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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ APRIL 2016



The Elite Goes Dark

How it happened — and what comes next

BY THOMAS REYNOLDS

STOP BY THE Elite Cafe on a Wednesday night in early March to meet a friend for a drink and the bartender asks: “Have you heard? The Elite’s been sold.”

It’s a shock. For 35 years a mainstay on Fillmore Street, its classic neon sign a beacon at the heart of the neighborhood, the Elite looks like a place that has always been there — and for nearly a century, it has. It opened in its Art Deco splendor in 1928 as the Lincoln Grill. In 1932, during the dry years of Prohibition, it became the Asia Cafe, which is what the neon sign spelled out for the next half century. It became the Elite Cafe in 1981.

Peter Snyderman took over a decade ago, after swearing he would never run

another restaurant when he closed the Alta Plaza at Fillmore and Clay. “You don’t get an opportunity to own a place like the Elite very often,” he reminisces as he heads in for the final brunch on Easter Sunday, March 27. “But I realized it was time to let someone else breathe new life into the Elite.”

The new owners will keep the name and the look and the New Orleans flavor, he promises. “It’s not part of the deal, but it’s part of the understanding,” Snyderman says. New owner Andy Chun, a rising restaurateur, confirms much will stay the same.

“It just means so much to so many people,” Chun says. “When an opportunity came up to do something with the Elite, we wanted to keep it the Elite and make it the best it can be.”

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Daily specials at Jackson Fillmore are written on the mirror behind the bar.

MORE ON JACKSON FILLMORE

TO THE EDITORS:

Faith Wheeler's recent article about new ownership at Jackson Fillmore ["We're Old School," March] was charming and captured the spirit of the restaurant. However, it contains a significant inaccuracy.

While Kelly and Casey Sullivan are wonderful managers, and their connection to the restaurant is indeed long and genuine, they are not the new owners. As one of the original, and current, owners of Jackson Fillmore, I was surprised to read of their "promotion."

Jack Krietzman (this is the correct spelling) and I opened Jackson Fillmore in December 1985, after working together for six years at Little Italy in Noe Valley, where he was a junior partner. Jack and I divorced in 1994, and I retained my ownership interest. After stepping back from active involvement for about 10 years, I returned in 2010 to run the back

of the house (as a service provided by my separate business, Routine Matters).

I also want to correct the naming story of the restaurant. I named it, not some neighbor or customer. Jack and I lived in Noe Valley back in 1985, at the corner of Noe and Valley. The 24 Divisadero bus runs on Noe at that point and as it goes toward Pacific Heights, the marquee shows the last stop on the line, Jackson-Fillmore. I saw it, and it clicked. The original graphics made the name deliberately ambiguous, so it could be read Jacks on Fillmore or Jackson Fillmore. When Jack's on Sacramento objected, we modified it to the current logo.

Thanks for correcting this misinformation. I am now going to reach out to our shareholders, who made it possible to open the restaurant 30 years ago and still own their shares, since they may read the article and be confused.

CONNIE JOHNSON

BEFORE THE SHAH'S CONSULATE

Re: 3400 Washington Street, "The Shah's Consulate," February.

Very interesting information. My mother, Violet Talbot Dutton Hickinbotham, and her older sister, Mary Elizabeth Dutton Eberhardt, were raised there. My mother passed away in 2014, but my aunt is still living and doing well in Stockton.

To the best of my knowledge, Iran leased the house from the 1950s until purchasing it in the early 1970s from my grandmother. That is when our house became flooded with furniture from 3400 Washington Street.

There were two houses built in San Francisco by my family:

- 1782 PACIFIC AVENUE, built in 1876 by Henry Dutton Jr. and Mary Talbot, daughter

of Captain William C. Talbot and Sophia Gleason Foster. The Talbot-Dutton House is city landmark No. 57.

- 3400 WASHINGTON STREET, built in 1927 by Henry Foster Dutton, son of Jr. and Mary, and Violet Phillips Dutton.

The houses were made out of lumber because they were built by the heirs of Captain Talbot, cofounder of Pope and Talbot Lumber Co. I believe my aunt remembers riding her bike in the hallways of the Washington Street house. It must have grand hallways. I had been hoping to get a tour before my mother passed, but no such luck.

We can't figure out what is going to happen to the house with the release of the Iranian frozen assets.

HENRY HICKINBOTHAM

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■ STREET TALK

Clay Theater revamp up for a vote this month

Plans to remodel Fillmore Street's single-screen **CLAY THEATRE** are scheduled to come before the Planning Commission on April 14. The plans would allow the theater also to be used as a restaurant, permitting an expansion of the food and beverages offered, including beer and wine. The lobby will be expanded and new accessible restrooms constructed. The historic facade will be unchanged.

■ **MORE FASHION:** Also coming before the Planning Commission: Plans to allow a new formula retail clothing store from Japan, **45RPM**, to open at 1905 Fillmore, currently an **AMOUR VERT** pop-up. The Planning Commission has never turned down a chain store that sought to open on upper Fillmore. . . . Under new planning rules, once a chain store is approved at any given location, other chain stores may follow. The Gap's new line, **INTERMIX**, is now building out the storefront at 2223 Fillmore formerly occupied by Brooks Brothers' Black Fleece.

■ **FOOD NOTES:** Nominees for this year's coveted James Beard Awards include Fillmore's Matthew Accarrino of **SPQR** and Dominique Crenn of **ATELIER CRENN**, plus bakers Belinda Leong and Michel Suas of **B. PATISSERIE** nearby at California and Divisadero. . . . Former Florio chef Nick Pallone has left the **ACADEMY BAR & KITCHEN** at 1800 Fillmore and the restaurant has returned its focus to pizza. . . . **TEN-ICHI** has a new look at 2235 Fillmore. . . . And construction has resumed on **BLUE BOTTLE COFFEE** at Fillmore and Jackson.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS



Take down a parking lot?

A familiar neighborhood location was on the list of potential sites for new homeless shelters released in mid-March: the public parking lot on California Street between Fillmore and Steiner.

Supervisor David Campos included the parking lot as one of three dozen pieces of city-owned property that should be considered as potential locations for new homeless shelters.

A spokesman for Mayor Ed Lee quickly dismissed the list as "grandstanding" and a neighborhood activist declared: "It's insane!"

The parking lot was created in 1990, with a grove of olive trees in the center and a trellis with climbing yellow roses along California Street. The trellis was taken down last year, but city staffers have been promising new plantings to replace the roses.



New merchants association president Ron Benitez, with daughter Harlow.

Merchants Elect New Leaders

NEW LEADERSHIP has taken charge of the Fillmore Merchants and Improvement Association, the 110-year-old group that has been promoting business on the street since Fillmore became the commercial center of the city after the 1906 earthquake and fire.

