NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR THE SECURITY TRUST COMPANY
BANK BUILDING

A Project

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by
Paul Rendes

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NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR THE SECURITY TRUST COMPANY

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by

Paul Rendes

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Department of History
Abstract

of

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR THE SECURITY TRUST COMPANY

BANK BUILDING

by

Paul Rendes

This project determines the eligibility of and establishes a historic context for the nomination of the Security Trust Company Bank Building to the National Register of Historic Places as a commercial building, with an accompanying nomination form. Sources of data used in this project include county assessor records, maps, historic and contemporary photographs, city and county histories, city directories, journal and newspaper articles, articles of incorporation, architectural plans, biographical texts, and contemporary literature on historic preservation and architectural history. The Security Trust Company Bank Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the property is eligible for its association with the 1952 Bakersfield earthquake. The building is also eligible under Criterion C for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of construction and representing the work of a master.

_________________________, Committee Chair
Dr. Lee Simpson

_________________________
Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The nomination of the Security Trust Company Bank Building to the National Register of Historic Places stemmed from a personal interest in the property’s unique restoration project. In April 2014, at which time I was in my last quarter as an undergraduate student at California State University, Bakersfield, the original 1910 architecture of the building was “rediscovered” by the property’s owner, Sam Abed, after city officials approved an order to demolish it. A lengthy restoration project soon began to remove the 1947 stucco façade that cocooned the building for nearly seven decades. Similar to many other Bakersfield residents, I developed an interest in the building’s history and watched its slow transformation. From John Powell, an architectural historian, I learned a significant amount of information about the property, such as that it was designed by Frederick Herman Meyer and constructed by Charles J. Lindgren, both historically notable in their professions. In conjunction with my correspondence with Powell, I was enrolled in the Public History Program’s Cultural Resources Management course (HIST 282A). From the course’s final project, which consisted of evaluating a resource for eligibility in the National Register of Historic Places, I developed an interest in nominating the building.

This project examines the property located at 1800 Chester Avenue, Bakersfield, California, and finds it eligible under the National Register Criteria at the local level of significance. Under Criterion A, the property is eligible for its association with the 1952 earthquake that destroyed much of Bakersfield’s built environment. Under Criterion C, the property is eligible because it not only embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Beaux Arts architectural style, but also because it represents the work of a master. Upon completion of the project, the appropriate nomination forms will be sent to the California State Office of Historic
Preservation to ultimately determine whether or not the property meets the criteria for listing in the National Register. The California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) will recommend whether it is eligible at the national, state, or local level. If the SHPO deems it eligible for the National Register, it will be sent to the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C. for further evaluation.

This project chronicles the process of nominating the Security Trust Company Bank Building to the National Register. The following chapter of this project discusses the broader history of Kern County and Bakersfield. The next section examines the theory and practices of historic preservation as well as the history of its activities at the national, state, and local levels. Chapter four delves into the bureaucratic process of evaluating the historic context, significance, and integrity of a property for inclusion in the National Register. Additionally, this task explores the approach that I employed in personally documenting the restoration project. Furthermore, I discuss the repositories and sources, both primary and secondary, utilized in acquiring information about the property and its associated contexts. The final section details the project’s findings and evaluation, demonstrating the significance, integrity, and eligibility of the Security Trust Company Bank Building. The utilization of available literature and materials will support my assertion that the Security Trust Company Bank Building is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C.

Project Need

Located in the southernmost region of the central valley, Kern County is the third largest county in California in terms of land area, and the eleventh most populous at 886,507. The city of
Bakersfield, the county seat, holds a population of 379,110, the ninth largest in the state.\(^1\) Both Kern County and Bakersfield are inadequately represented in the National Register and the California Register of Historical Resources. As of April 2016, a total of twenty Kern County properties are listed in the National Register, only six of which are from Bakersfield. Of the twenty, nineteen were listed between the 1970s and 1990s. The most recent property was listed in 2003. Furthermore, not a single property from Bakersfield or Kern County is listed in the California Register.\(^2\)

At the local level, just thirteen properties are listed in the Bakersfield Register of Historic Places, with eleven listed in the 1990s and only two since the turn of the century.\(^3\) Although the August 1952 earthquake, seismic retrofitting, and urban renewal destroyed countless properties, a number of historically significant properties still exist and await recognition, especially in the city’s oldest residential areas. As a mid-sized city with a fast growing population, it is unfortunate that Bakersfield has such a lack of historic preservation awareness. Perhaps one reason for such apathy is because the petroleum and agricultural industries, both historically and contemporarily, serve as the economic engines of the region, leaving little room for other interests or opportunities. The lack of economic diversity undoubtedly plays a role in the region’s consistently high illiteracy and poverty rates. Per the 2010 census, over twenty four percent of Kern County residents and over twenty percent of Bakersfield residents live in poverty.\(^4\)

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The lack of interest in preservation efforts is reflected in the fact that the Bakersfield Historic Preservation Commission is buried within the Economic Development and Housing Services Division of the Community Development Department. According to John Powell, a long time notable figure in California preservation with a focus on the central valley, the Bakersfield Historic Preservation Commission, established in 1983, was never intended to play a serious role in community development decisions.\(^5\) Inadequate preservation interests and budgetary issues have created challenges in finding, evaluating, and ultimately listing properties in the national, state, and local registers.

Similarly, the absence of preservation incentives at the county or city level further inhibit preservation efforts. The Mills Act, enacted by the state legislature in 1972, is the most important economic incentive for local preservation. Operated by local governments, the program offers economic aid to private property owners wishing to rehabilitate or restore buildings that are deemed historic based on local criteria. However, neither Kern County nor Bakersfield participate in the Mills Act, a program that also benefits local governments as it contributes to affordable housing and stimulates heritage tourism and community pride.\(^6\) The Mills Act would have been of significant assistance to Sam Abed, owner of the Security Trust Company Bank Building. Abed searched for city funds to assist in the extensive restoration of the building, a project that required nearly $40,000 for the windows alone, but discovered that no such resources exist.\(^7\) Although the restoration of the Security Trust Company Bank Building was a highly

\(^5\) Per April 2015 email correspondence with John Edward Powell, former Professor of Architectural History, Historic Preservation, and Art History. He has also worked as a Consulting Architectural Historian on a number of projects.


unique and extensive project, the fact that the building sat unchanged for an entire year after the
stucco façade was removed in April 2014 is indicative of the absence of any local preservation
program or oversight.

Nominating a treasure long thought lost to the National Register is imperative to fostering
community preservation awareness as it can offer a starting point for recognizing other historic
properties as significant at the local level at the very least. If not nominated, the Security Trust
Company Bank Building may once again be “modernized” and forgotten in the future. This
project also seeks to highlight Frederick Herman Meyer, an architect not primarily known for his
work outside of the Bay Area. In Bakersfield in particular, Meyer has been forgotten because the
other two local buildings he designed no longer exist. A successful nomination also offers the
opportunity to generate momentum for and assist in efforts aimed at revitalizing a once historic
and attractive downtown. For instance, not only will a listed property increase nearby property
values, but it can also encourage similar efforts to remove late era facades that conceal other
downtown buildings.
Kern County and Bakersfield

Kern County is home to a variety of land forms. To the west, Kern County encompasses part of the Coast Ranges, bordering the counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura. Along the Coast Ranges also runs the San Andreas Fault. The geological formation of the ranges created the oil pools that characterize the landscape of the western floor of the southern valley. East of the Coastal Ranges lies the Central Valley, or the Southern San Joaquin Valley in which Kern is situated. Within the valley, Kern extends from the western Coastal Ranges to the Sierra Nevada foothills in the east, and from Delano in the north to the Grapevine in the south. To the east lies the Sierra Nevada Mountains, within which is the manmade Lake Isabella, dammed in 1953 to store water and prevent the Kern River from flooding the valley floor. Connecting the Coastal Ranges with the Sierra Nevada is the Tehachapi Mountains, through which Interstate 5 runs. The Tejon Pass, historically the most frequently traversed route into Kern, is also located in the Tehachapi Mountains. To the east of the Sierra Nevada is the Mojave Desert, another early route pioneers traveled into Kern. Within Kern, the Mojave Desert spans from the Sierra Nevada in the west to Boron and Edwards Air Force Base in the east, and from Ridgecrest in the north to Rosamond in the south. In the Mojave Desert are also the El Paso Mountains, a branch of the Sierras.8

Although not much is known about the county’s aborigines, the Pinto Man, evidence suggests that they first entered the Indian Wells Valley in northeastern Kern County some 30,000 years ago. Around 1,000 years ago, the Shoshoneans, composed of a number of tribes, came to

occupy the eastern Kern desert region and the valleys of the Sierras. One tribe of Shoshoneans, the Kawaiisu, known also as the Paiutes, Tehachapis, and Plaeaus, established villages in Tehachapi, Hot Springs, Walker Basin, and Havilah. The Tubatulabal tribe set up villages on the main fork of the Kern River by Weldon and Old Kernville, and around the Poso Creek and upper Tejon areas. The Panamint tribe, also known as the Koso, occupied the northern region of the Mojave Desert while the Chemehuevi and Paiutes occupied the southern area.⁹

Indian artifacts found in 1968 on the shores of Buena Vista Lake near Taft, indicates that people have lived in the Southern San Joaquin Valley since approximately 5,650 B.C. The Yokuts, who lived throughout the valley and nearby foothills, were by far the largest of the native groups of Kern County. In total, fifty tribes, amounting to at least 25,000 people, comprised the Yokuts. The Yokuts frequently stole livestock from Spanish ranchos along the coast, leading to increased physical confrontation. In the early 1800s, Spanish troops traversed into the valley to capture natives for slave labor, resulting in the Yokuts’ almost complete abandonment of the western region of Kern. In 1851, General Edward F. Beale, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California and Nevada, engaged in efforts to move natives to Sebastian Indian Reservation located near Fort Tejon, a military outpost established in 1854 to suppress bandits and Confederate sympathizers, and quell misguided Indian fears that settlers harbored.¹⁰

During the Spanish era, officials expressed little interest in Alta California until the 1760s when Russian fur traders began penetrating the coastal regions. Spain displayed even less interest

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in developing or populating California’s central valley. In 1772, three years after establishing a
mission at San Diego, the first Europeans entered the Kern County area when Pedro Fages led a
group through the Grapevine in pursuit of two deserters of the Spanish military. Although he
failed to capture the deserters, Fages took advantage of the opportunity to explore the area’s delta
like landscape. He first encountered the Yokuts town of Tulamniu, located along the shores of
what Fages called Buena Vista (Lake), now a dry lakebed except for a small portion that serves as
a reservoir in southwest Kern.

In October 1775, Spanish authorities assigned Father Francisco Garces with the task of
not only spreading Catholicism, but also searching for an overland route from the Mexican state
of Sonora to Monterey, the capital of Alta California. Father Garces traveled along the Colorado
River and through the Mojave Desert and the San Bernardino Mountains before reaching Mission
San Gabriel. From the Tejon Pass, he reached the Kern River in May 1776, naming it the Rio de
San Felipe. After conducting the first Christian baptism in the San Joaquin Valley and exploring
present day Bakersfield, northern Kern County, and Tulare County, he recrossed the Kern River
and Tehachapi Mountains into the Mojave Desert, visualizing the southern valley as a prime
agricultural area and transportation route between the southwest and the Pacific Coast.

In the late 1700s, the El Camino Viejo, the oldest and most frequently used interior trail
during the Spanish and Mexican eras, became established. With a significant portion of the trail
running parallel to the coastal ranges in western Kern, it facilitated access from Los Angeles to

11 Richard C. Bailey, Heart of the Golden Empire: An Illustrated History of Bakersfield (Woodland Hills,
12 W.W. Robinson, The Story of Kern County (Bakersfield, CA: Title Insurance and Trust Company, 1965),
1-5.
13 William Harland Boyd, “From Father Francisco Garces,” in Inside Historic Kern: Selections from the
Kern County Historical Society’s Quarterly, 1949-1981, eds. William Harland Boyd, John Ludeke, and
the Bay Area and served as a route for fugitives to travel unobserved. In the early 1800s, after Father Garces, other Spanish religious and military authorities also traversed into the southern central valley. In 1804, Padre Juan Martin traveled from Mission San Miguel into the valley for missionary purposes. Two years later, in response to increasing Indian raids on coastal missions, Spanish officials organized an expedition headed by Lieutenant Francisco Ruiz to capture fugitives. Padre Jose Maria de Zalvidea also accompanied Lieutenant Ruiz to assess the prospects for mission sites within the valley. Also in 1806, twenty five soldiers accompanied Lieutenant Gabriel Moraga, who later named the San Joaquin River, on a campaign from Mission San Juan Bautista to explore the eastern valley for future development as a way to protect coastal missions and ranches from raids. Nine years later, in 1815, the “Grandos Expedition” entered the valley in search of runaway Indians from the missions, and in 1816, Padre Luis Martinez departed from Mission San Luis Obispo with Spanish soldiers to spread Catholicism in the region surrounding Buena Vista Lake.

Despite visions of developing the vast interior of Alta California, turmoil in Europe in the early 1800s stalled any hopes of progress. Recognizing the weakness of the Spanish monarchy, Mexico, like other Spanish colonies, declared and won its independence, a message relayed to Alta California in early 1822. Concentrating efforts on secularizing the missions the new and politically fragile Mexican government, however, was not in a position to develop the southern central valley, and specifically the area comprising Kern, until the 1840s. In the meantime, American explorers increasingly penetrated the region. Jedediah Smith led the first American overland expedition, arriving at Mission San Gabriel in November 1826. After Alta California Governor Jose Echeandia imprisoned the group, suspecting they were American spies, he

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released and ordered them to depart the way they came. In February 1827, however, Smith and his party deviated and entered Kern via the Tejon Pass. After exploring the area, Smith and two of his party members left California through the Sierra Nevada, only to make a return trip soon after gathering more men and supplies.\(^{16}\)

Smith’s journals and maps encouraged a number of other American explorers to travel to California and Kern County in particular. After examining Smith’s journals and acquiring copies of his maps, the Hudson’s Bay Company began trapping along the Kern River among other areas. In 1830, Ewing Young entered Kern using the same route as Father Garces and Smith and trapped along the Kern River. In 1834, Joseph Reddeford Walker led a group from the Pacific Coast through what would become Bakersfield, and then followed the Kern River into the Greenhorn Mountains through what is today known as Walker’s Pass. Nine years later, in 1843, Walker led the first wagon train of emigrants to cross the Rockies through Walker’s Pass and into the valley.\(^{17}\)

To facilitate large scale emigration to California and the seizure of Mexico’s northern territories, the United States government needed to obtain precise maps of the region. Accordingly, in 1843 officials selected John C. Fremont, Lieutenant in the United States Topographical Corps, to lead an expedition to explore Oregon and the region south of the Columbia River. After reaching Sutter’s Fort, the party explored the Kern River area before leaving east for Washington D.C. In 1845, Fremont received orders for a third expedition, assembling a party that included Reddeford Walker, Alexis Godey, Kit Carson, and Edward

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\(^{16}\) Bailey, *Heart of the Golden Empire*, 16-18.

Kern, a topographer for whom the Kern River and Kern County are named. After the expedition split in two, Kern produced the most accurate contemporary account of the river.\textsuperscript{18}

From 1842 to 1846, Mexico initiated efforts to settle and develop the southern valley as all five ranchos administered during this time period lay in Kern County. On July 14, 1842, California Governor Juan B. Alvarado granted Rancho San Emidio, or San Emigdio, to Jose Antonio Dominguez, a resident of San Juan Capistrano. On April 10, 1866, prior to becoming part of the Kern County Land Company’s holdings, Fremont bought a half interest in the rancho. After Governor Manuel Micheltorena originally granted the Rancho Los Alamos y Agua Caliente, which partly lays in Los Angeles County, to Pedro Carrillo in 1843, Governor Pio Pico regranted the land on May 27, 1846 to Francisco Lopez, Vicente Bottiler, and Luis Jordan. Governor Micheltorena granted the third Kern land grant, Rancho Castac, to Jose Maria Covarrubias on November 22, 1843. Governor Micheltorena awarded the fourth Kern rancho, Rancho El Tejon, to Jose Antonio Aguirre and Ignacio del Valle on November 24, 1843. The final rancho, Rancho La Liebre, located partly in Los Angeles County, Governor Pico accorded to Jose Maria Flores on April 21, 1846. However, like others in the valley, the Kern ranchos struggled during the Mexican era due in large part to their isolation.\textsuperscript{19}

After Mexico ceded Alta California under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and it became an American state on September 9, 1850, present Kern County was part of Mariposa County until the creation of Tulare County in 1852. At the same time, the increasingly dwindling mining prospects in the Mother Lode region sparked Kern’s gold rush. The first known discovery of gold by miners in Kern occurred in 1853 near the upper Kern River in the Greenhorn Gulch.

