

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name San Francisco Public Library North Beach Branch

other names/site number _____



2. Location

street & number 2000 Mason Street

not for publication

city or town San Francisco

vicinity

state California code CA county San Francisco code 075 zip code 94133

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

Signature of certifying official

Date

Title

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

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)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1		Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/ library

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/ library

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/ Ranch Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: OTHER

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The North Beach Library is a single story, brick building, rectangular in plan, with an asymmetrical low sloped gable roof supported on large exposed glulam beams. It is located on the edge of the North Beach Playground on a sloping site.

Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheet Page 1.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1959

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Appleton & Wolfard

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- 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.

Period of Significance (justification)

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The North Beach Library is one of eight libraries in San Francisco designed by the architecture firm Appleton & Wolfard. It represents a keen understanding of the modern library principles developed and distributed by the American Library Association after World War II. The design is based on a prototype created by Appleton & Wolfard, and the City Librarian, Laurence Clarke that produced a collection of buildings dramatically different from prior libraries and good examples of Mid-Century Modern design in Northern California.

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

See Continuation Sheet Page 2.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

See Continuation Sheet Page 11.

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The Property is located within San Francisco Assessors Parcel Number Block 0075 and Lot 001. However, only the footprint of the building shall be included within the boundary. North from the intersection of Mason Street and Columbus Avenue, the Property is one hundred feet by forty two feet to the east. To the south, the trellis restroom is and additional eight feet by thirty two feet to the east.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Johanna Street
organization Johanna Street, Architect date 31 August 2010
street & number 1423 15th Ave telephone 415-287-4143
city or town San Francisco state CA zip code 94122
e-mail johanna@streetarchitect.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ____.

Property Owner:

San Francisco Public Library North Beach Bran.
Name of Property

San Francisco, CA
County and State

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name San Francisco Public Library
street & number 100 Larkin Street telephone 415-557-4400
city or town San Francisco state CA zip code 94102

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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DESCRIPTION

The North Beach Branch Library is rectangular in plan featuring a low-pitched, gable roof, asymmetrically positioned. The front elevation of the library abuts the sidewalk of Mason Street and its west-facing red brick masonry wall is arranged in a saw-toothed pattern; a concrete planter is incorporated to take advantage of the triangular voids. Each north-facing fin of the sawtooth is full height metal sash glazing in a wood frame, divided two over two. Original metal sash casement windows, divided vertically, sit within the lower east glazing quadrants. The concrete and masonry of the west elevation has been painted in most pedestrian level areas due to vandalism. Nine, regularly spaced, deep, glulam beams articulate the wide eave of the front elevation. There are two points of entry to the library located on either side of the brick wall centered on the roof peak. The upper entry defines the corner of the south elevation with wood frame glazed side, and transom, lites flanking non-original, glazed metal double doors. The flanking terrazzo planter has been infilled and is painted in some locations. This entry is currently barricaded from use with a chain link fence due to handicap accessibility concerns. The other entry is located at a lower position due to the slope of Mason Street. It features similar non-original, glazed metal double doors with a wood frame glass transom that extends to the eave. A wood frame display case protrudes from the wall next to the doors. This is currently used as the main entry. The metal lettered sign was moved from its position on the masonry to the south of the upper entry, to centered on the masonry between the two entries.

Columbus Avenue intersects Mason Street at an angle, which created a triangular open area in front of the south elevation of the library. A wood trellis supported on red brick piers, shades the large, south-facing, floor-to-ceiling, metal, sliding glass doors and connects to the wall of what was initially a public restroom. The restroom, though not internally connected, was part of the scope of work for the design of the library. It is a small, low, rectangular, red brick masonry building with a flat roof. Wood trellis elements function as a small eave. The south elevation of the restroom features two flush metal doors and the north elevation has six, regularly spaced, high, punched, square windows.

The east elevation of the library faces tennis courts and is a tall, brick masonry wall articulated with the same nine, regularly spaced, deep glulam beams from the west elevation. Six pairs of low, metal vents located to the north of the roof peak are the only interruption in the, partially painted, red brick masonry wall. To the south, the east elevation of the library is divided into five vertical strips. Original metal sash casement windows, divided vertically, sit within each strip with a rectangular, concrete panel between floor levels. Fixed glazing fills in the spaces above the windows to the sloping eave. A flush metal door is positioned at the southern corner.

