

**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name  Armour & Co. Building

other names/site number  1050 Battery Street

**2. Location**

street & number  1050 Battery Street   not for publication N/A

city or town  San Francisco   vicinity N/A

state  California  code  CA  county  San Francisco  code  075  zip code  94111

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

California Office of Historic Preservation   
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the  
National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
0		objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**Agriculture/Subsistence:**

Meat Packing Plant

Smokehouse

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**Commerce/Trade:**

Business

Professional

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian: Italianate

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

roof concrete, asphalt

walls brick

other METAL: steel; GLASS; WOOD

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
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.
Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
removed from its original location.
a birthplace or a grave.
a cemetery.
a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
a commemorative property.
less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 #

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

1907-1934

Significant Dates

1907

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Geilfuss, Henry & Son

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government - planning department, assessor
University
Other

Name of repository:

History Center, San Francisco Public Library; Online Archive of California; San Francisco Architectural Heritage

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	4	—	—	—

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Karen McNeill, Ph.D., Historian/Architectural Historian

organization Carey & Co., Inc. date March 10, 2009

street & number 460 Bush Street telephone (415) 773-0773

city or town San Francisco state CA zip code 94108

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name Ron Kaufman & John McGuire

street & number 1 Lombard Street, # 201 telephone (415) 982-5702

city or town San Francisco state CA zip code 94111

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications 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. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

*Exterior*

This three-story-over full basement, load-bearing brick building with concrete foundation stands on landfill at the southeast corner of Battery and Union Streets in the Northeast Waterfront Historic District of San Francisco. It has three exposed, brick elevations: The primary, west elevation, faces Battery Street, the north faces Union Street and the south faces a pedestrian walkway and mini urban park, John Maher Street. The building is rectangular in plan with a flat roof surrounded by a low parapet.

The exposed elevations divide into two parts. The rusticated masonry of the first floor forms a base below a projecting brick belt course. Above, the walls are detailed in an alternating composition of projecting and recessed wall planes. The projecting planes appear as implied pilasters near the bottom, rising above bases which rest upon the belt course. Near the top, the pilasters lose their identity; becoming again the outer wall plane which forms a continuous horizontal band above the fenestrated recesses. The walls terminate with a five-course corbelled cornice.

Nine window bays punctuate the primary elevation, while the north and south elevations each have four. All of the windows are recessed, wood, and either double-hung (with lambs tongues), or fixed sash. On all elevations, ground-floor windows are one-over-one, double hung, and predominantly paired. The second and third-story windows, are nine-over-nine double-hung sash, in groups of three, set below segmental brick arches.

*Interior*

Original interior features include the exposed brick exterior walls, wood flooring, and heavy timber framing consisting of wood columns, beams and joists. The building also retains the ovens used for smoking pork. These consist of four small, brick-walled, windowless rooms on each floor, reached by narrow corridors and located at the southeastern portion of the floorplate.

While original floor plans do not survive, the original plan is assumed to be mostly open, as was typical of a building of this function.

**ALTERATIONS**

The interior framing of heavy wooden posts and beams remains essentially intact, while the plan has been changed to adapt to modern uses. Fire caused some damage in 1940, requiring the repair of some timber framing and other unspecified details. These repairs appear to have been sensitively<sup>1</sup> handled, as the repaired or replaced structural elements cannot be discerned.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all alterations are recorded in permit records for 1050 Battery Street from San Francisco's Department of Building Inspections.

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Office partitions were first introduced in 1944. Between 1975 and 1979, the interior went through several renovations. They included reconfiguration of corridors; the installation of an elevator, HVAC, and sprinkler systems; upgraded electrical, lighting, and power systems; and a new staircase leading from the second to the third floor. A test kitchen, lunch room, and shower room were built in the basement in 1979. Most of these alterations were additive and appear to be reversible. Although the iron doors that enclosed the smokehouse ovens have been removed, the oven spaces themselves remain, currently housing restrooms, storage spaces, or conference rooms.

The building has also been seismically upgraded. Shear walls reinforce the corner stairwells, limiting the intrusion to locations without windows. Overall, the interior character-defining features remain intact.

The exterior has undergone few alterations. Most changes have occurred at the first story: the Battery Street entrance, comprised of metal framed glazed double doors topped by a transom, is not original. Two pairs each of fixed, wood windows on the north and south elevations, and a secondary entrance also on the south elevation, replace former truck loading doors. Also on the south elevation, remnants remain from the later addition of a metal fire escape. Permits do not indicate when these alterations were made. Except for the windows noted above, all other windows appear to be original. Overall, the exterior retains a high level of integrity.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Armour & Co. building at 1050 Battery Street, in San Francisco, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A, for its association with the dominance of Chicago's meat packing giants in the early twentieth century. It is also significant under Criterion C, for its architect, locally prominent Henry Geilfuss & Son, and as an example of warehouse architecture of the early twentieth century. The brick building, constructed in 1907 as a meat packing plant and smokehouse for one of the most powerful meat packing companies in the country, stands as a monument to the rise of the Chicago meat packing giants in San Francisco, particularly in the wake of the passage of the Meat Inspection and Pure Food and Drug Acts of 1906, as well as the San Francisco earthquake and fires of that year. Indeed, it is one of the only extant meat packing warehouses dating to this period of Chicago's triumph over San Francisco's meat packing industry. In addition, 1050 Battery Street was designed by Henry Geilfuss & Son, one of the most prominent architects in San Francisco during the late nineteenth century. It is a late example of the master architect's work and one of the few - if not the only - surviving industrial buildings that he designed. The building also demonstrates Geilfuss's cognizance of contemporary trends in industrial architecture and, located next door to a National Register warehouse of similar vintage, 1050 Battery lends continuity to the architectural character of the block. The building's period of significance is 1907, the year it was built for Armour & Co., until 1934, the year that Armour & Co. vacated the building.

**CONTEXT FOR CRITERION A**

***San Francisco's Northeast Waterfront***

In 1848, just before gold seekers from around the world descended upon the tiny settlement of San Francisco, the site of 1050 Battery Street was beneath the San Francisco Bay. That year, William Squire Clark arrived in the newly annexed California territory to pursue business ventures, but noticed an absence of wharves where cargo could be unloaded and warehouses where supplies could be stored. Thus, Clark built a small redwood warehouse and a stone pier from rocks he quarried from Telegraph Hill. Clark located his warehouse and pier just to the east of Telegraph Hill, where he could take advantage of the bay's deep waters and the protection that the hill provided from westerly winds. After building his own warehouse and pier, Clark set about promoting the northeast waterfront's warehousing facilities, thereby creating San Francisco's first warehouse district. The world soon rushed in and followed Clark's lead. By 1851, quarried rock from Telegraph Hill, undoubtedly combined with abandoned ships, had filled the bay nearly to today's Front Street, resulting in flat lands - including the land where 1050 Battery Street stands - for building and development. Warehouses dominated the new landscape.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Courland, *the Old North Waterfront: The History and Rebirth of a San Francisco Neighborhood* (San Francisco, 2004), 1, 11-12.

