



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

National Register Nomination Case Report

HEARING DATE: APRIL 19, 2017

1650 Mission St.
Suite 400
San Francisco,
CA 94103-2479

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Planning
Information:
415.558.6377

Date: April 19, 2017
Case No.: 2017-003077OTH
Project Address: 811 Treat Avenue (Henry Geilfuss House)
Zoning: RH-3 (Residential House, Three-Family)
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 3613/053
Project Sponsor: California Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816
Staff Contact: Shannon Ferguson – (415) 575-9074
shannon.ferguson@sfgov.org
Reviewed By: Timothy Frye – (415) 575-6822
tim.frye@sfgov.org
Recommendation: **Send resolution of findings recommending that, subject to revisions, OHP approve nomination of the subject property to the National Register of Historic Places**

BACKGROUND

In its capacity as a Certified Local Government (CLG), the City and County of San Francisco is given the opportunity to comment on nominations to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Listing on the National Register of Historic Places provides recognition by the federal government of a building's or district's architectural and historical significance. The nomination materials for the individual listing of the Henry Geilfuss House at 811 Treat Avenue were prepared by Johanna Street.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

811 Treat Avenue, also known as the Henry Geilfuss House, is located in San Francisco's Mission District between 21st and 22nd streets. The property comprises an Italiante main residence designed by local master architect Henry Geilfuss circa 1882 as his personal residence; a raised room (c. 1882, altered c. 1900); a workshop (c. 1920) and a garage (c. 1940). The main residence and raised room are contributing features; the workshop and garage are non-contributing features that were added after Geilfuss moved from the property.

The property was surveyed as part of the Department of City Planning's 1976 survey and given a summary rating of "2". In 2010, the property was documented in the South Mission Historic Resource Survey and given a California Historical Resource Status Code of 3S or appears eligible for the National Register as an individual property through survey evaluation.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

The National Register is the official list of the Nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. The National Register's criteria for evaluating the significance of properties were designed to recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have made a contribution to the Nation's heritage. The following four National Register criteria are designed to guide state and local governments, federal agencies and others in evaluating potential entries into the National Register:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Criterion A (Event): | that are associated with events that have made significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; or |
| Criterion B (Person): | that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or |
| Criterion C (Design/Construction): | 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 represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or |
| Criterion D (Information Potential): | that yielded, or may likely yield, information important in prehistory or history. |

According to the nomination's summary, the Henry Geilfuss House is locally significant under Criterion B (persons) and Criterion C (architecture). Geilfuss was one of San Francisco's most prolific architects during the 1880s and 1890s. He designed the Italianate style Bayview Opera House (1888, Landmark No. 8) at 1601 Newcomb Avenue; the Romanesque Revival style St. Mark's Lutheran Church (1895, Landmark No. 41) at 1135 O'Farrell Street; the Stick-style Charles Dietle House (1878, Landmark No. 48) at 294 Page Street, and the Stick/Italianate Westerfield House (1889, landmark No. 135) at 1198 Fulton Street. Geilfuss designed 811 Treat Avenue as his personal residence and lived there from 1882 to 1900 (period of significance), which corresponds to the most productive time of his career. Although he did not work out of this house, in the absence of an extant office or studio, the property is eligible under Criterion B. The subject property is also an excellent example of a detached Italianate residence with decorative details that anticipated Geilfuss' later work.

The Department agrees that the property is locally significant under Criteria B and C as the work of master local architect Henry Geilfuss who designed this property as his family home and lived in it during his most prolific period. With its elaborate ornamentation and large bay windows the subject property is an excellent and rare surviving example of a detached Italianate residence in a city that contains a high concentration of this style of townhomes constructed side by side in rows as the city grew. However, staff believes that the ways in which the subject property anticipated Geilfuss' later work should be explored further by identifying and comparing his later buildings to the subject property.

ACTION REQUESTED

- Review the completed National Register of Historic Places Registration Form;

- Provide comments on whether the Henry Geilfuss House meets the criteria of significance of the National Register; and
- Recommend or not recommend the nomination of the Henry Geilfuss House for listing on the National Register, subject to revisions including a more indepth discussion of how the Henry Geilfuss House anticipated Geilfuss' later work.

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- The property is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under B Criterion C (Design/Construction), subject to revisions including a more indepth discussion of how the Henry Geilfuss House anticipated Geilfuss' later work.

RECOMMENDATION: Send resolution of findings recommending that, subject to revisions, SHPO should approve nomination of the property to the National Register

Attachments:

Draft Resolution

Letter from Julianne Polanco, State Historic Preservation Officer

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. XXX

HEARING DATE: APRIL 19, 2017

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Case No. 2017-003077OTH
Project: 811 Treat Avenue (Henry Geilfuss)
Adopting findings and Recommendations to
State Historic Preservation Officer
Staff Contact: Shannon Ferguson (415) 575-9074
shannon.ferguson@sfgov.org
Reviewed By: Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822
tim.frye@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER THAT 811 TREAT AVENUE (HENRY GEILFUSS HOUSE), LOT 053 IN ASSESSOR'S BLOCK 3613, BE NOMINATED TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES AND THAT, SUBJECT TO REVISIONS, THE OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROCESS THE NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION.

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, On March 6, 2017, Julianne Polanco, State Historic Preservation Officer, forwarded a request to the San Francisco Planning Department (hereinafter "Department") for review and comment on the nomination of 811 Treat Avenue, also known as the Henry Geilfuss House, on Lot 001 in Assessor's Block 0049, to the National Register of Historic Places (hereinafter "National Register").

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the Certified Local Government Agreement between the Office of Historic Preservation (hereinafter "OHP") and the City and County of San Francisco, the Historic Preservation Commission (hereinafter "Commission") has a forty-five (45) day review and comment period to provide written comments to the OHP before the State Historical Resources Commission takes action on the above-stated National Register nomination.

WHEREAS, The National Register is the official list of the Nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. The National Register's criteria for evaluating the significance of properties were designed to recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have made a contribution to the Nation's heritage in the areas of Events, Persons, Design/Construction, and Information Potential. The four National Register criteria are designed to guide state and local governments, federal agencies and others in evaluating potential entries into the National Register.

WHEREAS, At its hearing on April 19, 2017, the Commission, acting in its capacity as San Francisco's Certified Local Government Commission, reviewed the nomination of 811 Treat Avenue, the Henry Geilfuss House, to the National Register.

WHEREAS, In reviewing the nomination, the Commission had available for its review and consideration reports, photographs, and other materials pertaining to the nomination contained in the Department's case file, and has reviewed and heard testimony and received materials from interested parties during the public hearing on the Project.

WHEREAS, According to the nomination's summary, 811 Treat Avenue, the Henry Geilfuss House, is locally significant under National Register Criterion B (Persons) and Criterion C (Design/Construction) as an excellent and rare example of a detached Italianate residence designed by master local architect Henry Geilfuss as his personal home and where he lived from 1882-1900 which corresponds to the most productive years of his career.

WHEREAS, The Commission agrees that the entire property is nationally significant under National Register Criterion B (Persons) and Criterion C (Design/Construction).