The short, rectangular north elevation features a long band of original metal sash casement windows, divided vertically, set below the side of a spanning glulam beam. The brick masonry wall is punctuated by ten metal vents regularly spaced. The western end of the north elevation has a brick walled exit stair enclosed with a metal gate and chain link fence.

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The lower entry of the library brings patrons to a long, curved, wood circulation desk and the open plan, main floor level. The interior side of the red brick masonry exterior walls is exposed and unpainted. The glulam beams are also exposed and articulate the acoustic tile ceiling. Florescent lights are arranged in square patterns and five square skylights are located near the eastern wall. The browsing area of the library, which overlooks the main floor, is located up half a flight of stairs to the upper entry landing and then up another half a flight stairs. Wood handrails flank both side of the stairs. The service area for the library staff is located below the browsing area, reached by a stair located beyond the circulation desk.

SIGNIFICANCE

Libraries in the United States after Carnegie

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was a steel magnate in the late nineteenth century. His philanthropy funded the construction of more than a thousand public branch libraries throughout the United States; seven within the City of San Francisco.¹ His secretary provided grant applicants with guidelines to help regulate construction of the many buildings. As such, Carnegie's influence on the appearance and layout of branch libraries was pervasive and lasted well after his philanthropic foundation stopped funding their construction. Carnegie libraries are symmetrically rectangular in plan, with the main floor located above a basement, situated half above grade and half below. A formal staircase leads to the main floor which is entered through a small vestibule. The main floor is mostly an open floor plan subdivided by low bookcases. Windows are placed six feet above the floor level on all sides of the building to line the walls with bookshelves but still allow for natural light. The Carnegie libraries were Neo-Classical in style reflecting the solemn importance of the democratic goals of the public library institution.

The prosperity of the 1920s allowed cities in the United States to finance their own construction of public branch library buildings. The appearance and layout of the city-funded projects tended to match, and are often confused with, the Carnegie-funded libraries. Demand for convenient branches outpaced construction and the trend of leasing spaces not specifically designed to be libraries persisted. When the Depression hit, libraries became more popular than ever. But funds for libraries decreased considerably during the 1930s, making it very difficult to serve the increased patronage. The United States Federal Government funded some library construction during the Depression through the Works Progress Administration in an effort to battle the severe unemployment. The Neo-Classical style started to disappear from library construction, in favor of more popular designs, during the 1930s.

After World War II, the United States quickly entered an era of affluence along with a population and construction boom. Funds for libraries were now available to address issues and theories that had been on hold since the beginning of the Depression. The American Library Association, the main professional organization for librarians in the United States since 1879, immediately identified this potential and published a document entitled Post War Standards for Public Libraries in 1943, followed by A National Plan for Public Library Service in 1948. These documents were used to promote, and became the basis

¹ Kelley, Tim. "Origins of the Seven San Francisco Carnegie Branch Libraries 1901-1921," Context Statement for the San Francisco Planning Department, January 2001, page 3.

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of, the modern public library in the United States. The National Plan featured the following principles for library buildings:

1. The library building should be easily accessible to its potential clientele.
2. The library building should be functional.
3. Standard types of library buildings should be developed.
4. Many public library buildings should be adaptable for expanded service in county or regional library systems.
5. The public library building of the future should be planned and equipped as a modern educational center.²

These principles were intended to be further developed at state and local levels to incorporate regional priorities. Librarians, planners and architects worked together to create innovative, modern, branch public library buildings based on the criteria defined by the American Library Association.

Public branch libraries were a relatively new building type, and though rigidly defined by Carnegie at the beginning of the twentieth century, were a focus of innovation by the 1950s. In fact, the underlying intention of the library buildings built after World War II was to be distinct from their Carnegie predecessors. Ralph Ulveling, Director of the Detroit Public Library and President of the American Library Association from 1945-46, wrote extensively about Post-War library construction and became a sought-after consultant.³ In a 1952 article for Architectural Record, he and his colleague Charles Mohrhardt, Associate Director of the Detroit Public Library, summed up one of the main design goals of the modern library. "The library is no longer a mere symbol of culture or a civic monument with pillars and impressive masses of steps; instead it is becoming a friendly place which reveals the resources within and invites one to share its hospitality."⁴