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In 1902, the site of 1050 Battery Street joined the northeast waterfront's industrial warehouse economy in a significant way. The property had long belonged to Benjamin F. Porter, a prominent lumberman, banker, and real estate investor. During the late nineteenth century, the site hosted a hodgepodge of saloons, lodgings, a Chinese laundry, and some small warehouse and storage facilities. Then, around 1902, Porter sold the property to his son-in-law, William T. Sesnon, and Sesnon's business partner, Charles Laumeister. The younger men built a four-story warehouse for their American Milling Company, which produced flour, cereal, mill products, and grain. Architects Henry Geilfuss & Son designed the 1902 brick warehouse, which was connected directly to the waterfront via a private wharf. All but the concrete foundations of this warehouse were destroyed during the 1906 earthquake and fires.<sup>2</sup>

***San Francisco, Chicago, and the Battle for Dominance over the San Francisco Meat Packing Industry***

Following the disaster of 1906, William T. Sesnon and Charles Laumeister retained ownership of 1050 Battery Street, but relocated the American Milling Company to Erie Street in the Mission district. Armour & Co., a Chicago-based meat packing firm, hired Henry Geilfuss & Son to design a new three-story-plus-basement, load bearing brick warehouse and smokehouse on the Battery Street site. (Perhaps Sesnon's substantial investments in cattle ranches rendered him partial to the meat packing giant, but his relationship to the property appears to be limited to that of landlord.)<sup>3</sup> The construction of the new Armour &

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin F. Porter, along with his brother, is also significant for the large tracts of land he bought in southern California's San Fernando Valley. After William Mulholland's aqueduct through the Owens Valley to Los Angeles was completed in 1913, that land in the San Fernando Valley rendered men like Porter (or, in this case, his descendants) very rich indeed. Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., San Francisco (1899-1900), sheet 14; "1050 Battery Street" file at San Francisco Architectural Heritage; "Lumberman and Banker Dead," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 10, 1905, p. 14; "Death of a Pioneer," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 10, 1905, p. 5; Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York, 1986); William H. Thompson, "Watching a City Perish," *The World Today* (1906): 596.

<sup>3</sup> William T. Sesnon, a native San Franciscan, was an influential businessman and politician in the city. He served as president of the Santa Cruz National Bank, director of the Federal Reserve Bank of the Twelfth Federal District; director of the Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), member of the PPIE commission to Europe, and chairman of the PPIE reception committee; as well as president of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. In addition, Sesnon owned and operated extensive interests in agriculture. His association with 1050 Battery Street, however, does not appear to add significant historical value to the property. The property changed hands several times between 1906 and 1944, but always remained within the Sesnon/Porter family. "Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage Building Form," 1050 Battery Street file, San Francisco Architectural Heritage; "Kings Pledge their Support for Exposition," *San Francisco Call*, July 19, 1912, p. 4; "Sesnon as New Chamber Leader Urges City Boost," in *Ibid.*, January 22, 1913, p. 5; "William T. Sesnon Honored by Banquet," *San Francisco Examiner*, January 25, 1914, p. 39; "Many Indorse Wm. T. Sesnon," in *Ibid.*, November 2, 1917, p. 4; "Sesnon Will Direct Bank," in *Ibid.*, November 14, 1921, p. 11; "W. T. Sesnon, San Francisco Banker and Business Leader Dead," *San*



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Company building reflects two major events in 1906: the aforementioned earthquake and fires and the passage of the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food & Drug Act. These events, combined, weakened San Francisco-based business owners' control over the local meat packing industry; thus, after nearly twenty years of effort, Chicago's meat packing giants finally achieved dominance over San Francisco's industry. Although the Chicago companies more or less bestowed upon Swift & Co. the privilege of industry leader in San Francisco when they named Louis Swift president of the Western Meat Company in the 1890s, Armour & Co. was the most powerful meat packing company nationwide. And while 1050 Battery Street was neither the only nor the largest meat packing facility of the Chicago firms in San Francisco at the time, it is one of their only surviving buildings that dates to this most significant period in the battle between the Midwest and San Francisco.

*Background: San Francisco's Meat Packing Industry in the Nineteenth Century*  
Miller & Lux, one of California's most powerful nineteenth-century landholders, established San Francisco's meat packing industry in the 1860s, thereby helping the coastal city maintain and expand its influence in all matters related to the state. Charles Lux's country estate, known as Baden, just south of San Francisco in San Mateo County, served as the last feeding place for the cattle, calves, sheep, lambs, and hogs, before the animals reached their final destination: the slaughterhouse at Ninth and Brannan Streets, then on the outskirts of town. Later, Miller & Lux built the first slaughterhouse in the area that came to be known as Butchertown, near Potrero Hill. The meat industry vastly increased Miller & Lux's power, for the growth in the meat industry required increasing stock, which, in turn, demanded greater amounts of land for grazing. Real estate holdings in this relatively undeveloped state constituted power, influence, and fortune, and this concentration of land holdings by San Francisco-based firms consolidated San Francisco's power and influence in the state more generally.<sup>4</sup>

Several companies joined Miller & Lux at Butchertown, creating a powerful conglomeration of wholesale butchers and related industries. In fact, Butchertown was the largest meatpacking district west of Chicago. Some of the companies operated integrated systems, everything from the cattle ranches to slaughterhouses and marketing, while others bought cattle from middlemen and sold them to local butchers. Butchertown hosted no refrigerated facilities; instead, San Francisco's wholesale meat trade thrived on the delivery of freshly slaughtered animals to the city's butchers. While the companies lost some stock every year to periods of warm weather, San Francisco's generally cool climate made possible and lucrative this trade in fresh meat.<sup>5</sup>

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*Francisco Chronicle*, July 1, 1929, p. 1, 4; Block books, and Sales Ledgers, San Francisco Office of the Assessor; Courland, *The Old North Waterfront*, 71.

<sup>4</sup> David Iglar, *Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West, 1850-1920* (Berkeley, 2001), 35-59, 160.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-143; "Butchertown," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 1, 1889, p. 27.

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*Armour & Co.*

While Butchertown dominated the San Francisco Bay Area market, a handful of companies based in Chicago conquered most of the rest of the nation's meat market. At the top of this pyramid stood Armour & Co., with Philip Danforth Armour at the helm. Armour's career in the meat market began in the Sierra foothills town of Placerville, California, where he ran a butcher shop during the Gold Rush. He later moved to Wisconsin, where he continued in the meat packing trade, but Chicago's proximity to vast hinterlands and rail infrastructure compelled Armour to invest resources in this largest of Midwestern cities. During the Civil War, he opened a grain business in Chicago and, convinced that Chicago held the greatest promise for the meat industry, persuaded his brother to open a meat packing plant there in 1867. The brothers called their new venture Armour & Co., which by 1875 was thriving so much that Philip D. Armour finally made Chicago his permanent home. Eventually, Armour & Co. specialized in refrigerated meats and produced a variety of goods made from animal byproducts. The company also gained control of important infrastructure, like ice production and storage facilities, and opened plants large and small throughout the country. By 1891, Armour & Co. employed tens of thousands of people in plants around the country and slaughtered millions of cattle and pigs. It was the nation's top meat packing giant.<sup>6</sup>

