

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

DRAFT

Historic name: Woman's Club of Bakersfield

Other names/site number: Women's Club of Bakersfield

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1806 D Street (also known as 2030 18th Street)

City or town: Bakersfield State: California County: Kern

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title:	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS

Georgian Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, wood, glass, cement plaster

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is a two-story, approximately 15,000 square-foot building located in a hybrid residential/commercial neighborhood. The brick and wood-frame building is on the northeast corner of 18th Street and D Street, occupying four parcels totaling 0.29 acres. The Georgian Revival-style building was constructed in 1921 and repaired in 1953, following the 1952 Bakersfield earthquake. Clad in multi-colored English bond brick veneer, it features an arched entry portico, double-hung wooden windows, and Georgian-Revival detailing. The primary entrance is on 18th Street, with secondary and tertiary entrances on D Street. The Woman's Club of Bakersfield retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to convey its historic significance.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is located in the Brower Tract, an early residential tract subdivided in 1889 just west of downtown.¹ When the building was constructed in 1921, the area was completely residential in nature (**Figure 5**). Large turn-of-the-century Victorian and period-

¹ Chris Brewer, *History of Kern County: An Illustrated History of Bakersfield and Kern County* (Bakersfield, CA: Kern County Museum, 2001), 70.

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revival style homes prevailed and by 1910, a few upscale apartment houses were also located in the neighborhood. When the women were ready to build their new clubhouse, they needed a large parcel and the location on the corner of 18th and D Streets perfectly bridged downtown adjacency and their upscale membership. A review of the membership roster of 1921 indicates many of the women lived in the immediate vicinity of the new clubhouse.²

The Woman's Club became an anchor for a small group of fraternal/sororal clubhouses including the Masonic Temple just to the east on 18th Street (extant) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Hall across the street (razed). Over time, professional offices infiltrated the area, resulting in a hybrid residential/commercial mix.

Exterior

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is located at 1806 D Street. The property has also been identified as 2030 18th Street.³ To the north it is adjacent to an alley and to the east a commercial office building. The property is comprised of one rectangular building that runs nearly to the property line on all sides.

The main pedestrian entrance to the building is located on the south or main façade on 18th Street. Secondary and tertiary pedestrian entrances are located on the west elevation. The property has no vehicular entrance. Two quaternary entrances are located on the east façade—one a stage door, and one on the second floor accessed via a wooden stair.

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is a two-story, 15,842 square foot, brick and wood-frame building, rectangular in plan with a composition shingle-clad hipped roof. The asymmetrical south/main façade is dominated by an arched, cement plaster entry portico flanked by a pair of classical columns, and a classical column and classical pilaster supporting a pediment with a Georgian-style plaster cornice. Two shallow cement steps lead to double-paneled wood doors with a fixed-pane two-by-seven light wooden window above it. The doors are flanked by two single-paneled wood doors with a fixed-pane two-by-three light wooden window above each door. Each has a Georgian garland detail centered above the door window. A wooden ticket window is located on the west side of the portico. Above the double paneled entrance door, an arched wooden casement window with wooden sash is recessed within the arch echoing a Palladian window design. Directly above the arch is a cement plaster band with "WOMAN'S CLUB" cut into the plaster. The arch is flanked by a multi-colored English bond brick veneer in a decorative diamond pattern. Cement plaster rectangles punctuate the brick veneer on either side of the arch. Directly above the arch is a gabled, wood-clad roof dormer with a three-by-two fixed-pane wood window, wooden sash and decorative scrollwork.

The entry portico is flanked by two, two-story quoined volumes clad with multi-colored English bond brick veneer with raked joints. Each volume has a pyramidal roof and two vertically

² *Woman's Club of Bakersfield Year Book, 1920-1921*, Woman's Club of Bakersfield Archive.

³ Over the years, the address has alternated between 1806 D Street, and 2030 18th Street. The primary elevation and main entrance are on 18th Street. There are two tertiary entrances on D Street. The D Street address may have first come into use when a caretaker lived on the property in a second-floor room in the building's northwest corner.

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aligned double-hung wooden windows separated by a cement plaster rectangle. The first-floor windows are six-over-six pane pedimented windows with a simple frieze. The second-floor windows are six-over-six pane wooden sill windows with a brick and cement plaster veneer keystone lintel.

To the west of the western quoin volume is another two-story volume clad with multi-colored English bond brick veneer with raked joints and brick quoin detailing at the southwest corner. This volume has two vertically aligned double-hung, six-over-six pane wooden windows with brick lintels.

On the eastern end of the south/main façade is non-historic wrought iron fencing and wooden staircase and leading to an entrance at the second floor. At ground level, the original wood-clad volume and wood-clad addition to the east elevation are visible.

The west/secondary façade of the building is a symmetrical composition clad in multi-colored English bond brick veneer with raked joints. Brick-clad quoins appear at the southwest and northwest corners of the building and the façade is punctuated by a series of four brick-clad pilasters. Two wooden-paneled entry doors that function as secondary and tertiary entrances to the building are set off by shallow brick quoin volumes. Above the wooden door surrounds and pediment is an elliptical wooden arch echoing the arch found on the front/main facade with a wooden transom panel and a Georgian fan-shape formed by fluted, radiating lines.⁴ Each entry door has a non-original arched metal and canvas awning.

Nine windows are on the first-floor level and eleven windows are on the second-floor level. Above the entrance doors are two nine-over-nine, wooden double-hung windows flanked by six fixed-pane windows set in a wooden lintel. On the first floor between the two entrance volumes are five pairs of non-original double paned windows with vinyl mullions and sashes. On the second floor, between the two entrance volumes are five equally spaced pairs of six-over-six paned double-hung wooden windows set in wooden lintels. At the north and south corners of this elevation are four six-over-six pane double hung wooden windows with wooden sills and brick lintels. Three gabled, wood-clad dormers with a three-by-two fixed-pane wood window and sash are centrally located on this elevation.

On the 18th Street and D Street elevations there are cement sidewalks with planting areas at the base of the building and street trees at the curbed edge.

On the east elevation, at the north and south ends of the building, there are two original one-story wooden volumes clad in horizontal wooden siding. Between the original wooden volumes is an addition to the first floor, clad in horizontal wooden siding and featuring four fixed-paned and four double-hung aluminum clerestory windows. On the first floor, a window at the south end of the elevation has been replaced with wire safety glass. On the second floor, one six-over-six pane

⁴ Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 154.

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window with brick lintels punctuates the building at the south end. Directly to the north on this façade, is a two-by-four pane vinyl casement window.

On the ground floor, an original six-over-six pane double-hung wooden window is in the original horizontally clad wood volume at the north end of the building. To the immediate north of this is a double-panel wooden stage door accessible via seven concrete steps. Security bars are located on some first-floor windows and there is a wrought-iron fence at the property line. Three gabled, wood-clad roof dormers with a three-by-two fixed-pane wood window and sash are centrally located on this elevation.

The north elevation, adjacent to the alley, is dominated by the gunnite-clad wall that covers approximately two-thirds of this elevation at the eastern end. At the northwestern corner, is multi-colored English bond brick veneer with raked joints and a brick-clad quoin. Four six-over-six double-hung wooden sash windows punctuate the brick: two at the first-floor level and two at the second floor level. The gunnite-clad wall contains three pairs of three-over-three paned wooden windows in arched openings at the basement level. The two at the eastern end of the building appear to have been covered with metal screens. The remaining four have security bars. A large metal electrical box/meter and gas meter are also affixed to the gunnite area of this wall.

Interior

On the interior, a small reception room/entry vestibule with a plaster cornice and chandeliers is flanked by men's and ladies' lounges. The entries to the lounges have Georgian garland detailing. Double wooden doors flanked by single wooden doors with fixed-pane wooden windows above lead into the double-high auditorium space.

The auditorium features a large stage on the brick-clad north wall of the building that is accessed by five wooden stairs to the east and west of the raised platform. The stage surround is of continuous plaster ornament with a Georgian oval detail at the center. To the east, a set of five original two-by-five pane French double doors with six-by-two fixed-pane wooden windows above them, lead to the caterer's staging area addition and storage space (originally the exterior tea porch). To the west, a series of three, three-paneled wooden accordion doors lead to the former card room, repurposed as the tearoom. On the south wall of the auditorium a mezzanine features a projection door for screening films. The auditorium has a square coffered ceiling articulated by plaster cornices with six suspended crystal chandeliers. The floor features staggered maple wood slats.

The single-story height card room is a large open space that echoes the length of the auditorium space and features three additional chandeliers matching those in the auditorium. It has matching brick fireplaces on the north and south walls. The wooden mantles for each fireplace include Colonial style detailing and dentils. A cement plaster cornice is visible around the perimeter of the ceiling of the room.

The first floor also features a large safe from the Cary Safe Co. of Buffalo New York, as well as an original dumb waiter from the second-floor kitchen to the card room on the first floor.

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On the second floor, three interior spaces, the large banquet room (later fencing studio), small banquet room (later fencing equipment storage), and kitchen are of note. The large banquet room ceiling is composed of the same square coffered ceiling articulated by plaster cornices, as found in the auditorium. A series of original frosted-glass, dome light fixtures have been removed and stored in the kitchen cabinets. The space is also illuminated by a large 8' x 5' ventilated, galvanized iron and wire-glass skylight. Maple wood slat flooring matching that of the auditorium is present in the large and small banquet rooms. The kitchen features original wooden cabinetry and shelving on the north and west walls.