The following year, prospectors reported the first sizeable gold discoveries, intriguing prospectors from the Mother Lode, San Francisco, Stockton, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Santa Barbara. Keyesville, located a few miles south of the fork and a mile north of the Kern River, became Kern’s first town, established in 1854. Other mining towns sprang up such as Quartzburg, Kernville, Glenville, Claraville, Woody, Bodfish, Havilah, and Sageland. While Kern’s gold rush was short lived, gold and silver mining continued throughout the county until the 1930s, leading to the establishment of other towns such as Randsburg, Johannesburg, Mojave, and Garlock.20

In 1858, the Butterfield Overland Line, also known as the Great Southern Overland Mail, entered the San Joaquin Valley on its way from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Although operations ceased to exist by the beginning of the Civil War, it had a profound impact on the valley as it led to improved accessibility and awareness of the interior. The Butterfield Overland Line contributed to the influx of squatters and settlers to Kern Island, the original name of Bakersfield. Kern Island’s location between the channels and sloughs of the Kern River attracted newcomers in the late 1850s. Among the first settlers were the Bohna family, the Skiles family, the Lovelace family, the Baker family, Dr. Sparrel Walter Woody, and Captain Elisha Stevens.21

Colonel Thomas Baker, founder of Bakersfield and cofounder of Visalia, was born in Zanesville, Ohio in 1810. After moving to Iowa in 1838, he soon became involved in politics, serving in the 4th and 6th Iowa territorial assemblies and as a member of Iowa’s first legislature in 1846. Intrigued by the gold rush, Baker moved his family to California in 1850, settling in Benicia and Stockton. Three years later, he represented Tulare County in the State Assembly and from 1861 to 1862, Tulare and Fresno counties in the State Senate. While in the legislature, Baker worked towards passing legislation for reclaiming 400,000 acres of swamp and overflow lands in

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the southern valley, prompting the growth of Bakersfield and the region’s agricultural beginnings.22

After the successful reclamation project, Baker began to survey the area for the future site of a city. He fenced off ten acres of land in what is now downtown Bakersfield for the purpose of cultivating crops. The geographic location of Baker’s field offered travelers going to and from Los Angeles and Stockton, Sacramento, and San Francisco a convenient stopping place for hospitality. Anticipating the city would be the most important valley community south of Stockton, Baker mapped the streets and avenues accordingly. Soon after, he also completed the Baker Grade to connect the growing settlement with the mining town of Havilah, the county’s first capital. Within a few years, the city’s population quickly rose to 600.23

Kern County’s rich oil history began around the same time as Baker’s reclamation project, also contributing to the region’s growth. In 1864, the Buena Vista Petroleum Company discovered oil near Buena Vista Lake, and by 1866 the site generated up to 3,000 gallons of kerosene per month. However, coastal competition and expensive costs halted the company’s operations and the region’s oil production until the discovery of the Kern River Oil Field in 1899. Located northeast of Bakersfield, the Kern River Oil Field became California’s most productive, producing over seventeen million barrels by 1904. Perhaps the county’s most significant “black gold” discovery occurred in 1910 when the Lakeview No. 1 well, located in western Kern, produced 124,000 barrels within its first twenty four hours. Oil production in the county led to the establishment of McKittrick, Taft, Oildale, and Maricopa, and resulted in a construction boom in Bakersfield.24

22 Burmeister, The Golden Empire, 105-06; Boyd, A California Middle Border, 89-92.
The mining town of Havilah, located between the Kern River and Walker Basin, was established after several men discovered gold along Clear Creek in 1864. The news of the discovery and rumors that the Clear Creek district mines contained some of the most valuable gold in the state, attracted a number of outsiders. The active mining community’s population swelled to 3,000 by 1866. That same year, residents of Havilah circulated petitions to establish the county of Kern. In 1855, during the midst of Kern’s gold rush, Tulare Assemblyman Baker introduced a bill to create the county of Buena Vista, the predecessor of Kern County. Baker’s proposal called for the formation of Buena Vista County out of the southern region of Tulare County. Although the Assembly and Senate passed the bill and the governor signed it in 1855, certain provisions still had not been met. After a slightly amended version was circulated and passed in 1856, the bill languished until 1859 when it completely died due to local inactivity. Nonetheless, maps continued to allude to Buena Vista County.25

In early 1866, Visalia, the county seat of Tulare, received 274 signatures from residents in southern Tulare and northern Los Angeles counties in support of the creation of Kern County. James W. Freeman, a Democrat representing Tulare County, introduced Senate Bill 445, Chapter 569, in “An act to create the County of Kern, to define its boundaries, and to provide for its organization.” The state legislature and Governor Frederick Low approved the legislation, authorizing the creation of Kern County with Havilah as its county seat on April 2, 1866.26 By 1869, however, with the decline of mining activities and the anticipation of the coming of the railroad, Bakersfield began to significantly grow and resemble a viable county seat. Although a

bill to move the county seat to Bakersfield failed in 1870, Havilah continued to decline, falling to fourth in the county in registered voters.\textsuperscript{27}

Although the city disincorporated in 1876 and did not reincorporate until 1898, Bakersfield residents and the county Board of Supervisors voted to incorporate in 1873 with the anticipation of the coming of the railroad from San Francisco. On July 14, 1873, the Southern Pacific Railroad entered Kern County, reaching Delano. However, long before the railroad entered the county, Bakersfield residents and the Southern Pacific disagreed on the terms of the right of way that would be granted to the railroad. The failed negotiations ultimately led the railroad to bypass Bakersfield in favor of Sumner, later known as Kern City or what is now east Bakersfield. The town of Sumner, which incorporated in 1893 before later merging with Bakersfield in 1910, grew steadily at the expense of Bakersfield. The rail line then ultimately headed west through the famous Tehachapi Loop before entering Mojave and Los Angeles County. In 1895, largely due to valley resentment towards the Southern Pacific monopoly, the San Joaquin and San Francisco Railroad began construction in Stockton and arrived in Bakersfield three years later.\textsuperscript{28}

In 1873, with the departure of residents and capital from Havilah, the Board of Supervisors called an election for the proposal to transfer the county seat to Bakersfield. Havilah voted unanimously to retain the county seat and citing “irregularities,” the county supervisors rejected the votes from Bear Valley and Tejon precincts, giving Havilah the victory. However, the Bakersfield citizenry disagreed with the decision, charging that the board disenfranchised part

\textsuperscript{28} Chris Brewer, “Bakersfield became incorporated city on two occasions” and “Southern Pacific laid out Sumner, now east Bakersfield, when it ran its line through the area,” \textit{The Bakersfield Californian}, Special Commemorative Edition: “Birth of a City,” May 2, 2015, 24, 28-29; Robinson, \textit{The Story of Kern County}, 29-31.
of the county. After the matter was appealed to the District Court in Visalia and then the State Supreme Court, the board recounted the previously excluded votes, granting Bakersfield a narrow victory over Havilah as the new county seat in 1874.29

The 1880s marked not only a significant point in Kern County history, but also for the entire state as two powerful business interests fought a legal battle in court over water rights in the San Joaquin Valley. Henry Miller and Charles Lux owned the lowest part of the Kern River and Delta that included land north of Buena Vista Lake. On the other hand, James Haggin and Lloyd Tevis also held vast tracts of ranch land throughout the county that relied on the Kern River. The theory of riparian water rights had existed in the state constitution since 1850. Miller and Lux alleged that they owned the water from the Kern River because it naturally flowed on their property. Conversely, Haggin and Tevis argued in favor of appropriation rights to divert water for the purposes of irrigation and the greater public interest. Although the State Supreme Court sided with Miller and Lux, the opponents negotiated a deal to satisfy the interests of each side in 1888. Following the deal, Haggin and Tevis, who incorporated in 1890 as the Kern County Land Company, began selling large tracts of land. This development led to ensuing decades of growth and prosperity for the city after years of stagnancy. Not coincidentally, the city soon after witnessed the establishment of the Bakersfield and Sumner Street Railway, the Bakersfield Telephone Exchange, the Bakersfield Gas Works, a wave of construction that included the Southern Hotel, Scribner’s Opera House, and the Kern Valley Bank, and improved infrastructure that addressed increasing demands.30

Prior to the 1952 earthquake, the city’s worst disaster occurred on July 7, 1889 when a fire started in the business section of downtown on 20th Street and Chester Avenue. The fire

29 Boyd, *A California Middle Border*, 141-49.
quickly spread in all directions, destroying all but two buildings in the district. Nearly all of the downtown buildings were composed of wood, resulting in the destruction of a total of fifteen city blocks, five hotels, forty four houses, and 147 businesses. The cities of Tehachapi, Los Angeles, Fresno, Sacramento, and San Francisco all assisted in the rebuilding efforts. The fire also prompted the construction of brick buildings and structures to lessen the chance of similar disasters in the future. Among the many who came to Bakersfield to help reconstruct the city was Charles J. Lindgren, a brick mason who built the Security Trust Company Bank Building in 1910. The emphasis on reliable construction materials after the fire created a more metropolitan appearance for the growing city.\(^{31}\)

During the oil boom of the 1890s and early 1900s, which placed Bakersfield at the center of the California oil industry, the city experienced significant growth. In 1900, the city acquired electricity and the following year the Bakersfield and Kern Electric Railway began operations, serving Bakersfield and Kern City. The addition of electricity undoubtedly attracted business to the downtown area as an array of new halls, opera houses, department stores, and theaters appeared. In the early 1900s, Morley’s, Parra’s, Scribner’s, Grogg’s, The Empire, the Lyceum, The Elite, the Rex, and the C&S dotted Chester Avenue, prompting residents to refer to it as “Theater Row.” Similarly, the city acquired its most iconic landmark in 1904 from Truxtun Beale. While serving as the United States ambassador to Spain, he observed a Moorish tower that inspired him to construct a similar structure in Bakersfield, known as the Beale Memorial Clock Tower. The structure stood at the intersection of 17\(^{th}\) and Chester until the earthquakes of July

and August 1952 significantly damaged it beyond repair. The city erected a replica at the Kern County Museum in 1964.32

With the oil boom and the coming of the automobile in the early 1900s, the construction of roads became imperative. Paved and graded roads connected Bakersfield to the outlying communities of Taft, McKittrick, Maricopa, Wasco, McFarland, Arvin, Delano, and Buttonwillow. This occurred during the county’s second, and largest oil boom that brought an influx of people to the area. Moreover, in 1915, the Ridge Route Road opened through the Tehachapi Mountains. The Ridge Route, later replaced by Highway 99 and Interstate 5, quickly became popular as it offered a much shorter and more direct course from the San Joaquin Valley to southern California. Improved access between the valley and southern California encouraged increased investment and development in Kern County and Bakersfield.33

The Great Depression had a profound impact on California’s central valley, and Bakersfield in particular. The Dust Bowl, a period of severe drought and dust storms, caused a mass exodus from the Great Plains states to places such as California. The “Okies,” as many Dust Bowl migrants were referred to, had a profound influence on Kern County and Bakersfield. Between 1930 and 1940 Kern County’s population increased by sixty four percent, followed by sixty nine percent the next decade. While many locals shunned the migrants, Dust Bowlers arrived intrigued by the opportunities that oil, agriculture, and New Deal programs offered. President Roosevelt’s New Deal agencies such as the Public Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration employed thousands of people to improve the condition of parks, bridges, roads, overpasses, and public buildings in the county. The inflow of migrants from the

33 Bailey, *Heart of the Golden Empire*, 80-84.
Great Plains states left a lasting imprint on the culture of the region as they and their descendants have helped Bakersfield garner acclaim as the country capital of the west. ³⁴

Kern also played an important strategic role during World War II. The region’s oil production facilities served as vital resources for the war effort. Not coincidentally, in 1942 the military established Edwards Air Force Base in the remote region of southeast Kern. During the war the air force base served as a training and testing center continuing to exist in this capacity today. The isolated area of northeast Kern also offered a prime location for a military base as the United States Navy established the Naval Ordnance Testing Station, the largest in the world. The Mojave Desert communities of Rosamond, California City, Mojave, and Boron owe a large part of their existence to Edwards Air Force Base. Likewise, the recent development of Inyokern and Ridgecrest is attributed to the nearby Naval Ordnance Testing Station. Other defense related activities also appeared in the county during the war. Minter Field, located in Shafter, operated as a military air field until 1945, graduating over 11,000 Army Air Corps Cadets, some of whom became integral members of the Royal Air Force. In addition, Lockheed Aircraft Corporation and Vega Aircraft Company established a number of factories in the county, generating hundreds of wartime jobs. ³⁵

Kern County and Bakersfield have experienced a number of natural disasters over the years. However, 1952 experienced two of the most significant and devastating natural disasters ever recorded in the county in terms of structural and financial impairment. Although the 1857 Tejon earthquake in Kern County remains the strongest ever recorded in California with an estimated 7.9 magnitude, the July 1952 Kern earthquake measured 7.3, followed by a 5.8

earthquake that hit Bakersfield a month later. The July 21, 1952 Kern County earthquake, the
strongest in the state since the 1906 7.7 San Francisco earthquake, occurred along the White Wolf
fault with the epicenter at Wheeler Ridge. While Tehachapi and Arvin suffered the brunt of the
damage, shocks were felt in Bakersfield, Los Angeles, San Diego, Mexico, San Francisco, Reno,
and parts of southwest Nevada. The July 1952 earthquake also significantly affected agricultural
fields, irrigation ditches, levees, and reservoirs, causing an estimated thirty million dollars in
damage. Additionally, Bakersfield’s historic Beale Memorial Clock Tower also suffered minor
damage on all four sides.36

Following the July earthquake, seismographs continued to document more than a handful
of shocks registered at 6.0 or stronger, twenty four shocks at 5.0 or stronger, 180 shocks at 4.0 or
higher, and over 300 at less than 4.0. These tremors led to the catastrophic Bakersfield earthquake
of August 22, 1952. While the series of smaller earthquakes undoubtedly lessened what could
have been an even stronger earthquake, the 5.8 shock, which lasted only a few seconds with no
aftershocks, released energy equal to 2,000 atomic bombs, according to the United States Coast
and Geodetic Survey. The earthquake and ensuing fires caused serious damage to all but a few
buildings and structures in the downtown area, totaling sixty to 100 million dollars in property
loss. Surprisingly, only two people died and thirty two suffered injuries from the disaster. The
calamity, however, not only forever changed the physical makeup of the downtown area, but also
the city’s attitude towards historic preservation.37

36 Richard C. Bailey, “From Nineteen fifty-two Earthquake notes, “ in Inside Historic Kern: Selections from
the Kern County Historical Society’s Quarterly, 1949-1981, eds. William Harland Boyd, John Ludeke, and
Marjorie Rump (Bakersfield, CA: Kern County Historical Society, Inc., 1982), 248-51; Bailey, Heart of the
Golden Empire, 95.
37 Bailey, Heart of the Golden Empire, 95-97.
Chapter 3

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Theory and Practices of Historic Preservation

Although the word preservation denotes a certain meaning, it has casually been used to describe the entire movement to save historically significant resources. The Secretary of the Interior has explicitly defined preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, words that are frequently used interchangeably. Preservation is the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and material of a historic property. Work of this nature includes maintaining and repairing historic materials and features as opposed to the installation of new construction. Restoration is the act or process of accurately recovering the form, features, and character of a property and its setting as it appeared at a specific time by the means of the removal of later work or by the replacement of missing earlier work. Restoration also includes modernizing mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. Moreover, restoration requires a property to be used as it was historically or be given a new use that reflects the restoration period.\(^{38}\)