Ron Benitez — who with his wife Tricia owns the Asmbly Hall clothing store for prepsters at 1850 Fillmore — is the new president of the association, succeeding Vasilios Kiniris, who becomes the group's executive director. Kiniris owns Zinc Details.

"I'm very excited and eager to contribute," says Benitez, who is both a local resident and business owner. Benitez is also a corporate executive at Gymboree and has previously worked with Levi's and the Gap.

New members of the board of directors include Elena Basegio of the Fillmore Bakeshop, Olivia Dillan of Spice Ace and Gabe Garcia of Brooklyn Circus. They join holdover members Victoria Dunham of Hi-Ho Silver Jewelry, Thomas Reynolds of the *New Fillmore* and Beverly Weinkauff of *Toujours Lingerie*.

The merchants association sponsors the annual Fillmore Jazz Festival, which this year will be held on July 2 and 3. In addition, the group is considering a second festival celebrating rhythm and blues to be held in the fall on the blocks of Fillmore south of Sutter Street.

The group is also considering a quarterly art walk on lower Fillmore and is working to clean up and beautify the bridge over Geary Boulevard. A Fillmore wine walk was held on March 24.

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CRIME WATCH

New captains head local police stations

■ **JOHN JAIMERENA**, who has been with the San Francisco Police Department for 22 years, has recently taken over as captain at Northern Station, headquartered at 1125 Fillmore. It is not new territory for Jaimerena, who worked as a patrol sergeant in the neighborhood from 2009 to 2012. In the hopes of combating the rise in property crimes and car break-ins in the neighborhood, Jaimerena has added two foot beat officers on Fillmore Street, and says he plans to add more. In the past year, about 30 additional officers have joined Northern Station after graduating from the Police Academy.

■ **PAUL YEP**, who has been with the SFPD since 1996, was recently named captain of the Richmond District, which covers the neighborhood west of Divisadero. Yep is taking an old-fashioned approach by having coffee on Thursday mornings at 9:30 with one or two community members. If you are interested in having "Coffee with the Captain," email paul.yep@sfgov.org.

Burglary of a Business Sacramento and Lyon

March 3, 6 to 10:30 p.m.

An unknown individual entered a pet boarding business through an unlocked window. The intruder stole cash. The matter is still under investigation.

Driving Under the Influence California and Baker

March 4, 1:58 a.m.

Police received a report that a naked man was sitting in the driver's seat of a shuttle bus. When officers arrived, the horn on the bus was sounding and the man was resting his head on the steering wheel. The driver's foot was on the brake and the shuttle's engine was running. As officers pounded on the door to awaken him, the bus lurched forward. Police were forced to break the window to get inside. The driver was sweating profusely despite the chill of the night. The suspect is an employee of the bus company. After he failed a sobriety test, he was arrested and taken to the police station.

Robbery Turk and Baker

March 6, 7:28 p.m.

An unknown individual broke into a resident's home and stole numerous items. The resident became aware that someone was in his home and confronted the intruder, who attacked him before fleeing. The incident is still under investigation.

Driving With a Suspended License Geary and Arguello

March 9, 2:15 a.m.

An officer on patrol spotted a driver she recognized because she had arrested him twice in the last six months for drunk driving and for driving with a suspended license. She made contact with the man, who was driving with a suspended license. He was arrested for the offense.

Burglary Turk and Divisadero

March 9, 6:18 a.m.

Officers received a report of a burglary at

a construction site. A construction worker arrived on the premises and discovered his tools had been stolen. The incident is still under investigation.

Burglary O'Farrell and Scott

March 11, 11:48 a.m.

Employees of a hospital discovered their cabinets had been burglarized. Some petty cash was taken along with other small items. Police have no suspects at this time.

Burglary of a Store Sacramento and Lyon

March 12, 5:47 a.m.

A clothing store on Sacramento Street was burglarized in the early morning hours. When officers arrived, they saw that the store's glass front door had been shattered. A white curtain with a large bloodstain running across it was hanging loose on the front door. After searching the store, the police found no other sign of an intrusion. The owners of the store told them that a laptop and several pieces of clothing were missing.

At approximately 8 a.m. that same morning, officers from Bayview Station pulled over a car in violation of several sections of the California Vehicle Code. When the car stopped, the passenger jumped out, claiming he needed to get to the hospital immediately because he had a deep cut on his hand. Inside the vehicle, police found a laptop computer and several items of clothing with the price tags attached. The car's occupants were unable to provide receipts for the clothes. Officers determined that the property had been stolen from the store at Sacramento and Lyon. Both suspects were booked at county jail.

Threats Broderick and Turk

March 18, 12:46 p.m.

A man reported to police that his neighbor was making physical threats against him. He said he was frightened for his safety and believed his neighbor meant to do him harm. The neighbor was placed under arrest.



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Now Things Are Really Cooking at Browser Books

PERHAPS YOU HAVE noticed something unexpected coming out of Browser Books lately — the smell of soup cooking, or a sniff of shrimp scampi, or fragrant onions softening in a skillet.

That's an added benefit of the new cooking demonstrations Browser Books is now sponsoring each month. Randy Denham, a retired caterer who two years ago began working in the bookstore on weekends, is in charge, cooking in the store and serving up samples.

You're doing cooking demonstrations in a bookstore?

That's right. Every third Saturday and Sunday, starting at 2 p.m., Browser Books is cooking right in the store from the cookbooks we sell. Browser Books has a stunning cookbook collection lining the wall behind the cash register — an entire array of the newest, best and most beautiful cookbooks out today.

How did you become such a big fan of cookbooks?

I'm a self-taught chef, and I believe that people can teach themselves how to cook from books, whether professionally or for home use. It was a simple jump to setting up a kitchen in the middle of the store, putting out some burners, pots and pans and going to town with the newest books.

What kinds of dishes have you made?

The Browser kitchen has come up with pan-seared ribeye steak in a brown pan sauce, poached salmon with beurre blanc sauce, Vietnamese spring rolls and some great desserts.



Randy Denham cooks in the store at Browser Books.

How did the idea come about?

The entire staff of the bookstore loves food, all of us have a knowledge of cookbooks and we're proud of our cooking interests. We got together and thought it would be a great thing if we cooked from the cookbooks and talked about the cookbooks and sold them that way.

When did you start?

We tried it a couple of times last summer. We've been doing the regular once-a-month slot since November. We do it every third Saturday and Sunday. We hope it will help keep us on the map, because it's hard times for small, independent bookstores. But I really think that's changing. How many Borders are in town now, after all? Seems like there's not a Barnes & Noble anymore, either.

Some of the authors are local?

We use different cookbooks. Yesterday I used Charles Phan's *The Slanted Door* cookbook.

And did our neighbor come in while you were cooking from his book?