WHEREAS, The Commission relies on National Register nominations as vital documentation and evidence for the significance of historic resources in San Francisco, the nomination would benefit from additional minor clarifications as outlined in the Planning Department's National Register Nomination Case Report and consisting of a more in-depth discussion of how 811 Treat Avenue, the Henry Geilfuss House, anticipated the architect's later work by identifying and comparing his later buildings to the subject property

WHEREAS, Properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are automatically included in the California Register of Historical Resources and afforded consideration in accordance with state and local environmental review procedures.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby supports the nomination of 811 Treat Avenue, the Henry Geilfuss House, to the National Register, subject to revisions consisting of a more in-depth discussion of how 811 Treat Avenue, the Henry Geilfuss House anticipated the architect's later work.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, subject to the revisions outlined in the Planning Department's National Register Nomination Case Report, the Historic Preservation Commission hereby **recommends** that the property located at 811 Treat Avenue, the Henry Geilfuss House, located on Lot 053 in Assessor's Block 3613, be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, and that the Office of Historic Preservation process the National Register nomination.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Recording Secretary to transmit this Motion, and other pertinent materials in the case file 2017-003077OTH to the State Historic Preservation Officer.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Motion was **Adopted** by the Historic Preservation Commission on April 19, 2017.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NAYS:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: April 19, 2017

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.

DRAFT

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Geilfuss, Henry, House

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 811 Treat Avenue

City or town: San Francisco State: CA County: San Francisco

Not For Publication: ☐

Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: foundation: BRICK, CONCRETE, STUCCO;
walls: WOOD, GLASS; roof: ASPHALT; other: METAL

Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Henry Geilfuss House is located in San Francisco, California. Built in 1882, it is an Italianate style, wood-framed, wood-clad, two-story, flat-roofed residence with ancillary buildings. Master architect Henry Geilfuss designed the house for his family and resided there until 1900. The Henry Geilfuss House is situated on a flat, approximately 7,000 square foot lot, facing onto Treat Avenue, located in San Francisco's Mission District, between 21st and 22nd Streets. The property includes the main residence at the front, a raised room over the end of the driveway, a workshop, and a garage. A driveway runs down the north side of the lot and the buildings are arranged in a "U" shape around a rear courtyard. The workshop and garage were added after Henry Geilfuss moved from the property and are noncontributing. The neighborhood remains predominately row houses with the detached Henry Geilfuss House and neighboring former automobile assembly plant as the exceptions. The house features an angled bay window, recessed porch, and marvelous Italianate-style decorative elements. This property is in fair to good condition and has been minimally altered. It has integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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Narrative Description

Main Residence (contributing)

The front elevation of the main residence of the Henry Geilfuss House is set back about ten feet from Treat Avenue, to the west, with a small retaining wall, and chain-link fence and gate, at the sidewalk edge. A medium sized tree is the only landscape feature. The front elevation consists of a full-height angled bay at the north, and a wide centrally located staircase that leads up to a covered porch to the south. Above the brick foundation, the lower level of the front elevation is clad with wood made to look like cut stone. Wood quoins of alternating lengths with a pattern of truncated pyramids flank the angled bay. Three rectangular wood double-hung windows with simple flat trim and profiled sills are located on each side of the bay at the lower level. Metal security bars have been placed on these windows. A wood paneled door and paired wood double-hung windows are located on the recessed wall beneath the porch.

A wood paneled base with profiled cap runs the length of the wall tying together the windowsills and porch columns and guardrail at the transition between the lower and upper level of the front elevation. Above the paneled base the upper level wall plane is clad with horizontal wood siding. The vertical corner boards that flank the bay are carved with decorative floral and geometric motifs around applied rosettes. The three wood double-hung windows with flattened arch upper sash in the angled bay are more ornate at the upper level. The frames feature flat scrollwork at the top and bottom, decorative keystones, and colonnettes. The central window in the upper level of the bay has a decorative pediment.

South of the bay window, a wooden staircase leads up to the covered porch and recessed front entry doors. The wood guardrail of the stair is a simple pattern of vertical and x-shaped balusters. The double front entry doors are of wood with an upper glazed transom. The doors feature etched glass lites, ornate paneling, and scrollwork at the base of the otherwise simple frame. Paired wood double-hung windows with flattened arch upper sash are located to the south of the entry door in the recessed back wall of the porch.

The porch is supported from the bottom by narrow wood posts with wavy brackets. The porch roof is held aloft by three rectangular columns: two on either side of the staircase, and another at the porch's southwest corner. The columns are paneled with geometric carved patterns. Small triangular brackets connect the porch roof, which features four evenly spaced rosettes. The sides of the porch are bounded by a short wooden guardrail with geometric cutouts. The top of the front elevation features a wide cornice with dentils and paneling between the ornately carved and evenly spaced brackets.

The driveway that runs along the main residence's northern elevation terminates at a garage door that provides access to the rear courtyard. The west-facing wall above the garage doors is clad in horizontal wood siding and features a rectangular wood double-hung window with a decorative pedimented frame and profiled sill with brackets at the upper level.

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The main residence's north elevation abuts the driveway and is clad in horizontal wood siding; a belly band demarcates the upper and lower floor levels. Two pairs of rectangular wood double-hung windows are located at the lower level. The upper level has three double-hung wood windows clustered slightly off center; the middle window opens onto a small metal fire escape. The cornice at the front elevation wraps the corner of the north elevation then becomes merely a profiled molding running along the top. An electrical meter and vent pipe is also located on the north elevation near the west corner.

The uninterrupted horizontal wood-clad rear elevation of the main residence is east facing. The lower level of the rear elevation has two small rectangular wood double-hung windows and one larger. The small windows flank a wood paneled door; the one to the south has been in-filled with a metal vent. The door is topped with a glazed transom. The upper level of the rear elevation has a matching wood double-hung window directly above the lower level one located towards the south side. Two smaller wood double-hung windows are located to the north at the upper level of the rear elevation. The frames of the upper level windows feature bracketed sills. Drainage, vent, and conduit pipes snake up the rear elevation either side of the door.

The main residence's south elevation is clad in horizontal wood siding; three wood double-hung windows with simple frames are evenly spaced across the upper level. The easternmost window opens onto a small wooden landing; a wooden staircase leads down the south elevation to the side yard below.

The interior of the main residence is divided into four residential units, two on the lower level and two on the upper. A centrally located hallway at the lower level leads through the building from front to rear at the ground floor level with a unit to the north and one to the south. The walls and ceilings are painted gyp board-clad wood frame. The doors are painted hollow core wood and painted multi-paneled wood with two inch painted wood trim. The upper floor is similarly divided. Some original trim and plaster walls remain interspersed with more contemporary walls, doors, hardware, and trim.

