

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
CHR Status Code: _____

Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

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Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 1501 O'FARRELL ST

P1. Other Identifier: Rosa Parks Elementary School

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

*a. County: San Francisco

*b. USGS Quad: San Francisco North, CA Date: 1995

c. Address: 1501 O'FARRELL ST City: San Francisco ZIP 94115

d. UTM Zone: Easting: Northing:

e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number 0723 042

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

1501 O'Farrell Street is located on a 289' x 516' lot on the south side of O'Farrell Street between Hollis Street and Inca Lane. Built in 1927, 1501 O'Farrell Street is a reinforced concrete school building designed in the Classical Revival style. The main building is 3-stories high, while the hyphen, auditorium and auxiliary building are all 1-story high. Together, these buildings create a generally J-shaped complex of buildings, with the irregular-plan, detached auxiliary building located within the interior angle of the plan. The buildings are clad with smooth concrete and have flat roofs clad with built-up roofing material, except for the auditorium, which has a hip roof clad in built-up material and the auxiliary building, which has a hip roof covered with clay tile. A rooftop playground deck is located at the south end of the main building. The foundations and watertables are concrete. Playground areas are located to the south and east of the school buildings.

The main entry to the school complex is located at the center of the primary façade, on the hyphen between the main building and the auditorium. It features a gateway consisting of four square columns, topped by a paneled lintel. (continued)

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP15. Educational Building

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other

P5a. Photo



P5b. Description of Photo:

View of primary façade, looking southwest. 9/17/2008

*P6. Date Constructed/Age:

Historic Prehistoric Both

1926-1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance M

*P7. Owner and Address

SAN FRANCISCO CA 94102

*P8. Recorded By:

Page & Turnbull, Inc., CPH
724 Pine Street
San Francisco, CA. 94108

*P9. Date Recorded: 9/24/2008

*P10. Survey Type:

Reconnaissance - Level 1

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "None")

Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan

*Attachments: NONE Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record

Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record

Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (list):

*Recorded By: Page & Turnbull, Inc., CPH

*Date Recorded: September 2008 Continuation Update

***P3a: Description (continued):**

A decorative iron gate at the primary entry provides access to an atrium. The primary entry includes partially glazed, wood double doors surmounted by a fanlight. Secondary entries are located on the west and south facades of the main building. Both secondary entrances are recessed and feature partially-glazed, wood double-doors with glazed transoms. The southern entrance is surrounded by a projecting portico with a gable roof and arched opening.

The primary window type on the main building and hyphen are six-pane, fixed, aluminum sashes with operable awning portions at the center. For the most part, these windows have no trim. The auditorium has large, nine-pane fixed windows surrounded by wall panels and molded trim. The auxiliary building has segmentally arched window openings with three-pane, aluminum sash windows.

The facades of the main building and auditorium terminate in simple cornices that include multiple molded beltcourses. The north façade of the hyphen terminates in a simple paneled frieze, a dentil molding, and a small pent roof. The facades of the auxiliary building terminate in the overhanging eaves of the roof. Additional decorative features include a lettered sign at the northwest corner of the main building that reads: "Rosa Parks Elementary School." Label moldings and shield motifs are located over some windows on the main building, while other window openings have decoratively chamfered corners or molded surrounds. A tower is located at the southwest corner of the main building and features a gable roof with dentils at the roofline, a series of arched windows flanked by colonettes, and ornamental medallions.

The building appears to be in good condition.



View of north façade of main building, looking southwest.
Source: Page and Turnbull



View of east façade and auxiliary building, looking west.
Source: Page and Turnbull



View of west façade, looking northeast.
Source: Page and Turnbull

State of California - The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Detail of primary entrance into school complex.
Source: Page and Turnbull



Southwest corner of building, showing tower and secondary entry.
Source: Page and Turnbull

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*NRHP Status Code 5D3

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*Resource Name or # (assigned by recorder) 1501 O'Farrell Street

B1. Historic name: Raphael Weill School; Rosa Parks Elementary School

B2. Common name: Rosa Parks Elementary School

B3. Original Use: School

B4. Present use: School

*B5. Architectural Style: Renaissance Revival; altered

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

1927: Constructed. 1964: Play yard constructed, including paving, landscaping, fencing, benches, etc. 1966-1967: Auxiliary building at center of property constructed. Kitchen/cafeteria modernized. 1995: Extensive remodeling.

