



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

HEARING DATE: July 19, 2017
CASE NUMBER: 2015-005890DES
PROJECT ADDRESS 546-548 Fillmore Street, 554 Fillmore Street,
735 Fell Street, 660 Oak Street
BLOCK/LOTS 0828/021, 0828/022, 0828/022A, 0828/012
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Shannon Ferguson
Preservation Planner, 415-575-9074
REVIEWED BY: Tim Frye
Historic Preservation Officer, 415-575-6822
RE: Sacred Heart Church Parish Complex Landmark Designation
Recommendation– New Information

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

Reception:
415.558.6378

Fax:
415.558.6409

Planning
Information:
415.558.6377

On October 5, 2016, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) adopted Resolution No. 806 to initiate Article 10 landmark designation of 546-548 Fillmore Street, 554 Fillmore Street, 735 Fell Street, and 660 Oak Street, historically known as the Sacred Heart Parish Complex. At that hearing the HPC requested Planning Department Staff (Department) clarify whether or not the wood-frame connector between the third story of the rectory and the choir loft (Photo 1) should be considered a character-defining feature.

The landmark designation report notes that the connector was constructed sometime between 1913 and 1920 to allow priests easy access to the sanctuary for early morning masses and to get between the church and rectory in inclement weather (page 41). However, a building permit for its construction was not located and the exact date of construction is unknown.

The landmark designation report also notes that the pipe organ (Photo 2) was installed in 1923 and it blocked access to the connector (page 88). When the organ was removed sometime after 2009, the opening to the connector, as well as decorative wall painting dating from an earlier period was exposed (Photos 3-4). Therefore it appears that the connector was an accessible and active part of the church function for a very short period of time, roughly 3-10 years.

Based on the assessment of this new information, the Department maintains its determination that the purpose and use of the connector in the broader context of parish history is inconclusive. Master architect Thomas J. Welsh's Sacred Heart Church and rectory are rare surviving examples of his work; Sacred Heart Church is Welsh's only extant Romanesque Revival church design. The connector is not part of the historic Welsh design of the complex. Additionally, access to the connector was blocked by the organ and it was unused for over 80 years. Therefore, the Department has determined the connector has not taken on significance over time.



Photo 1. Exterior view of connector (outlined in red) between the third story of the rectory and the choir loft, view east, 2016. It was constructed sometime between 1913 and 1920 to allow priests easy access to the sanctuary for early morning masses and to get between the church and rectory in inclement weather.



Photo 2. Choir loft with organ intact, view west, 2009. Note that the organ at the left side of the choir loft extends out from the west window wall and the opening to the connector is not visible (photo courtesy of Chris VerPlanck).



Photo 3. Choir loft, view south, 2016. Note the opening and stair (indicated by red arrow) that leads to the connector. The pipe organ was installed in 1923 and it blocked access to the connector. When the organ was removed sometime after 2009, the opening to the connector, as well as decorative wall painting dating from an earlier period was exposed. Also note ghosting above the opening from trim that was likely removed to install the organ.



Photo 4. Choir loft, view northwest, 2016. Note decorative wall painting dating from an earlier period that was exposed when the organ was removed. Opening at right provides access to campanile stair. Trim above opening is likely similar to the trim that was removed at the connector opening to install the organ in 1923.