Armour & Co.'s fiercest competitor was Swift & Co., founded by Gustavus F. Swift, a pivotal figure in the transformation of the nation's meat packing trade. After losing money on the transport of live animals to other markets, Swift experimented with dressing meat in Chicago, then shipping various cuts at midwinter to East Coast markets. The success of this venture compelled Swift to invest in perfecting the refrigerated rail car. Swift then tackled marketing, for Americans were skeptical of eating meat that had been dressed a week before purchasing. He tantalized potential customers with a broad range of standardized cuts cosmetically trimmed to entice consumers to buy products that normally they would not have thought of purchasing. Finally, Swift found a railroad amenable to transporting refrigerated meat rather than livestock, which kept shipping costs down.<sup>7</sup>

Chicago's largest meat packing companies, including Armour, Cudahy, Hammond, Wilson, and Morris, adopted Swift's system and, rather than compete ruthlessly against each other, cooperated to secure their combined position as unparalleled leaders of the national meat trade. Refrigerated meat was the key component of Chicago's trade. It lowered the price of meat for consumers. It also raised potential capital for suppliers because they could target markets with specific cuts; they could sell more cuts because they no longer relied on butchers who stored whole carcasses, relying upon customer requests for a limited variety of cuts; and the meat packers could transform the unused

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.; Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 234-235, 242-243; "Armour & Co." *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org>, accessed January 26, 2009; Howard Copeland Hill, "The Development of Chicago as the Center of the Meat Packing Industry," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 10 (December 1923), 268-269.

<sup>7</sup> Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 233-240.

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remains of the carcasses for other products, like glue, soap, oil, fertilizer, oleomargarine, buttons, and hairbrushes. Previously, the unused portions of carcasses would have gone to waste - or filled another party's pockets with capital. These main Chicago companies also collectively controlled the gigantic Union Stockyard, which was established well outside the outskirts of town in 1865 and conveniently located near rail lines. As urban dwellers grew increasingly wary of living with livestock (especially after Mrs. O'Leary's cow allegedly started a conflagration that burned much of Chicago to the ground in 1871), smaller stockyards located within the city found themselves run out of business. Thus, the Chicago meat packers controlled the cattle trade, fixed prices, colluded with the railroads, and gained ownership of everything from grain supplies, to livestock, factories, refrigerated boxcars, icing facilities, and warehouses.<sup>8</sup>

A sign of the Chicago companies' industrial power lay in their imperviousness to scathing critiques. In this era of rapid industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and union agitation, the most damning critiques related to safety and sanitation. Workers earned low wages and lived in squalid conditions, while a lack of government oversight led to high risk of on-site injury. Not surprisingly, strikes were common, but usually fruitless; Chicago offered a ready supply of poor immigrant laborers desperate for work, no matter how poorly paid. Business leaders remained apathetic, even hostile, to calls for change. Tainted meat was common too. The most notorious case came with shipments of Chicago meat to troops fighting the Spanish American War. Again, the Chicago meat packers remained resistant to attack and business flourished. In 1906 Armour & Co., Swift & Co., Cudahy & Co., and the Nelson-Morris Packing Company were found guilty of accepting rail rebates, a violation of anti-trust laws, but the verdict achieved little in shifting the power of these companies in the meat industry.<sup>9</sup>

*Chicago Conquers the West*

After more or less conquering the Eastern seaboard to the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains south to Texas, Chicago's meat packing industry set its sights on the Pacific Coast. Five of Chicago's largest firms - Armour, Swift, Wilson, Cudahy, and Morris - arrived in California in 1887 in the guise of the American Cattle Trust and purchased Baden, Charles Lux's country estate, three years later. The Trust established the South San Francisco Land & Improvement Company to address real estate matters, and the Western Meat Company for meatpacking,

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<sup>8</sup> William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (Chicago, 1991), 207-259; Lizbeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York, 1990), 106-120; "People and Events: Philip Danforth Armour," at [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/chicago/peoplevents/p\\_armour.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/chicago/peoplevents/p_armour.html), accessed January 5, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> "Great Packers Indicted at Chicago," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 2, 1905, p. 19; "Good Words for the Beef," in *ibid.*, March 2, 1899, p. 3; "Army Beef Treated with Chemicals," *San Francisco Call*, March 20, 1899, p. 3; "Putrid, Spotted Beef Rejected in Large Quantities," in *ibid.*, March 31, 1899, p. 3; "Beef Barons May Not Be Indicted," in *ibid.*, June 10, 1905, p. 5; "Millionaire Packers Found Guilty," *Oakland Tribune*, June 12, 1906, p. 11.

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with Louis Swift serving as president of the Western Meat Company. The Cattle Trust then built a state-of-the art meat packing plant on the Baden grounds. With these components in place in San Francisco, the Cattle Trust shipped refrigerated meat from Chicago to the Pacific Coast, underbid on California cattle, and employed unskilled laborers at low wages to process and dress the meat at Baden. Three of the five companies - Armour & Co., Swift & Co., and Cudahy - also built relatively small packing houses in the city, so as to establish their individual brands in the region. Other Chicago-based companies that arrived in San Francisco during the late nineteenth century include Hammond & Co. and Libby, McNeill & Libby.<sup>10</sup>

San Francisco meat producers fought aggressively against the incursion of the Chicago companies and were successful for some time. For example, Miller & Lux established the Butchers' Board of Trade of San Francisco and Alameda Counties (BBT) in 1893. The BBT generally tried to regulate competition by implementing such policies as denying membership to a new butcher who opened a shop within one block of an established butcher, thereby blocking access to significant meat sources. The BBT also sought protection by the Board of Health against accusations made by the Western Meat Company about tainted meat from Butchertown. In addition, the BBT organized a boycott against Chicago meat, claiming that Butchertown meat was superior in quality because it was fresh rather than refrigerated. This last tactic proved the most effective; as the Chicago meat packers had encountered in other parts of the country, San Franciscans were reluctant to trust refrigerated meat. Efforts like these caused the Chicago companies to lose money in their West Coast venture, but the Chicago companies could afford to lose money for years.<sup>11</sup>

The tide began to turn by the late 1890s. As noted, summers tested the BBT's most persuasive argument against Chicago meat: Every year butchers lost significant amounts of Butchertown beef to the heat, while the Western Meat Company's refrigerated meat fared well.<sup>12</sup> Miller & Lux, the founding firm of Butchertown, sought permission to build a cold storage facility within two years of the Western Meat Company's arrival, foreshadowing the inevitable change in trend toward refrigerated meat. By 1901 Miller & Lux was colluding with the Western Meat Company to acquire control of the local retail trade, and then sell it to the Western Meat Company. The plan failed.<sup>13</sup> Some years later, J. H. McMenemy, former president of the Butchers' Board of Trade, claimed himself to be the only obstacle between Butchertown and the "beef trust" of the Chicago companies and Miller & Lux.<sup>14</sup>

After more than a decade of contentious and plodding growth, two events in 1906 accelerated and secured Chicago's dominance over the San Francisco meat market

<sup>10</sup> David Iglar, *Industrial Cowboys*, 160-163; San Francisco City Directories.