Character-defining features of the Woman's Club of Bakersfield include:

- Georgian-style hipped roof with eave cornice and dormers
- Rectangular plan and rectangular massing
- Exterior walls clad in multi-colored English bond brick veneer with raked joints and brick quoin detailing
- Main entrance with paneled wood door flanked by classical columns and pilasters
- Double-hung divided light wooden sash windows and French doors
- Wooden volumes on east elevation with vertical wooden siding
- Coffered ceiling with cornice details on interior of auditorium and large banquet room
- Georgian detailed cement plaster stage surround
- Crystal chandeliers in vestibule, auditorium, and tearoom
- French doors and accordion doors in auditorium
- Original light fixtures in large banquet room
- Original wooden cabinetry in the second-floor kitchen
- Large Cary Safe Co. safe
- Dumbwaiter

Alterations

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield has relatively few alterations, the majority of which are associated with the buildings' repair and renovation following the earthquake of 1952. Using building plans, historic photos and available building permits, a chronology of alterations is described below.

An original building permit for the Woman's Club of Bakersfield was not located, as all permits prior to the earthquake of 1952 have been lost by the city. The original certificate of completion is held in the archive of the Woman's Club. The grand opening of the building is also well documented in the *Bakersfield Californian*.⁵ The rehabilitation and alterations from the earthquake have an extant building permit.

⁵ "New Woman's Club Structure Opened and Wins Praise," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 20, 1921, 1; 8.

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Using available records from both Club meeting minutes and extant permits, the construction dateline is as follows:

1921	Construction of building
1953	Gunnite reinforcement, plaster, paint, refinish floors, new roof, remodel interior doors and windows (Ernest L. McCoy)
circa 1970	Construction of exterior wooden stairway at southeast corner of building
1988	New water heater and water line (permit)
Pre-1995	Kitchen addition to east elevation
1995	Seismic reinforcement (permit/plans)/unreinforced masonry rehabilitation
1996	Create storage room next to enclosed patio (permit)
2004	Remodel restrooms for A.D.A. Compliance (permit)
2004	Commercial addition/alteration of \$1,400 (permit)
2005	Re-roof (permit)
2006	Vinyl window replacement west elevation
2008	Replace toilets and urinal (permit)
2008	Addition/alteration of \$15,000 (permit)
2019	Wrought iron fence/security bars addition
2020	Reroof

A comparison of the original Biggar-drawn plans from 1921 with historic photos shows that the porch structure Biggar originally designed for the east elevation of the building was never constructed (**Figures 7, 10**). Reasons for this change are unknown. It may have been budget or program related, as newspaper articles from 1921 suggest that the intention was to add a “tea room” to the east end of the building in spring of 1922.⁶

The building remained virtually unaltered until the 1952 earthquake, although the ladies approached architect Ernest L. McCoy in early 1952 to design a kitchen in the location of the tea porch. These plans were scuttled, when the building suffered significant seismic damage later that year. No plans for McCoy’s work following the earthquake have been located. The *Bakersfield Californian* documents that in addition to the structural repair, Ernest L. McCoy was responsible for several alterations including the addition of the second-story board room and brick cladding at the corner of 18th Street and D Street.⁷ A 1951 aerial photo shows the missing corner, whereas a 1956 aerial photo reflects the presence of the second story addition. This is corroborated by historic photographs. The first known publication of the rehabilitated building (**Figure 15**) appears in 1954 ephemera held by California State University, Bakersfield and that image appears consistently in materials published after 1960.⁸

As part of the seismic repair carried out by McCoy, the all-brick, rear/north elevation of the building was stabilized with gunnite, obscuring three pilasters. Four windows on the east façade

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Huge Crowd Attends Homecoming,” *Bakersfield Californian*, November 24, 1953, 9.

⁸ Donato Cruz, email to the author, California State University, Bakersfield, August 3, 2021.

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were also closed in.⁹ Historic photos also suggest that wooden shutters on the south façade were removed at this time. Dentils along the eaves also appear to have been removed as part of re-roofing.

It is unknown when enclosure of the original tea porch on the east elevation as a caterer's patio was completed. There is no building permit for this work and historic aerial photographs are inconclusive.¹⁰ Although the porch enclosure generally follows the intent and location of Ernest L. McCoy's unrealized kitchen addition designs from 1952, the design and workmanship suggest that no architect was involved. It is unknown when the decorative balustrades over the wooden volumes on the east elevation were removed. Aluminum windows in the addition suggest that it may have occurred during the 1970s.

Stage dressing rooms have become offices and the studio apartment on second floor is devoted to storage. A new kitchen on the first floor of the building, possibly reflected in a building permit from 2004, replaced former dressing rooms.

The wooden stair to the second floor on the eastern elevation and the replacement of an original window with an entrance door to the large banquet room occurred circa 1970, when the Woman's Club elected to lease out the large banquet room to a ballet studio.¹¹

In 1996, an inspection of the building in accordance with new regulations resulting from the Northridge Earthquake identified broken roof rafters and other evidence of seismic vulnerability. The Woman's Club embarked on a major project to update seismic retrofitting of the building. The \$125,000 project was led by Warren A Minner, Engineer, under the watchful eye and approval of the Bakersfield Historical Society. Steel tie-rods were used as wall anchors to reinforce the four masonry walls of the building and the resulting plate washers are visible on all four elevations. Steel columns were also added to the interior of the east wall and the broken skylight above the large banquet room was replaced.¹²

In 2006, five original wooden windows on the west/secondary elevation were removed and replaced with double-paned, vinyl windows. It is likely that the wooden window in the large banquet room was replaced at this time as well.

Integrity

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance.

Location: The Woman's Club of Bakersfield remains in its original location; therefore, the property retains integrity of location.

⁹ "Huge Crowd Attends Homecoming," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 24, 1953, 9.

¹⁰ Because there was always a concrete pad there, it is nearly impossible to distinguish the concrete pad from the one-story roof.

¹¹ Beano Cameron, email to the author, August 11, 2021.

¹² "The Woman's Club of Bakersfield, 1896-2019," 1. Woman's Club of Bakersfield Archive.

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Design: The second-floor addition to the southwest corner of the building was designed by architect Ernest L. McCoy as part of the earthquake rehabilitation. Having worked for Biggar, McCoy was able to interpret the original design for the Club's evolving needs. The most altered elevation, the east elevation, is tertiary in nature with the single-story catering prep space addition nearly invisible from the main elevation and significantly obstructed from view by the office building to the east on the eastern elevation. This addition is also not visible from the auditorium space and the original French doors remain in place. The view of the building from the southwest corner, is unchanged from 1953. Therefore, the design of the Woman's Club of Bakersfield from the period of significance, remains largely intact and the property retains integrity of design.

Setting: The Woman's Club of Bakersfield was built to serve the growing membership. In 1921, the location was primarily a residential area adjacent to downtown. While some more commercial development has crept into the neighborhood, it still remains largely residential, and the Woman's Club remains a prominent feature among the houses and apartments. Therefore, the property retains integrity of setting.

Materials: While six original wooden windows have been replaced with vinyl windows and one with wire glass, with more than forty windows overall, replacements represent a very small percentage of the building's windows. Where windows have been replaced, the original openings have been retained, indicating that the integrity of materials is only partially compromised. Therefore, the Woman's Club of Bakersfield retains sufficient integrity of materials to convey its historic significance.

Workmanship: The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is constructed of brick, wood, glass, and cement plaster. Where repairs were required after the 1952 earthquake, significantly to north wall, gunnite was used to stabilize the unreinforced masonry. This elevation of the building, visible from the alleyway, is not seen from the primary, secondary, or tertiary façade. McCoy's brick enclosure of the southwest corner in 1952, employed the same multi-color English bond bricks, blending seamlessly with the original masonry cladding. Therefore, the Woman's Club of Bakersfield retains significant integrity of workmanship.

Feeling: As evidenced by a comparison of historic and contemporary photographs, anyone viewing the property today will note the presence of the building's physical character-defining features which combine to convey the building's historic character. Moreover, the ongoing presence of the turn-of-the century residential neighborhood to the northwest and southwest of the building, accurately conveys the neighborhood at the time of the building's construction. Therefore, Woman's Club of Bakersfield retains integrity of feeling.

Association: The building's integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling combine to convey the building's association with both the golden age of women's clubs and its architectural merit to any observer. Therefore, the Woman's Club of Bakersfield retains integrity of association.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY: WOMEN'S HISTORY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1921-1953

Significant Dates

1953

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Biggar, Charles H., AIA

McCoy, Ernest L., AIA

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History: Women's History as a rare and intact example of a purpose-built women's club building during the golden age of women's clubhouses. The property is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a rare, early, and intact example of master architect Charles H. Biggar, AIA and one of the few remaining prewar, pre-Bakersfield earthquake buildings. The 1921 to 1953 period of significance encompasses the building's design by Biggar and repairs as a result of the 1952 Bakersfield earthquake.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield exemplifies the type of purpose-built clubhouse building constructed by women's clubs in Southern California during the 1920s. The oldest women's sorroral organization in Kern County (founded in 1896), the Woman's Club expanded its membership significantly during the 1920s—a prosperous time for the oil and agricultural industries that dominated Bakersfield. Club activities in Bakersfield followed the patterns set by women's clubs more generally in Southern California, including a variety of civic engagement, arts, and cultural activities. The large facility was also rented out for community events over the years and became the location of a number of public and private functions. In 1952, the Bakersfield earthquake devastated the unreinforced masonry building. Unlike many others, the members of the Club elected to repair rather than raze it. As a result, it remains an early and intact example of a purpose-built women's clubhouse from the 1920s and one of the few prewar, pre-earthquake commercial buildings remaining in Bakersfield. The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is also the oldest, extant purpose-built clubhouse in Bakersfield and the earliest known example of a building designed by Biggar in California.

Criterion A: Social History: Women's History

Bakersfield: Land of Oil and Agriculture

Bakersfield is a California city located near the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley. It is the largest city in Kern County and functions as the county seat. Over the years, Bakersfield has remained relatively isolated from the two major metropolitan areas of the state: Los Angeles and San Francisco. Despite being only about 100 miles north of Los Angeles, its location to the north of the Tehachapi Mountains reduced accessibility. At the summit, the elevation of the Tejon Pass is 4,160 feet. San Francisco lies over 250 miles to the north. As a result, Bakersfield has a unique identity. Its development has been historically linked to its two main industries: oil and agriculture.