No, he didn't. He runs a very busy restaurant empire, so we'll forgive him. But who knows — he might.

But you have had visits from local cookbook authors?

We have. Joanne Weir came in the day after I used her *Kitchen Gypsy*. She signed all the copies of the book. Carol Field has come in and talked about her cookbooks. She has a lot to say about Italy. It's great when people come in who have books we've used.

And do other authors come in?

It's not just cookbook authors. Other writers also come into the store and sign their books. When Patti Smith was playing at The Fillmore, she came into the store and talked with one of the clerks and said she'd like to sign her book. The clerk said, "Oh, you wrote a book? Which book is it?" She pointed to *M Train*, her newest book, and the clerk realized who she was, and she signed all of her books. She was rehearsing down the street.

It's amazing the people I've talked to. I had a great conversation with Oliver Sacks about Andy Warhol and contemporary art.

How did you come to be the Browser chef?

It's a retirement job for me. I came here with 15 years of cooking experience in my own catering company and several restaurants around the Bay Area — and a passion for food that has lasted a lifetime.

This is a fun new community event where neighbors can gather, cookbook aficionados can learn about new books and people can sample great recipes.

Would you like to try a spring roll?



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SUSIE BIEHLER

Gary Mureta and Eric Trabert operate side-by-side shops on Fillmore that are a contrast in both ambience and inventory.

The Jewelry Bros

Next-door neighbors more like brothers on 'a family sort of street'

By JENNIFER BLOT

“HE CAN SELL ice to an Eskimo,” says Eric Trabert of Gary Mureta, his next-door neighbor at the top of Fillmore Street.

But Mureta doesn't hear his friend's admiring endorsement. He's busy juggling the demands of what appears, at first, to be a small and sleepy antique store. But the store phone is ringing. Then his cell phone rings. A customer comes in to pick up a massive — and heavy — bronze sculpture. His only employee is due to go on a break. And Trabert, owner of Trabert Goldsmiths, has popped in to say hello.

Mureta walks out the door to talk to someone on the street and leaves Trabert to hold down the fort. But Trabert doesn't seem to mind. Inevitably he'll spot something he's never seen in the golden glow of the store. There's a massive vintage silver and enamel Margot de Taxco cameo pendant, a Scottish agate silver buckle bracelet and numerous Victorian gold insect brooches with semi-precious eyes and bellies. Beyond jewelry, the store is brimming with an eclectic assortment of decorative pieces, silverware, sets of pastel colored stemware and oil paintings by 19th century California artists.

Trabert's shop next door is a contrast in both ambience and inventory. Brightly lit, with high ceilings, its cases sparkle with contemporary baubles: stackable rings, pieces anchored with unusual pastel sapphires, pearl chokers and thin gold bangles. Trabert offers his own designs as well as pieces from about a dozen contemporary jewelry lines.

In any other city, in any other neighborhood, two side-by-side retail shops both selling jewelry might only be that:

TO PAGE 8 ►



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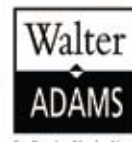
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Eric Trabert (right) owns Trabert Goldsmiths at 2420 Fillmore, which offers more contemporary jewelry, some of which is crafted in his own workshop (above).



Next-Door Jewelry Shops Find a Way to Be Friends

► FROM PAGE 7

just neighboring businesses, or even fierce rivals. But these next-door merchants on what Trabert calls “a family sort of street” have become like brothers — swapping tricks of the trade, entrusting one another with shop keys, hiking together in Yosemite and Tahoe or making their favorite day trip to Mt. Tam.

“He’s my little brother I never had out here,” Mureta says.

They met 18 years ago when Trabert was an apprentice at Tom Bergin Goldsmiths, then Mureta’s neighbor. In 2002, Bergin sold the business to Trabert.

Since then Mureta the antique hunter has lured Trabert to flea markets before sunrise, pointing a flashlight at potential treasures while providing the younger

goldsmith with an education on what to look for. Although they both love jewelry from the past, there’s no competition.

“He’ll find it first,” says Trabert.

Mureta has picked up a few things from his neighbor, too — primarily a better understanding of gemology and the kinds of old pieces worth saving through restoration. Trabert does jewelry repairs for Mureta, offers appraisals and sizes rings for his customers.

“I make the sale happen for Gary,” he jokes.

Trabert says the two often play a game where he guesses what Mureta has paid for an object. “He’s trying to learn about the value of the antique pieces so he can compare them with what’s out there in the modern world,” Mureta explains. And the

years of guessing have paid off. “He’s gotten better,” Mureta says, “and 90 percent of the time, he’s on the mark.”

Mureta’s childhood love of gleaning antique apothecary bottles from dumpsites proved profitable by the time he was a teenager, when he began peddling his wares — little wooden boxes, old spoons, glass vessels — at flea markets in his native Vermont. When it was time for college, a family friend told him he didn’t need a degree and was destined to be an antiques dealer. He gave college a try, but by 21 he was making a living as a dealer.

Trabert grew up in Los Angeles and, like Mureta, discovered his passion early. In his freshman year of high school, he took a jewelrymaking class and fell in love



