honor of being the pioneer native-born architect'.

Two interesting examples of Henriksen's residential work from the 1880's are both pictured in *Here Today*, the Junior League's 1968 survey of historic properties in San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin. One is at 1900 Webster, the Berges House built in 1884, with an unusual group of four 'blind' windows on the Pine Street side, closest to the corner, positioned to match actual windows further along the long exposed south side of the house. The second is a large, fully-detached, view home at 1804 Broadway, built for Captain R. E. Raimond in 1886, notable for its *oeil de boeuf* window in the gable.



1804 Broadway's 'Oeil de Boeuf' Window

Between 1885 and 1888 Henriksen bought and developed three adjacent lots on the 1300 block of Fell (now numbered 1336-40, 1342-44 and 1350) and one around the corner on Broderick. He lived in 1344 Fell, the upper flat in this attractive duplex, which is the most well-preserved of the three buildings. The property at 425 Broderick is a charming single-story Stick-style Victorian house.

Henriksen applied for, and received, another patent, this one for a device called an Adjustable Bridge for Fire Hose, and in 1890 he started to promote that in addition to the Automatic Safety Clutch for elevators.

In 1891 Henriksen took on William C. Mahoney as a partner at his 218 Post office. Henriksen's knowledge of fire-fighting equipment probably helped them to obtain, in November 1893, a contract to design three firehouses for the City of San Francisco. One of them, 2545 Folsom near 22nd

Street, has since been demolished, but the other two remain and were both established as San Francisco Landmarks in 1977. The second was built for Engine Company 21 at 1152 Oak Street (close to Henriksen's home on Fell Street) and it is now San Francisco Landmark #89.



The third firehouse was built in Pacific Heights for Engine Company 23 at 3022 Washington Street. It was sold by the City in 1964 and converted by interior designer John Dickinson into a showcase residence and studio for his own use in 1967. Dickinson lived there for 15 years until he died in 1982. Dickinson's remodel of it was illustrated by Diane Dorrans Saeks and John Vaughan in their book *San Francisco: A Certain Style*. From 1989 to 1995 it was the residence of former California Governor Jerry Brown, now in his second term as Mayor of Oakland. 3022 Washington still proudly displays its SFFD sign and is now San Francisco Landmark #93.

After the partnership with Mahoney broke up in 1893, Henriksen moved his office to 121 Post and in 1895 moved it again to 22½ Geary. His last major contract by himself, referenced in the October 1895 edition of *California Architect & Building News*, is for a building on Mission Street.



Henriksen became well respected in the local architectural community and served for three years in the mid-1880's as Secretary of the San Francisco Chapter of the AIA. In the 1890's he was chosen as the San Francisco delegate to lobby the California State government to establish licensing of architects, which endeavor was ultimately successful just after the turn of the century. He died on May 4, 1900 just before licensing came into effect.

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