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The First Peoples who lived on the land of modern Bakersfield, the Yokuts, called it *Woilu*, the planting place. Its location along the Kern River controlled its destiny for hundreds of years. The first Spaniard, Pedro Fages, laid eyes on the land in 1772 and called it Buena Vista. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, alternating floods and drought of the Kern River made agriculture difficult. It was Colonel Thomas Baker (1810-1872), a native of Ohio, who made his way to the San Joaquin Valley, bought land and embarked on a series of infrastructure projects aimed at taming the Kern River.

By the 1860s, while the rest of the country was being linked by rail, road, canal and river, Bakersfield remained isolated. It had a telegraph line and unreliable stagecoach line, and was deliberately ignored by the railroads.¹³ The city briefly incorporated in 1873, becoming the seat of the newly minted Kern County, and incorporation was reversed a mere three years later. In 1874, Bakersfield finally got its rail connection, which stopped a mile east of the city. Despite the snub, Bakersfield started to grow and agriculture flourished now that it had transportation for its crops. On July 7, 1889, a fire consumed most of the city.

By the mid-1890s, Bakersfield was beginning to become an oil town. Drilling was becoming more and more popular and with it came the single men who worked the fields and equipment. In 1899, James and Jonathan Ellwood discovered the Kern River field. By 1901, the fields were yielding about 12,000 barrels per day.¹⁴ The nerve center of the great oil rush was Bakersfield's Southern Hotel, its lobby consistently packed with ambitious men."¹⁵ The first decade of the twentieth century proved to be "the great oil rush." From 1900 to 1910, the city's population rose from 4,836 to 12,727 and Kern County's population rose from 16,480 to 37,715.¹⁶ According to historian John Maynard, "By 1908, Bakersfield was the recognized leader of the California oil industry."¹⁷

In 1920, the road known as the Grapevine was opened and it became possible to drive a car from Los Angeles to Bakersfield. The popularity of the automobile increased demand for oil and reduced the isolation that the town had long experienced.

During the early 1920s, downtown Bakersfield reflected its wealth in its buildings. Historian Richard C. Bailey notes the "outlay of several million dollars for new business buildings in the center of town."¹⁸ In addition to its elaborate Victorian courthouse, the city had a brick building housing the *Bakersfield Californian* newspaper, elaborate movie theaters, and department stores. The Beale Clock Tower was also a downtown landmark.

¹³ John Arthur Maynard, *Bakersfield: A Centennial Portrait* (Encino, CA: Cherbo Publishing Group, Inc., 1997), 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁸ Richard C. Bailey, *Bakersfield: Heart of the Golden Empire* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1984), 87.

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In addition to the oil wealth, Bakersfield's agricultural industry was booming. Electrically driven pumping drove a revolution in farming and helped mediate the feast or famine water situation. As a result, the Great Depression came slowly to Bakersfield. Oil and agriculture proved more resilient than other industries and none of the local banks failed. Soon dust bowl migrants were fleeing into the San Joaquin Valley where prospects were brighter than in the Midwest.

Bakersfield benefited from post-World War II prosperity, then suffered a catastrophic earthquake at 3:42 p.m. on Friday, August 22, 1952. The epicenter of the quake was directly under downtown Bakersfield and damage to buildings was widespread and significant. It caused two deaths, destroyed or weakened 396 buildings, shattered sixty-eight square blocks of downtown Bakersfield, and caused damage valued at \$25 million.¹⁹

After the earthquake, Bakersfield's architects rallied and began to rebuild the city, fueled by continued postwar prosperity of the late 1950s and 1960s. The earthquake transformed downtown from a showplace of architecture from the 1910s and 1920s into a postwar modern city with rare hints of its glorious past.

The city also expanded eastward: dozens of new housing developments and the ensuing commercial and institutional infrastructure followed. Even the recession of the 1970s was held at abeyance until the early 1980s.

Although the original ridge route was replaced with Interstate 5 in the 1960s, Bakersfield remains relatively isolated from Los Angeles and San Francisco. The decision to split and divert Interstate 5 to the west in the Central Valley, bypassing Bakersfield and leaving Highway 99 as the main artery into the city, continues to keep Bakersfield off the beaten path for many people.

Women's Clubs in Southern California

Women's clubs in Southern California began to take hold in communities during the 1890s. As described in the *SurveyLA: Women's Rights Context*, women's organizations changed and evolved with the social, political and economic climate of the region and the nation. Between 1890 and 1955, there were four distinctive periods: the Progressive Era (1890-1911), Civic Involvement (1911-1920), Cultural Enrichment (1921-1941), and Women in the Workforce & Return to Conservatism (1942-1955).

The Progressive Era: Temperance, Suffrage and Civic Reform, 1890 to 1911

In Southern California, women's philanthropic and civic reform efforts began during the 1880s. In the 1890s, they expanded and "the period ushered in a golden era of women's clubs."²⁰ Some of these clubs were engaged in civic matters, others were purely social, and others had hybrid missions. By the mid-1890s, women's suffrage was becoming well organized in Los Angeles and in San Francisco. A galvanizing national event appears to have been the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. From all parts of the country, activists including clubwomen,

¹⁹ John Arthur Maynard, *Bakersfield: A Centennial Portrait* (Encino, CA: Cherbo Publishing Group, Inc., 1997), 79.

²⁰ City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources, *SurveyLA: Los Angeles Citywide Women's Rights in Los Angeles*, October 2018, 19.

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temperance advocates, settlement workers, philanthropists, labor activists, and suffragists attended the event. One of the exhibit pavilions, "The Woman's Building," contained exhibits about women. Women lobbied the U.S. Congress, and a National Board of Lady Managers was formed to oversee women's representation at the Exposition. Each state had representation, with seven women coming from California.

In November 1896, the right for women to vote in California appeared on the ballot. While the majority of votes from Southern California favored suffrage, the amendment was defeated due to a larger number of "no" votes from Northern California. The result of the defeat was that suffragists and many women's clubs became discouraged and distanced themselves from the movement. Clubwomen began to describe their work as "civic altruism," as a way of "building a new public space, a civic arena in which citizens (women and men) concerned with the public good could build a moral, humane and harmonious America."²¹

During the late 1890s, even the non-political women's clubs broadened their interests from arts to include the study of social issues.²² In Southern California, this included justice reform and an effort to eliminate female juvenile delinquency. By 1910, California women were ready to take another run at suffrage and on October 10, 1911, women were accorded the right to vote in California by a margin of 2,051 votes.²³ In Kern County, the majority in favor of suffrage was much narrower—1,759 for and 1,592 against—passing by just 167 votes.²⁴

Women and Civic Involvement, 1912-1920

Immediately after winning the right to vote, activist efforts turned to voter registration and equipping women with knowledge of government, civics, and current events. Leading the voter registration charge was the California Federation of Women's Clubs (CFWC). The CFWC was the most powerful woman's association in the state with more than 25,000 members from 318 affiliates, including the Woman's Club of Bakersfield.²⁵

Topics for Southern California women's groups at the time included a clean milk initiative to combat infant mortality, working conditions for women and children in industry, juvenile courts, free kindergarten, and delinquency. During World War I, it was also common for women to work on behalf of the war effort as an element of civic engagement. The Spanish Flu epidemic also created opportunities for women to give back to the community.

A Movement Dissipates: Cultural Enrichment Takes Center Stage, 1921-1941

With enfranchisement, temperance, war, and disease in the rearview mirror, Southern California entered a period of economic prosperity and population growth during the 1920s. As a result, many women's clubs focused on arts and cultural activities to enrich their communities.

²¹ Gayle Goulet, *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-1911* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 107.

²² City of Los Angeles, *SurveyLA: Women's Rights Context*, 26.

²³ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁴ "County Majority is For Suffrage," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, October 13, 1911, 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

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As described in the *SurveyLA: Women's Rights Context*, the combination of wealth and empowerment resulted in a "building boom" for gendered women's spaces.²⁶ Unlike the more residentially scaled club buildings of the past, these buildings were large, visible statements about the place of women. Examples in Los Angeles included the Los Angeles Young Women's Christian Association (1921, not extant), Friday Morning Club (1923, extant), and Ebell Club of Los Angeles (1927, extant). In each case, a prominent local architect was hired to design a large period-revival style building, often in the downtown area.²⁷

These buildings were the locations for club meetings, lectures, concerts, plays and other cultural enrichment programming. They were also often used as meeting places by other women's organizations without the financial means to build purpose-built buildings for their own use. The stock market crash of 1929 and ensuing Great Depression effectively brought the building boom for women's clubs to an end as club members struggled to make ends meet both individually and as organizations.

Women in the Wartime Workforce and a Postwar Return to Conservatism (1942-1955)

World War II opened the door to workforce opportunity for women when the need for defense workers exceeded the number of men available to fill those positions. Many Southern California women were drawn to jobs in the aircraft industry and found that they enjoyed the work. At the close of World War II, when GIs began to return, defense contractors laid off women. Women were expected to get married, focus on raising families, and establish households in suburban tracts.

The postwar period was largely a regressive one for women's roles. The period has been described by some as "a return to normalcy." During this period, women's clubs remained active, if not as involved in activism as they had been in the early twentieth century.²⁸ Events were often focused on fashion, domestic science, arts, and culture.

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is the oldest women's organization in Kern County.²⁹ According to Mrs. Clara Conley, a founding member of the organization, the inspiration for the Woman's Club was provided by Katherine Philips Edson (1870-1933).³⁰ Conley was invited by her father to drive with him through the Antelope Valley to gather information about the almond industry. The route led to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Farwell Edson, a fruit grower at Rancho La Liebre, later Tejon Ranch.

