DOWNTOWN SAN MATEO

HISTORICAL TOUR

PUBLICATION OF THE CITY OF SAN MATEO
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

San Mateo is fortunate to retain in its buildings the character and history of its growth from small town to prominent city.

This architectural heritage is most evident on B Street and Third Avenue, where a majority of original structures still line these streets.

The ground floors of many of the buildings have been altered through the years. To get a better idea of the original buildings, stand back and look at the rooflines and upper floors.

DIRECTIONS

- The historic walking tour begins at B Street and First Avenue.
 Traveling south on B Street you will experience many styles of architecture dating back from the City's incorporation in 1894 to the 1930s.
- As you approach Third Avenue from B Street, your tour continues westward on Third Avenue to El Camino Real. Once reaching El Camino, cross to the opposite side of Third Avenue and continue east back to B Street.
- Your tour continues north on B Street to Baldwin Avenue.
- Head west on Baldwin Avenue to Ellsworth Avenue, then continue traveling to the south.
- From Ellsworth Avenue turn left onto Second Avenue. Travel east to B Street, where the tour ends.
- We hope you enjoyed your historic walking tour of Downtown San Mateo, and caught a glimpse of San Mateo's past. Stay awhile and experience the exciting shops, restaurants and features of modern day San Mateo.

101-107 SOUTH B STREET

Although extensive modifications were made over the years to its original structure, this brick structure once housed a livery stable.



113-121 SOUTH B STREET

1895

Built as the Odd Fellows Hall at a cost of \$7,000, the four-second story bays are richly detailed in sandstone colored brick. The multi-colored tile on the ground floor is probably a later modification.

139-141 SOUTH B STREET

1900

This address was well known in the 1920s as Noah's Cafeteria, operated by one of the first African American businessmen in San Mateo.

147-153 SOUTH B STREET

1905

Designed by architects Kuhn and Edwards, this building was built for local real estate investors Conrad and Raybould for \$16,000. The stucco relief patterns and rooftop filials add some style to the parapet of this otherwise plain structure.



159 SOUTH B STREET

1875

Originally the site of San Mateo's first drug store, and in 1883 the site of San Mateo's first telephone. In 1887 after the library burned down, citizens met at the drug store to form the first San Mateo fire company.

201 SOUTH B STREET

193

The House of Merkel was designed by San Francisco architects
Edwards and Schary. Octagonal bays at each corner highlight the
art deco design, arched windows, and terracotta tiling. The Merkels
opened a cigar store here in 1918, later expanding it to include
a soda fountain, liquor store, billiard parlor and horse betting.



215-223 SOUTH B STREET

Although extensively modified, this building was San Mateo's City Hall from 1914 to 1940. The Main Street frontage is still intact, exhibiting the prominent ground floor arches (used as fire engine doors). A judge's chamber occupied the second floor, and a jail cell and firing range occupied the basement. A mural was painted along the south side in 1990, depicting city hall activities.

243 SOUTH B STREET

1916

Spanish style brick building with decorative tile work below the windows.

251-255 SOUTH B STREET

1923

The brick and concrete Louis Building housed numerous tenants at this prime location, including the Plumbers and Electricians Association and Benet Building Company.

301-309 SOUTH B STREET

1912

This reinforced concrete Mission Revival building housed the National Bank of San Mateo, San Mateo Hardware and Pope's Drug Store during its first 30 years.



316-320 SOUTH B STREET

190

Tenants of this early commercial structure included Jennings and Ticknor Bootery, the local post office and a cigar and confectionary shop.

220-240 EAST THIRD AVENUE

1925

This early building displays Italian Renaissance detailing.
Frederick Smith operated a furniture store at this busy location
until the 1930s, when it was replaced by the Green Furniture
Store. Upstairs residences were renovated with City assistance.



1926

208-218 EAST THIRD AVENUE

13 This modern building with art deco touches housed three primary tenants: the Greenline Drug Company, J.C. Penney and Schneider's, a locally owned apparel store.

120-128 EAST THIRD AVENUE

1930

This Spanish Colonial Revival building housed Henry Pharmacy, Capps Creamery and then Collins Pharmacy.

82-84 EAST THIRD AVENUE

1930

This modest structure continued the Spanish Colonial Revival style of many nearby buildings.

72-78 EAST THIRD AVENUE

This uniquely designed building combines the Spanish Colonial Revival style with Art Deco details, including terracotta tiling.



60 EAST THIRD AVENUE

17 This building, formerly the San Mateo Theater, is too extensively remodeled to be considered historic. However, the original building is still visible above the two story front façade, which was added, eliminating the marquee and surface decoration.



