History of the City Hall and Civic Center by T.B. McGinnis, 1912-1918

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The History of the City Hall and Civic Center album was purchased in 1995.

Scope and Content

The History of the City Hall and Civic Center photo album contains 119 photographic prints as well as various municipal reports and records, all dated from 1912-1918, which document the construction and early use of San Francisco’s City Hall, Exposition Auditorium, and the greater Civic Center area. The album was compiled by Thomas B. McGinnis, Assistant Clerk, San Francisco Board of Supervisors and Superintendent of City Hall. McGinnis also wrote the text of the municipal report included in the album and may have been the principal photographer.

The construction of the new City Hall and Civic Center was necessitated by the earthquake and fire of 1906 which destroyed the previous City Hall. The photographs picture the buildings’ development from the excavation of the sites beginning in 1913 to their completion and occupation by city officials in 1916. Several photographs document the gradual construction of both the steel framework and the stone exterior. Also pictured are interior views of City Hall and the Exposition Auditorium; ground breaking and cornerstone ceremonies; views of the Civic Center Plaza and the San Francisco Public Library; several photographic reproductions of architectural plans and notes; the San Francisco City Treasury; and a group portrait of Boy Scouts. Individuals pictured include architects John Bakewell, Jr., and Arthur Brown, Jr.; sculptor Grenier; San Francisco Mayor James Rolph, Jr.; San Francisco City Supervisors George Gallagher and Paul Bancroft; and San Francisco City Attorney Percy V. Long.

Non-photographic material includes the text of the 1915-1916 San Francisco Municipal Report "City Hall and Civic Center History," clippings of resolutions and ordinances relating to the City Hall and the Civic Center, many of which are dated as late as 1919; manuscript notes regarding additional resolutions; and two 1916 letters from architects Bakewell and Brown to the San Francisco Bureau of Architecture describing the significance of Grenier’s sculptural contribution to City Hall.

The only identified photographer is John Channing.
[Page 978 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:011--ALB  ark:/13030/tf1g5006vw
Comming the erection of steel frame, City Hall. (Arrow marks location of corner stone.) Oct. 22nd, 1913. Corner stone laid Oct. 25th, 1913. 1647.
BANC PIC 1995.006:012--ALB  ark:/13030/tf7v19p41b

[Page 979 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:013--ALB  ark:/13030/tf1199p0z8
Steel for construction, and concrete retaining walls, City Hall. (Looking southwest from McAllister and Polk Sts.) October 22nd, 1913. 1648. BANC PIC 1995.006:014--ALB  ark:/13030/tf5779p3j2

[Page 980 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:015--ALB  ark:/13030/tf3n39p13c
Progress steel construction City Hall. November 12th, 1913. [ No. 1654?] BANC PIC 1995.006:016--ALB  ark:/13030/tf400008x3

[Page 981 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:017--ALB  ark:/13030/tf48700875
Erection steel -- basement and first floor City Hall. December 1st, 1913. (Polk and Grove Sts.) 1656. BANC PIC 1995.006:018--ALB  ark:/13030/tf009nb218

[Page 982 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:019--ALB  ark:/13030/tf996nb8rs
Progressive construction -- City Hall -- Dec. 11, 1913. (Polk Street facade at Fulton Street.) 1662. BANC PIC 1995.006:020--ALB  ark:/13030/tf7t1nb844

[Page 983 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:021--ALB  ark:/13030/tf229p1zn
Progress construction City Hall -- Dec. 11, 1913. (Grove Street elevation.) 1663. BANC PIC 1995.006:022--ALB  ark:/13030/tf6n39p45s

[Page 984 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:023--ALB  ark:/13030/tf0k400609
Progressive construction, City Hall. Jan. 6, 1914. (Van Ness Ave. Elevation.) 1688. BANC PIC 1995.006:024--ALB  ark:/13030/tf8x0nb90h

[Page 985 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:025--ALB  ark:/13030/tf767nb7mz
Progressive construction, City Hall. Jan. 6, 1914. (Grove Street elevation.) BANC PIC 1995.006:026--ALB  ark:/13030/tf7p30117s

[Page 986 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:027--ALB  ark:/13030/tf3290076j
Progressive construction, City Hall. Jan. 27, 1914. (Unloading 46 ton girders used in dome.) 1712. BANC PIC 1995.006:028--ALB  ark:/13030/tf4x0nb5v8

[Page 987 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:029--ALB  ark:/13030/tf5v19p2s4
Progressive construction, City Hall. Feby. 1, 1914. (Van Ness Ave. elevation.) [No. 1726?] BANC PIC 1995.006:030--ALB  ark:/13030/tf996nb8s9