²⁶ Ibid., 42.

²⁷ Ibid., 45-46.

²⁸ Newly established women's clubs in suburban locations, for example, were primarily social rather than political in nature.

²⁹ Newspaper article, Woman's Club Scrapbook, Bakersfield Women's Club Collection. California State University, Bakersfield, Walter W. Stiern Library-Historical Research Center.

³⁰ Edson was an ardent suffrage advocate, a founder of the Friday Morning Club of Los Angeles, and later became head of the State Department of Industrial Relations for Women. She was an important player in the women's rights movement in Los Angeles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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Conley was impressed by the Edsons, whose home she described as a center of culture. Charles Edson was a composer, poet and teacher of opera singers, as well as a fruit grower. To combat boredom and isolation, Katherine established an informal series of what she called "female round-ups," gathering the women of the region to share experiences, knowledge, and skills.³¹

To Conley it seemed "inexcusable that a thriving city like Bakersfield with access to San Francisco and Los Angeles, should be doing nothing along those lines."³² Upon returning home, Conley appealed to Mrs. R. H. (Lucretia) Stevens (1856-1934) who invited a few women to her home one afternoon in early 1896 and asked for their cooperation in forming a club.

On March 2, 1896 at the Southern Hotel, eighteen women assembled. Initially the intent was to study art and literature. At a meeting one week later, they voted to call themselves the Woman's Club—deliberately choosing the singular, possessive form of the noun to denote the importance of efforts of the individual.³³ The link to the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago just three years prior in 1893, is undeniable.

At its founding, the Woman's Club focused primarily on arts and cultural activities. Gradually, the club widened its interests to include civic matters. Among their first civic contributions, the Club was "instrumental in bringing about the re-incorporation of the City of Bakersfield in 1898,³⁴ involved in the establishment of the first public library and reading room and founded the first free kindergarten.³⁵ In April 1899, the Club made plans to buy 100 new books for a lending library.³⁶

Club meetings were scheduled in the parlors of the Southern Hotel, the Odd Fellows Hall, the Episcopal Church Guild, and the Echo Building. The first permanent home for the group was a small clubhouse built at 1600 H Street (not extant) in 1900. This also coincided with the Club becoming affiliated with the California Federation of Woman's Clubs. The Club was also affiliated with the General Federation of Women's Clubs, an important national organization providing support to the growing number of women's clubs around the country at the turn of the century.

During the first few years of its existence, the Club extended its purview beyond arts and literature to include civic affairs. Club members were "largely instrumental in closing of stores in evenings and on Sundays," as well as "doing excellent work in the final successful movement for incorporation."³⁷ By 1907, one meeting per month was devoted to the topic of "civics."³⁸

³¹ Jacqueline R. Braitman, "A California Stateswoman: The Public Career of Katherine Phillips Edson," *California History* 65 (1986), 82.

³² Undated document circa 1920, Bakersfield Woman's Club Archive.

³³ "Women's History Month," *The Bakersfield Californian*, March 24, 1996. D1.

³⁴ The city first incorporated in 1873, repealed its incorporation in 1876, and elected to re-incorporate in 1891.

³⁵ "Woman's Club History Told," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, March 9, 1924, 7.

³⁶ "Women's History Month," *The Bakersfield Californian*, March 24, 1996. D1.

³⁷ "Sketch of Woman's Club of Bakersfield," *Bakersfield Echo*, February 6, 1907, 8.

³⁸ "Woman's Club's Year's Program," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, September 13, 1907, 3.

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According to newspaper accounts, the Woman's Club did not take a formal position on suffrage. Mrs. T. H. Minor spoke on the organization's behalf saying that "as an organization, the Woman's Club cannot become sponsor to the movement on account of its being a political question and the Woman's Club has foresworn the sponsorship of things political or religious."³⁹ Yet, Mrs. Minor and "a large majority of the members of the Woman's Club will be in attendance at the [suffrage] meeting on Friday night" suggesting that despite an official position, the membership was active in securing the right to vote.⁴⁰

Katherine Philips Edson, living in Los Angeles, leveraged her ties as a former resident of Kern County, to promote suffrage in Bakersfield. She corresponded with prominent women in town, and in her role as the chairman of the public health committee of the California Federation of Women's Clubs, corresponded regularly with the Woman's Club of Bakersfield.⁴¹ Arrangements were made for Edson to lecture to the Club in the early fall of 1911, and Edson toured the Bakersfield oil fields and lectured at the Armory hall in Bakersfield in September 1911.

By the late 1910s, the women had outgrown their clubhouse at 16th and H Street; the Woman's Club of Bakersfield was the largest Woman's Club in California.⁴² For large events, they turned to leasing venues that could accommodate their growing membership. It became clear that a new clubhouse was in order and they saved for three years to fund the project. A location in a residential area adjacent to downtown with several vacant lots was selected.

In March 1920, the Board of Directors of the Woman's Club, as recommended by the Building Committee, engaged architect Charles H. Biggar to design the new facility.⁴³ Mrs. Charles H. Biggar (Marion) was a member of the Club and it is likely that helped secure the commission.

In correspondence dated May 1921, the author, Mrs. C. A. (Elizabeth) Hare, notes plans for a large auditorium, 50' by 80' with a 20' x 60' stage accommodating 1,000 attendees. The building was also to house a tearoom, banquet room, and a large, second floor kitchen with dumb waiter. Groundbreaking took place on May 21, 1921.⁴⁴

The total cost of the building was to be \$50,000.⁴⁵ To help finance the project, the women initially obtained a mortgage on the old facility. By September 1920, they had sold the old clubhouse to the Jewish Congregation of B'nai Jacob of Kern County, for \$6,000.⁴⁶ To supplement this, members and others were asked to donate. According to a list of pledges from

³⁹ "Suffragist Rally In Bakersfield Planned," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, August 27, 1911, 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "New Woman's Club Structure Opened and Wins Praise," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, November 20, 1921, 1.

⁴³ Note dated February 9, 1921. Bakersfield Woman's Club Archive.

⁴⁴ Woman's Club of Bakersfield Archive.

⁴⁵ Charles H. Biggar Contract, February 16, 1921, Bakersfield Woman's Club Archive.

⁴⁶ "Church of Jacob Will Take Woman's Club October 1st," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, September 25, 1920, 4.

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June 7, 1921, eighty-nine members and others donated to the building fund. The average donation was \$100. The opening occurred on November 19, 1921.⁴⁷

In 1920, the Woman's Club was active in the preservation of Ft. Tejon. That same year, the Club took a bold stance on community property rights for women. Mrs. Alan Bruce Campbell, a former president of the Woman's Club, advocated for the passage of an amendment to county regulations that would allow women to will their half of community property owned with their husbands to their children or others they deemed acceptable. The amendment was opposed by bankers, businessmen, and lawyers.⁴⁸ Ultimately, it did not pass.

It was also at this time that the Club took up the issue of prison reform for women, an issue they worked on for more than a dozen years. In addition to these activities, the club continued to promote arts and cultural programming for its members and the community. Like other large clubhouses, the Bakersfield Woman's Club was home to other organizations as well. In 1922, the Business and Professional Woman's Club occupied a room in the building.⁴⁹

By 1930, the Woman's Club of Bakersfield had 285 members and reincorporated. New issues for the women included the planting of trees and advocating for the dedication of a bird haven at the Sanctuary of the Pines at Frazier Mountain.

As part of the state and general Federations of Women's Clubs, the women of Bakersfield participated in collective efforts to place women physicians and attendants in female institutions. They exerted great influence in the formation of juvenile courts, detention homes, playgrounds and other institutions.⁵⁰ During the 1930s, the Woman's Club of Bakersfield's Civic Committee urged the state to develop a program for the rehabilitation of female prisoners at the state prison in Tehachapi.⁵¹

The Great Depression manifested itself at the Woman's Club as the ladies increasingly leased out the auditorium and other space to generate revenue. A number of speakers, who were not part of Club programming per se, appeared in the auditorium throughout the decade including Dr. Clifford Severn, a pseudoscientist working on food science and vitality, Gilbert Thayer on "Why Men Crack After 40," and Dr. Stanford Kingsley Claunch, a food scientist. In the late 1930s, the Milton Heller School of Dance also leased the second floor from the Woman's Club.⁵² The First Church of Christ Science of Bakersfield also leased the building for use in their Sunday services.

⁴⁷ "New Woman's Club Structure Opened and Wins Praise," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, November 20, 1921, 1:8.

⁴⁸ "Social Notes," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, October 1, 1920.

⁴⁹ "Furnishings Chose," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, January 13, 1922, 3.

⁵⁰ 50th Anniversary brochure, 1946, Bakersfield Women's Club Collection. California State University, Bakersfield. Walter W. Stiern Library-History Research Collection.

⁵¹ "Women's History Month," *Bakersfield Californian*, March 24, 1996, D1.

⁵² "Dance Studio to Hold Open House," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 7, 1939, 14.

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During World War II, the Woman's Club was the location of many events related to the war effort. These included screenings of war-related films and dances for personnel from nearby Gardner and Minter Fields.

After World War II, like most women's clubs, the interests of the Woman's Club of Bakersfield turned largely toward social and cultural pursuits, rather than civic matters. These social events often raised money for charitable organizations, scholarships, and other worthy philanthropic efforts.

The original design of the building placed banquet rooms and the kitchen on the second floor, leaving the auditorium for lectures, plays, and musical programs. The membership had grown so large that the auditorium was frequently used for banquets and the second-floor kitchen made food transport difficult. So, in 1952, members of the Woman's Club approached local architect Ernest L. McCoy to design a large kitchen addition to the east side of the building. McCoy's wife, Marjorie, was a member of the Club at the time. Although the architect drew three potential schemes for the addition, plans were shelved when the 1952 earthquake caused major damage to the building. Instead of the addition, McCoy was called upon for repair work.