<sup>11</sup> "Says He's Boycotted," in *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 6, 1898, p. 32;

"Butchers Plead for Protection," in *ibid.*, May 1, 1903, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> "Havoc of the Heat," in *ibid.*, September 2, 1894, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> "They do Not Agree," *ibid.*, September 16, 1894, p. 11; "No Beef Trust Can be Formed," in *ibid.*, September 24, 1902, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> "Saved Butchertown from 'Beef Trust,'" in *ibid.*, June 2, 1911, p. 10.

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and directly led to the construction of 1050 Battery Street: passage of the Meat Inspection and the Pure Food and Drug acts, and the San Francisco earthquake and fires. Major reforms to the meat packing industry finally came after the 1906 publication of Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*. Sinclair wrote a story about a Lithuanian immigrant family's struggle to achieve the American dream of upward mobility and material prosperity, only to face political corruption and Capitalist exploitation that left the family destitute, unhealthy, and working and living in unsanitary and unsafe conditions in the city of Chicago. Only kinship networks and the Socialist labor union offered hope and relief to the immigrants. *The Jungle* presented a broad attack on the social injustice of the entire American capitalist system. President Theodore Roosevelt, however, famously read, while eating his morning sausage, scenes of rats and laborers getting swept up with the bloody pools of slaughtered cattle and pigs, then falling to their grizzly deaths into machinery - and into the nation's meat. Disgusted, Roosevelt threw his sausages out the window and quickly called for passage of the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act. The Meat Inspection Act allowed representatives of the Department of Agriculture to inspect meat packing plants and prevent bad meat from getting to market, while the Pure Food and Drug Act allowed the government to impose fines and imprisonment on producers who sold tainted or misbranded meat. Though not particularly strong measures, they represented an unprecedented level of government intervention in the marketplace.<sup>15</sup>

Ironically, the workplace conditions and processing practices of Armour & Co. - along with the likes of Swift, Cudahy, Morris, and Wilson - catalyzed support for increased government regulation, but these companies were least affected by the new legislation. They had the capital to upgrade their facilities and/or pay fines necessary to comply with the new regulations. The companies of Butchertown, including Miller & Lux, in contrast, had a mixed response to the new regulations. On the one hand, such regulation might curb the influence of the Chicago producers, which would be a welcome change. On the other hand, Butchertown, comprised of relatively modest-sized companies compared to those of Chicago, could not as easily afford to comply with the new regulations and procedures. Butchertown existed into the 1960s, but the fiscal impact of the acts of 1906 led to a significant decline in local businesses' dominance over the regional meat industry. Most notably, Miller & Lux, the one longtime giant in the Bay Area meat packing industry, steadily lost control of the local market to Chicago after 1906.<sup>16</sup>

The earthquake and fires of 1906 further bolstered the position of the Chicago-based companies in the San Francisco Bay Area's meat packing industry. While Butchertown lay in ruins, the Western Meat Company slaughterhouse in South San

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<sup>15</sup> Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, with an Introduction and Notes by James R. Barrett (Chicago, 1988); Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 253; Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: the Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York, 2003), 160-163.

<sup>16</sup> "Slaughter Houses Muse be Kept Clean," in *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 17, 1897, p. 14; "Will Continue the Meat War," *San Francisco Call*, March 14, 1895, p. 9; Iglar, *Industrial Cowboys*, 167-170.

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Francisco survived the quake unscathed, allowing the Western Meat Company to secure a government contract to supply meat to the relief effort. Armour's meat packing plant on Clay Street lay in ruins, as did the city facilities of Cudahy, Swift & Co., and the Western Meat Company, but their undamaged South San Francisco stockyard and packing facilities resulted in virtually no lapse in business. Thus, these companies profited from the quake. In addition, the Chicago firms had ample capital invested throughout the rest of the country and could afford to rebuild immediately in San Francisco. Within a year after the earthquake and fires, the Western Meat Company built a large reinforced concrete facility at the northwest corner of 6th and Townsend Streets; it included shipping offices and stables, cold storage, a smoke house, and a creamery. Cudahy built a two-story brick warehouse and smokehouse at 55 Union Street, between Battery and Front Streets, and Libby, McNeill & Libby built new facilities on Mission Street, south of Market. Incidentally, when Butchertown rebuilt, it included ice storage facilities; the Chicago way of meat packing thus ruled the industry nationwide.<sup>17</sup>

*Armour & Co. Moves to 1050 Battery*

In October 1906, Armour & Co. filed a permit to build a new smokehouse and meat packing plant at 1050 Battery Street, at the edge of the fire district and close to the northeast waterfront, which firefighters had almost miraculously saved from utter destruction. They hired Henry Geilfuss & Son to design a three-story brick building on the former site of the American Milling Company. The site held several advantages: the foundations of the American Milling Company warehouse survived the quake and fires, which could expedite construction (though it is not clear that the final building was constructed on the old foundations). The site also stood across the street from the National Ice & Storage Company buildings, which were under construction when the earthquake struck and were completed in 1907. The cold storage facilities obviated Armour & Co.'s need to include refrigerators in the new warehouse at 1050 Battery Street, again potentially expediting construction and reducing costs. Armour & Co. took up residence in the building in 1907 and remained there until about 1934.

Of all the buildings that the various Chicago-based firms constructed in post-quake San Francisco, very few survive. The Western Meat Company's major storage and packing facility at the northwest corner of 6th and Townsend, was most likely a victim of work related to the construction of Highway 280, and Swift's facilities at both 5<sup>th</sup> and Townsend and on Pacific Avenue are gone as well. High rises now stand where Libby, McNeill & Libby's building on Mission Street once stood, and its building on Pacific Avenue has given way to modern office buildings. Fittingly, the building of the nation's most powerful meat packing company, the Armour & Co. building at 1050 Battery Street, is one of the few survivors. This building also retains the highest level of integrity. The Cudahy building next door, which appears to be the only other building of the Chicago firms that dates to this period and still stands, has a two-story

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<sup>17</sup> Iglar, *Industrial Cowboys*, 167-170; San Francisco City Directories (1907-1908); Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., "San Francisco," (1913-1915), sheets 13 and 175.

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addition that significantly compromises its integrity. Of the two firms, Cudahy was also less influential than Armour.

The occupants of 1050 Battery Street between 1934 and 1944 are unknown, but the property remained in the Sesnon/Porter family until 1944, when Victor, Jr., John A., and William F. Traverso bought the property. In keeping with the history of the northeast waterfront and 1050 Battery Street, the Traverso brothers used the building as a wholesale grocery warehouse.<sup>18</sup> V. Traverso Co. remained at 1050 Battery Street until the company dissolved in 1964. The dissolution of Traverso and Rainbow Stores coincides with the demise of the northeast waterfront as a light industrial warehouse district.