[Page 988 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:031--ALB  ark:/13030/tf2s2008cw
Progressive construction, City Hall. Feb. 11, 1914. (Van Ness Ave. elevation.) 1745. BANC PIC 1995.006:032--ALB  ark:/13030/tf8w10118x

[Page 989 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:033--ALB  ark:/13030/tf4x0nb5ws
Progressive construction, City Hall. March 6, 1914. (Van Ness Ave. and Grove St. elevation.) 1756. BANC PIC 1995.006:034--ALB  ark:/13030/tf9z09p5xj

[Page 990 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:035--ALB  ark:/13030/tf2v19p1j3
Progressive construction, City Hall. March 20, 1914. (Pols St. elevation -- looking North from Grove St.) 1782. BANC PIC 1995.006:036--ALB  ark:/13030/tf8r29p53h

[Page 991 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:037--ALB  ark:/13030/tf2z09p0cp

History of the City Hall and Civic Center by T.B. McGinnis, 1912-1918
Progressive construction, City Hall. April 23rd, 1914. (Polk St. elevation north from Grove St.) [No. 1815?] BANC PIC 1995.006:038--ALB ar:/13030/tf779p0mq
[Page 992 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:039--ALB ar:/13030/af052006kd

Progressive construction, City Hall. May 5, 1914. (Polk St. elevation -- Steel frame of Auditorium lower left hand corner.) 1840. BANC PIC 1995.006:040--ALB ar:/13030/tf779p03n
[Page 993 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:041--ALB ar:/13030/ft6j49p4dr

Completion of steel frame, City Hall, May 15, 1914. (Van Ness Ave. elevation.) [No. 1860?] BANC PIC 1995.006:042--ALB ar:/13030/ft9p3p58r
[Page 994 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:043--ALB ar:/13030/tf6g5p079d

Outside stone construction. (California White Granite.) May 15th, 1914. 1861. BANC PIC 1995.006:044--ALB ar:/13030/tf7n9p48h
[Page 995 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:045--ALB ar:/13030/tf65p0f4

First meeting of Board of Supervisors held in Chamber of the Board Oct. 9, 1916. Supervisors to assign quarters to respective Depts. by Resolution No. 12550 (N.S.). T.B. McGinnis to act as Executive Custodian by Resolution No. 12800 (N.S.). [Page 996 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."]
BANC PIC 1995.006:047--ALB ar:/13030/tf6b9p1f

Progressive stone construction, June 9, 1914. (Polk St. elevation.) 1874. BANC PIC 1995.006:048--ALB ar:/13030/tf3b69p1k
[Page 997 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:049--ALB ar:/13030/tf76o779q

[Page 998 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:051--ALB ar:/13030/tf5p0p9rb

[Page 999 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:053--ALB ar:/13030/tf99p5vm

Progressive stone construction -- July 30, 1914. (Van Ness Ave. and Grove St. elevation.) 1931. BANC PIC 1995.006:054--ALB ar:/13030/tf10b3gp
[Page 1000 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:055a--ALB ar:/13030/tf6o74qt

[Typewritten description of Echo Organ installed in Civic Center Exposition Auditorium.] BANC PIC 1995.006:055b--ALB ar:/13030/tf0p3m5
[Page 1001 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:057--ALB ar:/13030/tf2g5079x

Progressive stone construction -- August 8, 1914. (Van Ness Ave. and Grove St. elevation.) 1943. BANC PIC 1995.006:058--ALB ar:/13030/tf5y9p2tn
[Page 1002 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:059--ALB ar:/13030/tf5p0p9y
Progressive stone construction -- August 8, 1914. (Polk and Grove Sts. elevation.) 1944. BANC PIC 1995.006:060--ALB ar:/13030/tf6f5p0yv
[Page 1003 from 1915-16 San Francisco Municipal Report, "City Hall and Civic Center History."] BANC PIC 1995.006:061--ALB ar:/13030/tf779n9sk

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BANC PIC 1995.006--ALB

Progressive stone construction. March 26, 1915. (Polk and Grove Sts. elevation -- showing improvements in Civic Center Plaza.) 2310. BANC PIC 1995.006:092--ALB

Progressive stone construction. May 9, 1915. (Van Ness Ave. and Grove St. elevation.) 2370. [Duplicate of 96. Date?] BANC PIC 1995.006:094--ALB


Progressive stone construction. June 7, 1915. (Polk and Grove St. elevation.) 2427. BANC PIC 1995.006:098--ALB


City Hall, Auditorium and Plaza -- July 1, 1915. 2813. BANC PIC 1995.006:102--ALB

Polk Street entrance and Dome -- City Hall. BANC PIC 1995.006:105--ALB

Civic Center Plaza fronting the City Hall. Polk St. frontage. 3989.