As reported in the *Bakersfield Californian*, the Woman's Club of Bakersfield sustained approximately \$30,000 in damage.⁵³ The unreinforced brick masonry walls and the lack of connections between the roof structure and the walls resulted in significant damage as described in an open letter from the architect dated November 2, 1953.⁵⁴ The east wall was badly shattered and pulled away from the building. The north wall had significant cracks and the wall above the main entrance pulled away from the roof framing.⁵⁵ The building was deemed hazardous and uninhabitable, and the women were forced to vacate the building for more than a year. During this time, they held their meetings at a variety of locations around town.

In addition to the \$30,000 in structural damages, the budget called for \$20,000 in upgrades. As a result, the members of the Woman's Club evaluated three possible alternatives. First, to demolish the building and erect a new clubhouse on the lot. Second, sell the damaged clubhouse and property, move to another location, and erect a new clubhouse. Third, to bring the building up to revised earthquake standards and create a new kitchen.⁵⁶ In December 1953, the women decided to repair the existing building. The vote was 248 in support of the plan, with thirty-one favoring another option.⁵⁷ The women fundraised within the organization through a "Buy-A-Brick" campaign. The necessary repairs required "a heavy mortgage and much work and sacrifice to restore it."⁵⁸

⁵³ "Woman's Club Told of \$30,000 Building Damage," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 25, 1952, 21.

⁵⁴ Letter from Ernest L. McCoy to Woman's Club of Bakersfield, November 2, 1953. Woman's Club of Bakersfield Archive.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Vocalists Get Applause From Clubwomen; Building Plans Aired; Donation Made," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 1, 1952, 8.

⁵⁷ "Woman's Club Will Repair Present Structure," *Bakersfield Californian*, December 9, 1952, 11.

⁵⁸ "Woman's Club of Bakersfield, *Diamond Jubilee*," 11. Bakersfield Women's Club Collection. California State University, Bakersfield. Walter W. Stiern Library-History Research Collection.

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By 1953, the membership of the Woman's Club was more than 900 women.⁵⁹ On November 23, 1953 the women returned to the clubhouse. In addition to the structural improvements, McCoy oversaw a series of alterations, including the addition of "a board room" over the ladies lounge at the southwest corner of the building and a kitchen upgrade.⁶⁰

After returning to their clubhouse, the women spent ensuing decades developing programs and traditions.⁶¹ In 1991, the Woman's Club of Bakersfield was placed on the local Register of Historic Places by the Bakersfield City Council.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is a rare and intact example of the design of architect Charles H. Biggar, and the earliest known extant example of his work. It is the only example of his work in the Georgian Revival Style. It is also a rare and intact example of a pre-1952 earthquake commercial building in Bakersfield. The seismic rehabilitation and repair by Ernest L. McCoy, a former architect in Biggar's office, was a path not taken for most earthquake-damaged buildings in the city.

Charles H. Biggar, AIA (1882-1946)

The name Charles Howitt Biggar is synonymous with Bakersfield development and architecture during the early twentieth century. He was a prolific, classically trained architect responsible for many of Bakersfield's most iconic pre-World War II buildings.

Charles Howitt Biggar was born to Scottish parents who emigrated to America in the late 1870s or early 1880s. Biggar was born in Danville Township, Illinois in 1882. Architecture ran in his blood, as his father was a building inspector. While in college, he changed his major from medicine to architecture—enrolling at the University of Illinois. After college, he worked in Chattanooga, Tennessee in the office of Reuben H. Hunt as a draftsman before he journeyed to Seattle in 1910 where he was employed by the architect William P. White.⁶² Biggar attended the prestigious Atelier Jossely, at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris. He also took coursework at the University of Illinois.⁶³

By 1910, he was living in Bakersfield, making frequent trips to Los Angeles, and working alongside Thomas B. Wiseman (1885-1920) in the firm of Train and Williams.⁶⁴ Even at this

⁵⁹ "Buy-A-Brick Drive Opens, Party Given," *Bakersfield Californian*, August 21, 1953, 12.

⁶⁰ "Huge Crowd Attends Homecoming," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 24, 1953, 9.

⁶¹ Events included the Club's tea for new American citizens, cotillion/ballroom dance lessons, the annual Festival of the Trees fundraiser, and other community uses of the building.

⁶² "Bakersfield's Best Builder?," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 17, 2010.

⁶³ Biggar's AIA membership application indicates merely that he "completed coursework," whereas the 1978 National Register nomination for The First Baptist Church in Bakersfield reports that he graduated from the University of Illinois in 1908.

⁶⁴ "Personal Mention," *Los Angeles Herald*, August 25, 1910, 4; "Local Architects Make Very Good Showing," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, February 12, 1911, 16.

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early stage, Biggar's designs were being recognized by organizations such as the Architectural League of the Pacific Coast.⁶⁵ In 1911, Wiseman took over the practice of Train and Williams, and partnered with his colleague to become Wiseman & Biggar. Around 1915, Biggar established his own office in Los Angeles, associating himself with Charles Kysor (1883-1954). In this capacity he designed several hotels in Long Beach and many commissions in Los Angeles.

Biggar married Marion Whitney in 1917.⁶⁶ During World War I, he served as a 1st Lieutenant in the 115th Engineers from 1917 until 1919. He served in France and participated in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Upon his return to California in 1919, he and Marion moved to Bakersfield.⁶⁷ According to the *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, Biggar reinstated his association with Thomas B. Wiseman upon his return. In early 1920, they were awarded projects for additions and modifications to several Kern County schools.⁶⁸ In July 1920, Wiseman accidentally drowned at the age of 35 when he was swept away by the Kern River.⁶⁹

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is one of the first commissions in Bakersfield attributed solely to Charles H. Biggar. Biggar found himself in the right place at the right time. The 1920s were a very prosperous decade for the town based on the oil and agriculture economy. Wealthy residents took the opportunity to build homes, commercial, civic, and institutional buildings, and Charles H. Biggar was the most prominent architect in the city.

His most well-known buildings in Bakersfield include the Haberfelde Building (1927, extant), the Chamber of Commerce Building (1928, extant), East Bakersfield High School (1938), and the Bakersfield Central Fire Station (1938, extant). Most of these commissions were in various Period Revival Styles popular at the time. His work took a more modern turn as fashion was dictating, with the Tejon Theater (1947, extant) and the Harvey Auditorium (1948, extant).

The architectural community of Bakersfield is known for a strong system of mentorship of architects across generations. Biggar was no exception. Robert Eddy, Clarence Bart Alford, and Ernest L. McCoy, all Kern County High School graduates from 1933, were draftsmen in Biggar's office and later formed their own local firms.

Biggar's architectural talent and contributions have been recognized on a national level. His two other Bakersfield commissions listed on the National Register of Historic Places are the First Baptist Church (1930-31) designated in 1979 and the Bakersfield Californian Building (1925-26) designated in 1983.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Phi Kappa Sigma Fraternity Yearbook* (Philadelphia, PA: 1920), 578.

⁶⁷ "Mrs. Biggar, Resident Since 1919, Dies," *Bakersfield Californian*, June 16, 1977, 18.

⁶⁸ "Biggar and Wiseman Will Draft Plans for New Schools," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, March 26, 1920, 3.

⁶⁹ "Thomas E. Wiseman," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, July 7, 1920, 3.

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Ernest L. McCoy, AIA (1906-1981)

Ernest Lynn McCoy was born in Bakersfield in January 1906 to one of the pioneer families of the city. He graduated from Kern County High School (also known as Bakersfield High School) in 1925, where he was a student of the well-known local architectural educator and architect, Clarence Cullimore, Sr. (1885-1963).⁷⁰ McCoy graduated from the University of Southern California (USC) School of Architecture in 1933. From January 1934 until he entered the service around 1942, he worked for Charles H. Biggar as a draftsman, inspector, construction superintendent, and supervising project architect. In 1943, he briefly returned to work for Biggar on a housing project at Muroc Army Base in Muroc, California. In April 1944, he established his own practice in Bakersfield.

McCoy's solo practice thrived on the Kern County school infrastructure projects that grew rapidly during the postwar period. This included additions to existing schools as well as the design and construction of entirely new facilities. These schools were predominantly Mid-Century Modern in style and representative of the California Modern school planning and design movement.

In 1952, McCoy was called upon by the Woman's Club to design a first floor kitchen addition to the clubhouse. Given his decade of experience working in Biggar's office, and his wife Marjorie's membership in the club, Ernest McCoy was a logical choice. Biggar had passed away in 1946. Three surviving McCoy schemes for the addition show that the architect's approach was to make an addition to the east elevation of the building between the two existing wood-clad volumes housing the men's dressing room and the porch. When the earthquake hit, McCoy switched priorities from expansion to repair.

After the earthquake, McCoy was a member of an informal coalition of local architects who proposed the relaxation of certain code restrictions in order to speed the repair of quake-damaged buildings.⁷¹ At the time McCoy was working on the Woman's Club Building, he was also transitioning his office from the Hay Building to a Mid-Century Modern-style purpose-built office. The new office represented McCoy's practice at the height of its success. McCoy went on to design many significant Mid-Century Modern-Style buildings in Kern County including the Crocker Anglo National Bank (1956, altered/razed), South High School (1957, extant), and the Courts and Administration Building (1959, extant), all in Bakersfield.

McCoy was a founding member of the Golden Empire Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1977. He passed away in 1981.

⁷⁰ For more on Cullimore's contribution to architectural education in Bakersfield read Sian Winship's "Shaping Generations of Architects: Two High School Programs That Changed the Built Environment in Southern California and Beyond," *Southern California Quarterly*, Summer 2019, Volume 101, No 2., 163-204.

⁷¹ "Solution to Building Row Seen," *Bakersfield Californian*, October 21, 1952, 17.