Raised Room (contributing)

Attached to the north corner, upper level of the rear elevation is a raised room that aligns with the driveway and is open at the lower level behind the west-facing garage door. This was most likely used as the dwelling area for a groomsman or someone with a similar role of taking care of the horses or other household functions.¹ The raised room spans between the rear elevation of the main residence and the workshop and creates the south-facing wall of the courtyard. There are two wood double-hung windows centrally located on the horizontal wood clad upper level. A metal fire escape ladder is located between the windows. There is a metal gutter at the roof and vent pipe to the west of the windows. The interior of the raised room was not accessible and is clearly being used as a living space attached to the main residence.

¹ The Sanborn Map from 1889 has annotation within this building but it is almost illegible. The author assumes that it says "Groomsman room."

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Workshop (noncontributing)

At the other end of the raised room is a workshop clad with horizontal wood siding. It creates the west-facing elevation of the courtyard. The northern end of the workshop's west elevation is beneath the raised room and features a large opening that has been in-filled with wood. A large wood post with concrete footing supports the corner of the raised room above. To the south, at the lower level of the workshop is a wood paneled door with upper lite glazed adjacent to a bank of six narrow wood double-hung windows. Above the wood door at the upper level of the workshop there is an in-filled wood double-hung window opening. There is a wood post that juts out of the wall above the window. Also at the upper level is a small window opening with missing sash.

A vertical wood board marks the transition at which the workshop becomes single story. This south end of the west elevation is made up entirely of a bank of nine wood double hung windows. At the far south is a wood stair that leads to the roof. The roof acts as a patio entry for the south-facing upper level of the workshop with a wood door with decorative metal-bracketed wood overhang at the west. Another door opening is located at the east of the south-facing upper level of the workshop and there are four window openings in between.

The interior of the workshop is utilitarian: mostly undivided and featuring unfinished walls with exposed wood beams and supports. There is a concrete floor and the space is being used as storage. There is no obvious evidence of the curtain and/or laundry business equipment that would have been in this space. A small office is centrally located on the west wall that does have plaster clad walls and wood trim. The interior of the upper level, used for storage, is similar with unfinished walls and concrete floors.

Garage (noncontributing)

At the front of the property to the south of the main residence is a single story garage that spans between the main residence and the neighboring property. The stucco-clad front elevation of the garage abuts the sidewalk and is not much wider than the garage door. It features a stepped false front. The north elevation of the garage is also stucco clad where exposed. The stucco-clad west elevation features a wood double-hung window and single panel wood door. The south elevation of the garage is of horizontal wood siding where exposed.

Alterations/Construction History

The November 1882 issue of *The California Architect and Building News* recorded that construction had begun on the Henry Geilfuss House, a "one-story with basement frame building with stable on Treat Avenue near 21st Street." Henry Geilfuss is listed as the owner and architect. According to telephone directories and the 1889 Sanborn Fire Insurance map (**Figure 1**), the property's address was originally 809 Treat Avenue; it was changed to 811 Treat Avenue around 1894. No drawings or records relating to the property's original construction have been found. Historic Sanborn maps provide an indication of how the property has changed since the 1880s.

The earliest map shows that in 1889, the main residence and raised room were extant and a single-story barn, stable, and other outbuildings were located at the rear of the lot. The formal

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living spaces of the Henry Geilfuss House would have been found on the upper level. When the house was constructed the lower level was probably not occupied, as was commonplace at the time. It would have been a storage and utilitarian space.

By 1900, the barn and stable were consolidated into a single stable, a second story was added, and the whole building was expanded forward, absorbing part of the raised room. This expanded stable included a separate apartment with its own address, 311½ Treat Avenue. All other previous outbuildings were demolished, and a single-story outbuilding, no longer extant, was constructed against the southern edge of the lot opposite the stable/apartment (**Figure 2**).

In 1903 Geilfuss listed the property for sale. The advertisement read: “Nine rooms, stable for 3 horses, outhouses, garden, etc; a complete house.”² Henry Thorp had been renting the property since the turn of the century, followed by Matilda Schmidt and family in 1904. Geilfuss sold the property to the Schmidts, who operated a curtain laundry service there until at least 1937. Various members of the Schmidt family were resident there over the decades, as well as a number of people renting rooms in either the main building or in the converted and expanded stable/barn, some of whom were employed at the curtain cleaners.

The 1914 Sanborn map (**Figure 3**) shows that a single-story porch was added to the corner where the raised room attached with the main building. The outbuilding along the southern edge of the lot was also removed. The 1950 Sanborn map (**Figure 4**) identifies the former stable with an expansion to its south as a Sheet Metal Works. By then, the corner porch in the courtyard had been demolished, and a single story garage had been built at the lot’s southwestern corner. According to the 1990s Sanborn map, the rear buildings were used as a cabinet shop at the time.

Only three permits were found on record at the San Francisco Building Inspection Office. A permit was issued in 1972 to legalize the five apartments present at that time. Electrical and plumbing inspections were carried out after the permit was issued, and the permit was canceled later that year. A second permit to legalize the units was issued in 1975. In 1999, a permit was issued to repair the building’s front stairs, including replacing the rail posts and stringers and pouring concrete beneath them. In 2007 new built-up roofing was installed on the main residence.

The exterior of the main residence has been virtually unchanged since its construction. The interior of the main residence, however, has been heavily altered due to dividing the upper and lower floors into separate units. None of the interior modifications have affected the exterior except for the additional fire escapes, which are easily reversible. The raised room was altered while Henry Geilfuss lived in the building and has been extant since circa 1900.

The building at the location of the workshop was repeatedly altered from a barn to a stable to a laundry facility. At some time it might have been a residence as well though there is no evidence of that use. The interior of the workshop remains utilitarian and does not appear to have

² “Residence For Sale,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 February 1903.

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undergone alterations since it became a laundry facility. The garage was built after 1914 and before 1950. No permit records were found. It does not appear to have been altered since its construction and remains a garage.

Integrity

The Henry Geilfuss House is well preserved, and despite some deferred maintenance, notably intact. While the address has changed, the Henry Geilfuss House has not been moved since it was constructed, and therefore maintains integrity of location.

The main residence has been divided into several apartments and this change in floor plan only minimally altered the building's exterior. The changes include the addition of fire escapes and a wooden stair. The workshop (former barn and stable) at the back of the property was enlarged and expanded over the course of successive remodels starting around 1900. The changes made the rear courtyard more enclosed. The courtyard was present in one form or another from the start; even though the workshops as they stand are larger than the original stable/barn, they still echo the original design intent. This is reinforced by the workshops' horizontal wood siding, which matches the exterior treatment of the main building and raised room.

The addition of the garage is the most radical change for the property and is not compatible with the main residence, partially affecting the original freestanding spatial quality of the main residence. It did not damage or destroy decorative or character defining features and like many of the other changes can be removed. As such the building appears to have integrity of design.

The Henry Geilfuss House was built in a mostly residential neighborhood. At the time of construction it was considered a working-class suburb. The neighborhood remains predominantly residential and working-class. Many of the buildings that were in place when the Henry Geilfuss House was built are still extant. One exception is the neighboring property to the north and east. In 1913, the Ford Motor Company built an automobile assembly plant behind the subject property. Not long after, the five properties north of 811 Treat Avenue were demolished to make way for the Ford building's expansion, that later became the Las Americas Children Center and the John O'Connell Vocational and Technical Institute. This change did not affect the overall character of the neighborhood or the property's integrity of setting.