San Francisco and Laurence Clarke

In San Francisco, the last of the Carnegie-funded branch libraries were completed in 1921.⁵ From 1921 until 1951, while numerous branches were opened in leased spaces, the City built only three new branch library buildings; the Anza (1932), West Portal (1939) and Bernal (1940) Branches. In 1945, after thirty-three years as City Librarian, Robert Rea retired and was replaced by Laurence Clarke. "Clarke – a tall, energetic man with iron-gray hair - was in charge of the periodical department at the library during the depression."⁶ Invigorated by his new position and aware of the new standards promoted by the American Library Association, Clarke quickly started to advocate for more funds. To meet the standards of the American Library Association, the San Francisco Library had to continually increase personnel and acquire new books, in addition to modernization. But Clarke found that the Board of Supervisors was most receptive to requests for funds to build single branch libraries, particularly in the more affluent and politically influential neighborhoods. He and local community organizers initiated, one at a time,

² Joeckel, Carlton B. and Amy Winslow. A National Plan for Public Library Service. Chicago: American Library Association, 1948, pages 126-128.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Ulveling

⁴ Mohrhardt, Charles M., and Ralph A. Ulveling. "Public Libraries." Architectural Record, December 1952, page 149.

⁵ For a comprehensive history of the seven Carnegie Branch Libraries refer to "Origins of the Seven San Francisco Carnegie Branch Libraries 1901-1921," by Tim Kelley.

⁶ Strebeigh, Bob. "Our Neglected Libraries: Do the People Care?" San Francisco Chronicle, August 17, 1952, page 21.

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the construction of the Potrero (1951), Parkside (1951) and Marina (1954) Branches.

Unlike the Potrero, the Parkside Branch Library received a lot of attention. It was a local experiment in library design and everyone agreed that it was a tremendous success. A headline in the San Francisco Chronicle proclaimed “At Last, a Library with a Clubhouse Look” as if this was what everyone had been waiting for. City Librarian Laurence Clarke had worked closely with the architectural firm of Appleton & Wolfard to create a proto-type building that embodied modern library theory promoted by the American Library Association. “These days,” says Clarke “a public library must merchandise its services in much the same way as a successful bookshop sells its wares. It must entice people both young and old, to want to use it. Unfortunately, most existing public libraries look like a Water Department pumping station. Smart entrepreneurs make their cocktail lounges so attractive that you can’t help but stay on for another drink. Why not libraries?”⁷ The Parkside Branch was the “pilot project and proving ground for the entire program of public library building and expansion in San Francisco” and received national acclaim as an excellent example of Mid-Century Modern design.⁸

A Master Plan for San Francisco’s Libraries

The success of the Parkside project gave Clarke momentum to continue building branches. Using the original work developed for a failed 1948 ballot initiative, by 1953 the Planning Department had helped create a phased master plan. Phase One focused on under served neighborhoods and included a new branch building for North Beach, “Outer Sunset”, “Lake Merced Area”, Ingleside, Excelsior, and Bayview to be completed within five years. Phase Two included three additional new branch buildings with a five to ten year schedule and Phase Three included four more to be constructed in the 1960s, including one in Eureka Valley.⁹ Phase Two and Three mostly involved the replacement of the “out-dated” Carnegie-era libraries and never came to fruition. By the end of the 1960s, Phase One was all but complete and the work was performed almost entirely by Appleton & Wolfard.

The phased master plan developed by the San Francisco Planning Department in 1953 featured these principles.

1. Service Area: In general, branch libraries should have a service area range of not more than one mile, and should be distributed so that all sections of the residential community areas of the city are within the service range of a public library. The spacing of the branch libraries should vary in relation to present and prospective population densities and characteristics, physical barriers, and transit and trafficways pattern.
2. Size and Population: In general, the library system should be comprised of large branches each serving a population of 25,000 to 50,000. In areas of low population density or areas prescribed by physical barriers small branches may be developed to serve a population of 10,000 to 15,000.
3. Location: Branch libraries should be located where a variety of community facilities attract the

⁷ “At Last, a Library With a Clubhouse Look.” San Francisco Chronicle, October 28, 1951, page 9L.

⁸ “Report on a Plan for the Location of Public Libraries in San Francisco.” San Francisco Planning Department. April 1953, page 34.

⁹ Ibid, pages 24-25.