Rehabilitation is the act or process of making a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. Rehabilitation work calls for a property to be used as it was historically or for a new purpose that requires minimal change to its distinctive character, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. Lastly, reconstruction is the act or process of reproducing by new construction the exact form and detail of a vanished building, structure, or object, or a part thereof, as it appeared at a specific period of time. This method of work is used to

depict vanished or extant portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to facilitate accurate reconstruction with minimal speculation, and such reconstruction fosters public understanding of the property.\textsuperscript{39}

Generically, one can interpret historic preservation as appropriate maintenance of the existing built environment. Donovan D. Rypkema offers strategies and arguments in support of historic preservation efforts in \textit{The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader’s Guide}. Among the number of topics covered, building economics and the utilization of historic preservation as a strategy for downtown revitalization are two sections especially relevant to this project. He argues that rehabilitating or restoring a historic building is a cost effective alternative to constructing an entirely new building, pointing towards the evolution in building rehabilitation technology over the last two decades. Even for extensive rehabilitation or restoration projects that require the replacement of a number of materials, Rypkema argues that preservation still offers a greater return. The installation of new operating systems is typically a large portion of the expenses for major restoration projects like that of the Security Trust Company Bank Building. Plumbing, electrical, and mechanical systems, however, always have a shorter life span than the building, usually requiring replacement after two to three decades. Therefore, constructing a new building instead is not a cost effective strategy as these new components can be installed in existing historic buildings.\textsuperscript{40}

When contending that constructing a new building incurs approximately the same costs as rehabilitation, subscribers to this theory rarely factor in the costs for demolishing the structure and disposing of the debris. Rypkema also offers several other reasons against constructing a new

\textsuperscript{39} Murtagh, \textit{Keeping Time}, 20.
\textsuperscript{40} Donovan D. Rypkema, \textit{The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leaders Guide}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Washington, D.C: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2005), 90.
building in the place of a historic one. First, the fact that the building continues to stand is evidence in itself that it is still usable. Second, historic buildings like the Security Trust Company Bank Building often stand in close proximity to neighboring structures. Razing such buildings severely complicates matters as the potential liability for damage to an adjacent property must be addressed. Also, while rehabilitation projects have demolition and disposal expenses, they are typically less than the environmental costs incurred from tearing down an old building for the purpose of new development.\textsuperscript{41}

Rypkema also argues for historic preservation as an effective strategy for downtown revitalization. Investment in historic buildings reinforces the value of existing real estate assets. In other words, maintaining a historic building benefits not only its property owner, but the value of adjacent parcels as well. Investment in existing downtown infrastructure will generate increased private sector interest serving to aid in overall revitalization efforts.\textsuperscript{42} This is especially relevant for downtown Bakersfield. The restoration of the Security Trust Company Bank Building is undoubtedly the city’s most significant historic preservation activity in decades. The interest it has stimulated offers a starting point for both public and private development in the area.

**Historic Preservation in the United States**

The roots of historic preservation in the United States can be traced to the early colonization period. In 1643, the founder of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, expressed grief over the loss of the Castle Island fortification in Boston, advocating it could still serve a useful purpose after necessary improvements. Near the end of the eighteenth century,

\textsuperscript{41} Rypkema, *The Economics of Historic Preservation*, 91-92.
\textsuperscript{42} Rypkema, *The Economics of Historic Preservation*, 55-56.
architect Benjamin Latrobe lamented the demolition of the 150 year old Green Spring Plantation House in Virginia. Around the same time, in 1791, Congress allotted $300 for the preservation of Revolutionary War monuments. Just two years prior, a group formed the Massachusetts Historical Society, the first such entity in the nation. However, amid rapid economic and social changes, the general population largely harbored little interest in historic preservation.\(^\text{43}\)

Not until the early 1800s did a serious historic preservation consciousness begin to emerge. The proposed demolition of Philadelphia’s Independence Hall in 1806, the Pennsylvania Capitol for forty years, aroused public sentiment. After the state legislature denied local developers the opportunity to demolish the historic building, the city acquired the landmark and saved it, albeit with some alterations to its original design. The restoration installed a new fireproof annex in place of the original library and a different type of clock tower in place of the original that was removed a few decades before.\(^\text{44}\)

A national identity began to materialize in the mid 1800s, emphasizing the deeds of wealthy white men. In 1853, seven years after John Augustine Washington, great grandnephew of George Washington, announced plans to sell the neglected house of the nation’s first president, a group led by Ann Pamela Cunningham lobbied the state legislature to acquire the site for its preservation. Although the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association initially failed, the state eventually bought the property in 1860. The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association quickly developed into an effective preservation organization. It appointed leaders for each state where funds could be raised for preservation related activities. The Mount Vernon case set a precedent for preservation as private citizens served as the catalyst for such patriotic activities. In addition, saving sites


\(^{44}\) Benson and Klein, *Historic Preservation for Professionals*, 10-11.
associated with high ranking military and political officials became the norm. The group’s efforts inspired the establishment of other organizations such as the Valley Forge Association, the Ladies Hermitage Association of Nashville, and the Site and Relic Society of Germantown, Pennsylvania.⁴⁵

Until the close of the nineteenth century, preservation activities across the nation resembled those of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association. Prominent families pursued the preservation of their property for genealogical motives. Southerners not only preserved their own property, but also that of Civil War heroes. The influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe also provided increased motivation for preservation. Although patriotic fervor largely defined the nineteenth century preservation campaign, preservation for architectural reasons emerged in the 1870s. The 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia exposed the American consciousness to aesthetic appreciation. The following year, members from a Beaux Arts architectural firm produced sketches and measurements of colonial houses in several New England towns. Aesthetics became an important motive for preservation by the end of the nineteenth century, and even though associative reasons often supplied the motivation, it set the stage for architectural significance as a sole merit for preservation.⁴⁶

In 1910, William Sumner Appleton, a notable New England architectural historian in the early twentieth century, founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA). Although members of the elite class, Appleton and the group’s members focused their energy on preserving buildings based on aesthetic principles rather than for patriotic reasons. The SPNEA identified local landmarks and initiated efforts to preserve them through a variety of strategies. Often, the organization bought properties and mortgaged them to restorers.

Additionally, the group published endangered properties, attracting buyers willing to save them. Within two decades after its establishment, the SPNEA received acclaim as one the nation’s most prominent preservation organizations. Although critics contended the organization executed projects with minimal historical accuracy, its work assisted in generating public enthusiasm for the nation’s cultural heritage. The establishment of outdoor museums such as Wayside Inn, Colonial Williamsburg, and Greenfield Village during this time period reflects the growing interest in the nation’s past.47

The federal government slowly began to exercise its influence in historic preservation interests in the early twentieth century. After entering the conservation field by creating Yellowstone National Park in 1872, the federal government passed the 1906 Antiquities Act and established the National Park Service in 1916. The Antiquities Act responded to increasing vandalism and destruction of prehistoric resources in the southwest. It not only protected Native American artifacts located on federally owned property, but the legislation also granted the president the power to designate and protect historic landmarks, prehistoric and historic structures, and national monuments. In 1916, influenced by John Muir and the Sierra Club, congress authorized the creation of the National Park Service (NPS) to manage national parks, monuments, and reservations. The event further signified growing interest in protecting the less emphasized areas of the west and southwest.48

The creation of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1933 indicates an expansion in the historic preservation profession at the federal level. HABS had a profound impact on the preservation movement. As the Great Depression forced a number of architects and

48 Murtagh, Keeping Time, 51-55.
draftsmen out of work, Charles Peterson, restoration architect for the NPS, convinced the Park Service to create the project as a way to not only generate employment, but also to satisfy the need for historical documentation of buildings. HABS established recording techniques, methods, and professional standards, ultimately advancing the scope of the preservation field.  

Around the same time, the Park Service created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), also a product of the Great Depression. The CCC played an important role in developing, restoring, constructing, rehabilitating, and interpreting National Park sites. The work of the CCC reflects the beginning of the linking of environmental and cultural resources. Furthermore, recognizing the growing public and private interest in historic preservation, President Roosevelt signed the Historic Sites Act in 1935, a pivotal moment in the history of historic preservation. The legislation enabled the federal government to implement effective planning by allowing the Secretary of the Interior to conduct surveys and research, acquire and manage historic properties, partner with private organizations, and implement interpretive and public educational programs. The Great Depression encouraged the federal government to devote significant resources, both financial and professional, to historic preservation.  

The immediate postwar era introduced enormous challenges to preservation efforts. With the conclusion of the Great Depression and World War II, the national economy began to recover. The expanding economic and social opportunities offered Americans a new future, one predicated on the belief that modernity equated progress and vice versa. The government sought to maintain the high productivity in order to create a lasting peacetime economy. Likewise, legislative measures such as the 1944 Servicemen’s Readjustment Act and the Reorganization Plans of 1947 intended to generate housing and employment for servicemen and their families. The federal

government supported widespread new development with the mindset that prosperity would follow.  

Congress approved legislation such as the National Housing Act of 1949, an urban renewal measure that sought to satisfy public officials, developers, and planners who desired redevelopment incentives. The act allowed for the destruction of historic downtowns and neighborhoods as a way to “beautify” cities and remove slums and blight. Similar legislation in the 1950s further encouraged such activities as the federal government announced it would absorb the majority of demolition expenses. Such measures intended to facilitate inner city redevelopment and hasten the growth of suburbs. However, developers continued to favor suburban development as it offered a much greater return. Efforts in the name of progress intensified, culminating in President Eisenhower’s 1956 Federal Highway Act.  

As countless properties succumbed to demolition, the preservation campaign saw its greatest gains. Cities such as New York, Boston, and Chicago engaged in efforts to save historic areas from destruction. In response to post war reconstruction, the only national, private, non profit preservation organization coalesced. The National Trust, established in 1949, initially concentrated its efforts on acquiring and saving historic properties. It soon developed, however, into an organization that embraced a variety of preservation elements, namely providing public education and support to local entities. For instance, later in its history, the National Trust initiated its Main Street program, offering assistance to communities interested in reviving historic districts. Similarly, the National Trust later instituted the Community Partners program,


designed to assist communities and local organizations with issues related to historic residential neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{53}

The concern for the rapid loss of the nation’s cultural heritage ultimately culminated in the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. It ensured funding at all levels and participation from all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and several American territories. It required all participants to establish state historic preservation offices that engage in preservation efforts and public outreach, maintain statewide inventories of historic properties, process National Register nominations, and secure funds for federal grants received. The legislation also encouraged municipality participation through the Certified Local Government Program and special grants and tax credits. Moreover, the NHPA established the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of significant historical and archaeological properties. The National Register also recognizes the significance of entire districts as opposed to only individual properties.\textsuperscript{54}

The NHPA created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, a board that today includes the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Transportation, the U.S. Capitol Architect, the Board Chairperson of the National Trust, the President of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, and several others. The council works with the National Trust, recommends educational programs, relays preservation information to the president and congress, and reviews laws and statutes relevant to preservation. The entity is also responsible for reviewing the potential adverse effects federal projects may have on historic properties and sites.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} Benson and Klein, \textit{Historic Preservation for Professionals}, 33, 92-94.
\textsuperscript{54} Benson and Klein, \textit{Historic Preservation for Professionals}, 35-36.
\textsuperscript{55} Benson and Klein, \textit{Historic Preservation for Professionals}, 36-37.
Congress continued to aid the preservation campaign after the NHPA by enacting a number of tax reforms measures. A decade after the NHPA, congress responded to activists once again by passing the Tax Reform Act of 1976. It not only gave tax incentives for owning historic properties, but also for necessary rehabilitation projects. Among other incentives, the Revenue Act of 1978 provided a permanent ten percent tax credit for owners of certified historic commercial and industrial buildings. A number of other federal tax reforms followed.\textsuperscript{56}

Preservation in the 1980s experienced a couple significant changes. For instance, the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 instituted a new investment tax credit that was determined by the age of a historic building. Moreover, under the Tax Reform Act of 1986 rehabilitation tax credits decreased for the first time since the enactment of the NHPA. Legislation in the 1990s and early 2000s was designed to modify some of the 1986 provisions. Traditional investment tax credits have allowed for the completion of over 146,000 renovation projects since the mid 1980s.\textsuperscript{57}

Historic Preservation in California

The Catholic Church and private individuals spearheaded the early California historic preservation movement of the late nineteenth century. California’s missions had fallen into deterioration after decades of neglect. Although not restored based on historical integrity, Catholic priests focused their energy on returning the missions to an operable state of condition. Not long after, Helen Hunt Jackson’s \textit{Ramona} inadvertantly attracted droves of tourists to the missions in the 1880s and 1890s, producing romanticized visions of California’s past that led to the popularity of mission revival style buildings. Near the turn of the century, private

\textsuperscript{56} Benson and Klein, \textit{Historic Preservation for Professionals}, 40-42.
\textsuperscript{57} Benson and Klein, \textit{Historic Preservation for Professionals}, 42-45.
organizations dedicated to preserving the missions formed such as the Association for the Preservation of Missions and the Landmarks Club of Southern California. Around the same time, the Native Sons of the Golden West also formed, proposing a monument to James Marshall. The organization’s early efforts also included raising funds in the 1890s to restore and reconstruct the deteriorating Sutter’s Fort in Sacramento. Additionally, in the early 1900s it created a landmarks committee for the purpose of restoring historic properties such as Fort Ross, Colton Hall, and many of the missions.  

Concern for natural resources prompted the intervention of California state government in preservation activities. The Save the Redwoods League formed in 1918 in an effort to preserve redwood groves in present day Humboldt Redwoods State Park. The campaign led to the establishment of a State Park Commission to administer the park system and determine potential parks. At the same time, Frederick Law Olmsted began conducting a statewide survey of scenic, recreational, and cultural resources. At the conclusion of the survey, he suggested the state encourage private investment and protection of historic resources and that the state should only acquire endangered historically significant resources. Additionally, he urged state officials to educate the public on how to treat significant cultural assets. In the 1920s and 1930s, state owned properties, monuments, and parks proliferated. Moreover, 1931 marked the birth of the state landmarks program, an inventory that includes both private and public properties.  

California’s historic preservation consciousness continued to develop in the 1940s and 1950s. Gold rush centennial celebrations provided the impetus for much of the period’s preservation activities. The State Assembly designated 1948 as the Gold Discovery Centennial


Year and 1949 the Gold Rush Centennial Year. The resolution further invigorated patriotism and public interest in historic sites and events. Significant preservation and conservation events included restoring Sutter’s Mill, the town of Columbia, and developing scenic and recreational parkways. Additionally, Governor Warren authorized legislation approving the creation of a Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee to partner with the State Park Commission on considerations regarding historic sites.\(^{60}\)

The field continued to professionalize in the 1950s and 1960s as urban renewal threatened the state’s historical resources. In 1961, recognizing the sudden appearance of numerous local historical societies, the legislature passed a resolution to study the state’s historical assets and create a plan to preserve such resources. The Division of Beaches and Parks began work with a number of groups encouraging adaptive reuse and private and public investment in historical resources. Legislation also approved the Points of Historical Interest program mandating that local authorities create a landmarks advisory group to identify sites of social, cultural, religious, economic, political, or military significance. The growing interest in preservation led to the formulation of a history section within the Division of Beaches and Parks. Recognizing insufficient staffing, the agency subsequently created the specialized positions of Historian I, II, and III. In addition to the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Education, California State Archives, and the California Heritage Preservation Commission also coordinated early historic preservation activities.\(^{61}\)

The passage of the NHPA in 1966 fostered perhaps the most pivotal moment in the history of California preservation. California’s participation in the NHPA began in early 1967 when Governor Reagan appointed William Penn Mott, Jr. as State Liaison Officer, forerunner and


equivalent of the State Historic Preservation Officer. His duties included preparing a statewide historic preservation plan. The NHPA and the statewide preservation plan also necessitated internal reorganization for the purposes of sharing the workload. The Grants Administration and Local Assistance Branch, Statewide Planning Branch, Resource Management and Protection Division’s Historical Resources Section, Archaeological Resources Section, and the Interpretive Services Section all reported to the Advisory Committee for approval and implementation of projects.  

