

Pacific Heights Architects #27 - Adolph Lutgens



This series is focused on architects who had an influence over the way Pacific Heights looks today. Research for a San Francisco Historical Society home tour in 2000, for which the owners of 2811 Jackson generously allowed their house to be included, led me to architect Adolph Lutgens.

Adolph Charles Lutgens (1858-1939) was born in California. He started his working life as a carpenter, became a draftsman for architects Kenitzer & Raun, and then went into business for himself as an architect in 1883. In 1885 he was hired by the South End Boat Club to design a new boathouse (which has since been replaced), and this led to a commission ten years later to build the Dolphin Club's boathouse, which is still in use today at Aquatic Park (502 Jefferson, at Hyde). That same year, 1895, his major project was the Native Sons of the Golden West building at 414 Mason, just north of Geary, which had to be demolished following the 1906 earthquake and fire. He was among the first group of architects to apply for a State license as soon as they were available in 1901 (his certificate number was A71).



Dolphin Club Boat House



2811 Jackson Street

The subject of this article is 2811 Jackson. The original owners were real estate investors Charles and Caroline Wingerter, who bought a 63' 9" by 137' 6" parcel on the southwest corner of Jackson and Divisadero. In 1891, they commissioned Lutgens to design three houses there, two adjoining ones, then known as 2321 and 2323 Divisadero (the original spelling) and 2811 Jackson. The two Divisadero houses were completely rebuilt in 1920 into apartments with an entry on Jackson Street. That building, 2801 Jackson, was converted to 12 elegant condominiums in 1980.

This 1910 photograph (courtesy of postcard collector Glenn Koch) was taken looking west on Jackson Street from the corner of Divisadero. 2323 Divisadero is seen on the left. 2811 Jackson is almost completely hidden behind it. It was a 3-story home on the western portion of the lot, which was later subdivided to create a separate parcel. The contract date for 2811 Jackson was July 16, 1891 and the water connection was signed for on August 5, 1891. It is a Queen Anne Victorian with two different kinds of decorative shingles on the exterior of the house. A gabled porch enclosure supported by clustered Romanesque columns greets the visitor. The three art glass panels in the porch enclosure, designed in an Art Nouveau style, are probably original to the house. The scale of the gable of the porch compares to the gable of the main roof and matching plaster ornament is used in both. Other classic Victorian details include the button molding set in panels at the base of the first-floor bay window, the dentils below the cornice, and the sunburst bracket supporting the gabled roof.



In 1893, Lutgens designed two more houses on the southeast corner of the intersection for the Wingerters, 2342 and 2344 Divisadero, which were replaced in 1927 by a 6-unit cooperative apartment building, 2785 Jackson, converted to condominiums in 1989.

Charles Wingerter died in 1896, but Caroline continued his real estate operations and commissioned Lutgens to design a grand corner home at 2139 Pierce opposite Alta Plaza Park in 1897. That property is a mixture of styles, predominantly Classical Revival, and has since been divided into six apartments. Subsequent owners of 2811 Jackson also divided it into a “six-unit rooming house”, but it was converted back to a house with a legal ground-level apartment in the 1960's.

Although a lot of Lutgens’ work in San Francisco was lost in the 1906 disaster, 3633 Clay and 2121-27 Fillmore, both dating from 1905, also survive.



Sonoma City Hall

Lutgens is best known, however, for the Sonoma City Hall, which he designed in 1904, but because of financing delays and the 1906 earthquake, was not completed until 1908. It became the centerpiece of the eight acre Sonoma Plaza, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is a fine Mission Revival-style stone building, distinctively having the same facade on all four sides. This was done so as not to favor, or disadvantage, any of the commercial establishments facing the Plaza. Lutgens was later commissioned to design the Andrew Carnegie-financed Library on the east side of the Plaza, which was completed in 1913 and is now the Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau.

Lutgens continued to be listed in San Francisco City Directories as an architect until 1917, when he moved across the Bay to Vallejo, probably in semi-retirement, but maintaining his architectural license from his home address there until the mid-1930's. He died on April 14, 1939.

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