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residents of the surrounding area. Branch libraries should be easily accessible by pedestrian routes and vehicular trafficways, and should be not more than a level block from a transit stop.

4. Parking: Parking for motor vehicles and bicycles should be readily available on or near the site of a branch library.

5. Appearance and Design: Public library buildings should be simple and functional in design and in harmony with their surroundings. Buildings should be planned for the pleasure and convenience of the public, and for economy and efficiency in operation and maintenance.¹⁰

North Beach

“No branch library stirred more controversy (or any, for that matter) than the North Beach branch. While several of the new branch libraries were located in newer areas of the city with significant space available for development, the North Beach branch was being constructed in one of the oldest and densest neighborhoods in the city. Not coincidentally, as Bill Simons of the San Francisco Chronicle had predicted well over a decade earlier, location proved to be the most controversial issue. Washington Square was ruled out. The Library Commission favored a triangular lot bounded by Columbus, Powell and Greenwich, just south of the North Beach playground. Nothing apart from discussions concerning the library’s location happened for two years. Then in the spring of 1956 the Library Commission chose a site along the western edge of the North Beach playground, which required the elimination of one of three tennis courts. While the Recreation and Park Commission had to cede land for other libraries in other parts of the city – for the Marina branch for example – it protested such an intrusion in North Beach, because the neighborhood’s recreational facilities were particularly limited. Mayor George Christopher intervened at this point... He first appointed a neighborhood committee to recommend an alternative location to the playground site, and the committee concluded that the library be located on the triangular lot bounded by Mason, Columbus and Lombard. Christopher rejected this suggestion, because a block of Mason would have to be closed to create a buffer zone between the building and the streets surrounding it. It was perceived by some that such a move would create traffic and parking problems. The site was also thought to be too small and too expensive. In the end, Christopher essentially mandated that the library be located at the playground site. The Parks and Recreation Commission relented.”¹¹

Location and accessibility

Location and accessibility were important modern library elements in both the American Library Association’s National Plan and the Plan developed for San Francisco in 1953. On a large scale, convenient locations were a part of an effort to assure that all people, throughout the country, had access to a public library and to encourage use of the system. By 1956, the Federal Government issued the Library Services Act. The initiative was directed towards rural areas but it validated the work underway in San Francisco, continuously expanding library service to all areas. On a smaller scale, convenient

¹⁰ Ibid, pages 15-21.

¹¹ “North Beach Branch Library Historic Resources Technical Report.” Carey & Co., April 30, 2009, pages 8-10.

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locations, in the early 1950s, were associated with shopping districts. Post-War America was experiencing an economic boom and shopping districts were heavily trafficked. Influential librarian/consultants such as Ralph Ulveling and Charles Mohrhardt, encouraged the location of branch public libraries within these busy shopping districts to “attract” more people to the library and make picking up a book as easy as buying a loaf of bread.¹² The North Beach Branch is conveniently located near a shopping district.

Post-War libraries embraced elements of retail design to fully benefit from their shopping district context. Appealing views of the interior of the library, that revealed books and a pleasant atmosphere, were carefully planned to attract patrons in much the same way as a retail building. The easily accessed front entry doors were predominately glass surrounded by glazed sidelites and transoms, a direct reference to a storefront assembly. At the North Beach Branch, Appleton & Wolfard attempted to take up as little of the precious playground space as possible by setting the front elevation of the library up against the sidewalk of Mason Street rather than set back like many of the other libraries. The relationship of the building to the sidewalk is the most retail-like of the San Francisco Post-War libraries. It retains its original storefront-like entries and even features a retail style display case located near the entry to highlight the books and media inside the library.

The formal staircases of the Carnegie Libraries were attractive architectural elements but they made the libraries more difficult to navigate for the elderly and physically handicapped. The stairs also acted as a symbolic barrier. The temple-like qualities of a formal stair might deter patrons from feeling welcome to enter the building. Without stairs, Post-War libraries were as easily accessible as the stores in the nearby shopping district. The North Beach Library had two points of entry due to a sloping site. One was recessed toward Columbus Avenue and the other recessed toward Mason Street. The Mason Street entry brought patrons directly to the curved circulation desk and main library floor level. The Columbus Avenue entry, initially considered the main entry, was five steps higher and led to the browsing area up another four steps which overlooked the main library floor. Although the addition of steps was generally discouraged at the time this was necessary to achieve other important design elements. To make the building as compact as possible, the service area for the library staff was located below the browsing area reached by an interior stair, located beyond the circulation desk.