In 1972, Mott once again reorganized the Department of Parks and Recreation for the purpose of creating a new History Preservation Section to manage the state’s preservation activities. The change represented a greater commitment to historical and preservation concerns. The lifespan of the History Preservation Section saw the completion of the statewide comprehensive preservation plan in 1973. Section one of the plan focused on developing a system for preservation and interpretation of significant resources. The second section called for a county inventory of assets and the final volume included annual plans, grants, deficiencies, and potential opportunities.  

In addition to developing a comprehensive preservation plan, the History Preservation Section also processed and reviewed applications for the National Register and California Historical Landmarks and Points of Historical Interest programs, and supported the State Historical Resources Commission. The History Preservation Section also reviewed and commented on environmental impact studies and reports in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970. The History Preservation Section continued

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operations until the creation of its successor in 1975, the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP).\textsuperscript{64} In addition to absorbing the History Preservation Section’s responsibilities, OHP established programs such as the California Historical Resources Information System in 1975, or independent information centers located throughout the state responsible for managing historical and archaeological records for public access. In 1998, OHP also created a statewide inventory of resources, known as the California Register of Historical Resources, modeled after the criteria of the National Register.\textsuperscript{65}

Preservation initiatives also expanded in other state agencies and programs in the decades following the NHPA. The state park system continually generates and institutes plans for improving educational and interpretive programs offered to the public. Preservation legislation for planning, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction also enhances state parks. Furthermore, state agencies have expanded preservation awareness since the 1960s. For instance, CEQA and Section 106 of the NHPA require agencies to consult with the Office of Historic Preservation to devise projects and planning methods that protect historical and archaeological sites. Likewise, the state’s educational sector witnessed a rise in public history and historic preservation programs beginning in the 1970s, further professionalizing and advancing the field.\textsuperscript{66}

Since the 1970s, historic preservation in California has faced financial challenges and issues related to suburban sprawl. At the same time, the need to evaluate potential historic resources from the post World War II and Cold War eras has created immense opportunities within the

\textsuperscript{64} Hata, \textit{The Historic Preservation Movement in California}, 165-85.
\textsuperscript{66} Hata, \textit{The Historic Preservation Movement in California}, 187-95, 201-07.
field. These resources present challenges to the existing eligibility criteria which has generated discussion on developing new approaches and policies.\textsuperscript{67}

Historic Preservation in Kern County and Bakersfield

Scholars trace the origins of organized preservation in Kern County to the 1880s. In 1889, a local group of men and women called the Fox Tail Rangers embarked on a journey to Fort Tejon. While gathered around an oak tree near the fort, the group discovered an epitaph memorializing the death of Peter Lebec, a fur trapper killed by a bear in 1837. The discovery of Lebec’s remains and the epitaph, an artifact now housed at Fort Tejon State Historic Park, spurred local interest in the county’s history. A couple years later, in 1891, a group of Bakersfield women organized a local chapter of the Native Daughters of the Golden West. Similarly, in 1892 transplants from El Dorado County formed a pioneer society in Bakersfield, limiting membership to residents originally from that county; however, generating criticism from local “outsiders.”\textsuperscript{68}

Local preservation gained further popularity when Samuel Fergusson, general manager of the Kern County Land Company, suggested that Kern County participate in the upcoming 1893 Chicago World’s Fair as a way to promote itself to a global audience. At the same time, Fergusson also pushed for the creation of a society of Kern County Pioneers, an effort that came to fruition in 1895. Alongside the Society of Kern County Pioneers, other like minded groups formed with the goal of preserving local history. For instance, in the early 1900s, the Bakersfield Women’s Club urged local officials to create a historical society. Likewise, the superintendent of


Kern County schools worked with the California Federation of Women’s Clubs in devising an inventory composed of significant local historic sites. In the absence of a central collecting institution, public libraries also served as agents of preservation, acquiring historical artifacts and archival records. Moreover, state level organizations played a role in early Kern preservation as the California Historical Society surveyed sites within the county worthy of recognition.  

The Kern County Historical Society ultimately formed in 1931, evolving out of the Society of Kern County Pioneers and the Bakersfield Lions Club. Its founders include Alfred Harrell, Herman Spindt, Dwight Clark, William A. Howell, Jesse D. Stockton, Hugh S. Jewett, Roy W. Loudon, William V. Ewert, and Calvin V. Anderson. In its initial meeting in April 1931, it elected Alfred Harrell as president and acquired from UC Berkeley professor Herbert E. Bolton its first significant material, a document authored by Pedro Fages, the first known European to enter present Kern County. Since its establishment, in addition to publishing books, brochures, and articles related to the area’s history, it has assisted in restoring Fort Tejon, placed historical markers throughout the county, undertaken oral history projects, and cooperated with chambers of commerce, boards of trade, and other historical organizations.  

The Kern County Historical Society also played a major role in establishing the Kern County Museum, perhaps its most notable achievement. The museum’s origins date to the early 1900s when Bakersfield created a chamber of commerce. The Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, like public libraries at the time, collected historical materials. It too lacked the resources to continue to serve as a permanent repository for such items, prompting leaders from

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69 Gia, “How Bakersfield Saved Its Past.”
the Bakersfield Lions Club, forerunner of the Kern County Historical Society, to initiate a campaign for a county museum. In preparation for a new museum, the Lions Club encouraged public donations of historical materials that illustrated the county’s history.\footnote{Gia, “How Bakersfield Saved Its Past.”}

After accumulating historical resources, the Kern County Historical Society transferred the items to the basement of the Kern County Chamber of Commerce in the early 1930s, an area of the building that served as the county’s first museum. In 1940, the historical society asked the county board of supervisors to declare it an official county agency and designate a historian and curator for an official museum within an appropriate section of the building. However, officials only approved a future establishment of a museum. A year later, the historical society presented similar requests and although the board of supervisors approved each one, including the creation of a county museum, World War II stalled plans. Throughout the war, the museum, still in the basement, remained closed.\footnote{Gia, “How Bakersfield Saved Its Past.”}

An order in 1945 finally approved the basement of the chamber of commerce building as the official county museum. By the late 1940s, however, the basement’s insufficient space for the museum’s growing collection necessitated a move. After the county disbanded the Kern County Chamber of Commerce in 1952, the Kern County Museum acquired the entire building to exhibit the county’s history. Although the 1952 earthquakes caused $40,000 in damage to the facility (equivalent to $350,000 today) the building’s unique architecture was restored. Since 1950, the museum has also included Pioneer Village, the largest outdoor museum on the Pacific Coast, showcasing authentic and reconstructed structures depicting the region from 1860 to 1900.\footnote{Gia, “How Bakersfield Saved Its Past”; Mildred Brooke Hoover, Hero Eugene Rensch, and Ethel Grace Rensch, \textit{Historic Spots in California}, 3rd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), 132-33.}
Beginning in the immediate postwar period, however, a modernize Bakersfield movement developed, stemming from the larger urban renewal campaign that took place in communities across the nation. Mirroring the national scene, locals desired a fresh start after the conclusion of the war, an attitude that valued modern products and generating profit through new development. The Security Trust Company Bank Building became one of the first victims of local modernization efforts with the installation of an exterior stucco façade in 1947. A slew of other downtown Bakersfield properties experienced similar fates such as the Southern Hotel, an attraction that rivaled San Francisco’s finest hotels until its demolition in 1947 to make room for a new JC Penney building. Even prior to the irreparable damage it suffered from the August 1952 earthquake, Bakersfield’s most recognizable landmark, the Beale Memorial Clock Tower, was the target of criticism. Citing its location in the middle of downtown at 17th Street and Chester Avenue as a hindrance, residents often argued for its removal.  

In many ways, the August 1952 earthquake that struck Bakersfield only activated preexisting attitudes that favored redevelopment at the expense of the city’s cultural heritage. Redevelopment by an act of nature, the earthquake provided an opportunity to act on modernization attitudes. In addition to the nearly 100 structures substantially damaged by the earthquake, which included the loss of architectural landmarks such as the Kern County Courthouse, the Beale Memorial Clock Tower, the Bakersfield City Hall, and the Elks Club Building, the city also sanctioned the demolition of many sturdy and tenable buildings. Even many of the historic buildings that managed to survive the earthquake and the ensuing redevelopment had decorative features removed or modern exterior surfaces installed over their

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original architecture. For example, like the stucco façade placed over the Security Trust Company Bank Building, the nearby California Theater and Brock’s Department Store both also experienced the installation of midcentury style facades, features that still remain today. As a case in point, after the construction of the new city hall in 1954, an event that meant to signify the revitalization of the downtown business center, city officials celebrated Bakersfield as “America’s newest city.” In The Story of Kern County, W.W. Robinson offers a contemporary illustration of the accompanying effects and attitudes stemming from the 1952 earthquake, stating, “Handsome in line and color are all of the present civic center structures. Architectural excellence is contagious. Chester Avenue, the principal business street, is now lined with well designed and pleasing buildings, while streets parallel with or intersecting Chester are dominated and made lively by construction contemporary in style.” Writing in 1965, Robinson’s primary account offers an in depth glimpse into the extent of the physical alteration that downtown Bakersfield underwent after the natural disaster, a period that has had lasting effects both physically and culturally.

The Kern County Museum played a crucial role in saving the city’s heritage after the earthquake. Although the institution was new and in the midst of acquiring historical resources, the accumulation of the city’s most notable buildings reflect its quest to save structures from “progress.” For instance, of the fifty five historic structures it currently houses, it not coincidentally received a large number which date from the 1940s through the 1960s. Nonetheless, the city lost countless historic buildings from the earthquake, urban renewal, and

76 Robinson, The Story of Kern County, 53-55.
77 Robinson, The Story of Kern County, 55.
seismic retrofitting. The loss of Bakersfield’s El Tejon Hotel in 1970 represents one particularly important example. Constructed in 1926, a period of rapid growth for the city, the *Western Hotel Reporter* recognized the Mission Revival style hotel as one of the “Best in the West” in 1935. Suffering from financial constraints in the 1960s, however, Bank of America purchased the property and announced plans to construct a ten story financial center on the site. After its demolition, the Kern County Alliance, a group from the Kern County Museum, surveyed the site for historical artifacts and relics. Similar to the demolition of the Alhambra Theater in Sacramento in 1973, the loss of one of Bakersfield’s most distinct buildings galvanized local support for preservation.\(^79\)

However, grassroots support for preservation efforts proved to be only short lived. The Bakersfield Historic Preservation Commission, a largely powerless and inactive entity since its inception in 1983, has unfortunately accomplished little in the way of local historic preservation initiatives.\(^80\) For example, many of the city’s existing historic buildings have long been neglected such as the Nile Theater, Granada Theater, California Theater, Virginia Theater, Kern Theater, the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot in Old Town Kern, the Earl Warren House, and the Bush House, residence of George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush for a short period in 1949. Additionally, much of Old Town Kern, originally known as Sumner and Kern City, has also been neglected or subjected to recent redevelopment projects that have unsuccessfully attempted to revive the area’s business section. With this said, local historic preservation has improved recently as the city now offers downtown walking tours and has also developed a virtual tour of historic sites throughout Bakersfield. Moreover, the proposed route of the high speed rail through

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\(^80\) Bailey, *Heart of the Golden Empire*, 101-03.
Bakersfield has led to the evaluation of a number of properties for eligibility for the local, state, and national registers.
Chapter 4
THE NATIONAL REGISTER AND ITS PROCESS

Maintained by the National Park Service, a federal agency within the Department of the Interior, the National Register represents the nation’s official inventory and documentation of historic places. The National Register is composed of properties significant for national, state, and local historical events, architecture, engineering, culture, and archaeology. Properties included can be districts, buildings, sites, structures, or objects important to prehistory or history.

Developed by the NPS, National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Bulletin 15), guides the selection and evaluation of properties based on a standardized set of Criteria.

Evaluating Historic Context

Evaluating a resource’s historic context is necessary to support its historic significance and inclusion in the National Register. The historic context reflects a broad representation of an area’s history, architecture, engineering, archaeology, or culture. The historic context should address events or aspects that contributed to the property’s significance. A property can be evaluated within a national, state, or local contextual theme. Themes are used to link a property with the larger development of a community or area. Likewise, property types can also illustrate the historic context. Depending on the period of development and the associated theme, the historic context can include numerous property types or just a single type of property. Additionally, the historic context can be based on a property’s association with significant events,
individuals, architecture, or its potential to yield information important to prehistory or history. Lastly, the physical features a property possesses may serve as a basis for a historic context.81

Evaluating Significance

In Bulletin 15, the NPS offers guidelines for determining how to evaluate the significance of a property. After establishing the historic context of the property under consideration, the nomination preparer can determine the significance which is based on the period of significance and association with one or more of the National Register Criteria. The period of significance is the time period that the property is associated with significant events. The National Register Criteria for evaluating significance are as follows:

Criterion A: Properties associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Criterion B: Properties associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Criterion C: Properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Criterion D: Properties that have previously yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.82

Generally, inclusion in the National Register is limited to significant properties at least fifty years old that display sufficient integrity to convey their period of significance. Religious

properties, moved properties, birthplaces and graves, cemeteries, reconstructed properties, commemorative properties, and properties achieving significance within the past fifty years are typically not eligible for listing. However, the aforementioned properties can attain eligibility if they meet special requirements, or Criteria Considerations, while also being eligible under at least one of the four regular Criteria and possessing sufficient integrity.  

Evaluating Integrity

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, a property must not only be found significant under the applicable Criteria mentioned previously, but it has to also retain its significance through its physical features, or integrity. While evaluating integrity is subjective, it must be based in an understanding of how a property’s physical features are connected to its significance. Once the significance of a property is determined, several steps must be followed in assessing its integrity. A property’s essential physical features must be described followed by the determination of whether or not they are visible enough to convey significance. It may also be necessary to use similar properties as comparisons. The final step requires evaluating the seven aspects of integrity:

1. Location: The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.

2. Design: The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.


4. Materials: The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular

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period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

5. Workmanship: The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.

6. Feeling: A property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

7. Association: The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.  

For a property found significant under Criteria A and B, integrity is best determined by discerning whether or not it possesses the defining physical features that were present during its association with the important event, pattern, or person(s). A property found significant under Criterion C relies mostly on the aspects of design, materials, and workmanship as it must retain the majority of its character defining features that illustrate a specific type or method of construction. Integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship are the most relevant for properties associated with Criterion D.  

After thorough research and documentation reveal a property’s historic context, significance, and integrity, it can be nominated to the National Register. After following the guidelines presented in Bulletin 15 and Bulletin 16A, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form (Bulletin 16A), the preparer submits a registration form to the SHPO for review. If SHPO staff members believe that the nomination is eligible for listing in the National Register.
Register, it is sent to the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C. If the SHPO does not believe that the resource is eligible for the National Register, it may still add it to the state register or recommend inclusion in the local register.
Chapter 5

DEVELOPING THE NOMINATION

Methodology

The National Register nomination of the Security Trust Company Bank Building, located at 1800 Chester Avenue in the heart of downtown Bakersfield, represents a lengthy process of research and writing. Interest in the property began in April 2014 when construction crews removed the midcentury era stucco exterior that concealed the original Beaux Arts architecture for nearly seven decades. It cannot be stressed enough how rare of a discovery this represents for historic preservation in Bakersfield. Despite initial interest in the property, however, I did not originally intend to nominate it to the National Register. Upon entering the CSU Sacramento Graduate Public History Program in the Fall of 2014, I planned on completing an archival project for my thesis. However, after enrolling in the program’s cultural resources management course (HIST 282A) during Spring 2015, I began to contemplate the idea of a National Register nomination for my thesis project.

For my final project in HIST 282A, I evaluated the Security Trust Company Bank Building for National Register eligibility utilizing the appropriate DPR 523 forms and *Bulletin 15*. After consulting with the course’s instructors, I received approval to evaluate the resource. The first step in the process occurred in February 2015 when I took several photographs of the building. The following month, March 2015, I initiated email correspondence with local historian Gilbert Gia since he wrote an article about the bank building, titled, “The Naked Bank at 18th and Chester, 1909-2014.” I explained my project and interest in possibly nominating it to the National Register. He soon put me in contact with John Edward Powell who had supplied him with much of the information he used to produce a history of the building.
Powell, recipient of California’s 2005 Governor’s Historic Preservation Award, proved to be an invaluable source of information. Through intermittent email correspondence between March 2015 and December 2015, Powell supplied me with vital resources necessary to support a National Register nomination. For instance, he pointed me towards a number of different volumes of the *Architect and Engineer*, the leading architectural journal of its day. The *Architect and Engineer* articles not only contain content related to the Security Trust Company Bank Building, but also a number of other significant buildings that Meyer designed, including Bakersfield’s 1912 Beaux Arts style courthouse as well as the city’s Elks Club Building, both no longer standing. Just as importantly, Powell acquired black line copies of the original blueprints of the building and sent me scanned copies in June 2015. Original building plans are vital for any National Register nomination. They have allowed me to compare the original design to the approach that the restoration project has taken.