44 EAST THIRD AVENUE

18 The Benjamin Franklin Hotel is the most dominate of downtown commercial buildings. The owner, A.C. Franklin, billed it as a country resort for vacationing San Franciscans. The \$250,000 building offered a window in every room, swimming pool, garden, large lobby with a vaulted ceiling, and elegant dining facilities.



<u>32-36 EAST THIRD AVENUE</u>

Another example of popular Spanish Colonial Revival architecture.

28-30 EAST THIRD AVENUE

This unique Colonial Revival building is reminiscent of a Georgian townhouse. Layton Fine Furnishings occupied the building from 1936-1960.



10 EAST THIRD AVENUE

Thomas Edwards created a fanciful design with an elaborate checkerboard cornice frieze for this small building. Conway, Raybould & Johnson, local realtors and subdividers of major local estates, built the structure for their offices.

33-37 EAST THIRD AVENUE

1935

This building, built during the Depression features parapeted gables and row of small battlements at the top of the front façade give it a somewhat European character.

41-43 EAST THIRD AVENUE

This simple building fits well into the European flavored character of this block.

51-65 EAST THIRD AVENUE

24 The Levy Brother's store occupied this Tudor Revival building from the 1930s to 50s, and included groceries, hardware, men's furnishings, dry goods, millinery, apparel and toys, as well as a circulating library on the mezzanine.



69-73 EAST THIRD AVENUE

25

This building with Italian Renaissance features housed J.J. Newberry and Company until the store moved to the new Hillsdale Mall in 1957.



77-79 EAST THIRD AVENUE

1933

An appliance store occupied this building, which has been unaltered since original construction.

201-215 EAST THIRD AVENUE

The Medical Arts Building stands out for its distinctive Art Deco detailing. For \$80,000 was constructed in response to the 1928 expansion of Mills Hospital. Ground floor tenants included J.C. Penney and later a grocery store.



235-255 EAST THIRD AVENUE

1925

28 Designed by Mitchell Jackson and built by George Balovich, this building housed a jewelry store, dress shop, restaurant, creamery and liquor store.

250-254 SOUTH B STREET

29 This modest Spanish Colonial Revival store housed the Tasty Cake Shop, the Piggly Wiggly grocery store and then Safeway in the 1930s.



240-246 SOUTH B STREET

F.W. Woolworth occupied this art deco building.



200-206 SOUTH B STREET

This one story wood frame building housed the Bluebird Drug Company

164 SOUTH B STREET

32 This elegant Greek Revival building was designed by architect W.H. Weeks and built by Samuel Wisnom.



130-154 SOUTH B STREET

1907

Constructed by and for pioneer builder Robert Wisnom. The second floor of this Spanish Colonial Revival building included what were billed as "outside sunny apartments with modern equipment".

116 SOUTH B STREET

1923

34 Local contractor Charles Pederson built this simple one story concrete building.

100-110 SOUTH B STREET

1907

The Wisnom Building is an early example of Mission Revival architecture. Robert Wisnom, prominent in local commerce and construction, began operating a lumberyard in the 1880s in the rear of the building.



34-42 SOUTH B STREET

1897

36 This early brick commercial building of simple but stately design was occupied by two seemingly incompatible ground floor uses—a candy store and a machine shop, with doctor's offices above.

302-310 BALDWIN AVENUE

37

San Francisco architects Edwards and Schary crafted this Spanish Colonial Revival building for the Wisnom Company. The stucco relief incorporates art deco forms and tiling. Early tenants included the San Mateo Cafeteria and Delicatessen, the Chamber of Commerce and the San Mateo Employees Bureau.



120 SOUTH ELLSWORTH AVENUE

939

38 The Spanish Colonial Revival fire station is all that remains of the City Hall complex from the 1940s and 50s. Architect Toepke specialized in designing public buildings, and also designed Chope Hospital.

210 SOUTH ELLSWORTH AVENUE

39 The St. Matthew Station Post Office is the only building in San Mateo on a National Register of Historic Places. An excellent example of the Mission Revival style popular in the 1930s. Three interior murals titled "Life in Early California" as well as the ornate wood beamed ceiling add to its character. The land for the Post Office was purchased from St. Matthews Catholic Church (which was located next to it from 1900 to 1982) for \$17,500.



209-221 SECOND AVENUE

it is the only remaining downtown hotel of its era.

40 This handsome brick structure with prominent stucco bays was the Wisnom Hotel, one of several hotels within walking distance from the train station. Renamed Hotel St. Matthew by 1920,