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features: Playgrounds to the east and south. Auxiliary building at center of complex.

B9a. Architect: Frederick H. Meyer & Albin R. Johnson b. Builder: Unknown

Cultural community development; Golden Age of

*B10. Significance: Theme Schools Area: Japantown, San Francisco, California

Period of Significance 1927 Property Type Educational Applicable Criteria A/1, C/3

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)

Raphael Weill School was named after a San Francisco businessman, philanthropist, gastronome and patron of the arts, who is best known for his associations with the White House department store. Raphael Weill (ca. 1837-1920) was French and immigrated to California in 1853. The White House was the first dry-goods retailer in San Francisco, having first opened in 1854 under the name Davidson & Lane. Weill became associated with the business the following year and by 1885 served as a senior partner. Weill was a member of the Bohemian Club and a noted philanthropist. He served as the city's director of schools in 1883 and was known for generosity that included funding classroom improvements with his personal fortune.

The subject parcel consists of an entire block that, prior to 1927, was occupied by numerous single-family dwellings and residential flats buildings, as well as a few shops, a restaurant, saloon and pool hall.
(continued)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP15. Educational building, HP36. Ethnic minority property (JA, AA)

***B12. References:**

The Japanese American Directory, San Francisco: The Japanese American News, Inc., 1941.

Japantown Task Force, *Images of America: San Francisco's Japantown*. San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

(continued)

B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator: Caitlin Harvey, Page & Turnbull/
Matt Weintraub, SF Planning Department

*Date of Evaluation: May 2009

(This space reserved for official comments.)



B10. Significance (continued)

When the school was constructed, for a cost of \$350,000, it was touted as having the latest features to be incorporated into San Francisco's public schools, such as a covered playground, a rooftop playground, an auditorium (that seated 450), an outside activities room, and foot warmers so that students could dry their feet on wet days. The facility was also intended to host community betterment programs after school hours. A meeting room was provided to accommodate Boy Scout meetings, PTA meetings, and community improvement club activities. The school facility also featured 28 classrooms, a library, clinic, kitchen, book storage room, and science room. The school was designed to accommodate 1,100 students in the first through sixth grades. When it opened, at least 650 students from the nearby Henry Durant School at Turk and Webster streets transferred to Raphael Weill School, as did Henry Durant School principal, Bertha Klaus.

The architect of Raphael Weill School was the firm of Meyer & Johnson. Frederick Herman Meyer (1876-1961), who was one of the most prolific and versatile architects in San Francisco at the turn of the 20th century and designed in a wide variety of styles and building types. Frederick Meyer was born in San Francisco and had no formal architectural training, but began his career as a draftsman in a planing mill in the early 1890s. He was active in the rebuilding of San Francisco after the 1906 Earthquake and Fires. He later expanded his design practice to other parts of California. In 1934, he was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). He is best known for designing the Humboldt Bank and Monadnock buildings in San Francisco, as well as various projects for the San Francisco General Hospital and Pacific Gas & Electric Company. The former two designs were lauded for their extensive use of glazing and incorporation of fire-safety systems. In addition to Raphael Weill School, Meyer is known to have also designed the nearby Japanese YMCA at 1530 Buchanan Street (1935). In all, he designed more than 15 large office and commercial buildings, ten industrial plants (including three breweries), eight hospitals, three schools, eight City of San Francisco projects (including fire houses and branch libraries), and five major club and association buildings. He was also on the San Francisco Board of Consulting Architects in 1912, a force behind the creation of the Civic Center. Albin R. Johnson (1879-1926) was a native of Oakland. Seemingly not as prominent as Frederick Meyer, little biographical information is available for Johnson. He is known to have worked in partnership with Meyer for nearly 25 years, from 1901 until the time of his death in 1926. Raphael Weill School was constructed a year after Johnson's death and can probably be more appropriately attributed to Meyer.