The Henry Geilfuss House is built entirely of wood and is notably intact for its age and degree of maintenance. The wood does not appear to have been painted many times over the lifespan of the building and the large majority of the elaborate detailing at the front elevation is intact. There are very few obvious elements that have been replaced aside from the stair³, which appears to have been replicated due to the fact that the new guardrail does not meet updated code requirements and has a configuration commonly seen on Victorian-era guardrails. The accuracy of the replacement is unknown. The building therefore maintains a high degree of integrity of materials and workmanship.

³ A permit issued in 1999 included repair of the stairs.

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The few changes that were made to the Henry Geilfuss House were mainly at the rear and on the interior and did not alter the elaborate bay-windowed front that make it an excellent Italianate style residence designed by and for master architect Henry Geilfuss. It is still located in an area than has remained predominately residential and retained many of its original buildings. The narrow drive leading to what were once stables provides, too, an example of what life was like in the 1880s for Geilfuss. The building therefore has integrity of feeling and association.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1882-1900

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Geilfuss, Henry

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Geilfuss, Henry

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

The Henry Geilfuss House is eligible for the National Register at the local level of significance under Criteria B and C in the area of Architecture. Geilfuss was a master architect whose contribution to San Francisco's Victorian-era architecture was substantial and enduring. His buildings are often described as quintessential examples of San Francisco Victorian-era architecture. Geilfuss designed the residence at 811 Treat Avenue for his family and they lived there from 1882 until 1900. This period of significance also corresponds to the most productive time of his career. Although Geilfuss does not appear to have worked out of the house, under Criterion B, in the absence of an extant office or studio, the house is eligible for its association with Henry Geilfuss, prolific master architect of Victorian-era San Francisco. The two-story Italianate style residence in San Francisco's Mission District is also eligible under Criterion C as the work of a master architect and intact example of its style. This rare surviving example of a detached residence in a cityscape dominated by row houses is also an excellent example of a bay-windowed Italianate. Details evoke a Renaissance-era Italian villa along with flourishes of carved floral and geometric design that anticipated Geilfuss' later work.

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

Criterion B: Association with Henry Geilfuss, productive architect of Victorian-era architecture in San Francisco

At the height of his career, the following was written in 1889 with regard to Henry Geilfuss in San Francisco:

Henry Geilfuss was born in Thurin, Germany in 1850, and studied his profession in Erfurt, Weimar and Berlin in the different architectural schools of those cities. While in Berlin and Schlessing he practiced his profession principally under railroad officials in constructing bridges and heavy masonry, thus seeing considerable work and thoroughly preparing him for his future career. In 1876 he left his native country, arriving in this city in the same year, where he has been in active practice ever since, working as a draughtsman the first two years. Since he has been in business for himself he has been the architect for some of the best buildings erected here.⁴

The architect that Henry Geilfuss worked for after his arrival in San Francisco was Wildrich Winterhalter, another German expatriate. According to city directories, in 1879 Geilfuss opened his own practice; his first office was at 637 Kearny Street, and he soon moved to 33 Kearny Street. For a few years around 1890 his office was located at 935 Market Street. By circa 1890 he was established at 120-150 Fulton Street, which would be his office until 1910. Henry Geilfuss

⁴ *California Architect and Building News*, September 15, 1889.

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built and designed this office building. He may also have lived there briefly. It was almost certainly damaged or destroyed during the 1906 Earthquake and Fire disaster due to its location. Less than ten years following the Earthquake, his reconstructed office building was possessed by eminent domain for the construction of San Francisco's new City Hall.⁵

According to *Victoria's Legacy*, "About a quarter of the fifteen hundred builders of the eighties and nineties were practicing architects. One of the most productive was Henry Geilfuss..."⁶ The exact number of buildings he designed is unknown. It may be between 200 and 500. He worked from the mid-1870s until the mid-1910s (he died in 1922). As his reputation grew Geilfuss hired draftsmen and architects to assist with drawing production. He formed another practice with Robert Zimmerman in 1891, which does not appear to have lasted more than a year. Geilfuss' son Carl began working for his father in 1901, and the practice was renamed "H. Geilfuss & Son" in 1902.

Geilfuss worked very comfortably in all the popular styles and very often over lapped or combined styles. There are surviving examples of Italianate, Stick, Eastlake, Queen Anne, and Romanesque style buildings to name a few. He chose the Italianate style for his own residence so it can be assumed that was his preference at the time. It is unlikely that Geilfuss ever worked in his residence at 811 Treat Avenue. He lived there with his wife Anna (née Sinn) and three children.⁷ Their first son, Carl was born in 1876, followed by Henry in 1877, and daughter Else in 1886.⁸ Henry Geilfuss occupied the property from its construction in 1882 until 1900. After that he rented the property to the Thorp family, followed by the Schmidt family in 1904. Geilfuss finally sold the property to the Schmidts around 1910.

Henry Geilfuss took on other ventures, in addition to what has been repeatedly called a very prolific architectural career. He was a founding member and one-time president of the Golden State Land Company established in 1890 and he was also president of the Humbolt Building and Loan Association. He was an active member of the Republican Party and was elected as a delegate in 1892.⁹ It appears that the organization that he was most strongly affiliated with was the Masons. According to the National Register nomination for the South San Francisco Opera House that Geilfuss designed for the Masons, "he was member and one-time Master, of Hermann Lodge No. 127. This Lodge, which had been founded in San Francisco in 1858, had been granted permission to work entirely in the German language."¹⁰

The 1906 Earthquake happened towards the end of Geilfuss' 40-year career and many of his buildings were destroyed. It is unknown how many survive. Several of those that do are

⁵ "Civic Center Bond Issue in Court," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 June 1912.

⁶ Judith Lynch Waldhorn and Sally B. Woodbridge, *Victoria's Legacy* (San Francisco: 101 Productions, 1978), 24.

⁷ According to the census of 1880.

⁸ The spelling of the children's names is taken from Henry Geilfuss' obituary and other sources such as directories. The census of 1880 however shows Carl as Charles and Else as Ansie. It is unknown if these were their given names as no birth certificates have been found.

⁹ "Primary Elections," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 April 1892.

¹⁰ Katherine Petrin, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination, South San Francisco Opera House," 23 September 2010, Sec 8 p 4.

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considered quintessential examples of San Francisco Victorian-era Architecture. The following list includes a few notable works:

- Charles Dietle House (294 Page Street), built in 1878, extensive remodel by Geilfuss in 1885, Stick-style residence. San Francisco Landmark #48.
- Brune-Reutlinger House (824 Grove Street), built in 1886, Italianate style residence.
- South San Francisco Opera House (4701-4705 3rd Street), built in 1888, Italianate style theater. Listed on the National Register.
- William Westerfeld House (1198 Fulton Street), built in 1889, Stick style mansion. Listed on the National Register.
- John Coop House (959 South Van Ness Avenue) built in 1889, Queen Anne style residence.
- St. Mark's Lutheran Church (1111 O'Farrell Street) built in 1895 Romanesque style church. San Francisco Landmark #41.