(Proposed bronze) Fountains, Civic Center. 3986. BANC PIC 1995.006:107--ALB

City Hall and Plaza. (Photograph by Mr. Channing.) BANC PIC 1995.006:108--ALB

Fountain and statuary, Civic Center Plaza. (Temporary erection.) 3987. BANC PIC 1995.006:109--ALB

Interior dome ceiling over main rotunda. Showing upper gallery columns and medallions [sic]. BANC PIC 1995.006:111--ALB

Steel construction to top of dome. June 30, 1914. BANC PIC 1995.006:112a--ALB

Position of four girders weighing 49 tons each, and six 26 ton girders in dome, City Hall. June 30, 1914. 1892. BANC PIC 1995.006:112b--ALB

Steel construction around light wells. 1890. BANC PIC 1995.006:113a--ALB

Removal of Herald’s Business College site required for City Hall. 1632. BANC PIC 1995.006:113b--ALB

Steel construction -- Dome, City Hall. June 30, 1914. 1891. BANC PIC 1995.006:114--ALB

Flat cars S.P. Ry. [Southern Pacific Railway] transporting steel girders for City Hall. Size of girders 58'-1 7/8" long x 9'-1/2". Weight 49 tons each. Jany. 6, 1914. BANC PIC 1995.006:115--ALB

Girders 49 tons weight each supporting dome -- City Hall. BANC PIC 1995.006:116--ALB

Hoisting and setting 49 ton girder, City Hall. [Number cut off.] BANC PIC 1995.006:117--ALB


Sculptor Grenier and model of pediment over (exterior) facade. City Hall. 1816. BANC PIC 1995.006:120--ALB

Model of figures for fountains. Civic Center Plaza. (Mr. Grenier, sculptor.) 2043. BANC PIC 1995.006:121--ALB

Model of fountain, Civic Center Plaza. 1942. BANC PIC 1995.006:122--ALB

Models -- Statuary for Civic Center Plaza.

Leading into rotunda from Polk St. entrance. BANC PIC 1995.006:124--ALB

Grand staircase, rotunda. City Hall. 3553. BANC PIC 1995.006:125--ALB

Boy Scouts at attention -- staircase, rotunda, City Hall. (Victory Garden day, April 1st, 1918.) BANC PIC 1995.006:126--ALB

Rotunda entrance from Polk Street. 3552. BANC PIC 1995.006:127--ALB

Upper landing, stairs from rotunda. 3655. BANC PIC 1995.006:128--ALB

Detail -- staircase and gallery raling around rotunda. 3561. BANC PIC 1995.006:129--ALB

Galleries surrounding rotunda -- City Hall. BANC PIC 1995.006:130--ALB

Fourth floor gallery and ceiling arches. BANC PIC 1995.006:131--ALB

Light standards, rotunda -- City Hall. (4 in all.) Brass and bronze. 1500 [dollars?] each. 3678. BANC PIC 1995.006:132--ALB

Vestibule and columns. Van Ness Ave. entrance to rotunda. BANC PIC 1995.006:133--ALB

Interior chambers Board of Supervisors (carved oak). 3558. BANC PIC 1995.006:134--ALB

Stone carvings at entrance to Supervisors Chambers. BANC PIC 1995.006:135--ALB

Laying corner stone, City Hall. Oct. 25th, 1913. 10 o'clock a.m. (Supervisor Geo. Galligher [George Gallagher] addressing assemblage.) BANC PIC 1995.006:136--ALB

Mayor Rolph placing first trowel of mortar, cornerstone, City Hall. (Mayor's son standing by.) Oct. 25, 1913. BANC PIC 1995.006:137--ALB


City Treasury. $1,000,000 (gold) shown in trays. BANC PIC 1995.006:139--ALB

Erecting steel frame Exposition Auditorium (Civic Center). 1729. BANC PIC 1995.006:140--ALB

Progress steel construction. Auditorium in Civic Center. 15,809,616 lbs. steel in building. 1687. BANC PIC 1995.006:141--ALB

Completion steel frame. Auditorium. (15,809,616 lbs. steel in building.) 1753. BANC PIC 1995.006:142--ALB
Steel frame Auditorium. View north from Market Street. 1746. BANC PIC 1995.006:143--ALB  ark:/13030/tf870109q

Steel frame Auditorium. Hayes Street Auditorium. 1814. BANC PIC 1995.006:144--ALB  ark:/13030/tf1000628

Erecting granite stone front Auditorium. July 30th, 1914. BANC PIC 1995.006:145--ALB  ark:/13030/tf8x9p58d

Progress construction Auditorium. Grove St. front. BANC PIC 1995.006:146--ALB  ark:/13030/tf60009k1