Raphael Weill School was constructed during San Francisco's Golden Age of Schools, which spanned from 1917 to 1940. During this time, 49 public schools were constructed in San Francisco, primarily in an effort to accommodate the city's growing population, which was also expanding to areas outside the downtown core, like the Western Addition. Changes in educational practices instituted by the San Francisco Board of Education, which involved the expansion and de-specialization of curriculum, also necessitated new and more versatile school facilities.

The design of Raphael Weill School, like that of many other Golden Age schools, stemmed from turn of the 20th century shifts in school design practices that provided for improved fire safety, lighting and ventilation, sanitation and functional classroom layouts, as well as high-style aesthetics that expressed civic pride in education. By the 1920s, as seen in the design of Raphael Weill School, educational facilities were increasingly laid out as expansive complexes where school functions were separate but connected. They were surrounded by play yards that indicated a new emphasis on physical education and outdoor activity, and incorporated atriums that allowed for increased light and air and a connection to the outdoors. Schools were characterized by concrete or masonry construction, multiple-story buildings with regular and profuse fenestration, and rectangular centralized plans with projecting wings and pavilions. These pavilions often included a dedicated auditorium building, as seen at Raphael Weill, where an auditorium is connected to the main school building by a hyphen that contains the main entry to the school complex. By the 1940s, it was less common to find auditoriums integrated into school complexes; therefore, that aspect of Raphael Weill School represents a relatively short period in school construction when that convention was utilized, and which corresponds with the Golden Age of Schools.

In the early 1940s, Raphael Weill School was involved with the events of Japanese American internment during World War II. Located in close proximity to Japantown, the school enrolled many students who were Japanese American. In 1942, one month before Japanese American internment was ordered, Dorothea Lange photographed students at Raphael Weill School for the War Relocation Authority. Her photos illustrate ethnic diversity at the school and capture scenes of friendship between Japanese American students and those of other ethnicities as well as the American patriotism of the Japanese American children. The Wartime Civil Control Authority used Raphael Weill School as a collection point for the last of the Japanese American internees to leave Japantown. On the morning of May 20, 1942, these 274 Japanese Americans left Raphael Weill School in Greyhound buses bound for the Tanforan Assembly Center.

During World War II, the Japantown neighborhood experienced a major demographic shift. The African American population of the nearby Fillmore neighborhood expanded significantly, as many African Americans from the Southern U.S. relocated to the city for war-time labor and settled in the Western Addition. The African American population supplanted the area's absentee Japanese Americans, filling vacant housing, compensating for decreased commercial activity, instituting churches and community facilities, and sending their children to local public schools like Raphael Weill. After the war, the percentage of Japanese American students

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*Date May 2009

Continuation Update

B10. Significance (continued)

that returned to the school was markedly smaller that it had been prior to the war, reflecting broader patterns of disrupted social fabric in the Japanese American community that resulted from mass displacement and internment. This historical case remained true to the present day. In 2006, Japanese American students made up 7% of the student body, while African American students accounted for the largest demographic at 33%.

In 1995, as part of a "reconstitution" effort that included the wholesale replacement of faculty and staff and major remodeling of the school facility, Raphael Weill School was renamed to honor civil rights leader Rosa Parks. Parks herself attended the dedication of the school upon its reopening. The use of her name reflects strong ties to the historic African American population of the Fillmore neighborhood, in which the school is located. In addition, the school still retains its long standing ties to the Japanese American community. These were reinforced in 2006, when the Japanese Bilingual Bicultural Program West was merged with Rosa Parks School.