Criterion C: Italianate style residence of master architect Henry Geilfuss

The Henry Geilfuss House is a well-preserved, San Francisco Italianate style, freestanding residence designed by and for Henry Geilfuss, a master architect. The lot is sixty feet wide, making it more than two times wider than the average twenty-five foot lot common in San Francisco. As such there was room to design a detached house—a small luxury in a city of row houses, though not infrequent during the nineteenth century. It also made for a building as wide as it is tall—another San Francisco anomaly as narrower lots tend to produce taller proportioned buildings. Most of these larger lots, like the one at 811 Treat Avenue, have been more densely developed over time due to housing pressure.

According to *A Field Guide to American Houses* “The Italianate style dominated American houses constructed between 1850 and 1880... In these decades San Francisco grew from a village to a principal American port; most of its earliest town homes were constructed of wood in this style.”¹¹ San Francisco Architecture is therefore often synonymous with Italianate style Architecture and Henry Geilfuss is responsible for having designed some of its best-preserved examples. The style is often divided into two categories: the earlier flat-fronted houses and the later bay windowed. The nominated property falls into the latter. It might have seemed a little old-fashioned, as the Eastlake/Stick style was perhaps more in vogue, and Geilfuss must have favored it when designing his own house in 1882.

Henry Geilfuss worked in all the popular styles with apparent ease though he certainly gave himself liberties to deviate and add flourishes from other styles. The Henry Geilfuss House is a very personal design and shows experimentation with carved patterns that anticipate his later work. It features a full-height, angled bay window and a flat roof very typical of the Italianate style, and it also features an uncommonly large covered porch that might be more in keeping with a small country villa.

¹¹ Lee and Virginia McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 212.

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True to the Italianate style, the treatment of the front of the house is divided between the upper and lower level. The lower level is clad in wood made to look like cut stone with decorative quoins suggestive of the imposing lower level of a Renaissance era Italian villa. The trim at the lower level is simple flat stock, undecorated to invoke mere functionality. The upper level is elaborate and ornate. In addition to the hooded windows, colonnettes, and profiled moldings are elements more common in later styles. The other elevations of the main residence are simply clad with horizontal wood siding and almost devoid of decoration, true to the San Francisco Italianate style.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Books

Bay of San Francisco: The Metropolis of the Pacific Coast. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1892.

Delehanty, Randolph and Richard Sexton. *In The Victorian Style.* San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991.

McAlester, Lee and Virginia. *A Field Guide to American Houses.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

Olmstead, Roger and T.H. Watkins. *Here Today: San Francisco's Architectural Heritage.* San Francisco: Junior League of San Francisco, 1968.

Waldhorn, Judith Lynch and Sally B. Woodbridge. *Victoria's Legacy.* San Francisco: 101 Productions, 1978.

Periodicals

"New Hotel." *San Francisco Chronicle.* April 12, 1890.

"New Corporations." *San Francisco Chronicle.* June 6, 1890.

"Primary Elections." *San Francisco Chronicle.* April 24, 1892.

"The New St. Mark's German Church." *San Francisco Chronicle.* June 25, 1894.

"Residence For Sale." *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 22, 1903.

"Civic Center Bond Issue in Court." *San Francisco Chronicle.* June 19. 1912.

California Architect and Building News. Volume III, Number 11, November 1882.

California Architect and Building News. Volume X, Number 9. September 15, 1889.

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Reports and miscellaneous documents

Bloomfield, Anne. "National Register of Historic Places Nomination, William Westerfeld House." August 1, 1988.

Petrin, Katherine. "National Register of Historic Places Nomination, South San Francisco Opera House." September 23, 2010.

Snyder, John William. Index of San Francisco building, 1879-1900. M.A. Thesis, University of California, Davis, 1975. ("Henry Geilfuss" clipping file, the Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository: San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco Planning Department, San Francisco Department of Building Inspection, Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.756870

Longitude: -122.413100

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

The boundary of the property corresponds to the area described by San Francisco block and lot number 3613/053. It is a rectangular lot that is sixty feet wide running north/south along Treat Avenue and one hundred twenty two and a half feet deep.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The block and lot boundaries are the original legal outlines of the property and have remained unchanged.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Johanna Street
organization: Johanna Street, Architect
street & number: 17 Upper Lake Rd.
city or town: Woodside state: CA zip code: 94062
e-mail: johanna@streetarchitect.com
telephone: 415-287-4143
date: 29 December 2015, Revised August 2016, December 2016

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Photographs

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

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Henry Geilfuss House

City or Vicinity: San Francisco

County: San Francisco

State: California

Photographer: Johanna Street

Date Photographed: June 2015

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

- 1 of 9 North and west (front) elevation, camera facing southeast.
- 2 of 9 North and west (front) elevation, camera facing southeast.
- 3 of 9 West (front) elevation, camera facing east.
- 4 of 9 West (front) elevation, camera facing east.
- 5 of 9 West (front) elevation at garage, camera facing northeast.
- 6 of 9 South elevation, camera facing northwest.
- 7 of 9 East (rear) elevation, camera facing northwest.
- 8 of 9 Courtyard elevation at raised room, camera facing north.
- 9 of 9 Courtyard elevation at workshop, camera facing northeast.

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Index of Figures

- Name of Property: Henry Geilfuss House
- City or Vicinity: San Francisco
- County: San Francisco
- State: California
- Date and Source: As noted
-
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Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970
- 2 of 5 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Henry Geilfuss House, 1900
Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970
- 3 of 5 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Henry Geilfuss House, 1914
Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970
- 4 of 5 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Henry Geilfuss House, 1950
Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970
- 5 of 5 Aerial Photograph of Henry Geilfuss House, 1938
David Rumsey Historical Map Collection

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 100 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.