Mid-Century Modern Home

While elements of retail design were employed to attract people to the libraries, residential qualities were used to make patrons feel at ease so that they would stay longer and return often. Mid-Century Modern homes were predominantly single-story, located outside of urban centers and featured a convenient location for an automobile. They were set back from the street with ample front and rear yards. Open floor plans and abundant glazing filled the interiors with natural light and diminished the barrier between interior and exterior. The technology developed during World War II was now available for private consumption and houses were filled with all sorts of new tools and inventions. Radiant floor heating, provided a comfortable environment and the fireplace was no longer required for warmth but

¹² Mohrhardt, Charles M., and Ralph A. Ulveling. “Public Libraries.” *Architectural Record*, December 1952, page 152.

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used as a location for relaxation. These domestic design principles appeared in mid-twentieth century branch public library construction. The North Beach Branch is residentially scaled; single story with an open floor plan. It features a living room like space with a fireplace and carefully planned glazing allowing for a well lit area.

The architectural style of the North Beach Branch was also residential. It referenced the popular elements of suburban properties being built in the area by developers such as Joseph Eichler. Joseph Eichler (1900-1974) was a prolific real estate developer, building over 11,000 homes in California between 1950 and 1974.¹³ His homes were predominantly based on the designs by Anshen & Allen and utilized exposed beams, extensive glazing and low (or no) sloped roofs. The beams, over-hang, massing and roof shape of the North Beach Branch are all elements of this popular regional style of Mid-Century Modernism.

Windows and Light

Architects during the middle of the twentieth century, used large areas of glazing to dissolve the barrier between interior and exterior. Philip Johnson took this idea to the extreme with his 1949 Glass House. Architects also used windows to deliberately manipulate natural light to create a particular interior ambiance. In libraries designed after World War II, the aim was to provide abundant diffuse natural light evenly throughout the building. Appleton & Wolfard carefully positioned large expanses of glass on the north and east elevations of their branch public libraries. Then they used light colored walls and floors to bounce the diffuse light to all surfaces of the library. While views to the south and west were often advantageous, the windows had to be shaded from allowing direct, glaring sunlight into the library. Appleton & Wolfard employed a deep overhang along with a creative zig-zag shaped wall and their signature trellis feature to prevent unwanted direct light within the North Beach Branch Library.

Florescent lighting was also used to illuminate the interiors within the Post-War branch libraries. It was arranged regularly throughout the ceiling to evenly light the open floor plan. The Post-War period was a time of rapid change and people were generally optimistically forward looking which encouraged flexible, adaptable design. The evenly lit space of the library anticipated easy change to the layout and use. Ralph Ulveling and Charles Mohrhardt, reiterated in their 1952 article for *Architectural Record*, "Illumination should be evenly distributed over the public service area so that freestanding bookcases, tables and other equipment may be moved to new positions and still be well-light."¹⁴ Appleton & Wolfard creatively positioned the utilitarian light fixtures in the North Beach Branch to create an attractive ceiling that also served the functional requirements of even light. In fact, Appleton & Wolfard creatively addressed all the utilitarian principles of the modern library with an appealing regional Mid-Century Modernism that led to more than a decade of library building in San Francisco.

Appleton & Wolfard

Abraham A. Appleton was born in the summer of 1887 in San Francisco.¹⁵ He attended the University

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Eichler

¹⁴ Mohrhardt, Charles M., and Ralph A. Ulveling, "Public Libraries." *Architectural Record*, December 1952, page 152.

¹⁵ *American Architects Directory* R. R. Bowker LLC., 1955

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of California at Berkeley and studied architecture under John Galen Howard until 1908.¹⁶ A staunch Classicist, Howard most likely influenced Appleton to go on to the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. On his return to San Francisco, Appleton worked for William C. Hays, a “faculty and professional colleague”¹⁷ of Howard. In 1913, Abraham Appleton proposed to Hilda Oser.¹⁸ They married and had one child, Robert Oser Appleton. Robert would later become an architect and join his father’s firm.