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Georgian Revival Style⁷²

The Georgian style was the predominant architectural style in Great Britain and her North American colonies throughout the eighteenth century. It takes its name from the three kings: George I, George II and George III—whose successive reigns (1714-1820) encompassed the period. Its stylistic elements were probably fixed by the end of the seventeenth century. The Georgian style combined traditional elements of late medieval English architecture, such as steeply pitched roofs, towering chimneys and dormers, with the strict proportions, symmetrical composition and Classical detailing of the Italian Renaissance as well as a recent invention, the vertical sliding sash (double-hung) window. Inspired by pattern books and constructed by prosperous merchants and planters, the Georgian houses of the American Colonies were smaller and less ornate, but no less stately, than their British counterparts and projected the same aura of dignity and gentility. In the late eighteenth century, the sober, restrained Georgian style gave way to the lighter, more ornate Adam style.

The U.S. Centennial Exposition of 1876 inspired a sense of patriotism in Americans and fostered an interest in the styles of the Colonial era. Early examples of a revival style in the late nineteenth century were rarely accurate reproductions. They took elements of Georgian architecture and applied them to Victorian buildings. In the early twentieth century architects began to produce more accurate interpretations that featured historically correct proportions and details. The Georgian Revival style is characterized by a rectangular plan and a formal, symmetrical, five-bay composition; exterior walls veneered in brick; restrained use of Classical ornament; hipped or side gabled roof with eave cornice, sometimes with dormers; tall chimneys; and double-hung, divided light wood sash windows. Georgian Revival buildings of the 1920s and 1930s sometimes also feature Adam (Federal), Palladian, or other Neoclassical elements such as columned, pedimented porticos or Venetian (Palladian) windows.

Character-defining features include:

- Hipped or side gable roofs with eave cornice, sometimes dormers
- Rectangular in plan and regular massing
- Symmetrical façade, typically five bays wide
- Exterior walls veneered in brick; occasionally wood siding
- Main entrance centered on front façade, with paneled wood door flanked by Classical pilasters or columns supporting a pediment
- Double hung, divided light wood sash windows, sometimes with louvered or paneled shutters
- Prominent brick chimney(s)

Early Twentieth Century Purpose-Built Fraternal and Sororal Club Houses in Bakersfield

A review of Bakersfield City Directories indicates that in 1923, there were six purpose-built club houses in the city. These included the Bakersfield Club at 1830 19th Street (razed); Elks Club at

⁷² Style description is adapted from the Architectural Resources Group/Historic Resources Group *Draft Historic Resources Inventory Update Historic Context Statement*, January 31, 2017, 330.

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1710 Chester Avenue (razed), the Masonic Temple at 1512 20th Street (razed) the Fraternal Order of Eagles at 1410 19th Street (razed); and the Odd Fellows Building at 1811 Chester Aveune (razed). The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is the last surviving purpose-built clubhouse from this period. The Masonic Temple at 1920 18th Street (extant) was erected to house its growing membership in 1923—two full years after the Woman's Club. The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is the last purpose built sororal/fraternal club house in the city of Bakersfield.

Comparison with Other Charles H. Biggar Buildings in California

Research in local newspapers (e.g., *Bakersfield Californian*, *Bakersfield Echo*, and *Los Angeles Times*) for built commissions by Wiseman and Biggar, Kysor & Biggar, and Charles H. Biggar, Architect from the first two decades of the twentieth century reveals that the Woman's Club of Bakersfield is the oldest extant and intact building by Charles H. Biggar in California.

In total, seventy-five California projects were identified with Charles H. Biggar's full career. Using historic newspapers, city directories, Sanborn maps and other ephemera, all projects prior to 1922 were located and investigated using Google street view. Only a few were extant, and those were significantly altered. Many of his early school projects were razed after the Bakersfield earthquake. Therefore, the Woman's Club of Bakersfield is the oldest, extant, and intact building by Charles H. Biggar in all of California.

Conclusion

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield is a rare and intact example of a purpose-built women's clubhouse from the golden age of women's clubs. It is also an early, rare, and intact example of a building by master architect Charles H. Biggar, AIA. It is also a rare and intact example of a prewar, pre-earthquake building in downtown Bakersfield. The Woman's Club of Bakersfield retains all aspects of historic integrity. As such it is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places at the local level.

Woman's Club of Bakersfield
Name of Property

Kern, California
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Woman's Club of Bakersfield
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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

___ previously listed in the National Register

___ previously determined eligible by the National Register

___ designated a National Historic Landmark

___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

___ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Woman's Club of Bakersfield
Name of Property

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Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Woman's Club of Bakersfield

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 35.375647 Longitude: -119.025463

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 13, 14, 15 and 16 in Block 240, in the City of Bakersfield, County of Kern, State of California as per map recorded November 25, 1898 in book 1, pages 13 and 14 of Maps in the office of the County Recorder of said County.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Legal description of property historically associated with the Woman's Club of Bakersfield.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Sian L. Winship

organization: Preservation Consultant to the Woman's Club of Bakersfield

street & number: 2146 Westridge Road

city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90049

e-mail: sianwinship@gmail.com

telephone: (310) 560-6436

date: September 2021; Revised November 2021

Woman's Club of Bakersfield
Name of Property

Kern, California
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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Woman's Club of Bakersfield
City or Vicinity: Bakersfield
County: Kern
State: California
Photographer: Sian Winship
Date Photographed: July 27, 2021

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 23 South (main) façade, looking north
- 2 of 23 Southwest corner of building, looking northeast
- 3 of 23 West (secondary) façade, looking northeast
- 4 of 23 West (secondary) façade, looking east
- 5 of 23 Northwest corner of building looking south
- 6 of 23 North façade, looking south
- 7 of 23 East façade. looking west showing original wooden building (horizontal siding) and addition (vertical siding)

Woman's Club of Bakersfield
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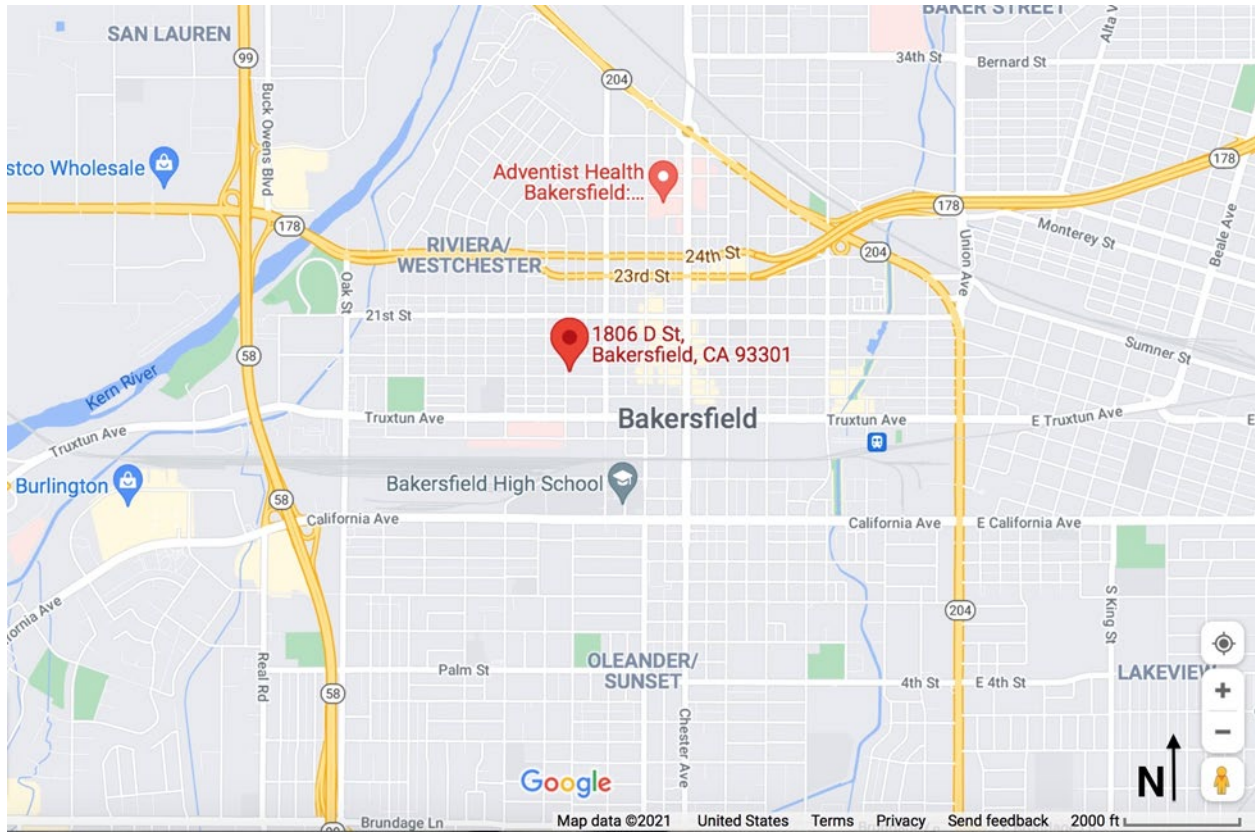
- 8 of 23 Close up of entry portico on south (main) façade
- 9 of 23 Door detail, south door on west elevation
- 10 of 23 Stair addition on east elevation
- 11 of 23 Context view, south (main) façade looking east, toward downtown with Masonic Temple visible to far right
- 12 of 23 Context view, south (main) façade looking east into residential neighborhood
- 13 of 23 Entry vestibule looking east toward Men's Lounge
- 14 of 23 Auditorium and stage, looking northwest, featuring continuous plaster ornamented stage surround, coffered ceiling with plaster cornices, crystal chandeliers, and tri-fold accordion doors to card room (later tearoom)
- 15 of 23 Auditorium, looking southeast, with French doors to historic tea patio, later enclosed addition
- 16 of 23 Card room (later tearoom) looking east, with matching crystal chandeliers visible through open tri-fold accordion doors
- 17 of 23 Card room looking south toward one of two twin fireplaces in the room
- 18 of 23 Card room looking north toward matching fireplace
- 19 of 23 South fireplace detail in tearoom featuring Georgian oval and dentil details, plaster cornice also visible
- 20 of 23 Large, second-floor banquet room (later fencing studio) looking southeast, with coffered ceilings, maple flooring and central skylight
- 21 of 23 Detail of original decorative, plaster relief light fixture housing in large banquet room, plaster cornice also visible
- 22 of 23 Second-floor kitchen looking northwest, featuring original casework/shelving
- 23 of 23 Close-up, first floor safe with working dumbwaiter visible just to the right