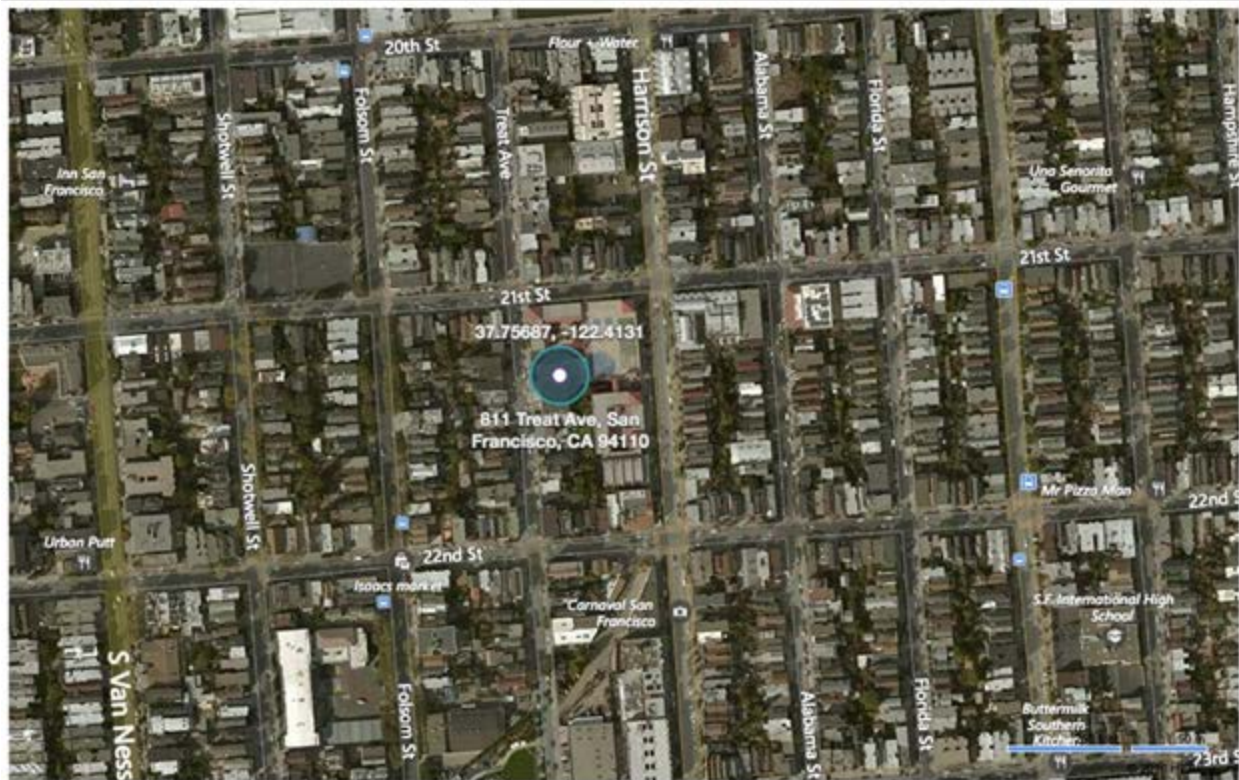
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Location Map