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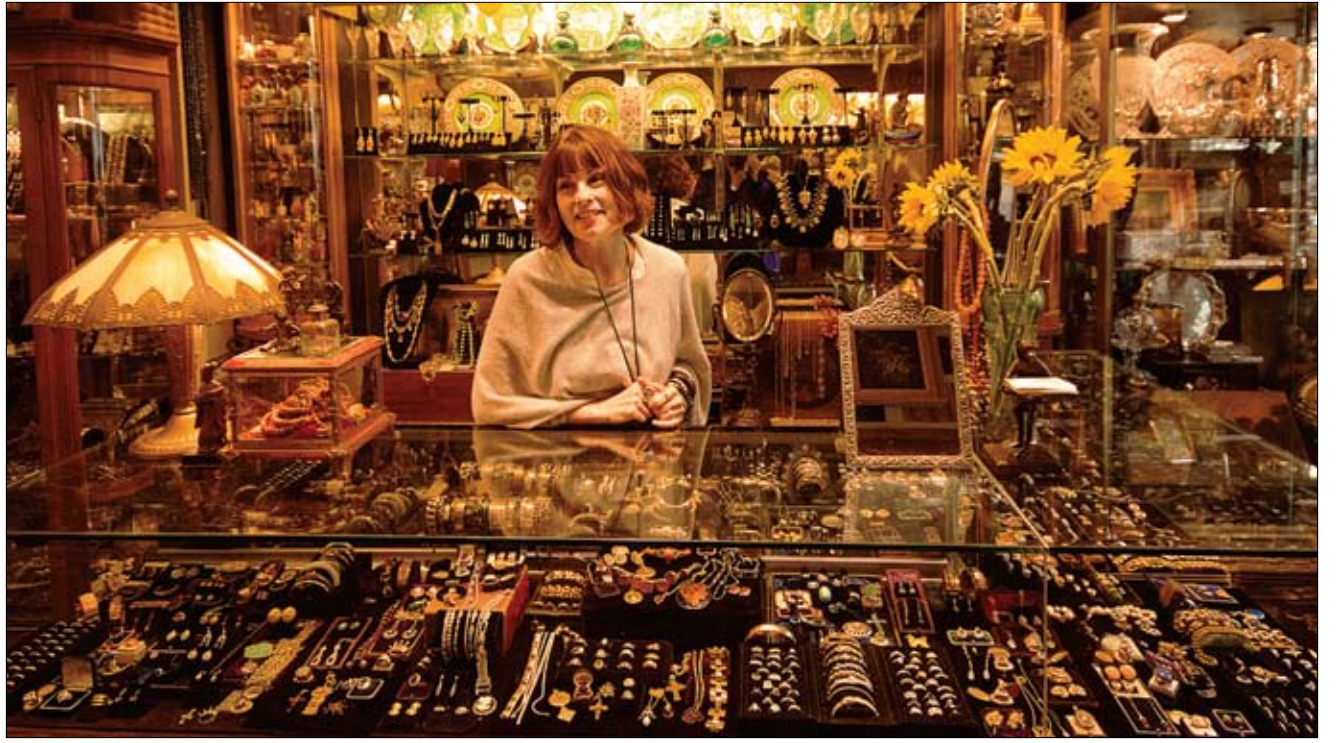
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Gary Mureta (left) owns Mureta's Antiques at 2418 Fillmore. With the assistance of his colleague Adele Pomeroy (above), he and his shop offer a wide assortment of antique jewelry, among other treasures, many from neighborhood homes.

with metals and intricate detail work. His dad, an endodontist who had similar skills working in wax, encouraged him. Later, Trabert graduated from the metal arts program at Humboldt State University.

Mureta says he and Trabert found their calling early on. Then he reconsiders. "It found us," he says. "And then we found each other."

Trabert's custom works are contemporary but, thanks in part to Mureta, he has grown to appreciate jewelry's past. "When you talk about quality, you look back 100 years," he says. "They just made pieces right back then."

Trabert professes a love of old European rose-cut diamonds and has repurposed a number of Mureta's finds. Recently, he transformed a pair of 1940s diamond

brooches into a pair of earrings with a handful of leftover loose diamonds for future projects. Trabert calls this "upcycling" and says many customers are becoming more interested in eco-conscious jewelry.

Mureta's store has long been the epitome of "green," though the antiques business and Mureta's focus have changed since he opened 32 years ago. In the early days, he sold a lot of antique china, including a full set of Limoges to Danielle Steel within weeks of opening. Today there's a greater demand for estate jewelry. But one thing that hasn't changed is Mureta's love of the neighborhood.

"I think it's better," he says. "People are nostalgic. People cling to the past so they reject change sometimes. Look at the avail-

ability of stores and the availability of merchandise on Fillmore these days."

Mureta experimented briefly with selling through the online auction site 1stdibs, but is again focusing exclusively on his store. "My business is very local," he says. "I am part of the experience. I like to show my merchandise directly to customers."

Trabert's clientele is also local, but people around the world can view his merchandise through a well-designed website and popular Instagram feed. His bestsellers are engagement rings and wedding bands.

While both cater to a local clientele of jewelry lovers, they don't see one another as competitors. "In many ways we're in the same business," says Mureta. "But we're in such different angles of it that we complement each other."



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Hello humankindness™



How the Elite Got a New Owner

► FROM PAGE ONE

Legendary San Francisco restaurateur Sam DuVall is the father of the Elite Cafe. When he opened it in 1981, his timing was chancy. The space had been sitting empty for a couple of years after the Asia Cafe closed. Fillmore was lined with modest neighborhood shops and was deemed dicey.

DuVall was competing for the shuttered Asia Cafe with Jeremiah Tower, a superstar chef of the era. A leasing agent just getting her start at the Edward Plant Co., Carol Chait, represented the owners of the building. And it all came down to a dead rat.

"I was showing the place to Jeremiah," Chait says. "There was crap all over the floor and all of a sudden I saw this rat in the corner. It was dead, but I was afraid to pick it up. I asked Jeremiah to put it in the trash, but he didn't want to touch it, either. Later that day I was showing the space to Sam DuVall and I said, 'Sam, would you do me a favor and get rid of that thing?' He did — and he also had the best ideas for revitalizing the restaurant. I said to the owner, 'Sam's your guy.'"

DuVall undertook a painstaking restoration of the space, reworking and rewiring the Asia Cafe sign out front to proclaim it the Elite Cafe. DuVall says he took the name from a favorite eatery in his hometown of Jackson, Mississippi.

"It was a good name, but I used it tongue-in-cheek, since it wasn't really very elite at the time," says DuVall. But now, he says, "The place is a historical landmark. People love it. It's part of San Francisco history."

DUVAL LATER SOLD the Elite to Tom Clendening, who owned it for several years. In 2005, Peter Snyderman heard Clendening might be looking to sell. He considered partnering with Perry Butler, owner of Perry's on Union Street, who was also eyeing the Elite. But eventually Snyderman put together his own group of investors, made a deal, and got back in the game.

"We were brutalized by the renovation," Snyderman says now. "It was in terrible disrepair. We pulled up the old green linoleum floor to find charred timbers — there'd been a fire."



During the last week before it closed, a legion of locals came in for a final sazerac or martini or manhattan or two.

Snyderman had heard the rumors a bookie ring operated there when it was the Asia Cafe. When he began renovating, he found 50 telephone lines running into the basement.

"That's an awful lot of phone numbers for one restaurant," Snyderman says with a smile. "We love that part of the lore."

When the renovation was complete, Snyderman had a hit on his hands — especially after he added 16 more seats outside on the sidewalk by putting four four-tops under newly installed heaters.

"We had a dramatic increase in business — a 60 percent increase over the old Elite," he says.

It became a profitable endeavor — "and the percentage of restaurants that turn a profit is ridiculously low," he says. "All of the investors have been paid back in full, plus more."

Yet as he neared his 10th anniversary at the Elite, Snyderman began to realize he was ready to make a change. "It had been brewing for a while," he says. "Those decimal points in life make you reflect on things." So he quietly began contacting brokers, who quietly began speaking to people who might be interested in taking over. One broker thought the Elite would bring more than \$1 million.

"She fell short," is all Snyderman will say about the eventual selling price.