Woman's Club of Bakersfield
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Figure 1 Location Map

Longitude: 35.375647 Latitude: -119.025463



Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Woman's Club of Bakersfield
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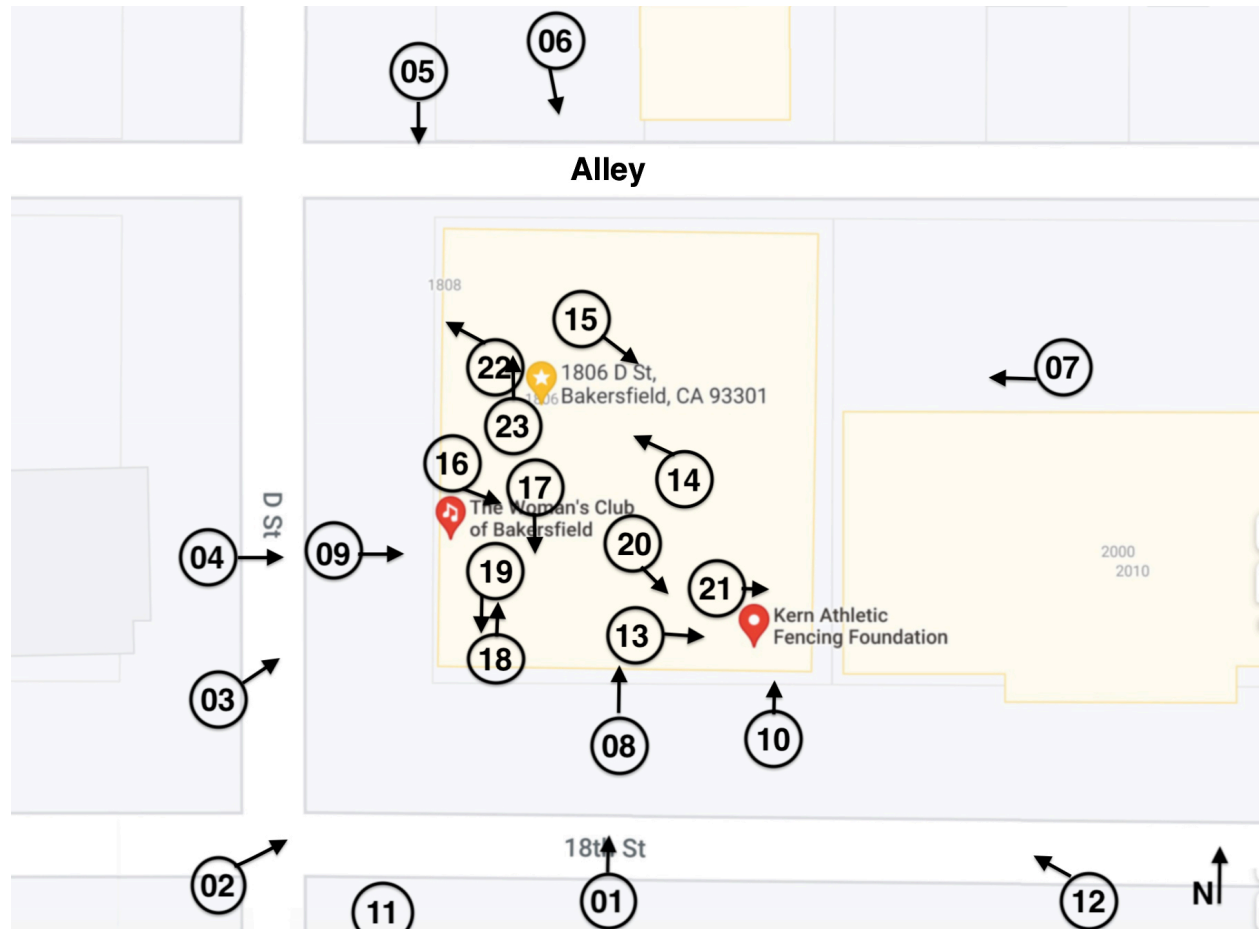
Figure 2 Vicinity Map



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Figure 3 Sketch Map/Photo Key



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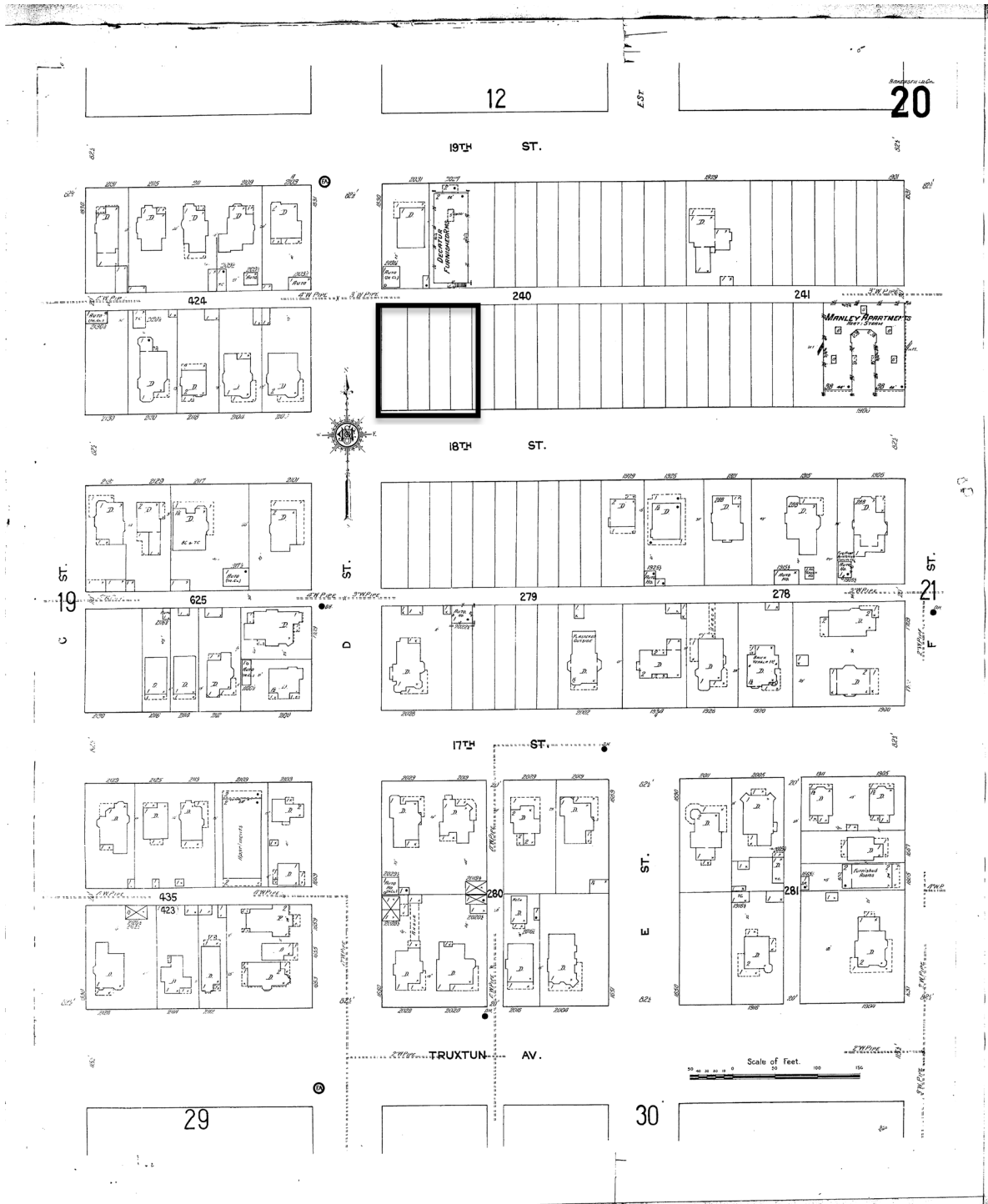
Figure 4 The first Executive Board of the Woman's Club of Bakersfield in 1896. Source: Woman's Club of Bakersfield Archive.



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Figure 5 1912 Sanborn map showing residential nature of the neighborhood prior to 1921 construction of the Woman's Club on the outlined parcels. Source: Los Angeles Public Library, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.



Woman's Club of Bakersfield
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Figure 6 South and north elevations of Bakersfield Woman's Club from the plans of architect Charles H. Biggar. Source: Kern County Museum.