Latitude: 37.756870

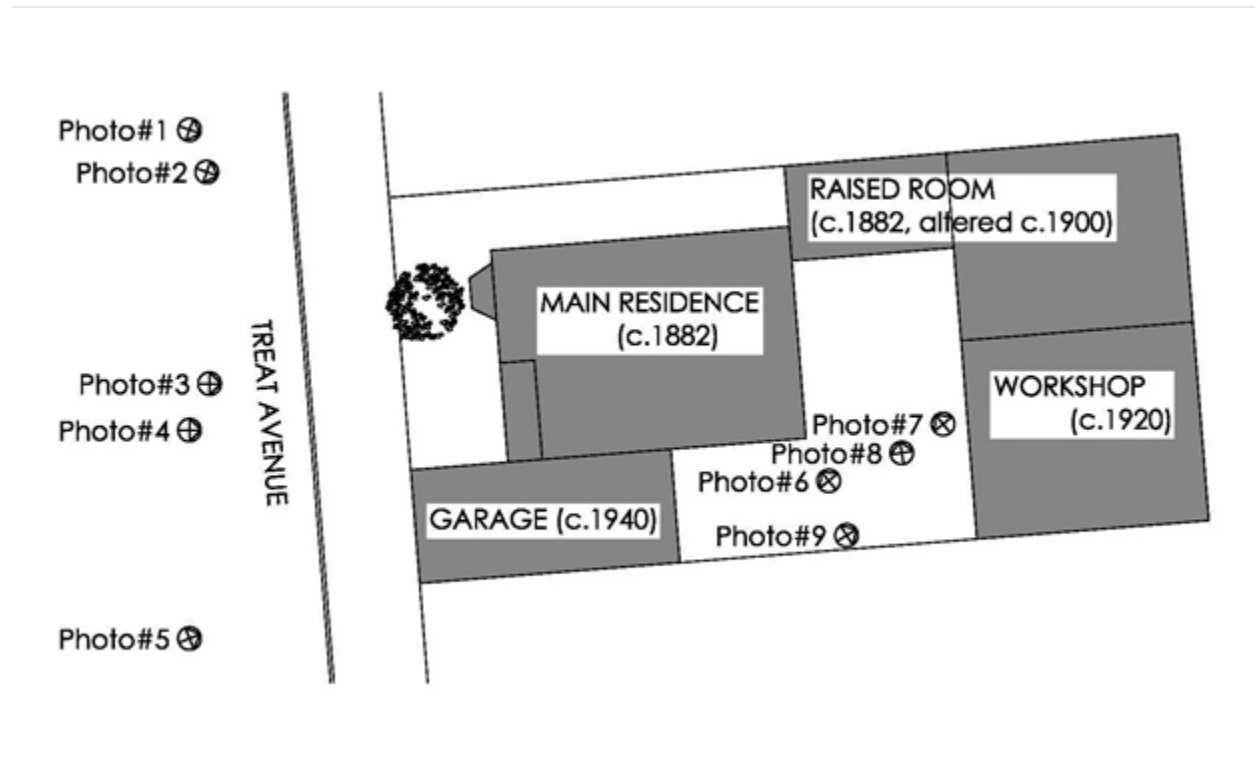
Longitude: -122.413100



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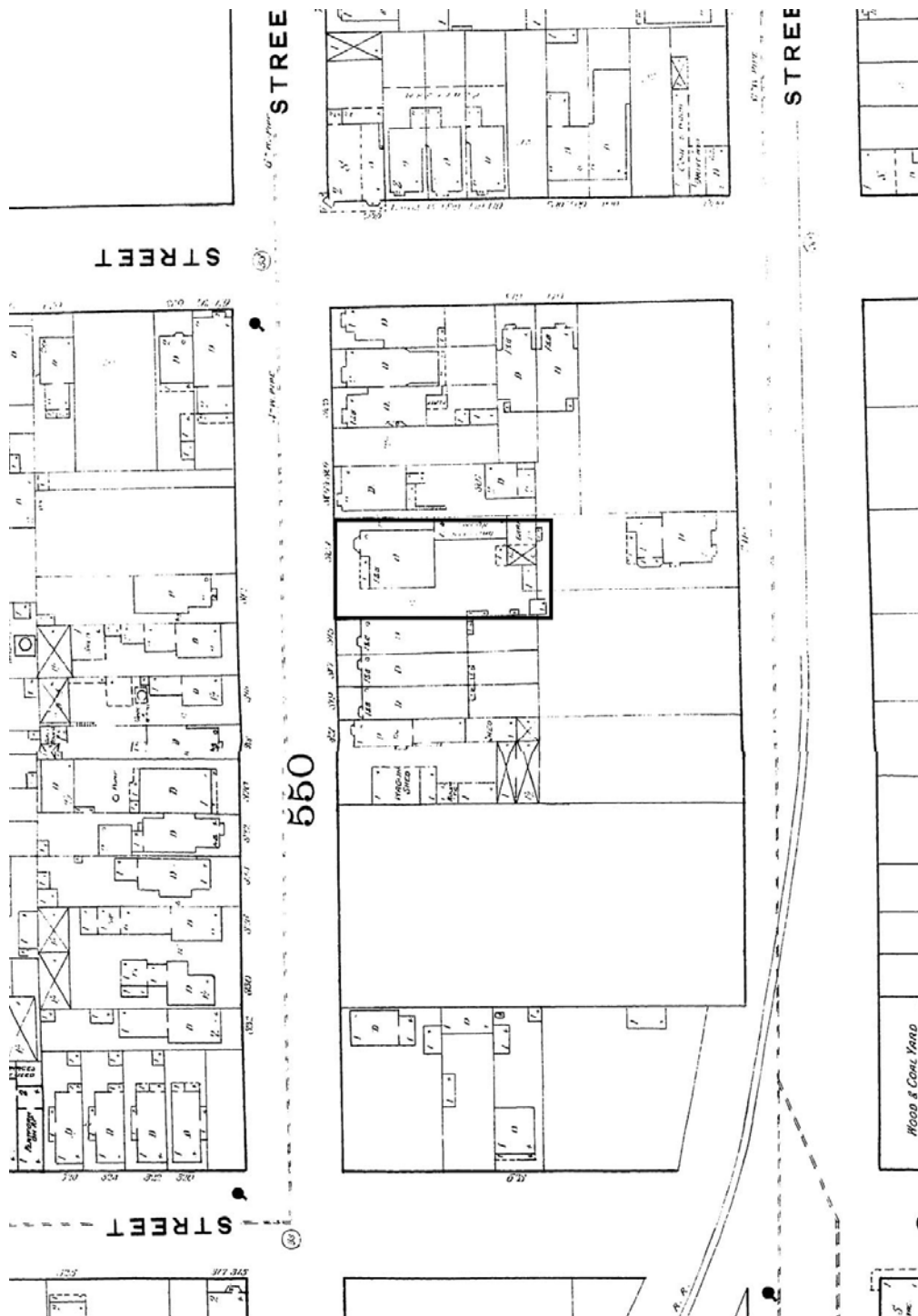
Sketch Map/Photo Key



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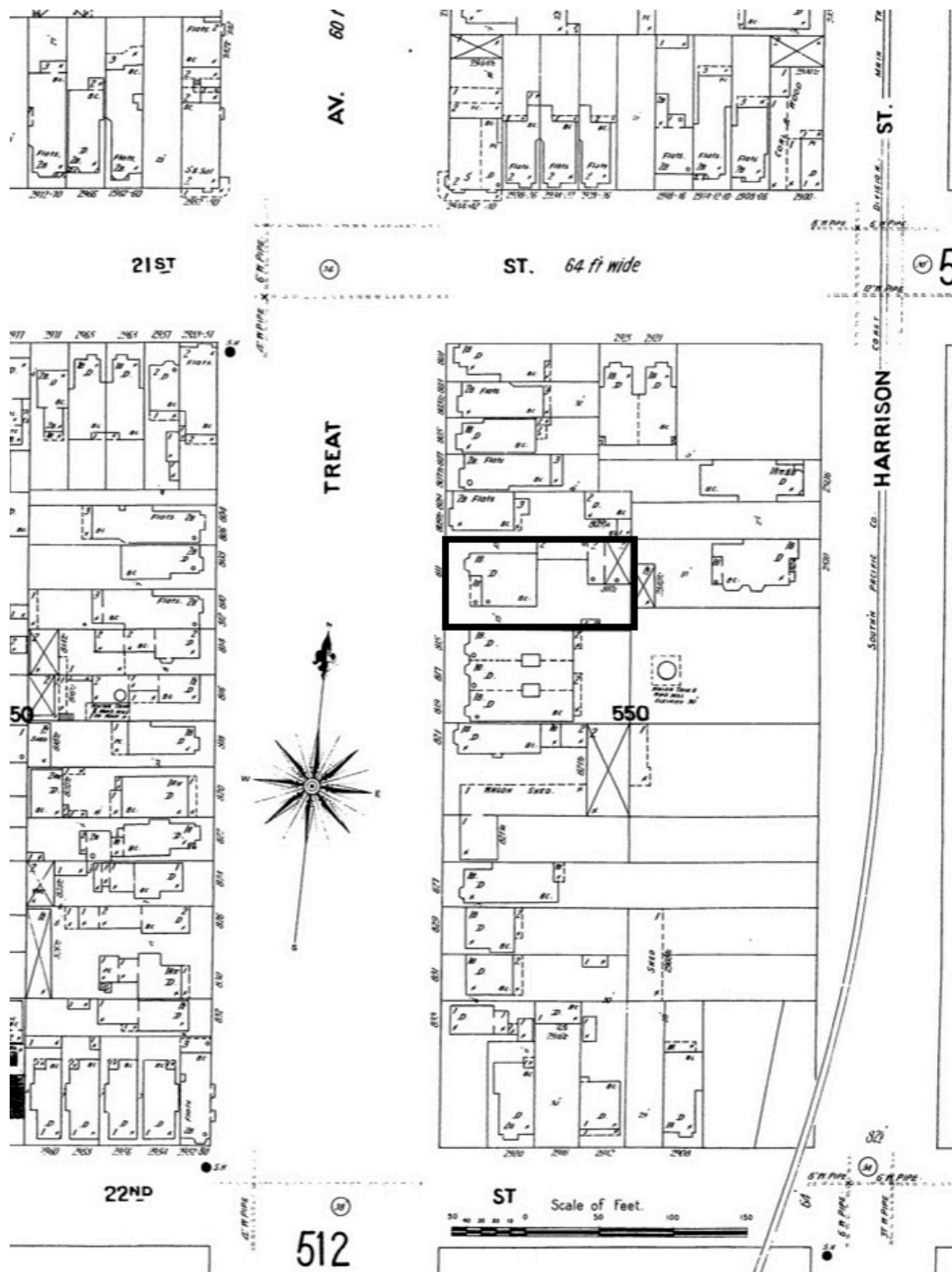
Figure 1. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Henry Geilfuss House, 1889