Meanwhile, Andy Chun and his team were making a name for themselves in San Francisco food and wine circles. Chun had started the Press Club, a wine bar at the base of the Four Seasons hotel and condominiums near Union Square, which grew

out of a business plan he had developed while he was in business school at Dartmouth.

Then two years ago Chun's team took over Schroeder's, the family-owned German restaurant in the Financial District, reinvigorating the 120-year-old beer hall while maintaining its culture and heritage.

IN CHUN AND his team, Snyderman saw kindred spirits.

"We were looking for someone who would continue the tradition," Snyderman says. "We wanted someone to carry on while injecting new vigor. We wanted it to remain the Elite. We didn't want somebody gutting it."

And the owners of the building would not entertain the idea of a new operator who wanted to rip out the mahogany booths and bar their grandfather had built with his own hands.

"Schroeder's is the best analog for what we're trying to accomplish at the Elite," Chun says. "This exercise is very similar."

Chun already has his chef: Schroeder's chef Chris Borges, a native of New Orleans who was studying at Stanford to become a doctor before he gave in to his passion for food. Borges was executive chef of Taste catering when he took over the food at the Press Club, and later moved to Schroeder's.

"He's from New Orleans and he's well-suited for this cuisine," Chun says. "This is his homecoming."

It's also a homecoming of sorts for Chun, who lived in the neighborhood for 15 years, first at Jackson and Baker and

later with his wife on Washington Street near Fillmore.

"The neighborhood is one we know well," he says. "We've always had a soft spot for the Elite."

It took months for the deal to come together. By the beginning of March, everything was set, except for the timing.

"We didn't want to stay open and have the quality of things go down," Snyderman says. "We wanted to end on a high note."

The Elite's chef, James London, provided the answer. He gave notice he was leaving at the end of March to drive home with his girlfriend to South Carolina and open his own restaurant.

"That settled it," says Snyderman. He sent a heartfelt email to his staff on March 8, giving them three weeks notice that March 27 would be the Elite's last day, and asking them to hang on through the end.

"As a whole, the staff has been really great," Snyderman says. "They've all stuck it out. It made me very happy."

DURING THE FINAL weeks — and especially during the last week — regular patrons boiled in for a final sazerac or martini or manhattan or two. Snyderman's parents came in for a final meal, as did many groups of his friends and a legion of locals. One regular patron declared his dinner of pan-roasted salmon with beluga lentils, parsnip puree and salsa verde the best meal he'd had at the Elite in 30 years of dining there. The end was near, and yet it was a festive atmosphere, full of friends and neighbors, as it might have been in New Orleans.

Chun's general manager at Schroeder's, Teresa Breau — another who knows New Orleans, and who will take on the GM role at the Elite — met with the Elite staff on March 23 and laid out the timeline, inviting those who were interested, and can wait three or four months, to be a part of the new Elite when it reopens this summer.

"We'd love to keep some of the current staff," says Chun. "We want the Elite to be the kind of place you come to see friends."

For his part, Peter Snyderman is looking forward to his freedom, but he knows he is a lucky man.

"The Elite is a special place," he says. "What a 10-year ride it has been." And he says he now identifies with the slogan used by Patek Philippe watches: You never actually own it. You merely look after it for the next generation.

With a little luck, the good times will be rolling again at the Elite Cafe by the Fillmore Jazz Festival in early July.

Saloon critic Chris Barnett contributed to this story.

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'Sweet Bean' at the Kabuki

Sometimes a film and a neighborhood are destined for one another. And so it is with *Sweet Bean*, a deeply affecting tale of finding happiness by finding meaning. After watching this charmer at the Kabuki, you might be tempted to stroll over to Japan Center and indulge in a dorayaki, the pancake stuffed with sweet bean filling around which the story of three lonely people revolves. I defy you to resist.

Cherry blossoms and the bright moon figure prominently in this story, and both are on display when we meet Sentaro (Masatoshi Nagase). He is the taciturn manager-cook at a tiny dorayaki shop, where he gives away bags of his wares to giggling schoolgirls as an incentive to leave, and bags of the dorayaki irregulars to Wakane (Kyara Uchida), the lonely schoolgirl who is the closest thing he has to a friend. Into their lives drops Tokue (Kirin Kiki), a determined septuagenarian with crippled hands and an ebullient spirit. Her dream has been to work in a shop like Sentaro's and she won't take no for an answer. After an initial rebuff, she shows up with a batch of her homemade bean filling, and whatever doubts Sentaro had disappear with the first taste.

Each character has his or her own secret sorrow, but filmmaker Naomi Kawase is in no hurry to reveal them. Instead she offers us a finely observed character study of how people cope: Sentaro's gruffness, Wakane's palpable sadness and, in contrast, the bottomless well of happiness Tokue finds in being able to rise before dawn and spend hours creating a delicacy that takes the neighborhood by storm. When the secrets are revealed, they are all the more poignant, the characters all the more worthy of our empathy — particularly Sentaro, whose brush with Tokue becomes a wake-up call sent from fate itself as she patiently tutors him in more than cooking.

The joy in watching Tokue cook is seeing her delight in the process of transforming adzuki into magic, and in bringing Sentaro back to life. She is a serenely content Zen master of cooking, respecting the beans' journey from the field to her pot, careful to drain away the bitterness when they are rinsed. This is not cooking, this is an homage to creation itself that Sentaro absorbs without realizing it. And we do, too.

— ANDREA CHASE

FILM

Hank Williams Comes to the Clay

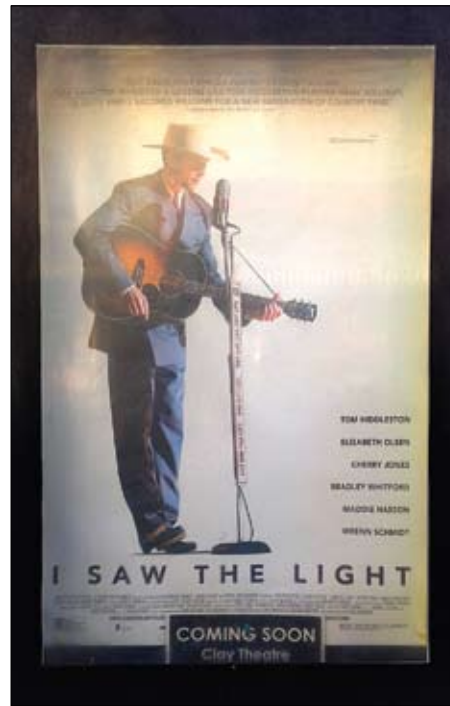
By ANDREA CHASE

“I SAW THE LIGHT” — screening this month at the Clay Theatre at 2261 Fillmore — was originally set for an autumn 2015 release, with an eye to positioning Tom Hiddleston's performance as Hank Williams for Oscar consideration.