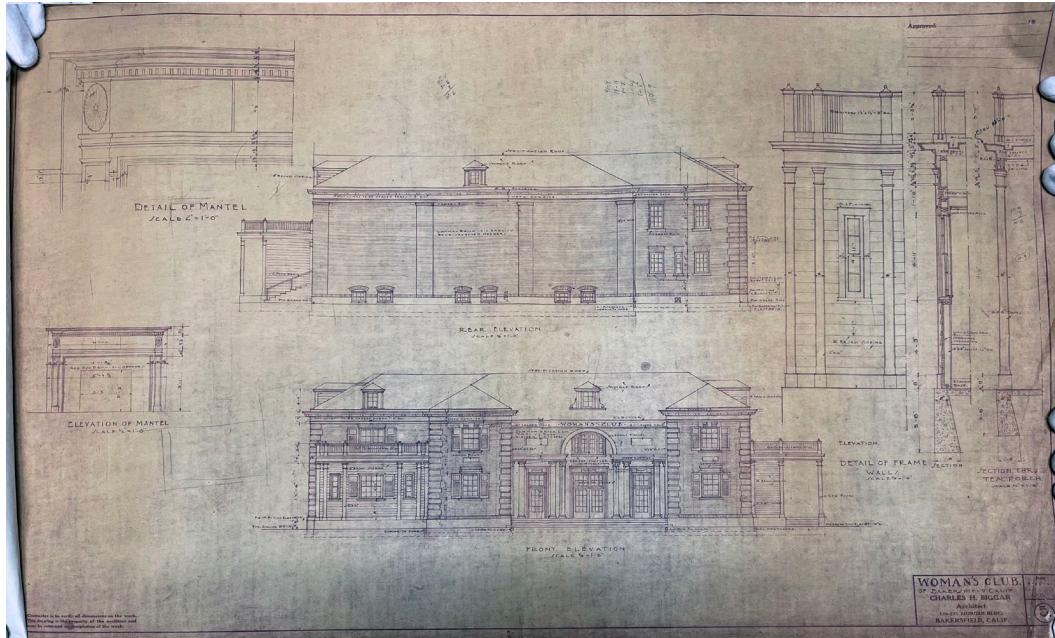
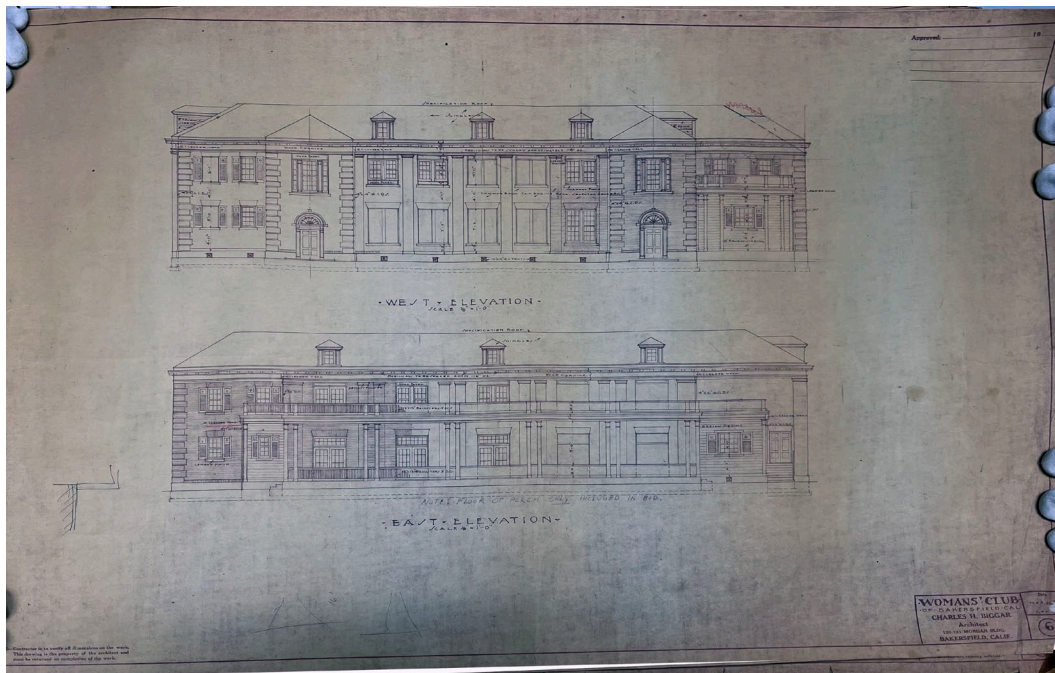


Figure 7 East and West elevations of Bakersfield Woman's Club from the plans of architect Charles H. Biggar. Source: Kern County Museum.



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Figure 8 Details for entry portico of Bakersfield Woman's Club from the plans of architect Charles H. Biggar. Source: Kern County Museum.

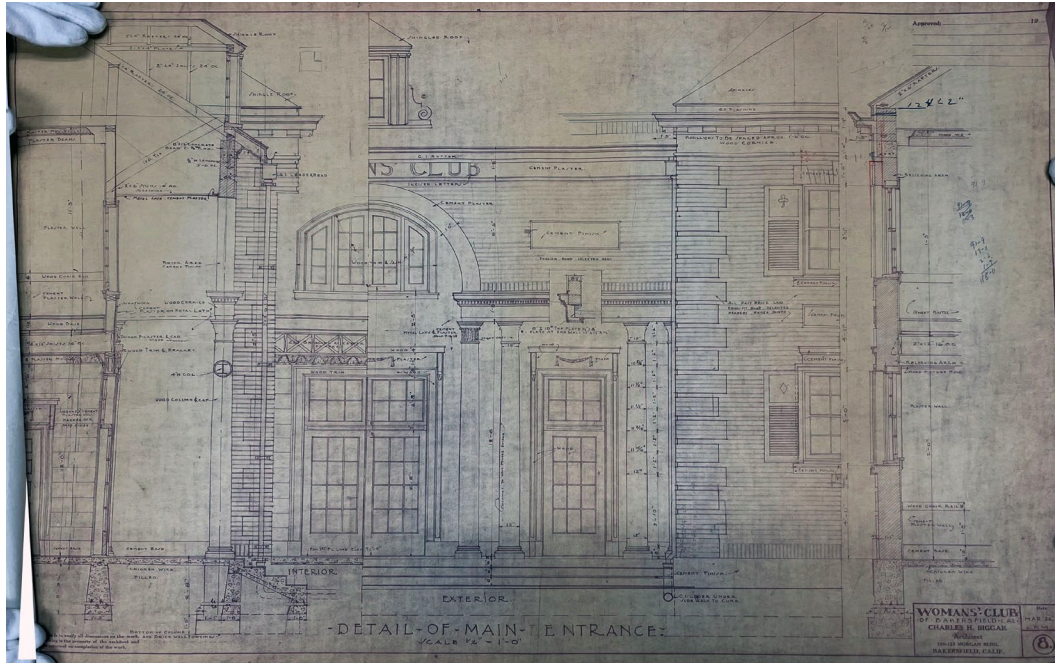


Figure 9 Woman's Club of Bakersfield circa 1921 taken from southwest corner of 18th and D Streets. Source: Bakersfield Women's Club Collection. California State University, Bakersfield, Walter W. Stiern Library-Historical Research Center.



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Figure 10 Woman's Club of Bakersfield circa 1925 showing the east elevation and outdoor tea porch. Source: 1925 Scrapbook, Woman's Club of Bakersfield Archive.



Figure 11 State Women's Clubs Convention at Woman's Club auditorium, likely Women's Clubs Convention circa 1927. Source: Kern County Museum.



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Figure 12 Woman's Club of Bakersfield c. 1934 Looking northeast on 18th Street. Masonic Temple built in 1923. Source: Bakersfield Women's Club Collection. California State University, Bakersfield, Walter W. Stiern Library-Historical Research Center.



Figure 13 Woman's Club of Bakersfield, c. 1930s. Source: Woman's Club of Bakersfield Archive.



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Figure 14 Woman's Club of Bakersfield ushers from 1944-45 in card room. Source: Woman's Club of Bakersfield Archive.



Figure 15 Woman's Club of Bakersfield in 1954, showing second story addition and brick volume by Ernest L. McCoy as part of the post-earthquake construction. Note roof dentils have also been removed.

The Woman's Club of Bakersfield

Meets Second and Fourth Mondays, 1:30 P. M., Unless Otherwise Stated



Organized and Incorporated 1896
Re-incorporated 1930

AFFILIATED WITH STATE FEDERATION SINCE 1900
GENERAL FEDERATION 1948



2030 EIGHTEENTH STREET
Telephone FA 5-7889
Mailing Address P. O. Box 886

Club Flower: COCHET ROSE
Club Color: WHITE AND GOLD

Club Motto
"FROM POSSIBILITY TO REALITY"

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Photo 1 South (main) façade, looking north



Photo 2 Southwest corner of building, looking northeast



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Photo 3 West (secondary) façade, looking northeast



Photo 4 West (secondary) façade, looking east



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Photo 5 Northwest corner of building looking south



Photo 6 North façade, looking south



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Photo 7 East façade. looking west showing original wooden building (horizontal siding) and addition (vertical siding)



Photo 8 Close up of entry portico on south (main) façade



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Photo 9 Door detail, south door on west elevation



Photo 10 Stair addition on east elevation



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Photo 11 Context view, south (main) façade looking east, toward downtown with Masonic Temple visible to far right



Photo 12 Context view, south (main) façade looking east into residential neighborhood



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Photo 13 Entry vestibule looking east toward Men's Lounge



Photo 14 Auditorium and stage, looking northwest, featuring continuous plaster ornamented stage surround, coffered ceiling with plaster cornices, crystal chandeliers, and tri-fold accordion doors to card room (later tearoom)



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Photo 15 Auditorium, looking southeast, with French doors to historic tea patio, later enclosed addition



Photo 16 Card room (later tearoom) looking east, with matching crystal chandeliers visible through open tri-fold accordion doors



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Photo 17 Card room looking south toward one of two twin fireplaces in the room



Photo 18 Card room looking north toward matching fireplace



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Photo 19 South fireplace detail in tearoom featuring Georgian oval and dentil details, plaster cornice also visible



Photo 20 Large, second-floor banquet room (later fencing studio) looking southeast, with coffered ceilings, maple flooring and central skylight



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Photo 21 Detail of original decorative, plaster relief light fixture housing in large banquet room, plaster cornice also visible



Photo 22 Second-floor kitchen looking northwest, featuring original casework/shelving



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Photo 23 Close-up, first floor safe with working dumbwaiter visible just to the right