CONTEXT FOR CRITERION C

*Henry Geilfuss & Son and Early-Twentieth-century Warehouse Architecture*  
Henry Geilfuss, one of San Francisco's most popular and influential architects of the late nineteenth-century, and his son designed 1050 Battery Street. This building marks a departure from their signature Victorian houses replete with decorative embellishments. Instead, it embodies modern trends in architecture

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<sup>18</sup> The Traverso family had first entered the food business in 1902, when Victor Traverso, Sr., opened a grocery store in North Beach, San Francisco's Italian neighborhood. Over the next twenty years, however, chain stores transformed the grocery business. In the chain store system, a central organization operated stores that offered the same products - usually national brands like Armour meats or Schilling spices - at standardized and significantly lower prices than independent grocers (usually around 10 percent lower). Chain stores also displayed those products in almost identical fashion at every store, so a consumer could enter any Safeway, for example, which was founded in southern California in 1914, and know exactly what s/he could find and where in the store it was located. A common defense against the incursion of chain stores can be found in the example of the Traverso brothers. Founded in 1922, V. Traverso Co. was the first communal grocer in San Francisco. It operated under the insignia Rainbow Stores (not related to the Rainbow Grocery now existing in San Francisco). Individual grocers remained independently owned, but membership in Rainbow Stores guaranteed access to national brands at discounted prices. Within six years, 150 Rainbow Stores operated in San Francisco alone. By 1928 V. Traverso Co.'s headquarters and warehouse had also relocated from a small storefront on Washington Street, just outside North Beach, to a larger space on Pacific Avenue that was strategically located next to Libby, McNeill & Libby and Swift & Co. facilities, and across the street from the Colombo vegetable market. In 1944, V. Traverso Co. upgraded again, this time to 1050 Battery Street and again marking the company's continued growth in the local grocery market. Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York, 1990), 106-120; "Wholesale Grocery Firm Establishes Buying Club," *The Examiner Retailer* (July 1928), at *Rainbow Food Stores: The First San Francisco Grocery Co-Op*, <http://papillonbusinesssolutions.com/RainbowFoodStores>, accessed January 8, 2009; Rainbow Stores to Gentleman, June 30, 1928, at *ibid.*; Rainbow Stores, "Bulletin No. 9," January 22, 1929, at *ibid.*; Traverso Family to Our Suppliers, October 1, 1964, at *ibid.*; San Francisco City Directory (1903); Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "San Francisco" (1913-1915), sheets 14 and 15; "Northeast Waterfront Historic District," 4.

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that sought a balance between function and ornamentation in all types of buildings. It is also a late example of the architecture firm's work and appears to be the only surviving example of Geilfuss & Son's industrial architecture.

Henry Geilfuss was born in Prussia in 1850 and received his architectural training at technical schools in Erfurt and Berlin. Before immigrating to San Francisco in 1876, Geilfuss worked for German railroad companies constructing bridges and heavy masonry structures. His career shifted significantly upon arriving in San Francisco. For much of the 1880s and 1890s, Geilfuss gained widespread recognition for his exuberant Italianate, Gothic, Eastlake, and stick style Victorian homes and mansions - the beloved iconic architecture of San Francisco that wrought the scorn of such architects as Willis Polk, Coxhead and Coxhead, and Bernard Maybeck in the 1890s. Geilfuss designed houses throughout the city - and apparently exclusively in San Francisco - but was particularly prolific in the Mission, Eureka Valley, and the Hayes Valley area of the Western Addition, near Alamo Square.<sup>19</sup> Despite these younger critics' disapproval of Geilfuss's work, late nineteenth-century biographies of Geilfuss were unanimous in their approval of the architect, declaring that he designed "some of the best buildings erected here."<sup>20</sup> And while best known for his houses, Geilfuss designed a variety of building types. Among his most famous non-residential designs were St. Mark's Lutheran Church (1894), an eclectic Romanesque and Gothic brick building that still stands on O'Farrell Street near St. Mary's Cathedral, the Kohler & Van Bergen's Winery, the United States Brewery, and the National Brewery.

Although generally considered an architect entrenched in nineteenth-century styles and building modes, Henry Geilfuss achieved a balance between functionalism and architectural beauty in his design for 1050 Battery Street that demonstrates his engagement with contemporary debates about industrial architecture. Engineers dominated industrial architectural design during the nineteenth century. They cared less about style than about experimenting with materials, building techniques, and forms that best suited the function of a building. Architectural details like a tower with a mansard roof, an elaborate cupola, or Grecian temple-like entrance often adorned engineer-designed buildings as afterthoughts; for the most part, engineers eschewed ornamental details. In contrast, architects, increasingly trained in Classical

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<sup>19</sup> Several of Geilfuss's houses remain standing (though many more have been demolished), including one of his most famous designs, the Westerfeld house, on Fulton Street at the northwestern corner of Alamo Square, which was designed in 1882 for a German-born confectioner and baker. Prominent building contractor John Mahony purchased the house after Westerfeld's death, followed by Russian émigrés in the 1930s, and during the 1960s it served as a hippie commune called the Calliope Company, which Tom Wolfe immortalized in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. Henry Geilfuss & Son, file at San Francisco Architectural Heritage; James Beach Alexander and James Lee Heig, *San Francisco Beautiful: Building the Dream City* (San Francisco, 2002), 237-239.

<sup>20</sup> "Henry Geilfuss," *California Architect and Building News*, September 15, 1889, in Geilfuss file, SFAH.



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architecture, art and architectural history, defined themselves as artists and considered the pursuit of beauty as paramount in architectural design. They frowned upon engineers as amateurs and their austere factories as eyesores. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, however, architects in San Francisco and across the nation cringed at what they perceived as a cacophony of cheap, overly decorated, and/or poorly designed buildings covering the landscape. In their quest for solutions to this nightmare, architects looked, in part, to industrial architecture both as an inspiration for restraint in modern design and as a type of architecture that could be infused with beauty.<sup>21</sup>

The Armour & Co. building embodies this relationship between architects, industrial architecture, and experiments in modern design. Several elements of the building reflect standard conventions of nineteenth-century industrial architecture. It is a traditional warehouse with load bearing exterior brick walls and heavy timber interior framing. The brick was exposed on the interior as well, except where steel lined the smokehouse ovens. The footings were constructed of reinforced concrete, and the faced brick work was bonded at every sixth course, as was mandated by city code. Nine-lite double hung wood sash windows set in segmental arches, common to industrial warehouses, occupied the three exposed elevations of the building. This design resulted in a fire resistant box with ample open space and significant sources of natural light and ventilation. In short, it was appropriately functional for a meat packing plant and smokehouse.<sup>22</sup>

Geilfuss also integrated decorative elements into the exterior design, elevating the building from the purely functional to the architectural, as understood in the early 1900s. These elements include the rusticated base, the inset panels, the parapet with its stepped cornice, the segmental arches, and the implied pilasters. All of these elements relieved the building of its relentless rectilinear quality and created a unified composition of Classically inspired architecture. Perhaps the most modern aspect of the building is the pilasters. By using the window recesses, a slightly projecting base, and the continuous cornice to create the impression of a pilaster, Geilfuss achieved a sophisticated level of abstraction that foreshadowed future developments in industrial architecture. As technology allowed windows to replace wall space and economic considerations made aesthetic embellishments impractical, architects increasingly depended on the structure itself to express design.<sup>23</sup>

Several of the decorative elements served functional purposes too. For example, the slightly projecting, rusticated base could hide blemishes from vehicles that bumped into the building and protect the building from potential structural damage that such a collision might cause. Segmental arches that

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<sup>21</sup> Bradley, *The Works*, esp. 201-223; Mary N. Woods, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley, 1999); Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World*, 9-106.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Corbett, *Building California: Technology and the Landscape* (San Francisco, 1998), 21-27, 41-43; and Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (New York, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-258.