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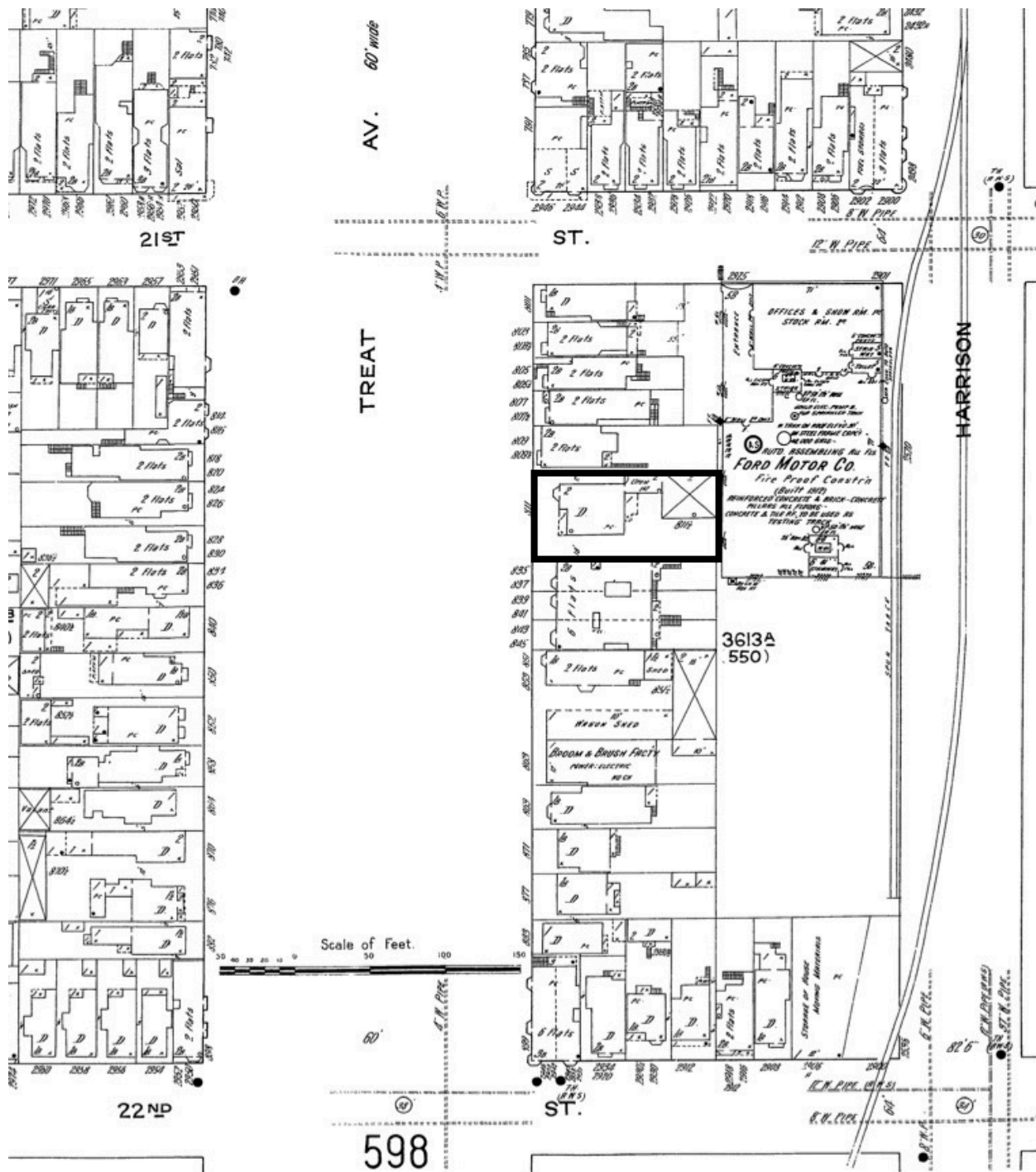
Figure 2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Henry Geilfuss House, 1900



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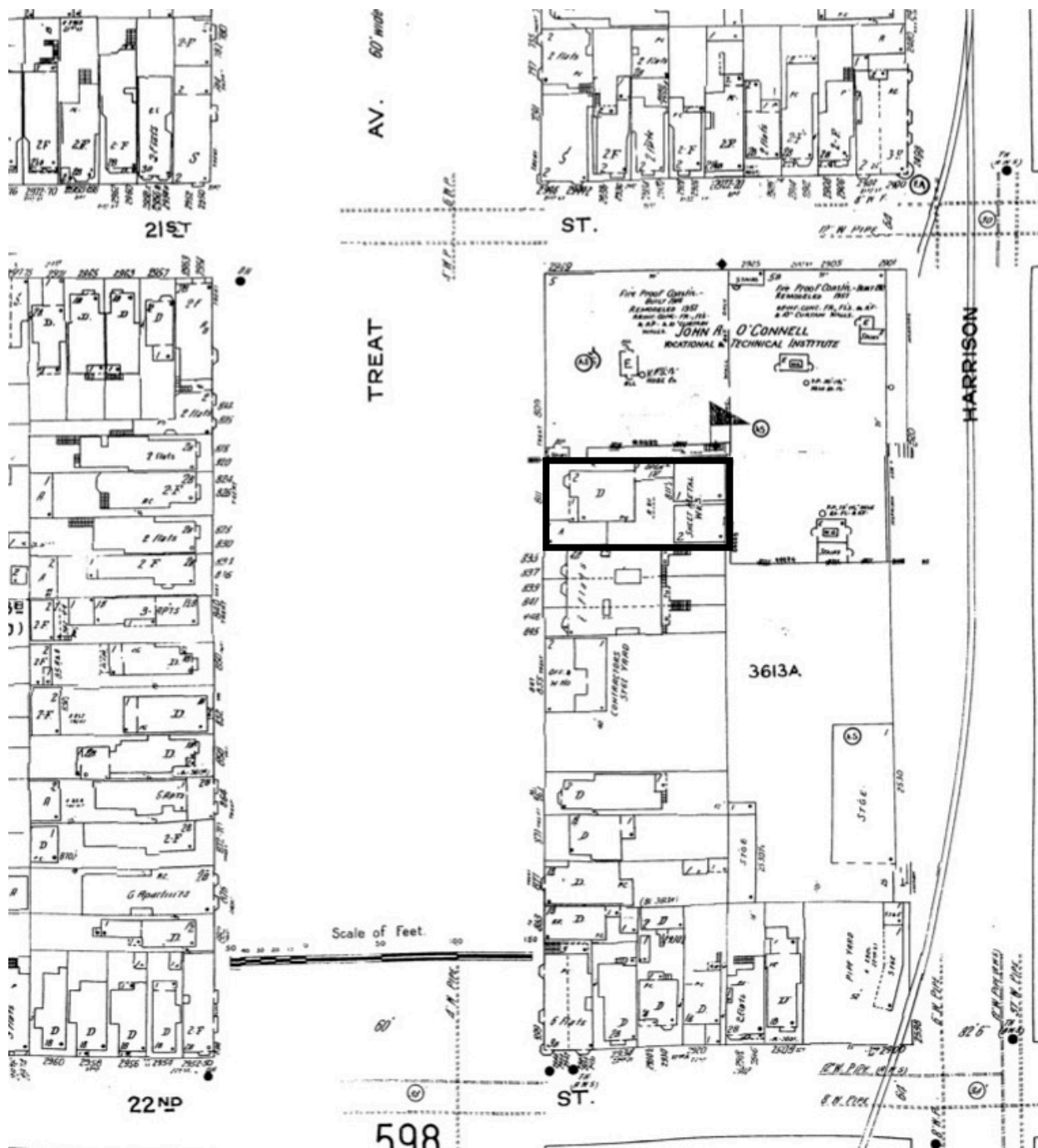
Figure 3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Henry Geilfuss House, 1914



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Figure 4. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Henry Geilfuss House, 1950



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Figure 5. Aerial Photograph of Henry Geilfuss House, 1938



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Photo 1.



Photo 2.



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Photo 3.



Photo 4.



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Photo 5.



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Photo 6.



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Photo 7.



Photo 8.



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Photo 9.