The initial stages of the project made significant use of data held at the California Room in the California State Library and the Sacramento Room in the downtown Sacramento Public Library. In addition to utilizing Gia’s article to construct the history of the property, I used city directories at the State Library to track the ownership of the building. Additionally, the microfilm collection of *The Bakersfield Californian* at the State Library proved useful. I not only located a section from a September 1947 article detailing the remodel of the building, but also July and August 1952 articles depicting the damage from the earthquakes. Moreover, online access to black and white Sanborn maps held at the downtown Sacramento Public Library enabled me to compare the physical appearance of the building from 1912 to 1949.

After completing the DPR 523 evaluation for HIST 282A, I came to the conclusion that the Security Trust Company Bank Building was worthy of a National Register nomination for its
association with the August 1952 earthquake (Criterion A) and because it embodies the
distinctive characteristics of a type and period of construction, and represents the work of a
master (Criterion C). I continued to document the development of the restoration project through
May 2016, taking photos of the west and south facing facades and noting the changes in the
building’s appearance each time I visited the property. The initial documentation in February
2015 occurred during a time in which the building had been sitting idle for nearly a year since the
removal of the stucco facade. The building’s windows, parapet embellishments, and cornice line
were all missing. The building’s base, pilasters, and abacuses and vents on the south elevation
were also damaged.

Documentation in May 2015 revealed that part of the polystyrene parapet features had
been installed on the front facing elevation. On the south elevation, the irreparably damaged
abacuses were removed. Work at this point also continued to remove the material that coated the
original color of the building. A couple months later, in July 2015, both the west and south facing
parapets were installed. By November 2015, the restoration began to progress quicker. On the
west and south elevations, the color of the added parapet and the original exterior began to reflect
the authentic complexion. Likewise, the restoration project installed mullions in all of the window
frames on both elevations. Moreover, at this point in time the project restored the front pilasters
and all but one of the vents on the south elevation of the building.

One month later, in December 2015, the restoration introduced additional mullions and
window panes in the bottom half of the window frames. A key difference in comparison to
the original windows is that on the south elevation three full length windows, and within one of
them a side glass door, were installed. In January 2016, the project not only fully restored the
south elevation’s triglyphs and metopes, but workers also began reconstructing its abacuses using
polystyrene. By March 2016, the property’s exterior rehabilitation neared completion. All of the window panes and abacuses were completed. Moreover, the front facing parapet had a darker coating resembling stone and concrete to match the rest of the exterior. Furthermore, this stage of the restoration painted all of the mullions black. In May 2016, the south parapet received a darker coating and the last vent needing attention was repaired, completing the exhaustive exterior restoration (See Figures 30-48 in National Register Registration Form in Appendix).

In pursuit of a National Register nomination, I contacted the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) in December 2015 regarding the nomination process. OHP staff quickly responded to my inquiry, supplying me with detailed information about the requirements, standards, and components of a nomination packet. Soon after, I began following in detail Bulletin 16A while completing the National Register registration forms for the nomination of the Security Trust Company Bank Building. Following completion of this project, the National Register registration forms will be forwarded to OHP for review. Depending on whether or not OHP staff suggest changes to the content, the forms may slightly differ from the version seen here. This process will most likely take a few months following the submission of this project.

Literature Review

In addition to the sources mentioned previously, this exercise relied also on contemporary articles from The Bakersfield Californian. They reveal both current and historical information regarding the Security Trust Company Bank Building. The articles shed light on the 1952 earthquakes and historic preservation in Bakersfield. The University of California Calisphere Collection, a digital archive contributed to by all ten University of California
campuses as well as other institutions, contains several historical photographs of the subject property. I acquired a digital copy of a parcel map of the property from the Kern County Assessor’s Office. A search for historical building permits proved unsuccessful, however, as the county assessor’s office unfortunately destroys all such records ninety days after the completion of a project.

The historic context section of this project employed an array of secondary sources that illustrate the development of Kern County and Bakersfield. As alluded to previously, Gia’s article on the property proved especially useful for tracking early ownership history. A number of books make up for the article’s lack of a broad historic context. Richard C. Bailey’s *Heart of the Golden Empire: An Illustrated History of Bakersfield* (1984) perhaps is the most complete account of Bakersfield. While the work delves into aspects of Kern County and California history as a whole, it serves as the most useful material for the development of the city of Bakersfield, chronicling events from the Native American period into the 1980s. The work also contains information related to local preservation.

Another source referred to often is Eugene Burmeister’s *The Golden Empire: Kern County, California* (1977). This text offers a concise, but valuable history of Kern County, detailing the region’s environmental features, economic industries, communities, growth of Bakersfield, and the Native American, Spanish, Mexican, and American periods. Similarly, although not frequently cited, Burmeister’s *City Along the Kern: Bakersfield, California, 1869-1969* (1969) offers a glimpse into the development of downtown Bakersfield, specifically some of the theaters and opera houses that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This project also consulted William Harland Boyd’s *A California Middle Border: The Kern River Country, 1772-1880* (1972) for information pertinent to early local history. Boyd’s work
discusses the area’s ranchos during the Mexican era, the region’s early mining activities, and initial efforts to create Kern County.

Published in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Kern County Historical Society, Inside Historic Kern: Selections from the Kern County Historical Society’s Quarterly, 1949-1981 (1982) addresses a range of topics from the perspective of a variety of writers. This report made use of the excerpts on the county’s early inhabitants and explorers, 1952 earthquakes, and the founding of the Kern County Historical Society. W.W. Robinson’s The Story of Kern County (1965) represents the most unique secondary source utilized in this project. Published by the Title Insurance and Trust Company, the work spans sixty three pages, covering the most significant topics in the county’s history. Each significant event typically has a few corresponding paragraphs. The light reading makes it a convenient source for information. The final section, illustrating contemporary attitudes regarding the modernization of downtown Bakersfield, proved the most interesting as it can be treated as a primary account.

The endeavor also made significant use of a few architectural field guides to assist in the description of the resource. Although primarily geared towards residential properties, Virginia and Lee McAlester’s A Field Guide to American Houses (1984) serves as the primary source for describing the features of the Security Trust Company Bank Building. The work’s photographs and detailed profile of the style proved highly informative. John J. G. Blumenson’s Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945 (1981) and Carole Rifkind’s A Field Guide to American Architecture (1980) were also reviewed. For an in depth account of the origins of the Beaux Arts style, Richard Chafee’s essay in The Architecture of the Ecole Des Beaux-Arts (1977) proved useful. Seeking information on the emergence and development of the distinct style in the United States, this task turned to David Brain’s

Considering their body of work and the communities they served, searches for scholarly literature on Frederick Herman Meyer and Charles J. Lindgren did not reveal as much as anticipated. Per Powell’s suggestion, articles published in the *Architect and Engineer* serve as one of the primary sources of information for buildings that Meyer constructed. Michael R. Corbett’s *Splendid Survivors: San Francisco’s Downtown Architectural Heritage* (1979) represents the other source most frequently consulted for information on Meyer. Beginning in 1975, San Francisco Heritage, a non profit preservation organization, pursued an architectural survey of the city’s downtown as a strategy to preserve cultural resources from redevelopment. The historic resources inventory resulted in Corbett’s book, a work that guided the city’s 1985 downtown plan. *Splendid Survivors* accords Meyer with the only architect’s portrait and one of the two selected biographies. This is perhaps the only book that consolidates Meyer’s personal life with his professional accomplishments.

The fact that the Meyer collection is housed at the UC Berkeley Environmental Design Archives, a repository that collects architectural records associated with Northern California’s most significant architects, alone illustrates his significance. Unfortunately, however, according to archival staff, the Meyer collection does not include a file on the Security Trust Company Bank Building. The finding aid to the collection fortunately offers useful material on Meyer’s life and career.
Locating reliable information on Lindgren also presented challenges. Madigan Talmage-Bowers’ *Swinerton, A Builder’s History: 125 Years of Building Excellence* (2013) contains a couple chapters on Lindgren’s enterprises, the founder of what is today known as Swinerton. Although a highly respected and historically notable construction company, the work was nonetheless produced for promotional reasons. This undertaking employed James Miller Guinn’s *History of the state of California and biographical record of the San Joaquin Valley, California. An historical story of the state’s marvelous growth from its earliest settlements to the present time* (1905) to expand on and corroborate some of the content provided in the former.

Chapter three draws on a variety of literature on historic preservation. Donovan Rypkema’s *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leaders Guide* (2005) advocates for preservation and investment in existing buildings. Unlike a traditional, academic text, this source is organized into twelve chapters, each containing in a list form a number of economic arguments supporting preservation. Published by the National Trust, it is geared towards local level preservationists. William J. Murtagh’s *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (1997) not only distinguishes important preservation terms, but it also traces the national preservation movement and incorporates a section in the appendix devoted to the Secretary of the Interior’s standards for rehabilitating historic buildings. Similarly, written by Virginia O Benson and Richard Klein in 2008, *Historic Preservation for Professionals* represents another valuable source for chronicling national preservation efforts, offering information on federal legislation and the roles that public and private entities play in the preservation scene.

Published by the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1992, Nadine Ishitani Hata’s *The Historic Preservation Movement in California, 1940-1976* documents preservation activities in California. Although it concentrates on modern preservation efforts, the first chapter
contains a broad overview of the earliest preservationists that established the groundwork for the profession. This work perhaps is the most authoritative on historic preservation in California.

The final section of chapter three, preservation in Kern County and Bakersfield, incorporates a range of sources to construct the history of a subject that has received little scholarly attention. This aspect of the project made significant use of Gia’s “How Bakersfield Saved Its Past.” His article, written in 2015, contains important content on the origins of the area’s preservation movement and the campaign to secure a county museum. *Heart of the Golden Empire: An Illustrated History of Bakersfield*, recent articles from *The Bakersfield Californian*, *The Story of Kern County*, and essays assembled in *Inside Historic Kern* also assist in the development of this section. Furthermore, the “El Tejon Hotel and Other Historic Buildings of Bakersfield,” written in 2011 by CSU Bakersfield Archives, Special Collections and Digital Storage Librarian Chris Livingston in the *Bakersfield Magazine*, discusses the 1970 demolition of the El Tejon Hotel. The article places the loss of one of the city’s most identifiable and distinct architectural landmarks within the larger context of local redevelopment efforts.
Chapter 6

FINDINGS AND EVALUATION

After completing the necessary research surrounding the property, determinations can be inferred regarding eligibility for listing in the National Register. To merit inclusion in the National Register, a property usually must be at least fifty years old, meet at least one of the four Criteria outlined in Bulletin 15, and exhibit enough historic integrity. Although exceptions to the requirements exist, most properties are expected to meet the standards.

Significance

The Security Trust Company Bank Building derives its significance from its association with the devastating 1952 Bakersfield earthquake and by embodying the defining features and characteristics of the Beaux Arts style of architecture. As discussed previously, the 1952 earthquakes, specifically the August occurrence that directly hit Bakersfield, left very few buildings standing in the downtown area. Ensuing urban renewal and seismic retrofitting requirements led to the loss of many more local buildings. The Security Trust Company Bank Building is a rare representation of a bygone era.

The Security Trust Company Bank Building also excellently expresses the defining characteristics of the Beaux Arts style. Constructed in 1910, the Beaux Arts bank building reflects the City Beautiful movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The period drew on neoclassical design principals that intended to serve as a solution to increasing inner city issues. As a downtown commercial building, the subject property possesses many of the character defining features of the Beaux Arts style. Indicative of the style, the bank building has a symmetrical façade, parapet roof, cornice line, alternating triglyphs and metopes in the frieze
band, sunken panels, ornamental surface features, hood molding, scroll modillions, pilasters, abacuses, a keystone, and a grand arched entrance with a spandrel. Furthermore, its significance also stems from its association with Frederick Meyer and Charles Lindgren. Both individuals gained notoriety in California in their respective professions and are commended for their efforts in rebuilding San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake (See National Register Registration Form in Appendix for further details).

Integrity

The project required a detailed analysis of the subject property’s integrity. A resource of this nature requires an interpretation of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Similar to the National Register Criteria, the Secretary of the Interior’s standards and guidelines are used to judge restored and rehabilitated properties for inclusion in the National Register and for eligibility for tax credits. The Security Trust Company Bank Building represents an exceedingly unique resource. The building has obviously lost some of its character defining features from the stucco façade that masked its exterior for nearly seven decades. It is indeed remarkable that any of its marquee features still remain intact.

A close examination of the guidelines and standards for rehabilitation supports the subject property’s eligibility for the National Register. The first requirement presented calls for a compatible use for a property without eliciting significant change to it. The subject property meets this requirement as the owner is currently searching for either a high end restaurant or bank to fill the vacant site. Numerous restaurants and banks have conducted business in the building.

The standards also state that original materials shall not be destroyed, removed, or altered. In the event that the level of deterioration or damage precludes repair, replacement is
recommended. For example, when the stucco façade was removed in 2014, the original parapet embellishments and cornice line were completely missing. In such cases, not only is replacement advised, but compatible materials are permitted. While the preferred option is always to replace features with original materials, compatible substitute materials are allowed in a restoration project for technical and financial reasons.

Since the original roof line railing, parapet, and cornice line were completely missing and therefore could not be re-established, rehabilitation standards approve of a new design that is compatible with the other character defining features and the size, scale, and material of the building. The building’s new parapet and cornice line, composed of expanded polystyrene, maintain the character and integrity of the property. On the other hand, although the abacuses on the south elevation were also unsalvageable, they were duplicated after the original design using expanded polystyrene. The documentation of the restoration project reveals that no historic materials were destroyed, altered, or removed.

The existing condition of the building required the repair of some features as well. As a case in point, only minor damage to some of the pilasters on the front and south facades did not necessitate the same rehabilitation approach that the parapet, cornice line, and abacuses commanded. The three enlarged window frames on the south elevation that stretch to ground level also conform to appropriate rehabilitation measures. Although not ideal, one can argue that a liberal interpretation of the Secretary of the Interior’s rehabilitation standards allow for such an alteration. Since the original base of the building no longer existed when the restoration project initiated, enlarging the windows did not destroy any historic features or materials. The enlarged windows allow for much needed interior light, a need originally met by a monitor that used to
exist on the roof. Rehabilitation standards support necessary alterations that are essential for continued use as long as character defining features are not radically modified.

In like manner, the original sash and window plates were completely missing. Although the new windows do not exactly reflect the original design, the mullions had to be installed differently for structural reasons. This is only a small concern as it does not significantly compromise the building’s integrity. The slightly different design was necessary for continued use and no historic materials were damaged, falling in line with rehabilitation standards. Moreover, rehabilitation criteria include color as an important quality to maintain. Covered in black when rehabilitation and restoration work began, delicate surface cleaning returned the exterior to its original color. Likewise, the new materials composed of expanded polystyrene foam also were coated to match the rest of the exterior’s color and to mimic the texture of the original features. Overall, the restoration project respected the original character and theme of the building, taking care to preserve all existing features and materials (See National Register Registration Form in Appendix for further details).

Determination of Eligibility

After thoroughly researching and documenting the property under investigation, I assert that the Security Trust Company Bank Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the Security Trust Company Bank Building remarkably survived the August 1952 earthquake largely intact. The marquee building not only represents a significant survivor of the natural disaster, but is one of the few downtown buildings or structures that survived in general. The effects of the

86 Murtagh, 184-86. Source of all information in the section, “Integrity.”
catastrophe extended long after 1952 as it gave further fuel to modernization visions in the form of downtown redevelopment. Additionally, resulting seismic retrofitting policies further doomed many historic properties. The event radically altered the character of downtown Bakersfield as very few remnants of the pre-1952 earthquake era remain today.