Raphael Weill School at 1501 O'Farrell Street retains integrity of association, continuing to be used as an educational facility, specifically a public school. The building retains integrity of location, having never been moved from its original site. Its integrity of setting is somewhat diminished as the neighborhood where it is located was drastically reshaped by redevelopment projects in the 1960s and 1970s. Though the area remains generally residential, the street grid around the school has been reconfigured and it is now surrounded by large apartment complexes, modern buildings, and several 19th century buildings that were moved to their current sites during redevelopment. Raphael Weill School retains some integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Few major alterations appear to have been made to the original school complex; however, cosmetic changes like the removal of original Renaissance Revival ornamentation (alterations to the main entry are particularly noteworthy) have diluted the property's aesthetic character. Additionally, an auxiliary building was constructed in the middle of the school yard in 1966-1967, somewhat detracting from the character-defining aspects of the school's original plan, which consisted of a sprawling but interconnected complex. Integrity of feeling is still strong, however, as the property obviously conveys its function as a school and retains many of the characteristics that identify it as a historic educational property constructed during San Francisco's Golden Age of Schools.

Raphael Weill School at 1501 O'Farrell Street appears to be eligible for local listing as a contributing element to the San Francisco Golden Age of Schools Historic District, a discontinuous historic district. The building's primary associations with the Japanese American community are based on the attendance of a large demographic of Japanese American students at the school between 1927 and 1942. This demographic diminished markedly during and after World War II. The school was not constructed by or for the Japanese American community specifically and its role as a general curriculum public education facility that was used by a diverse ethnic population in the Western Addition is different from, but no less significant than, that of educational properties like Kinmon Gakuen, which were established by the Japanese American community in order to teach Japanese language and culture and promote Japanese heritage among the younger generations. The building's secondary associations to the Japanese American community are as the background for the extraordinary portraits of social fabric captured in the now-famous photographs by Dorothea Lange, and as the site of the last internees' departure from San Francisco. Though the school was originally named for Raphael Weill, it is not directly associated with him in any way. Weill died seven years before the school was constructed and its naming was an honorific act only. Similarly, Rosa Parks' association with the school is honorific. Though she attended the dedication ceremony at the school's reopening, she has no direct links to the school other than name.

Though the school's architecture is somewhat altered, it is still distinctive and characteristic of school design during the Golden Age of Schools. For this reason, the school may be significant and eligible for historic designation. Additionally, it was designed by Frederick Meyer, who can be considered a master architect. The school fits into the context of Meyer's diverse portfolio; it is one of two buildings he designed in the Japantown neighborhood, and one of three schools he designed in the city.

The status code of 5D3 assigned to this property means that it appears to be a contributor to a district that appears eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation. This property was not assessed for its potential to yield information important in prehistory or history, per National Register Criterion D.

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Continuation

Update



Raphael Weill School entry, 1930.
(San Francisco Public Library, AAB-0015)



Raphael Weill School, looking northwest, n.d.
(San Francisco Public Library, AAD-4392)



Raphael Weill School, looking southwest, n.d.
(San Francisco Public Library, AAD-4393)



Raphael Weill School, looking west, n.d.
(San Francisco Public Library, AAD-4395)

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Raphael Weill School, looking southwest, 1964.
(San Francisco Public Library, AAB-0014)



Raphael Weill School, looking southeast, n.d.
(San Francisco Public Library, AAD-4396)

B12. References (continued)

Obituary: Albin H. Johnson. *Architect & Engineer*, February 1926.

Pease, Ben. San Francisco's Japantown and Western Addition maps; 1910, 1920s, 1940, 1948-49, 1956-59, 1972, 2004.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: 1893, 1899, 1913, 1950, 1962.

San Francisco Assessor's Office, sales ledgers.

San Francisco Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan Historic Context Statement, 2009.

San Francisco Block Books: 1894, 1901, 1906, 1909.

San Francisco Chronicle, "New School Opens March 7," 3/3/1927, p.14.

San Francisco Chronicle, "Many Educators at School Dedication," 4/25/1927.

San Francisco City Directories.

San Francisco Department of Building Inspection, permit records and plans.

San Francisco Examiner, "Rosa Parks' name for SF school?," Aug. 23, 1995.