Auditorium completed. Cost -- Exposition Co. $1,000,000; City for stone, $210,025; Land $700,000. 2261. BANC PIC 1995.006:147--ALB  ark:/13030/tf3p3008b1

Exposition Auditorium, from Civic Center Plaza. BANC PIC 1995.006:148--ALB  ark:/13030/tf109nb2sz

Interior main hall Auditorium. Seating capacity -- main hall 10,000; six smaller halls 1200 each; four halls 400 each; two committee rooms 50 each. 2180. BANC PIC 1995.006:149--ALB  ark:/13030/tf9h4nb8w5


[First Floor Plan. Photographic reproduction of architectural drawing for Civic Center Exposition Auditorium.] BANC PIC 1995.006:150b--ALB  ark:/13030/tf3b69p1g3

Main Public Library building in Civic Center. BANC PIC 1995.006:151--ALB  ark:/13030/tf396nb477

Market Street Approach, Civic Center. (Detailed on proposed future appearance.) [Photographic reproduction of architectural drawing.] BANC PIC 1995.006:152--ALB  ark:/13030/tf7r29p5fc

Market Street Approach. (Detailed on proposed future appearance.) [Photographic reproduction of architectural drawing for Civic Center.] BANC PIC 1995.006:153--ALB  ark:/13030/tf0w1006pm


Proposed Fountain for Civic Center San Francisco Cal. [Photographic reproduction of architectural drawing.] BANC PIC 1995.006:155a--ALB  ark:/13030/tf067nb2nw


Moving Commercial School from Grove St. bet. Polk and Larkin Sts. to Fell and Franklin Sts. BANC PIC 1995.006:155b--ALB  ark:/13030/tf1199p108

Ground breaking City Hall site. (Mayor and Board of Supervisors.) April 5, 1913. BANC PIC 1995.006:156--ALB  ark:/13030/tf1779p045

Supervisor Paul Bancroft, Charman [sic] Public Buildings Committee presenting Mayor Rolph with a Silver Shovel at ground breaking exercises. City hall site. April 5, 1913, at 3 o'clock p.m. BANC PIC 1995.006:157--ALB  ark:/13030/tf3p3008cj

Mayor Rolph, raising first shovel of dirt from site of City Hall on silver shovel presented by Board of Supervisors. April 5th, 1913. BANC PIC 1995.006:158--ALB  ark:/13030/tf0j49n9r1

School children singing at ceremonies, earth breaking in site for City Hall. Stand erected along Van Ness Ave. opposite Fulton St. April 5, 1913. BANC PIC 1995.006:159--ALB  ark:/13030/tf9m3nb90

Address by Mayor Jas. [i.e. James] Rolph, Jr., laying corner stone, City Hall. Oct. 25th, 1913. BANC PIC 1995.006:160--ALB  ark:/13030/tf7489p45t

Address -- Percy V. Long, City Attorney, laying corner stone, City Hall. Oct. 25th, 1913. BANC PIC 1995.006:161--ALB  ark:/13030/tf1779p05p


Mayor Rolph addressing assemblage laying corner stone, City Hall. Oct. 25, 1913. BANC PIC 1995.006:163a--ALB  ark:/13030/tf9s2012st

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Glossing and cementing down corner stone, City Hall. Oct. 25, 1913.
BANC PIC 1995.006:163b--ALB ark:/13030/tf396nb48r

Supplemental. Resolutions and Ordinances passed by Board of Supervisors, relating to City Hall and Civic Center. [Newsprint clippings, each summarily captioned.]
BANC PIC 1995.006:164--ALB ark:/13030/tf4k4009b5

[List of offices and departments moved into the new City Hall; notes referring to resolutions regarding City Hall and Civic Center; and clipping of city ordinance regarding City Hall.]
BANC PIC 1995.006:168--ALB ark:/13030/tf8j49p4v3

[Clipping from unidentified print source regarding transfer of title of block in San Francisco Civic Center to United States Government.]
BANC PIC 1995.006:170--ALB ark:/13030/tf3779p17t

[Number not used] BANC PIC 1995.006:171--ALB
[Number not used] BANC PIC 1995.006:172--ALB
[Number not used] BANC PIC 1995.006:173--ALB
[Number not used] BANC PIC 1995.006:174--ALB
[Number not used] BANC PIC 1995.006:175--ALB
[2 letters from architects Bakewell and Brown to Bureau of Architecture, San Francisco City Hall, regarding aesthetic significance of various sculptural groups designed for City Hall. From July, 1916.]
BANC PIC 1995.006:176--ALB

1915. [Lacking.]

[Inside back cover. Architectural drawing of bird's eye of view of Civic Center, San Francisco.]
BANC PIC 1995.006:178--ALB ark:/13030/tf2199n9ks