The Security Trust Company Bank Building’s embodiment of the Beaux Arts architectural style also qualifies it for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. Despite missing some original features, an examination of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation reveals that the property’s restoration and rehabilitation work falls within the accepted guidelines. The distinctive features needed for identifying a Beaux Arts building are evident and excellently expressed. A style rare on the West Coast and especially in California’s central valley, the Security Trust Company Bank Building possesses indicative features of the Beaux Arts that include a symmetrical façade, a parapet roof and cornice line, alternating triglyphs and metopes, sunken panels, hood molding, scroll modillions, exuberant surface ornamentation, a keystone, an arched entrance with a spandrel, abacuses, and pilasters. Just as importantly, under Criterion C the property is eligible for representing the work of a master. Frederick Meyer and Charles Lindgren are highly recognized and celebrated for their respective professional careers.
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.

1. Name of Property
   Historic name: Security Trust Company Bank Building
   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: 1800 Chester Avenue
   City or town: Bakersfield State: CA County: Kern Zip Code: 93301
   Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of commenting official:</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Title: _______________

State or Federal or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification
I hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____________________

Signature of the Keeper ____________________ Date of Action ________________

5. Classification
Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private: X

Public – Local

Public – State

Public – Federal
**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box.)

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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Object</td>
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</table>

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

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<th>Noncontributing</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register __N/A____

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Commerce: Financial Institution
- Commerce: Business
- Health Care: Medical Business
- Social: Civic
- Government: Government Office
- Commerce: Restaurant
- Commerce: Professional
- Transportation: road related (stage depot)
Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Vacant: bank or restaurant anticipated.

___________________
___________________
___________________
___________________
___________________
7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Beaux Arts

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: Concrete, Stone: Limestone

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
Located at 1800 Chester Avenue in Bakersfield, California, the Beaux Arts style Security Trust Company Bank Building underwent a lengthy, multi-year restoration project beginning in April 2014 after an exterior stucco façade covered it since 1947, or nearly seven decades. It has a rectangular shaped floor plan and is a symmetrically designed, one story structure with a basement. The exterior is composed of concrete, limestone, and expanded polystyrene molding, mimicking the original stone material that comprised the west and south facing parapet. The reconstructed abacuses on the south elevation are also composed of expanded polystyrene molding. The building has a parapet roof, although at least part of the top covering the building is a replacement since a fire damaged half of the original in 2002 (See Figure 30). The interior roof structure is comprised of six open-web flat trusses, two running from the front to the rear, or west to east, and four positioned north-south. The top of the roof originally had a monitor with hipped gables in the front and rear. The monitor had clerestory windows that served as skylights. It also functioned as a ventilator. The monitor was removed sometime after the 1947 remodel. Extensive work was required to return the building to an acceptable condition and it retains much of its integrity, especially when one considers its tumultuous history (See Figures 1-10 for original building plans, and Figures 31-50 for photographic documentation of rehabilitation project).
Narrative Description

Setting

The Security Trust Company Bank Building is located at the corner of 18th Street and Chester Avenue in downtown Bakersfield. The total property encompasses 2,740 square feet and is situated within a commercial district. A few notable nearby historic buildings are the California Theater, the Sill Building, the Haberfelde Building, the Moronet Building, and the Kress Building.

West (Primary) Elevation

The front elevation faces west towards Chester Avenue. It originally had roof line railing and a stone carved keystone motif in the center of the front facing parapet, according to the original building plans. The building also had small carved ornamental features protruding from a pronounced, decorative, metal cornice line. Due to financial constraints, the original roof line railing, parapet, cornice line, and stone carved keystone, all completely missing when the exterior stucco façade was removed in April 2014, could not be fully duplicated. The restoration installed a parapet design with square pads and a plain cornice line, all molded from expanded polystyrene. The polystyrene, or architectural foam, is coated to match the original color of the rest of the exterior. The new parapet and cornice, however, still respect the original theme of the building.

The front façade has alternating triglyphs and metopes in the wide frieze band that sits above the architrave. In the middle of the frieze band an inscription reads “Security Trust Company.” Underneath the architrave is a sunken panel that is supported by four visually dominating unfluted pilasters, each with an abacus (with casting) and molded bases. There are spandrels and a keystone above a full arched entrance. On each side of the entrance, above the windows, there are metal vents above hood molding that is supported by scroll modillions. Below the hood molding on each side of the entrance, there are two eighteen foot tall window frames. Originally, two vertical wooden mullions and a horizontal wooden mullion separated three rectangular window plates. Below the three rectangular window plates, two vertical wooden mullions separated three smaller, but still rectangular, window plates. A stone bill is underneath both windows. Since the original window plates and sash no longer existed, the restoration installed double paned windows with a centered vertical mullion separated by a horizontal mullion.

Above the entrance was originally an arched glass plate window separated by four vertical wooden mullions. A sculptural feature was positioned on a mantel above a transom window. The front elevation also originally had a wood framed double door with rectangular window panes in each. In addition, glass sidelights were on the sides of the doors. As none of the original materials existed after removing the stucco façade, the restoration placed two vertical mullions separated by a horizontal mullion in the arched double paned window above the entrance. The project also installed two horizontal mullions between a transom window. Below the transom window are aluminum framed double doors that have rectangular window panes, closely reflecting the theme of the original design. The entrance doors are each flanked by glass sidelights.
South Elevation

The south elevation faces 18th Street. A cutaway corner exists between the front portion of the building facing Chester Avenue and the south elevation of the building. As with the front facing elevation, the south elevation had roof line railing, a parapet, and a metal cornice line with carved ornamental features. However, the restoration could only afford to reconstruct the parapet and cornice line in the same design as the reconstructed front parapet and cornice.

The side facing 18th Street is nearly identical in its original design to the front. It too has a frieze band with alternating triglyphs and metopes situated above an architrave. Below the architrave there is a sunken panel. Overhead each window frame there is a metal vent positioned above hood molding that is supported by scroll modillions. One difference, however, is that the south façade has six dominating square pilasters, each with abacuses (with casting) and molded bases. All six abacuses, completely missing at the beginning of the restoration, were restored using expanded polystyrene to appear original. The square pilasters, minimally damaged, were also restored after the original design.

The most noticeable difference that the restoration installed in comparison to the original plans, however, pertains to the window designs as all had to be completely reconstructed. The original windows on the south elevation were identical to the original windows on the front of the building. Differing from the originals, the western and eastern most windows on the south facing elevation are double paned and have a centered vertical mullion separated by a horizontal mullion. They both retain their original stone bill.

The three middle windows have all been enlarged, extending to ground level. There are a couple of logical reasons for this. First, the concrete base that supported the windows no longer existed when the restoration began. Additionally, extending the three middle windows to the ground gives the interior much needed light. The second and third windows from the western most edge of the south elevation each have a centered vertical mullion with two centered horizontal Mullions. The second window from the east has two vertical Mullions and two horizontal Mullions. A glass door has also been added, serving as a side entrance. All of the Mullions, both on the west and south elevations, slightly differ from the original designs because structural concerns, namely wind load support, had to be taken into consideration during the restoration project.

North and East Elevations

The north and east elevations of the building both retain their original brick walls and stone and concrete parapets. Both elevations are directly bordered by neighboring buildings.

Integrity

The Security Trust Company Bank Building maintains sufficient historic integrity to convey its historic significance. While the original parapet, cornice line, and windows could not be re-established or designed to exactly replicate the originals, they are close reflections and serve to maintain the original theme and character of the building. The restoration and rehabilitation
approaches fall in line with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. The rest of the exterior materials of the building are original or have been restored according to the original plans, such as the abacuses on the south elevation. The property retains its integrity in the seven aspects of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Location

The property remains at its original site, retaining its integrity of location.

Design

When the stucco façade was removed in April 2014, the original roof line railing, parapet embellishments, and cornice line were completely missing, requiring replacement. According to adhered to rehabilitation standards, compatible substitute materials are permitted for technical and financial reasons. The design of the new parapet and cornice line are compatible with the other character defining features and the size, scale, and material of the building. Additionally, the original sash and window plates were completely missing at the beginning of the restoration project. Although the new windows could not exactly duplicate the originals due to structural concerns, they do not significantly compromise the building’s integrity. Continued use of the building required a slightly different design, falling in line with rehabilitation standards.

Although the parapet, cornice line, and windows are reconstructions that do not exactly reflect the originals because of financial and structural concerns, the building retains the rest of its original character defining features to convey its historic design. Considering that the building has experienced an array of uses and natural disasters, not to mention the stucco façade that concealed the original architecture from 1947 to 2014, it is remarkable that the majority of its character defining features have survived.

Setting

The Security Trust Company Bank Building retains its historic setting. It remains located at the corner of 18th Street and Chester Avenue in the heart of downtown Bakersfield. The properties bordering the Security Trust Company Bank Building on the north and east sides both retain their original structural design. In addition, the nearby California Theater and Sill Building still stand. The original bank building retains its urban setting.

Materials

Rehabilitation standards state that original materials shall not be destroyed, removed, or altered. Since the original parapet embellishments and cornice line were absent at the initiation of the restoration, the new installations did not harm any historic materials. Moreover, all of the abacuses on the south elevation were unsalvageable, precluding repair. They were duplicated after the original design using expanded polystyrene foam, a compatible material.

The three enlarged window frames on the south elevation that stretch to ground level also conform to appropriate rehabilitation measures. Although not ideal, one can argue that a liberal interpretation of the Secretary of the Interior’s rehabilitation standards permits such an alteration.
Since the original base of the building no longer existed when the restoration project initiated, enlarging the windows did not destroy any historic features or materials. The enlarged windows allow for much needed interior light, a need originally met by a monitor that used to exist on the roof. Rehabilitation standards support necessary alterations that are essential for continued use as long as character defining features are not radically modified.

Moreover, rehabilitation criteria include color as an important quality to maintain. Covered in black when rehabilitation and restoration work began, delicate surface cleaning returned the exterior to its original color. Likewise, the new materials composed of expanded polystyrene foam were coated to match the rest of the exterior’s color and to mimic the texture of the original features.

As noted previously, the building has experienced a few changes since 1910. With this said, however, it still retains the majority of its exterior materials to convey its historic significance. Its stone and concrete exterior are materials meant to last. The building embodies the majority of the character defining features of the Beaux Arts style of architecture.

Workmanship

The Security Trust Company Bank Building, composed of a concrete and stone exterior, serves as an excellent example of Beaux Arts style architecture constructed from 1885 to 1930. Beaux Arts architecture is an extremely rare style not only in Bakersfield, but along the entire West Coast and especially in California’s central valley. The property is also one of the few remnants of pre-1952 Bakersfield.

Feeling

The original bank building remains situated in its original location and it retains its urban setting. Although some of its original materials have been removed throughout its life and could not be exactly replicated, the restoration sought to respect the building’s original theme and character. Also, the building retains its original structure as it has not experienced any additions.

Association

The Security Trust Company Bank Building is highly notable for its association with renowned architect Frederick Herman Meyer and builder Charles J. Lindgren. In addition, it is recognized for surviving the devastating August 1952 earthquake that damaged so much of Bakersfield’s built environment.
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.)

- [X] 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.
- [X] 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
Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Architecture**

**Conservation**

**Community Planning and Development**


Period of Significance

A: 1952

C: 1910


Significant Dates

1910, Bank Constructed

1952, Earthquake


Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)


Cultural Affiliation


Architect/Builder

Architect: Frederick Herman Meyer

Builder: Charles J. Lindgren
**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 Security Trust Company Bank Building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criteria A and C in the areas of architecture, conservation, and community planning and development. Under Criterion A, the property is eligible for its association with the August 1952 Bakersfield earthquake, a natural disaster that radically altered the character of downtown Bakersfield. Occurring a month after the more powerful Kern County earthquake, the August occasion that struck Bakersfield left very few buildings or structures standing in the downtown area. The catastrophe fueled pre-existing modernization and redevelopment visions that led to the loss of additional historic buildings. The Security Trust Company Bank Building represents a rare pre-1952 resource for the community. Under Criterion C, the Security Trust Company Bank Building is eligible for embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Beaux Arts architectural style. Built in 1910 during the City Beautiful Movement, the Beaux Arts building is situated in the midst of the revival of renaissance forms of architecture. The Beaux Arts style is a rarity for the West Coast and especially California’s central valley. The property is also eligible under Criterion C for its association with Frederick Herman Meyer and Charles J. Lindgren. Both Meyer and Lindgren are highly notable for their work in the Bay Area, especially for their efforts in rebuilding San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and fire. Lindgren is also notable for his work in Bakersfield and other central valley communities. The period of significance for Criterion A is 1952 for the August 1952 Bakersfield earthquake. The period of significance for Criterion C is 1910, the year of the building’s construction.

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

**History of the Security Trust Company Bank Building**

The Security Trust Company evolved from the Bakersfield Security Company, incorporating on October 7, 1910 with its principal place of business in Bakersfield, California. It formed with an initial capital stock of $300,000 for the purposes of transacting a departmental banking business as a commercial bank, savings bank, and trust company. George J. Planz (President), H.R. Peacock (Vice President), Dave Hirshfeld (Vice President), J.A. Hughes, J.W. Heard, A.S. Crites, F.W. Warthorst, L.P. St. Clair, W.W. Frazier, W.W. Colin, D.L. Brown, J.M. Jameson, W.A. Howell, C.A. Barlow, and Chris Mattly constituted the first directors of the Security Trust Company, all local residents. Seventeen years later, on September 30, 1927, the company merged into the Security Bank and Trust Company.¹

Planning for the construction of the Security Trust Company Bank Building commenced in 1909 after the previous building, a drug store, was torn down. George J. Planz, President of the Security Trust Company, wanted the bank built at 1800 Chester Avenue, believing it a prime

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¹ Security Trust Company Articles of Incorporation, Inactive Corporations, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.
location for business. Planz selected Frederick Herman Meyer and Charles J. Lindgren to construct the building.

Upon completion of the Security Trust Company Bank Building in 1910, the Security Trust Company named William V. Matlack, Bakersfield Mayor as well as the President of the Bakersfield City Board of Trustees and a Southern Pacific Railroad agent, as the bank’s first head cashier (Figures 13-17). The bank collaborated with *The Morning Echo* in its initial promotional efforts and prospered greatly, attracting an extraordinary number of customers in its first three years (Figure 18). Its popularity grew so much that the company bought out and moved into the nearby Kern Valley Bank Building, the first banking institution in Kern County. Despite the move, the Security Trust Company still used the building at 1800 Chester Avenue for other operations. Just a few years later, the Security Trust Company opened a bank in Taft, and once again relocated its Bakersfield branch to accommodate its growth (Figure 19). Today, the only remnant of the Security Trust Company is the 1800 Chester Avenue bank building.

After the Security Trust Company completely moved out of 1800 Chester Avenue in 1919, the building became the Union Stage Depot, used by several companies for bus and stage transportation services (Figures 20-21). In 1927, a real estate firm and a mining company moved into the building at 1800 Chester Avenue. The following year, First National Bank occupied the property (Figures 22-23). In 1934, Anglo California National Bank bought out First National Bank, moved into the building, and installed interior security devices. Following the Anglo California National Bank’s residence, a drug store occupied the site from 1939 to 1941.

In June 1942, 1800 Chester Avenue housed rationing services and the Kern County and Bakersfield Civilian Defense Councils, and in October, the Information and Consumer Center for the Office of Civilian Defense (Figure 24). The city of Bakersfield continued to rent the building until 1947 when the French Café moved into 1800 Chester Avenue. The French Café extensively remodeled the building, spending at least $25,000 to place a stucco façade over the original exterior architecture. The remodel removed the original windows and the cornice and parapet embellishments. The monitor, however, remained, only to be removed years later (Figures 11-12). The 1947 remodel is a classic example of the modernization movement that took place throughout the country in the immediate post-war period.

Following the French Café, the building housed the Salad Bowl Restaurant from 1952 to 1958 (Figure 26). During the Salad Bowl Restaurant’s residence, a devastating earthquake struck on August 22, 1952, forever altering downtown Bakersfield (Figure 25). Ironically, however, the stucco façade placed over the Security Trust Company Bank Building in 1947 most likely saved it from the utter destruction that so many other buildings experienced.