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extended through the entire thickness of the wall not only broke up the monotony of the elevations, but transferred the weight of the wall to the spaces between the windows, eliminated the need for flammable wooden headers or corrosive steel, and thereby saved money in construction and potential damages. Unlike the decorative features of a typical Geilfuss house, then, none of the decorative features of the Armour & Co. building were frivolous or excessive.<sup>24</sup>

The \$7500 Armour & Co. building was a relatively significant commission for Geilfuss & Son to acquire in the post-earthquake period. As suggested, however, architectural tastes had shifted away from elaborate Victorian styles by the time the earthquake and fires engulfed much of San Francisco. Geilfuss, far more closely associated with the Victorian period than with modern movements, saw his productivity decline. As Richard Longstreth notes, architects like Geilfuss "had been removed from the architectural mainstream and... continued to work in ways they had learned early in their careers."<sup>25</sup> Henry Geilfuss & Son continued to practice until 1917.<sup>26</sup> The company all but disappears from the record, however, after 1910, making 1050 Battery Street a late example of Henry Geilfuss's oeuvre and a rare example of his surviving industrial work.

**CONCLUSION**

The Armour & Co. building at 1050 Battery Street captures the triumph of Chicago-based companies over the San Francisco meat packing industry. After nearly two decades of trying and failing to dominate the San Francisco meat packing industry through aggressive business tactics, the passage of the Meat Inspection and Pure Food and Drugs Acts of 1906 as well as the earthquake and fires of that year shifted Chicago's fortunes. The Chicago companies were able to profit from the natural disaster in ways that San Francisco firms could not. With ample capital to rebuild quickly in San Francisco and to comply with the new federal regulations, the Chicago companies were further able to exert their strength. Of all the Chicago companies, Armour & Co. was the most powerful meat packing firm in the country and a leader in the Midwestern city's conquest over the nation's meat packing industry and consumer habits. Fittingly, the Armour & Co. building at 1050 Battery Street is one of the few buildings to survive from the period when Chicago achieved its dominance over San Francisco's local leaders in the meat packing trade. The National Ice & Storage warehouses, which were integral to the refrigerated meat industry that Chicago pioneered, still stand across the street from the Armour & Co. building. The Cudahy building remains next door at 55 Union Street as well, underscoring the level of cooperation in which Chicago firms engaged to achieve and maintain their industry dominance. Having said that, 1050 Battery Street retains a much higher level of integrity than the Cudahy building, as it has undergone only minor

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 233-234.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World: Four Architects in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley, 1983), 80.

<sup>26</sup> Geilfuss file, San Francisco Architectural Heritage.

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exterior alterations since its 1907 construction. Finally, 1050 Battery Street is a late and rare non-residential example of master architect Henry Geilfuss, one of the most popular architects in San Francisco between the 1870s and 1890s. For these reasons, the Armour & Co. building at 1050 Battery Street is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C.

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### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

1050 Battery Street stands at the southeast corner of Battery and Unions Streets. The rectangular lot measures 120' north to south and 75' east to west, for a total area of 9,000 square feet.

#### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These boundaries have been determined for the nominated property because they correspond to the Assessor's parcel on which 1050 Battery Street stands. This parcel is known as Lot 003 in Assessor's Block 0111.



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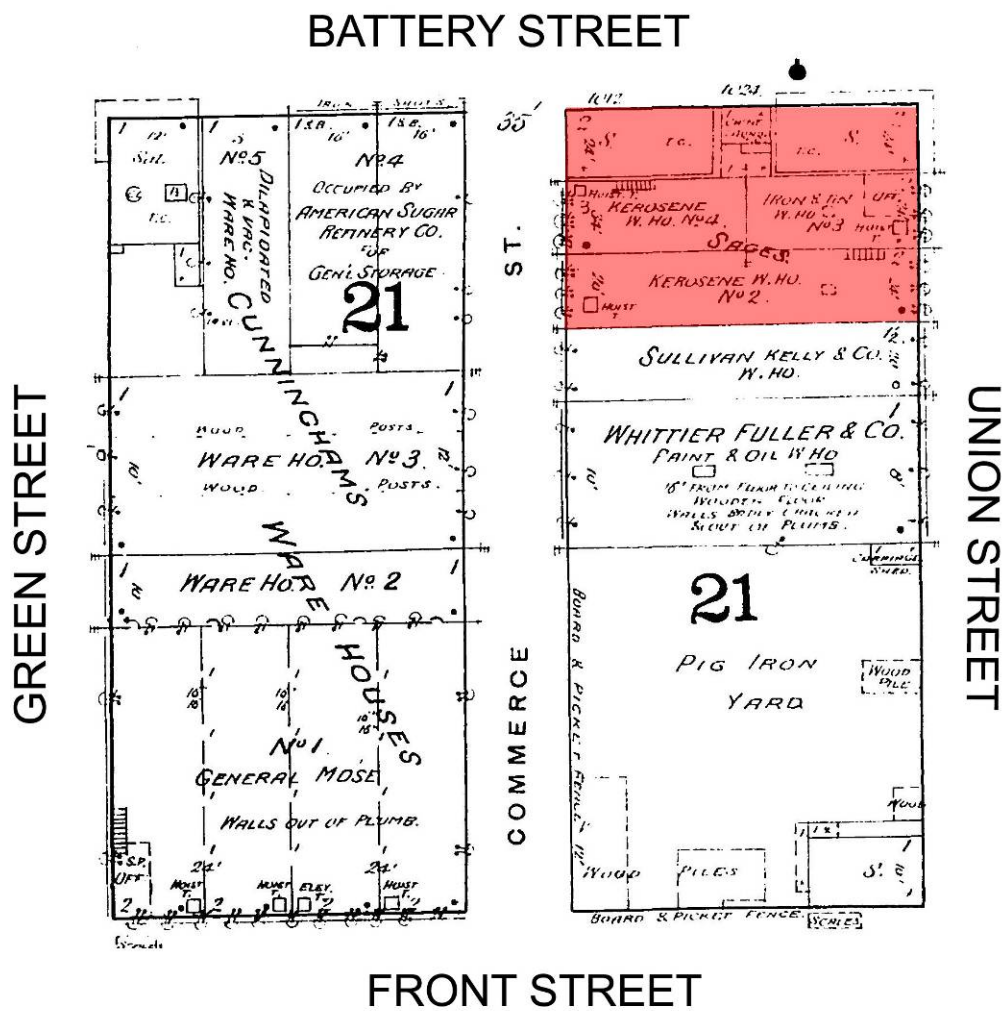
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### SANBORN MAP IMAGES

Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., San Francisco (1887), sheet 3a.