It's easy to see why it caused awards buzz. It's also easy to see why the film was pulled from its original release date. Hiddleston is brilliant as the tortured country-western music legend. The script, on the other hand, is an episodic mess that is torture for the audience.

From his wedding in an auto repair shop to the tough-as-nails Audrey (Elizabeth Olsen), through the drinking, brawling, womanizing and assorted questionable decision-making, events move swiftly and without much of a helpful narrative. Key characters in Williams' life pop up without context and then disappear just as quickly. Even the usually helpful, if irksome, dialogue-as-exposition device is maddeningly sketchy, and the emotional crescendos a coherent narrative would provide fail to materialize.

But then there's Hiddleston. There is the anguish and the sweetness, the noble ambition to be a better person, the driving determination to be a star and the fatal inability to resist temptation. As Williams tells a reporter at one point in the film, his music is about sincerity — and Hiddleston has taken that



to heart, bringing a subtlety to his performance that humanizes a larger than life legend. There is no contradiction between the young father cradling his newborn and the semi-detached lover explaining to one of his flings that marriage is not in the cards for them.

The same is true of how Hiddleston recreates Williams in performance. He may be lip-synching to a sound track, but he is living the songs, as well as reacting to the audience in front of him. The charisma is irresistible.

He is ably supported by an intriguing, complex performance by Olsen, who fulfills the promise of her

earlier work in such films as *Martha Marcy May Marlene* and *Kill Your Darlings* with an assured turn that combines cold calculation and a flinty sort of warmth. As Lillie, Williams' formidable mother, veteran Broadway star Cherry Jones is politely ferocious in both her love for her son, and her distaste for his choice of bride. Like the authenticity of Hiddleston's southern twang, Jones grasps the shades of civility southern women use to convey complete and utter contempt.

Forewarned is forearmed. Knowing the shortcomings will soften the blow of the script's many failings. Is it worth it? Yes, but just barely.

Neighborhood resident Andrea Chase writes about film at killermoviereviews.com.

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BY GARY CARR

WHEN THE Multi Ethnic Theater stages the world premiere of *It Ain't So...* this month at the Gough Street Playhouse — running from April 22 through May 14 — it will continue a half-century tradition of theatrical performances in a historic church setting.

The playhouse is located at the corner of Bush and Gough Streets in the monumental Trinity St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Built in 1893, the church was modeled on Durham Cathedral in England by noted architect A. Page Brown, who also designed San Francisco's iconic Ferry Building.

For the last 50 years, the church has been home to some of the most innovative theater companies in the Bay Area. The legendary Margrit Roma began her nationally known New Shakespeare Company at Trinity in 1965. The Lorraine Hansberry Theatre called it home in the 1980s, followed by the Next Stage, the Custom Made Theatre Company and Lewis Campbell's Multi Ethnic Theater.

TRINITY'S THEATER STORY begins with Margrit Roma. Eccentric, domineering and driven, Roma was a major force in Bay Area theater for more than 25 years. Born in Switzerland at the outset of World War I, she caught the acting bug and moved to Berlin in 1931 to train with Max Reinhardt and work with Bertolt Brecht. She fled Hitler's Germany for Paris, where she appeared in the *Comedie-Francaise*.

Fleeing Hitler once more, she ended up in Hollywood, where she made three pictures for Paramount. She met her husband, Clarence Ricklieds, in Southern California. Soon referred to as "Rick and Roma," they moved to San Francisco in 1964 and began producing shows. They founded the New Shakespeare Company at Trinity Episcopal, with Roma as artistic director and Ricklieds handling the business end.

When audiences exceeded the capacity of the church in 1969, the troupe moved to Golden Gate Park and produced Shakespeare in the open air. However, they always used Trinity as their home base, as they did when the New Shakespeare Company began touring the country. The tours brought the likes of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest* to California state parks and to small towns and colleges all over the country. Roma and her company usually did three major tours a year, each extending for two or three months. But they always ended up back at Trinity.

From the very beginning, Roma insisted



Historic Trinity St. Peter's Episcopal Church is also home to the Gough Street Playhouse.

Trinity's Theater Story

Church and playhouse meet at Bush and Gough

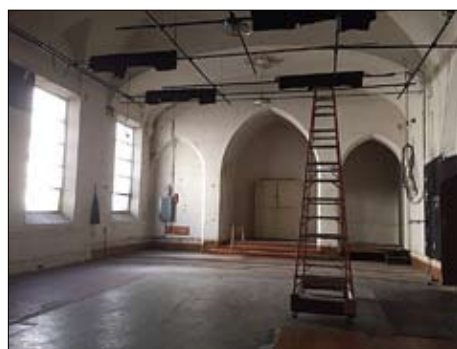
on multi-racial casting. Not only was Othello played by an African-American, but so were the merchant Shylock and the sorcerer Prospero.

Loss of federal funding in 1981 led to bankruptcy for the New Shakespeare Company and cancellation of its tours. Roma and Ricklieds continued to produce Shakespeare in Golden Gate Park until 1983, when the company morphed into the present San Francisco Shakespeare Festival.

BUT TRINITY Episcopal would not wait long for a new theatrical tenant. Shortly after its founding in 1981, the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre moved in, headed by Stanley E. Williams and Quentin Easter, two more icons of San Francisco theater. For the next seven years, Trinity would host some of the most influential plays by African-American playwrights, including Suzan-Lori Parks, Lynn Nottage and August Wilson.

In 1988, the Lorraine Hansberry bid farewell to Trinity for its own space in the YWCA building on Sutter Street. It would remain there until 2008, when it lost its lease to the Academy of Art University, which bought the building to convert to a dormitory. The Lorraine Hansberry troupe continues to mount theatrical productions in various venues around the Bay Area.

Again Trinity wasn't without a theater



The chapel-theater under renovation.

company for long. After the Hansberry departed, the space became the home of the Next Stage, a training program originated by longtime acting teacher Marcia Kimmell. Originally from Chicago, Kimmell was trained in improvisational theater at the Second City by the great innovator and creator of theater games, Viola Spolin. Kimmell's Next Stage focused on the development of human potential, using improvisational training as a playful medium that, as she says, "enables people to grow to the 'next stage' of their development."

SHORTLY AFTER Kimmell established the Next Stage at Trinity, Lewis Campbell, an acting teacher from what would become the School of the Arts in San Francisco, joined her in founding Theater Residencies Inc.

Theater Residencies was, for Campbell, the culmination of a 35-year teaching career during which he directed, designed and built more than 100 productions and designed and installed more than 15 working theaters in various found spaces. At San Francisco's Mission High School, Campbell established Multi Ethnic Theater and its mission, "a color-creative approach to casting." Later, he developed the Center for Theater Training, which became the Actor Training Program at the School of the Arts when that alternative high school was formed. In June of 1993, Lewis took early retirement from teaching to become Multi Ethnic's full-time artistic director.