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3 Gia, “The Naked Bank at 18th and Chester, 1909-2014.”
From 1958 to 1960, Cindy’s Restaurant rented the building. After Cindy’s Restaurant left, the corner of Chester Avenue and 18th Street remained vacant until Tiny’s Waffle Shop moved into the building in 1962. After Tiny’s Waffle Shop, the Six Pence and Rye Restaurant rented the building in 1974. The Six Pence and Rye Restaurant added a loft dining area and cedar paneling, and removed most of the original mosaic tile flooring in favor of brick and carpet flooring. It also modified the interior lighting and décor, and added a fireplace, all resembling English style accessories. In addition, during its tenancy, the Six Pence and Rye Restaurant added wood shingles above the entrance as well as wood shingle window heads. It also most likely added false timbering. The Six Pence and Rye Restaurant left after a fire in 1975.6

Following the fire, Michael’s Fine Food and Spirits occupied 18th and Chester from 1976 to 1979. From 1980 to 1981, Michael’s Loft Restaurant rented 1800 Chester Avenue, and from 1982 to 1983, the building housed Bea’s Old Loft Restaurant. Loft-Jandayan Inc., opened at 1800 Chester Avenue in 1985, remaining until Bea’s Old Loft Restaurant returned in 1986.7 City Lights and Tapas most recently occupied the location until a fire severely damaged the roof in 2002 (Figure 27). City Lights probably added green paint to the exterior features while Tapas painted the exterior features brown and white, and removed the false timbering along the base of the building (Figures 28-29). Since Tapas left after the 2002 fire, the building has remained vacant.

Sam Abed, local real estate agent and current owner of the property, bought the building in 2013 after the city approved a demolition order in 2012. After beginning initial repairs on the building in April 2014, Abed “discovered” the original architecture underneath the stucco façade. In addition to encountering the remnants of a basement tunnel, Abed also discovered the building’s original safe and plumbing and electrical systems. In April 2015, nearly one year after Abed received permission to remove the exterior stucco facade, the city of Bakersfield finally approved a project to begin restoring the exterior of the building. The building’s exterior restoration was completed in May 2016 and Abed expects either a bank or an exclusive restaurant as the new tenant.8

**Criterion A: August 1952 Bakersfield Earthquake**

The Security Trust Company Bank Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because it is associated with the catastrophic August 1952 Bakersfield earthquake. The August 1952 earthquake, felt from Los Angeles to San Francisco, forever changed the character of downtown Bakersfield, significantly more so than other impacted cities. The 1952 earthquake is largely credited for the lack of historic structures in Bakersfield, partly reflected in the fact that only thirteen places are listed in the Bakersfield

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6 Bakersfield City Directory (San Francisco: R.L. Polk & Co., 1952-1975); Gia “The Naked Bank at 18th and Chester, 1909-2014.”
Register of Historic Places, six in the National Register of Historic Places, and not a single property in the California Register of Historical Resources.\(^9\)

Beginning in the immediate postwar period, a modernize Bakersfield movement developed, stemming from the larger urban renewal campaign that took place in communities across the nation. Mirroring the national scene, locals desired a fresh start after the conclusion of the war, an attitude that valued modern products and generating profit through new development. The Security Trust Company Bank Building became one of the first victims of local modernization efforts with the installation of an exterior stucco façade in 1947. A slew of other downtown Bakersfield properties experienced similar fates such as the Southern Hotel, an attraction that rivaled San Francisco’s finest hotels until its demolition in 1947 to make room for a new JC Penny building. Even prior to the irreparable damage it suffered from the August 1952 earthquake, Bakersfield’s most recognizable landmark, the Beale Memorial Clock Tower, was the target of criticism. Citing its location in the middle of downtown at 17th Street and Chester Avenue as a hindrance, residents often argued for its removal.\(^10\)

Kern County and Bakersfield have experienced a number of natural disasters over the years. However, 1952 experienced two of the most significant and devastating natural disasters ever recorded in the county in terms of structural and financial impairment. Although the 1857 Tejon earthquake in Kern County remains the strongest ever recorded in California with an estimated 7.9 magnitude, the July 1952 Kern earthquake measured 7.3, followed by a 5.8 earthquake that hit Bakersfield a month later. The July 21, 1952 Kern County earthquake, the strongest in the state since the 1906 7.7 San Francisco earthquake, occurred along the White Wolf fault with the epicenter at Wheeler Ridge. While Tehachapi and Arvin suffered the brunt of the damage, shocks were felt in Bakersfield, Los Angeles, San Diego, Mexico, San Francisco, Reno, and parts of southwest Nevada. The July 1952 earthquake also significantly affected agricultural fields, irrigation ditches, levees, and reservoirs, causing an estimated thirty million dollars in damage. Additionally, Bakersfield’s iconic Beale Memorial Clock Tower also suffered minor damage on all four sides.\(^11\)

Following the July earthquake, seismographs continued to document more than a handful of shocks registered at 6.0 or stronger, twenty four shocks at 5.0 or stronger, 180 shocks at 4.0 or higher, and over 300 at less than 4.0. These tremors led to the catastrophic Bakersfield earthquake

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of August 22, 1952. While the series of smaller earthquakes undoubtedly lessened what could
have been an even stronger earthquake, the 5.8 shock, which lasted only a few seconds with no
aftershocks, released energy equal to 2,000 atomic bombs, according to the United States Coast
and Geodetic Survey. The earthquake and ensuing fires caused irreparable damage to all but a
few buildings and structures in the downtown area, totaling sixty to 100 million dollars in
property loss. An estimated 100 buildings were significantly affected. Surprisingly, only two
people died and thirty two suffered injuries from the disaster. The calamity, however, not only
forever changed the physical makeup of the downtown area, but also the city’s attitude towards
historic preservation.12

In many ways, the August 1952 earthquake that struck Bakersfield only activated preexisting
attitudes that favored redevelopment at the expense of the city’s cultural heritage. Redevelopment
by an act of nature, the earthquake provided an opportunity to act on modernization attitudes in
an atmosphere of “progress.” In addition to the nearly 100 structures substantially damaged by
the earthquake, which included the loss of architectural landmarks such as the Kern County
Courthouse, the Beale Memorial Clock Tower, the Bakersfield City Hall, and the Elks Club
Building, the city also sanctioned the demolition of many sturdy and tenable buildings. Even
many of the historic buildings that managed to survive the earthquake and the ensuing
redevelopment and seismic retrofitting, had decorative features removed or modern exterior
facades installed over their original architecture. For example, like the stucco façade placed over
the Security Trust Company Bank Building, the nearby California Theater and Brock’s
Department Store both also experienced the installation of midcentury style facades, features that
still remain today.13 As a case in point, after the construction of the new city hall in 1954, an
event that meant to signify the revitalization of the downtown business center, city officials
celebrated Bakersfield as “America’s newest city.”14 In The Story of Kern County, W.W.
Robinson offers a contemporary illustration of the accompanying effects and attitudes stemming
from the 1952 earthquake, stating, “Handsome in line and color are all of the present civic center
structures. Architectural excellence is contagious. Chester Avenue, the principal business street,
is now lined with well designed and pleasing buildings, while streets parallel with or intersecting
Chester are dominated and made lively by construction contemporary in style.”15 Writing in 1965,
Robinson’s primary account offers an in depth glimpse into the extent of the physical alteration
that downtown Bakersfield underwent after the natural disaster, a period that has had lasting
effects both physically and culturally.

The Kern County Museum played a crucial role in saving the city’s heritage after the earthquake.
Although the institution was new and in the midst of acquiring historical resources, the
accumulation of the city’s most notable buildings reflect its efforts to save structures from
“progress.” For instance, of the fifty five historic structures it currently houses, it not
coincidentally received a large number that date from the 1940s through the 1960s.16 Nonetheless,

12 ‘1952 Earthquakes,’ The Bakersfield Californian, July 21-23, 1952, August 22-23, 1952; Bailey, Heart
of the Golden Empire, 95-97.
13 Henry A. Barrios, “Earthquakes of 1952: Quakes and attitudes changed Bakersfield’s historic
downtown”; Bailey, Heart of the Golden Empire, 129.
14 W.W. Robinson, The Story of Kern County (Bakersfield, CA: Title Insurance and Trust Company, 1965),
53-55.
15 Robinson, The Story of Kern County, 55.
the city lost countless historic buildings from the earthquake, urban renewal, and seismic retrofitting. The loss of Bakersfield’s El Tejon Hotel in 1970 represents another particularly important example. Constructed in 1926, a period of rapid growth for the city, the Western Hotel Reporter recognized the Mission Revival style hotel as one of the “Best in the West” in 1935. Suffering from financial constraints in the 1960s, however, Bank of America purchased the property and announced plans to construct a ten story financial center on the site. After its demolition, the Kern County Alliance, a group from the Kern County Museum, surveyed the site for historical artifacts and relics. Similar to the demolition of the Alhambra Theater in Sacramento in 1973, the loss of one of Bakersfield’s most distinct buildings galvanized local support for preservation.\(^\text{17}\)

However, grassroots support for preservation efforts proved to be only short lived. The Bakersfield Historic Preservation Commission, a largely powerless and inactive entity since its inception in 1983, has unfortunately accomplished little in the way of local historic preservation initiatives.\(^\text{18}\) For example, many of the city’s existing historic buildings have long been neglected such as the Nile Theater, Granada Theater, California Theater, Virginia Theater, Kern Theater, the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot in Old Town Kern, the Earl Warren House, and the Bush House, residence of George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush for a short period in 1949. Additionally, much of Old Town Kern, originally known as Sumner and Kern City, has also been neglected or subjected to recent redevelopment projects that have unsuccessfully attempted to revive the area’s business section.

The Security Trust Company Bank Building is an extremely rare resource in Bakersfield. Long thought lost, it represents one of the few buildings in Bakersfield to not only survive the 1952 earthquake, but also urban renewal and seismic retrofitting. Moreover, it remarkably survived the cataclysmic earthquake without suffering a single crack.\(^\text{19}\) The building at 1800 Chester Avenue is exceedingly unique to the local area. The stucco façade placed over the original architecture in 1947, no doubt ironically saved it from suffering the same fate that so many other buildings experienced.

**Criterion C:**

Constructed in 1910, the Security Trust Company Bank Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level for embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Beaux Arts style of architecture and because of its association with the notable architect Frederick Herman Meyer and builder Charles J. Lindgren. Meyer is highly recognized for his work in the Bay Area, especially for his efforts in rebuilding San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and fire. Lindgren too is commended for his work in rebuilding the city after the 1906 disaster. Additionally, Lindgren is recognized as a master for rebuilding Bakersfield after the 1889 fire. Despite its tumultuous history, the Security Trust

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\(^{18}\) Bailey, 101-03.

\(^{19}\) Henry A. Barrios, “Downtown building may be fostering changes,” *The Bakersfield Californian*, May 10, 2014.
Company Bank Building retains a number of its character defining features. The property represents a rare Meyer work located outside of the Bay Area.

Settlement of Bakersfield
Thomas Baker, founder of Bakersfield, was born in Zanesville, Ohio in 1810. In 1830, soon after becoming a colonel in the Ohio State Militia, Baker moved to Illinois. Just a few years later, he moved to Iowa as one of the first American settlers. He immediately entered politics, securing a spot in Iowa’s first legislature. In 1850, amid the Gold Rush, however, he left for California. After living in Benicia and Stockton for a short period, Baker helped establish Tulare County and the city of Visalia. Soon after reclaiming swamp lands from the Kern River in the 1860s, he settled on the site of what eventually became the city of Bakersfield, originally known as Kern Island. Baker’s farm, located between what is now 14th and 17th Streets and K and P Streets, served as a rest stop for travelers going to and from Los Angeles and Stockton, Sacramento, and San Francisco. His farm bordered what eventually became the site of the Security Trust Company Bank Building.20

Chinese immigrants first came to Kern County in the 1870s to work in the mines and on the railroads. The borders of Bakersfield’s original Chinatown first encompassed today’s 20th to 22nd streets, and L and K streets. Soon after, Bakersfield’s Chinese population progressively increased, so much that by the 1880s Bakersfield’s Chinatown encompassed the area near the site of what became the Security Trust Company Bank Building. Underneath Chinatown, the Chinese constructed an underground tunnel system used to stay cool during the summer. During the Prohibition Era, bootleggers and others used the underground tunnel system as it facilitated access to bars, brothels, and gambling halls. In July 2014, three months after removing the stucco façade from the original Security Trust Company Bank Building, Sam Abed, local realtor and current owner of the building, discovered the remnants of a tunnel in the building’s basement. Evidence of an entrance to a tunnel most likely reveals that the bank building was the site of illegal activity during Prohibition. Unfortunately, however, little more information can be gleamed from Bakersfield’s complex system of underground tunnels as most, if not all, collapsed during the August 1952 earthquake.21

During the oil boom of the 1890s and early 1900s, which placed Bakersfield at the center of the California oil industry, the city experienced significant growth. In 1900 the city acquired electricity and the following year the Bakersfield and Kern Electric Railway began operations, serving Bakersfield and neighboring Kern City, today east Bakersfield. The addition of electricity undoubtedly attracted business to the downtown area as an array of new halls, opera houses, department stores, and theaters appeared. In the early 1900s, Morley’s, Parra’s, Scribner’s, Grogg’s, The Empire, the Lyceum, The Elite, the Rex, and the C&S dotted Chester Avenue, prompting residents to refer to it as “Theater Row.” Similarly, the city acquired its most iconic landmark in 1904 from Truxtun Beale. While serving as the United States ambassador to Spain, he observed a Moorish tower that inspired him to construct a similar structure in Bakersfield, known as the Beale Memorial Clock Tower. The structure stood at the intersection of 17th and

Chester until the earthquakes of July and August 1952 significantly damaged it beyond repair. The city erected a replica at the Kern County Museum in 1964.  

**Beaux Arts Architecture**

Operating until 1968, the Ecole des Beaux Arts, a prominent art school in France, formed in 1819 from the Academie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture and the Academie Royale d’Architecture. Like other academies, the Academie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture and the Academie Royale d’Architecture existed to reinforce the glory of the king through public art and architecture. Beginning in 1789, however, the French Revolution brought about the suppression of royal academies. Discontent with the conditions of the academies, students led a campaign against the institution’s opposition to equality and liberty. The dissatisfied students argued for greater intellectual freedom and the exclusion of professors’ apprentices from special classes. The attacks against the academies reflect the revolution’s aim to break with traditional culture and hierarchical structures.

In 1819, following the restoration of the monarchy, a royal order conjoined the schools of architecture, painting, and sculpture into the Ecole Royale des Beaux Arts. The prestigious school offered courses in architecture, French architecture, history of architecture, construction, perspective, mathematics, physics, chemistry, geometry, and general law. In 1868, Napoleon III attempted to implement significant changes to the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Students from the schools of law and medicine argued for changes to the government’s educational and professional policies. Advocates for reform wanted the prominent Grand Prix competition opened to more students, students to be included in all juries, the power of the Conseil des Batiments Civils to be curtailed, public commissions to only be given to trained architects, and an architect to be limited to only one government commission at a time. Citing inefficiency, the government also desired to reorganize the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1863 by discharging a number of professors and chairs.

Despite the government’s attempt to implement drastic change, the school largely continued to operate as usual as officials failed to enforce the reforms, ultimately abolishing each one. During and after World War II, however, the academy suffered greatly from isolation and the lack of funding. Although the French economy improved in the 1950s, the institution continued to struggle from neglect. In 1968, student riots erupted in protest of the school’s quality and method of architectural education, persuading the government to close the school and replace it with several autonomous units. Regardless, the renowned Ecole des Beaux Arts is credited with producing countless architects that achieved notoriety both in Europe and the United States.

The Renaissance architectural principles taught at the Ecole des Beaux Arts were introduced to the United States in the 1880s. Thereafter, the movement towards the Beaux Arts in the United States gained significant momentum at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Specifically, the exposition’s “White City” exhibit attracted many to the Beaux Arts tradition.