By the early 1920s, Abraham Appleton had partnered with Samuel Lightner Hyman. Hyman had also attended the University of California at Berkeley and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Early works by Hyman & Appleton included an apartment building located at the southwest corner of Powell Street and Pine Street in downtown San Francisco, completed in 1922 and an apartment building located at the northwest corner of Pacific Avenue and Laguna Street, built in 1926.¹⁹ Noteworthy in Hyman & Appleton’s oeuvre are a significant number of buildings designed for the San Francisco Jewish community. Appleton was a member of the Concordia-Argonaut Club which may have led to commissions such as the design of the seven-story Mt. Zion Nurse’s Building located on Sutter Street at Scott Street (built in 1925, now demolished).²⁰ The Hebrew Home for the Aged, a large complex bounded by Mission Street, Silver Avenue, Lisbon Street and Avalon Avenue (built in 1923) was another high profile project for Hyman & Appleton. The Eureka Benevolent Society Building housed the Jewish philanthropic organization that catered to the sick and families of the deceased. It is located on the northeast corner of Post Street and Scott Street and designed by the firm in 1930.

During the construction slump of the 1930s, building owners often chose to modernize by adding a “vener of Art Deco ornamentation” rather than building a new structure.²¹ Hyman & Appleton “updated” several buildings in this way, including 343 Sansome Street, the former Crown-Zellerbach Building (built in 1908, renovated in 1930) and 1035-1045 Market Street.²² The Sinai Memorial Chapel for the Chevra Kadisha, the Jewish Holy Burial Society, located on the northwest corner of Divisadero Street and Geary Boulevard (built in 1937) is an elegant example of the firm’s Art Deco Style.²³

Appleton was active in, and respected by, the local architectural community, and in 1940, became president of the Northern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. In 1948, his partner Samuel Hyman died; by this time, Harold Wolfard was playing a key role at the firm. Harold Nelson Wolfard was born October 6, 1907 in Laramie, Wyoming but lived most of his life in Berkeley. He attended Berkeley High School followed by the University of California at Berkeley, graduating with a degree in Architecture in 1931. He worked as a draftsman during his education and interned at several

<http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/1956%20American%20Architects%20Directory.aspx>.

¹⁶ Winter, Robert. *Towards a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts & Crafts Architects of California*. University of California Press: Berkeley, page 13.

¹⁷ Ibid, page 33.

¹⁸ “Engagements and Weddings on Calendar.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 7, 1913, page 26.

¹⁹ “Estate Builds Structure.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 21, 1922, page 7.

²⁰ “Abraham A. Appleton.” Obituary. *San Francisco Examiner*, August, 25, 1981, page B7. “Mt. Zion History”

<http://mountzion.ucsfmedicalcenter.org/history/index.html>.

²¹ Crowe, Michael F. *Deco by the Bay*. New York: Viking Studio Books, 1995, page 55.

²² *Splendid Survivors*. San Francisco: California Living Books, 1979, page 217.

²³ “Abraham A. Appleton.” Obituary. *San Francisco Examiner* August, 25, 1981, page B7.

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offices after graduation before joining Hyman & Appleton in 1936. Wolfard left Hyman & Appleton to work on the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition with the California Commission but never really severed relations.²⁴

Once work for the Exposition was completed, Wolfard returned to Hyman & Appleton. He received his license in 1940 and within a few years became a partner at the firm. The firm of Appleton & Wolfard worked on numerous project types including, residential, religious and institutional throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Appleton's aptitude with Jewish religious building continued with his new partner with the construction of Temple Emanu-El (1948) in San Jose and Temple Beth Sholom (c. 1950) in San Leandro. The eight San Francisco Public Branch Libraries, however, represent the firm's most renowned achievement. Wolfard played the major role in the design of the San Francisco Branch Public Libraries from 1951 to 1966. His name almost exclusively appears on the drawings in the box labeled "approved by". Appleton's son, Robert also worked on the drawings with Wolfard and probably did a significant amount of the drafting. His name often appears on the drawings in the box labeled "drawn by". The senior Appleton only signed the North Beach Branch drawings.