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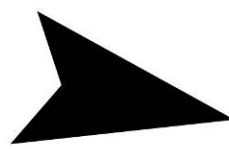
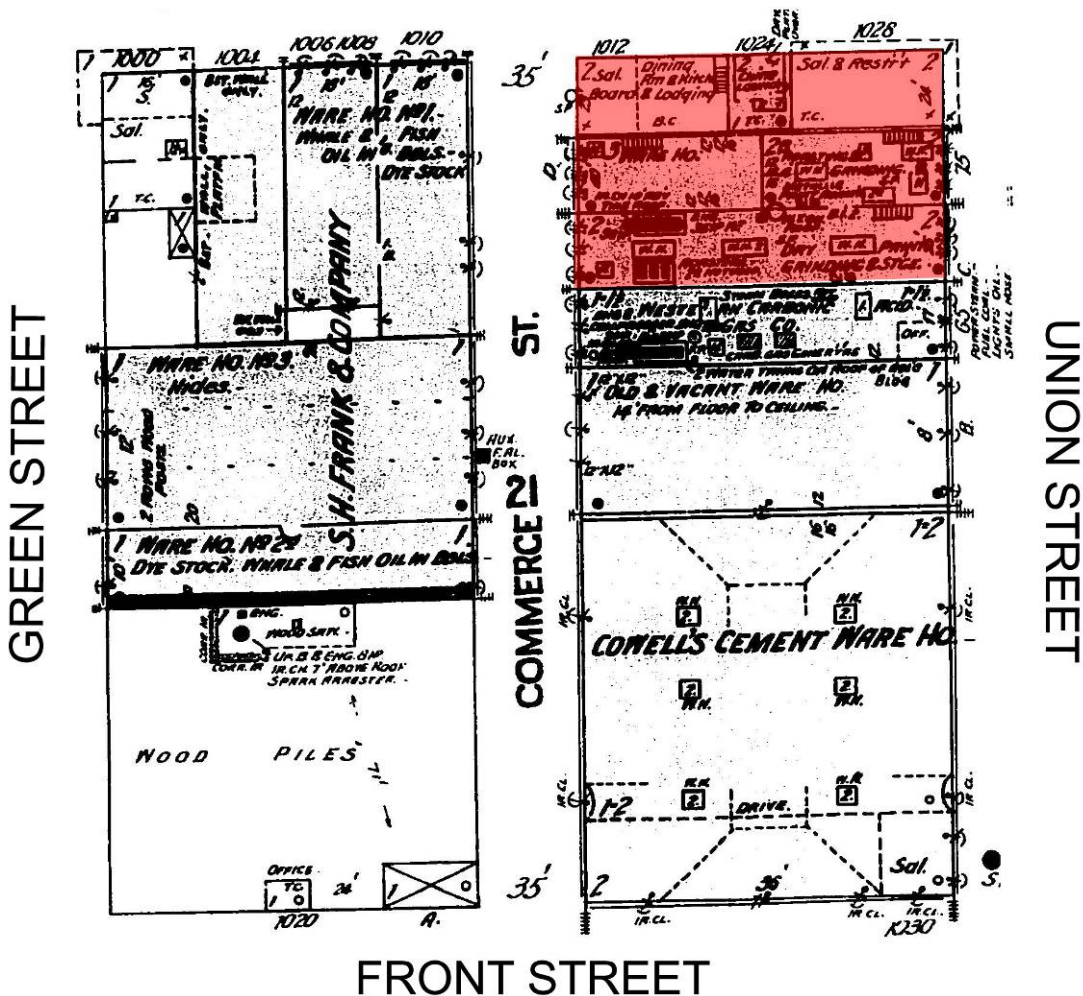
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Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., San Francisco (1899), sheet 14.

### BATTERY STREET



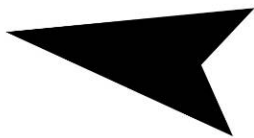
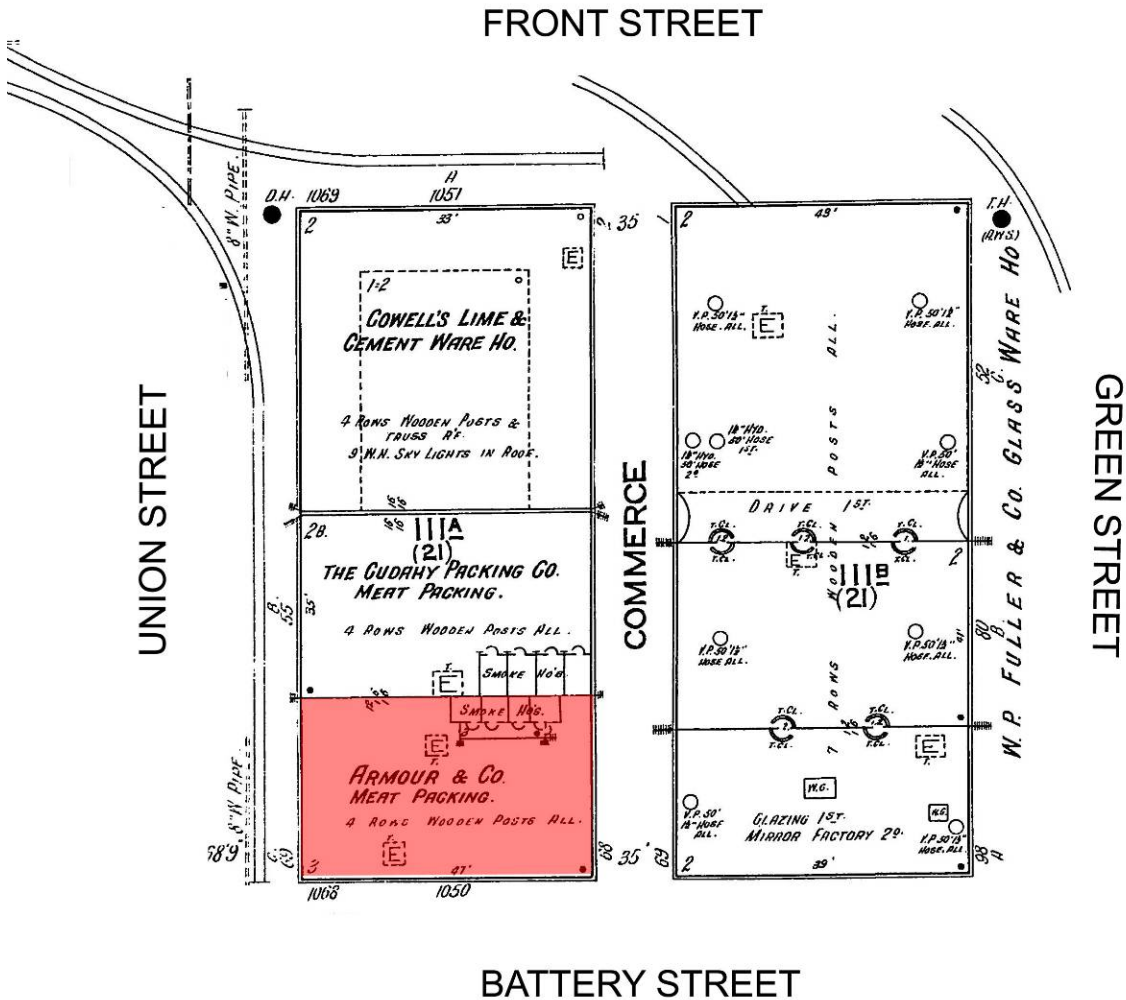
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Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., San Francisco (1913), sheet 13.