After Marcia Kimmell and Lewis Campbell founded Theater Residencies, it was the Multi Ethnic Theater and the Next Stage Training Program that became the two major theater projects based at Trinity church. At Trinity, Multi Ethnic has presented one or more productions a year and has also supported efforts by visiting theater companies, the longest running being Custom Made Theatre Company. Custom Made began at the Next Stage in 2005.

In 2010, the name of Trinity's theater space at 1620 Gough was changed to the Gough Street Playhouse. Custom Made Theatre remained there until 2015, producing up to six shows a year. In the past few summers, Custom Made shared the space with Multi Ethnic, staging David Sedaris's *The Book of Liz*, followed by a production of August Wilson's *Two Trains Running*.

Custom Made moved to a larger theater near Union Square in September, leaving Multi Ethnic as the current theatrical tenant.

NOW TRINITY HAS begun to tackle a major issue in San Francisco: retrofitting its historic home. Led by the priest in charge, Rev. Patricia Cunningham, and assisted by Multi Ethnic Theater's Lewis Campbell, Trinity has launched a fundraising campaign to renovate the church and the space that has housed 50 years of plays and performances. The chapel adjacent to the main sanctuary has been stripped to the bare walls and reconfigured. Campbell says the goal is to create a space that can be used for both theater and other events.

With his experience in creating theaters in found spaces, Campbell has already begun drawing up plans. They include his own system of custom-built "disappearing" theater seating and wall paint suitable for both a dark theater and a bright meeting room — and continuing a half-century of artistic endeavor.



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A New Outlook on the Park

French consul's residence is again a private home

By BRIDGET MALEY

A FLURRY OF recent renovations along the north side of Jackson Street facing Alta Plaza Park are nearing completion. The two blocks include a string of historic residences that have been home to many prominent San Franciscans. The exquisite French Revival style house at 2570 Jackson Street has been meticulously renovated and is again a private residence, after serving for decades as the official residence of the French consul general.

The home was designed in 1924 by architect Albert Farr for Domingo Lyle Ghirardelli and his wife, Alice. After attending Stanford University, the grandson of the famous chocolatier married Alice Belau Elliott in 1907. The *The San Francisco Call* gossiped in a two-tiered headline: "Divorcee Weds Son of Millionaire Merchant: Free of Bonds, Mrs. Elliott at Once Marries Lyle Ghirardelli." The couple had



The home at 2570 Jackson, built in 1924, has been completely renovated.

two children, Ynez, born in 1910, and Domingo Kent, born nine years later.

The family's first residence was at 2741 Vallejo Street, near Divisadero. It sat immediately adjacent to a classic San Francisco 1902 Shingle Style house, also designed by Albert Farr. A block away, Farr in 1904 had designed neighboring homes for Grace Mortenson (2881 Vallejo) and Marie McCrae (2891 Vallejo).

The Ghirardellis lived in the Jackson Street house fronting Alta Plaza Park until Alice's death in December 1956; Lyle died two years later. During the time they lived on Jackson Street, neighbors included

Reuben W. Hills Jr., of Hills Brothers Coffee, at 2590 Jackson; and Edward Zelinsky Sr., one of San Francisco's largest painting contractors, at 2502 Jackson.

The Ghirardellis' house was purchased in the late 1950s by Lot D. Howard Jr., a surgeon, and his wife, Elizabeth, who had four children. Then, in January 1966, the government of the French Republic acquired it to use as its consular residence. It remained French territory until recently, when it was purchased, remodeled and returned to private residential use.

For their Jackson Street house, Lyle

and Alice Ghirardelli selected an established architect, indicating their desire for a fashionable new residence designed by a known hand. In 1924, Farr was 52 years old, a respected architect in San Francisco's social circles, and had already completed many outstanding commissions. They included the Presidio wall homes of H.W. and R.H. Postlethwaite in the 3300 block of Pacific (1902); a very Cape Cod-like house for Edwin and Virginia Newhall at 2950 Pacific (1907); the Ethel Park Roeder House at 1020 Broadway on Russian Hill (1909); Wolf House, the Sonoma retreat

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For decades the French tricolor flew in front of 2570 Jackson (above) when it was the residence of France's consul general. Now the home (far left) has been totally renovated and is again a private residence.

Historic Home on Alta Plaza Park Was Built for a Ghirardelli

► FROM PAGE 13

of Jack and Charmian London (1911, burned 1913); and a series of houses stepping up the 2600 block of Green Street in Pacific Heights (1911-16).

Farr's early works were soundly within what became known as the First Bay Tradition — the Bay Area's version of the New England shingled home. Yet he often employed more revivalist styles, as seen in the Ghirardelli's French-inspired home.

Farr was a native Nebraskan whose family spent considerable time in Japan,

where his father developed that country's modern postal system. Returning to Oakland in 1890, Farr apprenticed with architects Clinton Day and the Reid Brothers before establishing his own practice around 1897. Farr lost his downtown office in the 1906 earthquake and worked out of his own home for a period of time before re-establishing an office at 68 Post Street.

After the earthquake, wooden homes in the Shingle Style fell out of favor to revivalist-inspired styles that could be easily executed in stucco, a more fireproof mate-

rial. Just prior to his commission for the Ghirardellis, Farr brought on an associate, New Zealand native Francis Ward, who remained a collaborator until Farr retired.

The French Revival style, sometimes referred to as Chateausque, suited California's warm climate and was a frequent choice for both high-end and middle class single family homes, as well as many apartments, from the mid-1910s into the 1930s. In the design of the Ghirardelli home, Farr made use of corner quoin detailing, shuttered windows, a mansard roof with

attic dormers, stately pillars, a front terrace, elaborate cartouches and decorative chimney caps. This ensemble resulted in a dignified, elegant and imposing facade projecting the splendor of the 1920s onto Alta Plaza Park.

Albert Farr's career spanned more than 40 years, with significant works throughout the Bay Area, but his designs are often overshadowed by those of his peers such as Ernest Coxhead and Bernard Maybeck. The recent thoughtful renovation of 2570 Jackson Street brings back one of his residential landmarks in the neighborhood.