The North Beach Branch Library was such an extended and controversial project that it, no doubt, tried the patience of everyone involved. Something of Wolfard's nature can be derived from an incident at one of the public meetings for the North Beach Branch. A Library Commissioner wrongly accused Wolfard of negligence and the statement was printed in the newspapers the next day.²⁵ Obviously incensed, Wolfard immediately presented a resignation letter for the project to the Library Commission stating that "no such project can be successful without the mutual confidence and trust necessary between architect and client which has been rather publicly denied..."²⁶ He went on to remind the Library Commission of his past projects; "a very real contribution to Library Architecture in America."²⁷ Harold Wolfard was clearly aware and proud of his achievements in modern library design. The Library Commission formally apologized and the Appleton & Wolfard design for North Beach was completed but Wolfard, still perhaps harboring some bitterness, did not sign the drawings.

Appleton & Wolfard continued to work together through the 1960s and elements of their successful San Francisco branch public libraries appeared in other projects such as the Sonoma United Methodist Church (c.1955) and the San Francisco County Fair Building (1960) in Golden Gate Park. Appleton & Wolfard were working on the design of the Fair Building concurrently to the Merced Branch Library.²⁸ Set on a three-acre site in the southeast corner of the Arboretum, the design of the Fair Building incorporated elements from the Parkside and Marina Branch Libraries. Features such as enticing views of the interior through floor to ceiling windows, a clerestory of glass block and a prolific use of the Appleton & Wolfard-designed wood trellis system are all direct references to the libraries. The building,

²⁴ Wolfard, Harold Nelson. "Application for Licensure as an Architect in California." 1937.

²⁵ "Library Plan Approved, Architect Is Under Fire." San Francisco Chronicle, May 2, 1957, page 3.

²⁶ Wolfard, Harold. Letter. May 1, 1957.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Hogan, Phyllis. "Hall of Flowers: Spacious Garden Center Houses Shows and Meetings for San Francisco." New York Times, January 15, 1961, page X19.

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also known as the Hall of Flowers, received national attention with an article in the New York Times in 1961. "San Francisco's Hall of Flowers has a low, sloping roof. Its northern exposure give even light with neither shadow nor warmth. A mixture of fluorescent and incandescent light approximates daylight. One wall between the gallery and the parking lot slides away permitting a light pickup truck to carry heavy plants directly into the show room. There are no steps, indoors or out. This is a major factor in flower shows which, Stettler notes, attract many elderly people."²⁹ The firm was dissolved in the 1970s. Harold Wolfard died in 1977. Abraham A. Appleton died in 1981. In his obituary, Appleton was described as "one of the titans in the local architectural world."³⁰

Criterion A

"Historic contexts are those patterns or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (and ultimately its significance) within prehistory or history is made clear."³¹ The North Beach Branch Library in San Francisco relates to an optimistic fervor in the United States after World War II during which librarians promoted new standards and theories which became the basis of the modern library. The American Library Association called for creating a repeatable "standard" library type that was accessible, functional, adaptable, and modern. The modern public library was developed in the middle of the twentieth century by librarians, architects, and planners. In San Francisco, City Librarian Laurence Clarke and the architectural firm of Appleton & Wolfard developed a nationally recognized prototype branch library building that successfully conformed to Post-War modern library trends and incorporated local ideals. The North Beach Branch Library was based on the prototype and was part of a carefully planned and deliberate building campaign. Each library was a reflection of principles of the modern public library promoted by the American Library Association after World War II. The North Beach Branch is significant based on National Register Criteria A. It is "associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history."³²

Criterion C

The North Beach Branch is also significant according to National Register Criteria C: "That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction."³³ The Appleton & Wolfard-designed library creatively addressed the all utilitarian principles of the modern library with appealing retail elements such as storefront windows, a display case and artificial illumination. Appleton & Wolfard also incorporated the popular, regional, suburban residential qualities typical of Mid-Century Modern design in Northern California. Due to the number of branches designed by Appleton & Wolfard, their success

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Abraham A. Appleton." Obituary. San Francisco Examiner August, 25, 1981, page B7.

³¹ "How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form" U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, 1999. page 11.

³² Ibid, page 1.

³³ Ibid.

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and exposure, the North Beach Branch is a significant contribution to Library Architecture in San Francisco in the mid-twentieth century. The North Beach Branch Library has not been rehabilitated since it was constructed fifty years ago and is the only library of the group that retains significant amounts of the original furniture, including shelving, tables and chairs. It possesses a very-high degree of integrity.

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View of (Front) West Elevation.
Taken 27 April 2010 by Johanna Street.