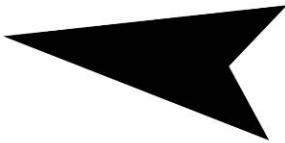
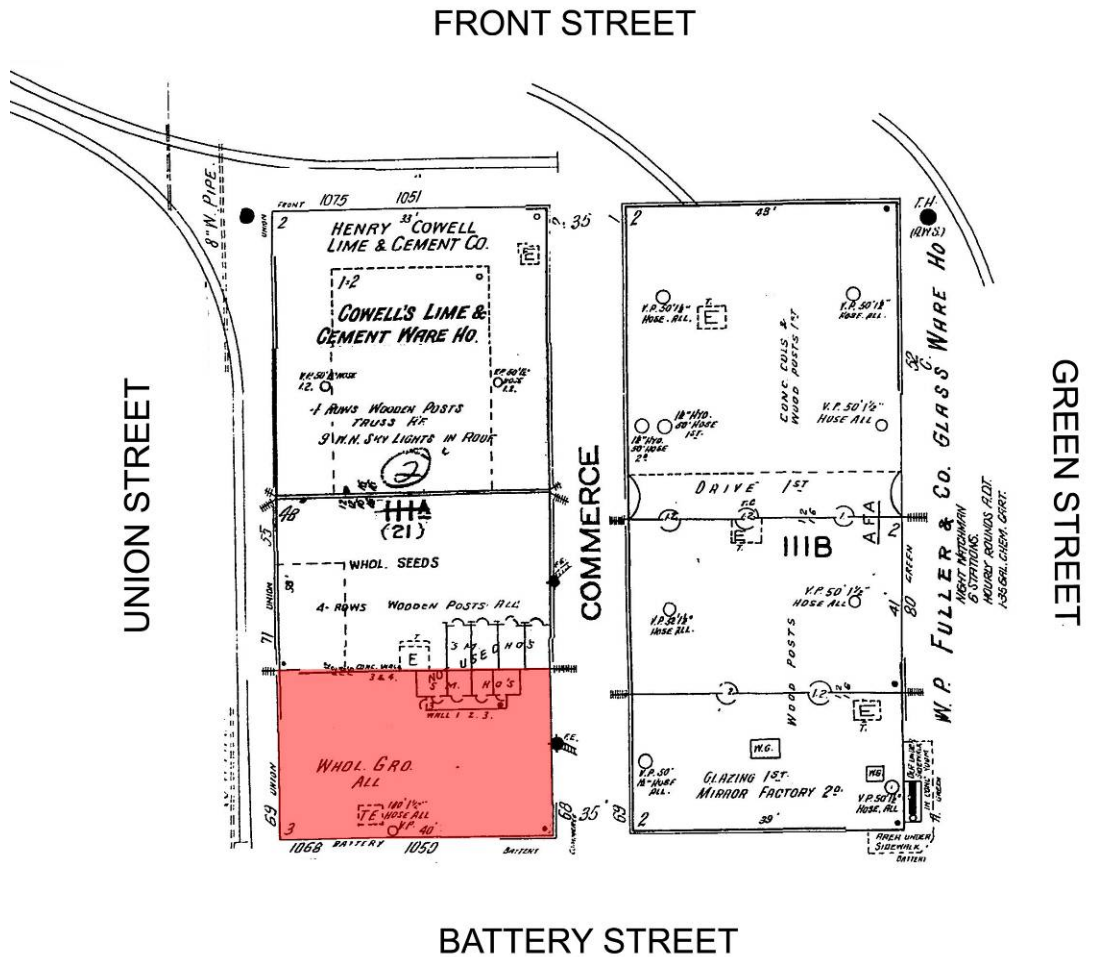
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Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., San Francisco (1950), sheet 13.



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BUILDING CHRONOLOGY

- 1906 - October, building permit application for 3-story brick warehouse on foundations of old American Milling Company. Iron clad frame section 13" above roof in center. Geilfuss & Son, architect; George Wagner, contractor.
- 1907 - January, building permit for 3-story plus basement smokehouse & warehouse. Footings reinforced concrete; foundation walls brick; face brick work laid in lime mortar and cement; face brick work bonded every 6<sup>th</sup> course; joists steel; flat roof of wood and iron covered with tar & gravel.
- 1918 - July, building permit application for 2-story brick addition. Ward & Blohme, architect and engineer; Barret & Hilp, builder/contractor.
- 1940 - October, building permit application to replace floors in bad condition; replace timbers same dimension as original; George Wagner, contractor.
- December, building permit application to remove two top floors; repair fire damage in other floors.
- 1941 - August , building permit application to construct unloading platform.
- 1944 - July, building permit application to erect new office partitions; no structural changes.
- 1970 - July, awning.
- 1975 - May, building permit application for renovation; "demo of portions of existing construction;" sidewalks, street trees, exit stairs, corridors, elevator, electrical, lighting, power, H-VAC, sprinkling system, seismic bracing.
- 1976 - December, building permit application for same work as above.
- 1977 - September, building permit application for same work as above.
- 1979 - February, building permit application for office development of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors; skylight; 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>-story stair; Esherick, Homesy, Dodge, and Davis (EHDD), architects.
- June, building permit application to install steel framed canopy over existing entrance; EHDD, architects.
- July, building permit application for gypsum board partitions, H-VAC system, sprinklers.

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Armour & Co. Building  
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July, building permit application to construct test kitchen, employees' lunch room, and shower room in basement.

1981 - May, building permit application to reinforce parapet.

1995 - January, building permit to remodel existing office (interior).

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HISTORIC PHOTOS



"Sansom bet Vallijo and Gren [Sansome between Vallejo and Green], " 1906. Courtesy of California Historical Society.

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National Park Service

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**PHOTO LIST**

Photographer: Carey & Co.  
[Digital photographs]

1. West (primary façade) and North elevations, looking northeast.
2. North and west elevations, looking southeast.
3. North elevation, looking southwest.
4. Main entrance, looking east.
5. Façade, first-floor fenestration, looking north.
6. Typical second-story window.
7. Typical third-story window.
8. South elevation, former fire escape, facing north.
9. Cornice.
10. South elevation, cornice detail and roof access addition,  
from below, looking northeast.
11. Roof, showing equipment and shared wall with adjacent  
building, looking northeast.
12. Interior timber framing.
13. Typical brick work in former smokehouse area.