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2131 Vallejo St #3	1	1	1	1,100	42	3/6/2016	1,095,000	1,250,000
2075 Sutter St #215	2	2	1	1,088	14	2/29/2016	995,000	1,275,000
2279 Sutter St	3	2	1	1,506	66	2/25/2016	1,150,000	1,390,000
2112 Pine St #A	3	2	1	1,520	25	3/3/2016	1,749,000	1,650,000
2526 California St	2	2	2	n/a	1	3/2/2016	1,665,000	1,665,000
2106 Scott St #A	2	2	1	1,880	12	3/10/2016	1,850,000	1,900,000
1854 Vallejo St #A	3	2	1	1,580	21	3/14/2016	2,195,000	2,100,000
1808 Greenwich St	3	3	1	2,250	24	3/14/2016	2,649,000	2,660,000
3993 Washington St	2	2	1	1,945	14	2/25/2016	2,695,000	2,700,000
2528 California St	3	3	2	n/a	1	3/2/2016	2,970,000	2,970,000
2190 Broadway #2E	3	3	1	3,200	41	2/24/2016	3,995,000	4,000,000



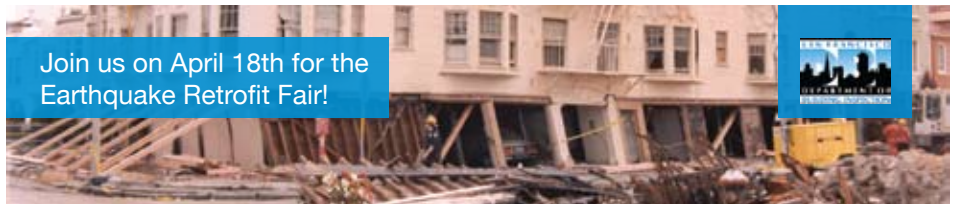
Springtime on Washington Street

San Francisco's first \$10-million-plus, single-family home sale of the year is now on the books — and it happened on a prime Pacific Heights block, where properties command top dollar despite lacking the top-of-the-line views found in other parts of the neighborhood.

On March 11, the home between Buchanan and Webster at 2312 Washington Street (above center) sold for \$10.95 million, finding a buyer in a brisk 19 days. The six-bedroom, 5,600-square-foot home is ideally situated between Lafayette Park and Alta Plaza Park, two blocks east of Fillmore Street's shops and restaurants. The home benefits not only from its highly sought walkable location, but also boasts a very desirable floor plan and luxury amenities including an elevator to all four levels of the home, a wine cellar, an entertainment room and a gourmet kitchen. It also has a guesthouse with a garden view.

A look at historic sales data underscores that spring is an ideal time for sellers on the 2300 block of Washington Street to go to market. Over the past three years, all three other single-family transactions on that block have occurred in the second quarter, with prices ranging from \$7.8 million to \$11.5 million.

— Data and commentary provided by PATRICK BARBER, president of Pacific Union. Contact him at patrick.barber@pacunion.com or call 415-345-3001.



Join us on April 18th for the Earthquake Retrofit Fair!

Take the Next Step!

DBI works closely with property owners to improve the seismic safety of their buildings, protecting the lives of tenants and families. Through the Mandatory Soft Story Program, property owners of multi-unit Type 5 wood frame buildings are required to seismically strengthen their property within the next five years.

Ensure your property is seismically retrofitted by turning in your permit application today!

Compliance Tier	Submittal of Permit Application with Plans	Completion of Work and CFC Issuance
1	09/15/2015	09/15/2017
2	09/15/2016	09/15/2018
3	09/15/2017	09/15/2019
4	09/15/2018	09/15/2020

You may be able to add accessory dwelling units to your property when undergoing a seismic retrofit. Financing opportunities are available. Visit sfdbi.org/softstory for more information.

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- Chouquet's**
2500 Washington 415-359-0075
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2417 California 415-929-9030
- Dosa**
1700 Fillmore 415-441-3672
- Elite Cafe**
2049 Fillmore 415-673-5483
- Fat Angel**
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- Florio**
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2114 Fillmore 415-447-2668
- Gardenias**
1963 Sutter 415-776-6783
- Glaze Teriyaki Grill**
1946 Fillmore 415-590-2199
- The Grove**
2016 Fillmore 415-474-1419
- Harry's Bar**
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- India Palace**
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- Izakaya Hashibiro Kou**
1560 Fillmore 415-441-9294
- Jackson Fillmore Trattoria**
2506 Fillmore 415-346-5288
- La Mediterranee**
2210 Fillmore 415-921-2956
- Mehfil Indian Cuisine**
2301 Fillmore 415-614-1010
- OTD**
2232 Bush 415-923-9575
- Pa'ina**
1865 Post 415-829-2642
- Palmer's Tavern**
2298 Fillmore 415-732-7777
- Pride of the Mediterranean**
1761 Fillmore 415-567-1150
- The Progress**
1525 Fillmore 415-673-1294
- Roam Burgers**
1923 Fillmore 415-440-7626
- SPQR**
1911 Fillmore 415-771-7779
- State Bird Provisions**
1529 Fillmore 415-795-1272
- Sweet Lime**
2100 Sutter 415-674-7515
- Sweet Maple**
2101 Sutter 415-855-9169
- Tacobar**
2401 California 415-674-7745
- Ten-ichi**
2235 Fillmore 415-346-3477
- Thai Stick**
2001 Fillmore 415-885-6100
- Troya**
2125 Fillmore 415-563-1000
- Via Veneto**
2244 Fillmore 415-346-9211
- Woodhouse Fish Co.**
1914 Fillmore 415-437-2722

PIZZA

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1800 Fillmore 415-775-1800
- Bruno's**
1375 Fillmore 415-563-6300
- Delfina Pizzeria**
2406 California 415-440-1189
- Dino's Pizza**
2101 Fillmore 415-922-4700
- Extreme Pizza**
1730 Fillmore 415-929-9900

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2325 Pine 415-440-0356
- Bumzy's Chocolate Chip Cookies**
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- Fillmore Bakeshop**
1890 Fillmore 415-923-0711
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- Miyako Old-Fashioned Ice Cream**
1470 Fillmore 415-931-5260
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2213 Fillmore 415-441-5396
- Sift Cupcake & Dessert Bar**
2411 California 415-580-3030
- Smitten Ice Cream**
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- Wise Sons Bagel & Bakery**
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- Yoppi Yogurt**
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- Ales Unlimited**
2398 Webster 415-346-6849
- D&M Wine and Liquor**
2200 Fillmore 415-346-1325
- Vino**
2425 California 415-674-8466
- Wine Jar**
1870 Fillmore 415-931-2924

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- Gino's Grocery**
2500 Fillmore 415-775-1908
- Mayflower Market**
2498 Fillmore 415-346-1700
- Mollie Stone's**
2435 California 415-567-4902
- Pacific Food Mart**
2199 Sutter 415-614-2385
- Spice Ace**
1821 Steiner 415-885-3038

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2261 Fillmore 415-561-9921
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1805 Geary 415-346-1600
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- Sheba Piano Lounge**
1419 Fillmore 415-440-7414
- Sundance Kabuki Theaters**
1881 Post 415-346-3243



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- Peet's Coffee & Tea**
2197 Fillmore 415-563-9930
- The Social Study**
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