

Pacific Heights Architects #22 - Julius E. Krafft

The focus of this series is architects who made a contribution to the way Pacific Heights looks today. Julius Krafft lived in Pacific Heights and designed many magnificent homes that survive today.

Julius Ernest Krafft was born in Stuttgart, Germany on November 11, 1855 and emigrated to the United States in 1872, settling first in Chicago. After 2 years there he moved out to the West Coast in 1874, living first in Oakland and moving into San Francisco in 1881. He was employed as a draftsman by architects John P. Gaynor and Thomas J. Welsh. Krafft worked for the prolific Welsh for 12 years before starting his own practice in 1888 with an office on Market Street.

Two of his earlier commissions were for the German Lutheran Church. In 1891 he designed the small Immanuel Lutheran Church built on Alameda. In 1894 he designed the much larger St. Paulus Lutheran Church, a reproduction of the magnificent cathedral at Chartres in France. Both of Krafft's churches were of redwood construction in a late-Victorian Gothic Revival style. St. Paulus, on the corner of Eddy and Gough, was S. F. Landmark #116 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but was tragically destroyed by a fire in November 1995.

Krafft was also a designer of grand Queen Anne Victorian mansions, only a few of which are still intact, with those usually having been converted to apartments or offices. In Pacific Heights examples include 1819 Jackson (1889, now 6 apartments), 1735 Pacific (1890, now offices), 2266 Pacific (1895, converted to 4 condominiums), and 2109 Broadway (1896, recently restored to a single-family home and with a garage added).

Three downtown apartment buildings were designed by Krafft, all of which were destroyed in 1906. However, fine surviving examples of Krafft's residential architecture in Pacific Heights includes 2224 Baker, 2601 Broadway and 2612 Scott (all from 1898), 2900 Broadway and 2614-18 Jackson (now 4 condominiums, both built in 1899), 2120 Broadway and 1701 Scott (both in 1900), 2420 Pacific (1901), 2020 Jackson and 2555 Webster (both from 1902).

Krafft's 2120 Broadway (now Hamlin School) and 3512 Clay in Presidio Heights are featured in Randolph Delehanty and Richard Sexton's 1991 book *In the Victorian Style*. They both have rectangular floor plans, benefitting from their wide lots. They differ significantly in style, however. Delehanty describes 3512 Clay as Colonial Revival, with its lovely semi-circular bay windows with double-hung sashes and curved glass and a peaked roof with dormer windows; and 2120 Broadway as an Edwardian Palazzo, having no front bay windows, triangular pediments, and a flat roof with a rectangular projecting cornice.



The subject of this article is 2020 Jackson, built in 1902 by Isaias William Hellman as a wedding gift for his daughter Clara, who was to marry attorney Emanuel S. Heller. Hellman had emigrated to the United States from Bavaria in 1859, founded the Farmers and Merchants Bank in Los Angeles in 1871, and moved to San Francisco in 1890 to establish the Nevada National Bank and the Union Trust Company. In 1898 Krafft had designed 2612 Scott for Hellman's eldest son Isaias Warren Hellman. In 1904 Edward H. Harriman, an investor who had gained control of the Wells Fargo Express Company moved its headquarters to New York City and in

April 1905, he arranged the merger of its banking operations with the Nevada National Bank. Isaias William Hellman of Los Angeles became the President of the merged Wells Fargo Nevada National Bank.

On the morning of April 18, 1906, a major shock hit San Francisco and between the earthquake and the three-day fire that followed, the business center of the City was virtually destroyed. Hellman relocated the Wells Fargo Nevada National Bank's operations to the house he had built at 2020 Jackson, where it continued to accept deposits and pay out cash. Wells Fargo was able to wire its correspondents: "Building Destroyed. Vaults Intact. Credit Unaffected."

2020 Jackson has served as a stage for many important social gatherings over the last 100 years, including hosting the main reception for delegates to the 1945 international conference in San Francisco which created the United Nations. It was University High School's Decorator Showcase House in 1991.

The arched entrance has a hand-forged wrought-iron and etched-glass door. An elegant foyer leads into the magnificent hall, with a fireplace framed in rich hardwood to complement the paneled walls, box-beamed ceilings, and herringbone hardwood floors. Flanking the south side of the hall is a formal living room with coved ceilings molded intricately in plaster. This room features a marble fireplace encased in a mantle of handcrafted Indonesian mahogany. This rare wood is also used to accentuate architectural details throughout the entire room. Three pairs of south-facing French doors open to balconies. Flanking the north side of the hall is a formal dining room, for entertaining on a grand scale. This room features impressive Gothic architectural detail, a stone fireplace, and a Bay view. Arched doors lead to a limestone terrace lined with balustrades and enjoying an unobstructed vista to Alcatraz, Angel Island, and Marin County.

A grand staircase to the second level is bathed in natural light by a lovely stained-glass window. The master suite now occupies the entire south half of this floor. This suite has a marble fireplace, two separate bathrooms, and large dressing rooms. On the north side of this level is a wood-paneled library with a marble fireplace, a wet bar, and a Bay view. Another family bedroom with Bay views, a fireplace, and a private bathroom completes this level.



Leading to the top floor is a sky-lit extension of the main staircase, added by the designer owners in the major remodel prior to the 1991 Showcase. Beautifully updated for modern living, this level now features a media room, an office, two guest suites on the south side, each with its own bathroom, and two more bedrooms on the view north side, which share a bathroom.

Krafft married his wife Anna and in 1903 they were able to purchase the vacant lot at 2829 Divisadero, building a house there in 1904 that they continued to live in for the rest of their lives. They had two sons and two daughters. After the 1906 earthquake and fire, Krafft reestablished his practice in the Grant Building (114 Sansome), as J. E. Krafft and Sons. He also designed at least 3 downtown commercial buildings - 60 Kearny at the corner of Post (1907, for the Bullock and Jones Co., since demolished), 966-70 Market (1907), and 251-53 Post (1908, the Mercedes Building). In

1909 he moved his office to the newly-rebuilt Phelan Building (760 Market). After his death, on September 26, 1937, his architectural practice was continued by his sons, Elmer Jerome and Alfred Julius.

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