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24 Chafee, 97-103.
Prompting the turn of the century City Beautiful movement, the showcased neoclassical buildings intrigued city planners, architects, and the general population as a solution to issues within the urban core of cities. Additionally, the movement acknowledged the architect’s vital role in achieving urban reform in the Progressive era.26

Beaux Arts architecture symbolically reflects the social, economic, political, and technological changes that emanated from the Progressive era. Scholars identify two aspects that account for its emergence and development in the United States. One, the distinct style generated order in the city and offered a response to urbanization. Not coincidentally, its development coincided with the emergence of new forms of authority in the city. On the other hand, scholarship suggests that the production of the Beaux Arts reflected the interests of the elite. It expressed the ability of professional architects to forge relationships with important social elites and secure reputable undertakings.27

Scholars also allege that the adherence to the Beaux Arts came at the expense of modern American architecture as it stunted the development of the Shingle, Prairie, and Craftsman styles. They claim that the preceding architectural forms held the ingredients for an authentic American style, architecture based on local materials and considerations. At a time when modern American architecture should have naturally taken hold, designers favored importing a foreign style for personal interests. The formal, ideal, and academic Beaux Arts that supposedly represented eternal values, received contemporary criticism as well. A few decades after the 1893 World’s Fair, Lewis Mumford likened the spread of classicism from Europe to a virus, suggesting that it would damage American culture for the ensuing fifty years. The Beaux Arts’ monopolization of American architecture remained a fixture until the 1930s.28

Beaux Arts architecture, the French equivalent of “fine arts,” became a popular style among American architects from approximately 1885 to 1930, a time period in which elaborate eclectic styles dominated the national landscape. Drawing on classical architecture, the Beaux Arts employs many of the same details and features common in other Renaissance influenced styles. Smooth, light colored stone exterior surfaces, visually dominating one or two story pilasters or columns with capitals or abacuses, and symmetrical facades typify the style. Flat roofs, parapet roofs, low pitched hipped roofs and Mansard roofs also characterize the Beaux Arts. Furthermore, the style utilizes transitioning planes, pronounced cornice lines, projecting facades, intricate moldings and sculptures, dentils, modillions, and arched windows and entrances often with surrounds, receding and advancing entablatures, spandrels, and balustrades. Beaux Arts architecture primarily distinguishes itself from related Renaissance styles, however, by the highly exuberant surface ornamentation it possesses.29

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27 Brain, 811-12.
28 Brain, 808-10.
Despite some alterations, the Security Trust Company Bank Building still remarkably exhibits a number of the character defining features of Beaux Arts architecture. The alternating triglyphs and metopes and its smooth, exuberant stone exterior surface reflect key characteristics of the style. The symmetrical façade, cutaway corner, sunken panel on the west and south facades, four unfluted pilasters and five square pilasters with abacuses, spandrels, hood molding, and scroll modillions all signify defining features. The grandiose arched front entrance and the prominent keystone above it represent two additional distinctive attributes. Moreover, although they do not exactly reflect the original design, the parapet and cornice features installed during the restoration project respect the original theme and character of the building. The property not only is the lone surviving distinctively Beaux Arts style building in Bakersfield today, but it represents a rare form of architecture for the San Joaquin Valley and the West Coast.

Frederick Herman Meyer
Frederick Herman Meyer, architect of the Bakersfield Security Trust Company, was born in 1876 in San Francisco and garnered acclaim during his professional career. Although he possessed no prior architectural training, Meyer began his career in 1896 when the building firm Campbell and Pettus hired him as a draftsman. Following his initial foray into the profession, he continued to accumulate experience, working for a number of additional architectural firms. From 1899 to 1900, he began his own practice, partnering with Samuel Newsom in San Francisco. The duo designed a number of properties in Pacific Heights. After working solo the following year, Meyer partnered with Smith O’Brien for the next six years. Together, the two traveled to Chicago to gain insight relating to commercial and office building architecture. The visit helped Meyer and O’Brien produce a number of like buildings in the Bay Area. In fact, the Chicago style became the norm for San Francisco architecture until the mid 1920s.

Although Meyer is responsible for notable properties in the Bay Area prior to 1906, he is most recognized for his integral role in rebuilding the city of San Francisco after the catastrophic 1906 earthquake and fire. Meyer’s projects included theaters, banks, hotels, utilities, schools, libraries, breweries, industrial properties, depots, houses, fire stations, churches, apartments, and office, club, commercial, and medical buildings. In 1913, San Francisco Mayor Jim Rolph chose Meyer as one of the members for the San Francisco Civic Center Commission, an organization that fully embraced the City Beautiful movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the prime of his career, Meyer designed an array of prominent buildings in the Bay Area that include, but are not limited to, San Francisco’s City Hall, the General Hospital, the Rialto Building, the California Hall, the YMCA Hotel, the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, and Oakland’s Key System Building.

Other Meyer Bay Area projects include the Green’s Eye Hospital, the Elks Club Building, the Bankers’ Investment Company Building, the Oakland Bank Building (now the Bank of America Building), the Kohler and Chase Hall, the Financial Center Building, the Monadnock Building, and the Humboldt Bank Building. Although Meyer almost exclusively carried out projects in the Bay Area, he also worked in the West Coast, including the Security Trust Company Bank Building in Bakersfield.

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30 Finding Aid to the Frederick Herman. Meyer Collection, (1976-1), Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, CA.
32 Corbett, Splendid Survivors, 34, 52.
Bay Area, he also is credited with a few buildings in other regions. He designed Chicago’s Monadnock Building, Sacramento’s original Sutter Hospital, and Bakersfield’s 1912 courthouse and Elks Club Building. Unfortunately, Bakersfield’s 1912 courthouse was one of countless buildings lost in the 1952 earthquake. Urban renewal sealed the fate of Bakersfield’s Elks Club Building. Many of Meyer’s finest buildings are commended for their efficient and effective utilization of space and high aesthetic qualities and character.

Prior to his death in 1961, Meyer engaged in professional partnerships with a number of individuals such as Albin Johnson, Albert J. Evers, John G. Howard, John Jr. Reid, Walter D. Reed, Dodge A. Riedy, Martin Rist, Timothy L. Pflueger, Mark T. Jorgensen, Lawrence H. Keyser, George Fred Ashley, Alfred W. Johnson, and Chris W. Runge. In 1929, he became president of the San Francisco American Institute of Architects (AIA). Two years later he served as the Regional Director of the national AIA, became a Chamber of Commerce director, and chaired its bridge, highway, and subway committees. From at least 1931 to 1937, Meyer fulfilled the role of president of the northern division of the State Board of Architectural Examiners. In 1934, he became a Fellow of the prestigious AIA and from 1937 to 1938 he occupied the position of National First Vice President for the organization. In 1942, concerned with transportation issues, San Francisco chose Meyer as its Administrator of Defense Transportation. Published in 1979, Michael R. Corbett’s Splendid Survivors: San Francisco’s Downtown Architectural Heritage associates Meyer with the construction of thirty buildings and discloses that twenty five of his pre-1945 works are listed in the National Register.

Charles J. Lindgren

Charles J. Lindgren, a native of Sweden who immigrated to Chicago in 1879, acquired high notoriety during his career as a building contractor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1888, intrigued by California’s land rush, Lindgren moved his family to Los Angeles, establishing a contracting company with James Boyd and Frank Sharples. Although initially successful, the ensuing real estate market collapse forced the three partners out of business. Eager to start anew, Lindgren found an opportunity in Bakersfield a year later. After the July 7, 1889 fire damaged nearly the entire business section of downtown Bakersfield, Lindgren arrived to help reconstruct the city with James Curran, a partnership that developed into the Bakersfield Sandstone Brick Company which introduced techniques and methods for producing sturdier bricks to the West Coast. A pioneer in innovation, Lindgren promoted the use of sandstone brick as a way to decrease the chances and severity of future fires. Lindgren’s use of exterior concrete and stone and interior brick to construct Bakersfield’s Security Trust Company Bank Building, have undoubtedly contributed to its ability to withstand an earthquake and several fires since 1910. He not only played a significant role in rebuilding Bakersfield, but he also is

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34 Email correspondence with John Edward Powell, Architectural Historian.
35 Corbett, Splendid Survivors, 52.
36 Madigan Talmage-Bowers, Swinerton, A Builder’s History: 125 Years of Building Excellence (San Francisco: Swinerton, Inc., 2013), 9-17.
credited with much of the development of neighboring Kern City and other San Joaquin Valley communities.³⁷

In the early 1900s, intrigued by the construction boom in San Francisco, Lindgren relocated and partnered with Lewis Hicks, a notable Berkeley engineer. While he continued to construct a number of buildings in downtown Bakersfield, such as the Security Trust Company Bank Building in 1910, he found plenty of work in San Francisco, especially after 1906. Like Meyer, Lindgren and Hicks receive praise for their efforts in rebuilding the city. After experiencing the aftermath of the 1889 Bakersfield fire, Lindgren sought to introduce new construction methods and materials to ensure the durability of buildings in San Francisco. However, the duo’s emphasis on the superiority of steel reinforced concrete construction received little attention until the occurrence of the 1906 disaster. Steel and concrete buildings fared the best in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, validating their argument. As recognized building experts, Hicks and Lindgren helped reconstruct the city after the earthquake. A number of the city’s buildings are a testament to their partnership such as the Fairmont Hotel, the YMCA Building, the Sheldon Building, the Mechanics Savings Bank, and the Olympic Club, to name a few.³⁸

After Lindgren and Hicks split apart in 1908, Lindgren, along with his brother, established the Lindgren Company. The Lindgren Company built a number of notable buildings such as the San Francisco Public Library; the Southern Pacific Building in Chicago; the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building; the Francis Drake Hotel; a number of postwar factories, shopping centers, and housing tracts; the 263 mile Barco pipeline that crosses the Andes Mountains; and a number of office buildings and military and government facilities. Today, the Lindgren Company lives on under the name Swinerton, Inc.³⁹

³⁸ Talmage-Bowers, 18-22
³⁹ Talmage-Bowers, 2-8.
9. Major Bibliographical References

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


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University of California Calisphere Digital Collection.
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
X_____ Local government
X_____ University
_____ Other

Name of repository: Kern County Assessor’s Office; Beale Memorial Library (downtown Bakersfield); California State Library; California State University, Sacramento; California State University, Bakersfield

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): ________________
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  Less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)
Datum if other than WGS84:__________
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)
1. Latitude: 35.375455   Longitude: -119.018530

Or

UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927  or  ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:     Easting:        Northing:
2. Zone:     Easting:        Northing:
3. Zone:     Easting:        Northing:
4. Zone:     Easting:        Northing:

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

The property is bounded by Chester Avenue to the west, 18th Street to the south, and neighboring properties bordering its north and east elevations.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property is located at the corner of Chester Avenue and 18th Street in downtown Bakersfield, situated within the described boundaries.
11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Paul Rendes
organization: California State University, Sacramento Graduate Public History Program
street & number: 6905 Highland Knolls Drive
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telephone: 661-364-4631
date: June 18, 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.)
Google Earth Aerial Map (substituted for USGS map)
Sketch Map

Property shown in red
Kern County Assessor Parcel Map No. 6-02.
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.

Photo Log
Name of Property: Security Trust Company Bank Building
City or Vicinity: Bakersfield
County: Kern
State: CA
Photographer: Paul Rendes
Date Photographed: July 3, 2016
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 15. Camera facing east towards the west elevation.
2 of 15. Camera facing north towards the south elevation.
3 of 15. Looking at an close up view of the south elevation.
4 of 15. Looking at an up close view of a scroll modillion.
5 of 15. Looking at up close view of an abacus on the south elevation.
6 of 15. Looking at an up close view of parapet and triglyphs and metopes on the south elevation.
7 of 15. Looking at an up close view of parapet on west elevation.
8 of 15. Looking at an up close view of triglyphs and metopes on the west elevation.
9 of 15. Looking at an up close view of the side of an abacus on the west elevation.
10 of 15. Looking at an up close view of the front of an abacus on the west elevation.
11 of 15. Looking at an up close view of hood molding and scroll modillions.
12 of 15. Looking at an up close view of one of the vents.
13 of 15. Looking at an up close view of a spandrel above the entrance.
14 of 15. Looking at an up close view of the keystone above the front entrance.
15 of 15. Looking at the north elevation.

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.
Additional Documentation: Historic Photographs

Figure 1: 1910 building plans. Foundation (left) and front elevation (right).
Figure 2: 1910 building plans. Basement floor plan.
Figure 3: 1910 building plans. Roof plan (left) and ceiling plan (right).
Figure 4: 1910 building plans. Front elevation.
Figure 5: 1910 building plans. Transverse section.
**Figure 6:** 1910 building plans. 18th Street elevation (top) and longitudinal section (bottom).
**Figure 7:** 1910 building plans. Details of roof trusses.
Figure 8: 1910 building plans. Elevation of rear interior wall.
Figure 9: 1910 building plans. Elevation of interior walls.
Figure 10: 1910 building plans. Elevation of 18th Street interior wall.
Figure 11: 1912 Sanborn map of property (1800 Chester Avenue).
Figure 12: 1949 Sanborn map of property (1800 Chester Avenue)
Figure 13: West elevation, 1910. *Architect and Engineer* 26, no. 1 (August 1911): 51-52.
Figure 14: West elevation, 1910. Chris Brewer, *Bakersfield and Kern Picture Album.*
Figure 15: West elevation. Date unknown. University of California Calisphere Digital Collection.
Figure 16: West and south elevations, 1910. *Architect and Engineer* 26, no. 1 (August 1911): 51-52.
Figure 17: Original interior, 1910. *Architect and Engineer* 26, no. 1 (August 1911): 51-52.
Figure 20: The Security Trust Company Bank Building, circa 1922 when it housed the Union Stage Depot. The iconic Beale Memorial Clock Tower is shown in the background. Eugene Burmeister, *The Golden Empire: Kern County, California.*
Figure 21: Photograph taken sometime between 1919 and 1927 when the Union Stage Depot occupied the building. Google Images.
Figure 22: The Security Trust Company Bank Building shown in the background, 1929. At the time, it housed the First National Bank. Chris Brewer, *Bakersfield and Kern Picture Album.*
Figure 23: The Security Trust Company Bank Building, 1930. University of California Calisphere Digital Collection.
Figure 24: People lining up for ration stamps inside 1800 Chester Avenue, June 1942. Gilbert Gia, “The Naked Bank at 18th and Chester, 1909-2014.”
Figure 25: Three quarters of the Beal Memorial Clock Tower was destroyed in the devastating August 1952 earthquake. Photograph taken by Clyde Johnson. University of California Calisphere Digital Collection.
Figure 26: People gathering for a rally in front of 1800 Chester Avenue, then occupied by the Salad Bowl Restaurant, 1954. University of California Calisphere Digital Collection.
Figure 27: City Lights resided at the corner of 18th and Chester from the late 1980s to the 1990s and added green paint to the surface features. University of California Calisphere Digital Collection.
Figure 28: West elevation in 2014, prior to the removal of the exterior stucco surface and wood shingled features. Bing Images.
Figure 29: West and south elevations, 2014. Gilbert Gia, “The Naked Bank at 18th and Chester, 1909-2014.”
Figure 30: Property shown within yellow boundaries prior to the removal of the stucco façade. The building remained without half of a roof for twelve years after a fire in 2002. Bing Aerial View.
Figure 31: Roof under repair, 2014. Bing Aerial View.
Figure 32: Workers removing the stucco façade and wood shingles in April 2014. Google Images.
Figure 33: South elevation after removal of stucco façade, 2014. Google Images.
**Figure 34:** West elevation, February 2015. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 35: South elevation, February 2015. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 36: West elevation, May 2015. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 37: South elevation, May 2015. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 38: West elevation, July 2015. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 39: South elevation, July 2015. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 40: West elevation, November 2015. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 41: South elevation, November 2015. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
**Figure 42:** West and south elevations, December 2015. Steven Mayer, “Downtown ‘temple’ getting windows, more,” *The Bakersfield Californian*, December 23, 2015.
Figure 43: West elevation, January 2016. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 44: South elevation, January 2016. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 45: West elevation, March 2016. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 46: South elevation, March 2016. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 47: West elevation, May 2016. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 48: South elevation, May 2016. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 49: West elevation, July 2016. Exterior rehabilitation complete. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
Figure 50: South elevation, July 2016. Exterior rehabilitation complete. Photograph taken by Paul Rendes.
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Email correspondence with John Edward Powell.