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North Beach Branch Library, San Francisco.
View of South Elevation.
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View of East Elevation.
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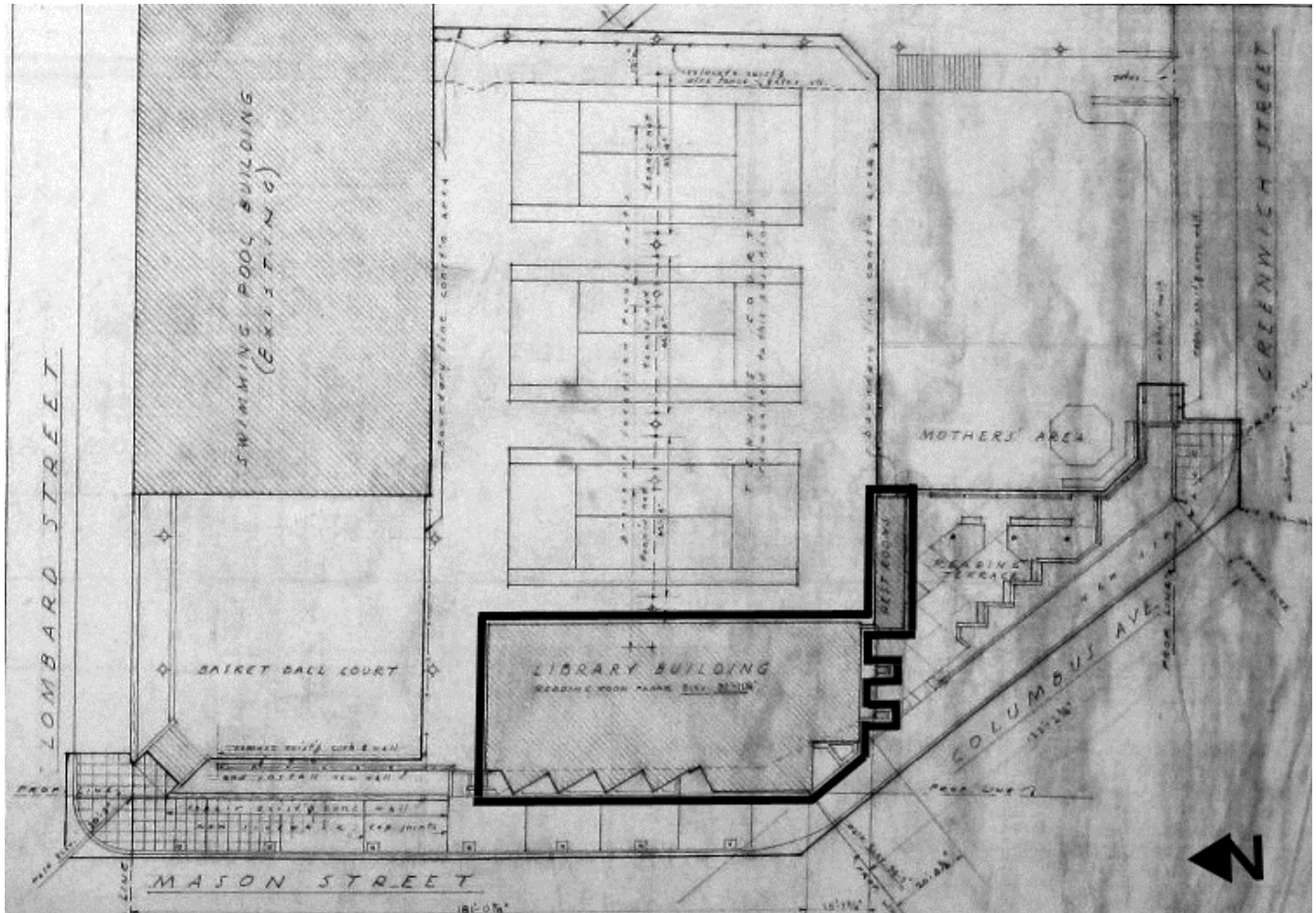
North Beach Branch Library, San Francisco.
View of North Elevation.
Taken 27 April 2010 by Johanna Street.

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North Beach Branch Library, San Francisco.
Property Boundary.
Drawn over original site plan from 1957, Johanna Street in 2010.