The Royal Baking Company building is on track to become the Excelsior District's first designated City Landmark. Story on page 4

EXCELSIOR RISING

The Royal Baking Company building is on track to become the Excelsior District's first designated City Landmark. Story on page 4

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Embracing Neighborhood Pride

The cover story of the Spring 1990 issue of *Heritage News* proclaimed, "Neighborhood Activists Get Results." Then, as now, San Francisco’s formidable bulwark of community activists serves as the first line of defense for the city’s historic places.

That issue of *Heritage News* profiled numerous examples of everyday people working to save the places that make their communities special, such as 699 Paris Street, a "modest Excelsior District house" that nearly fell victim to demolition. "Its residential type and relatively open site, looming from the crest of a hillock, recall the agrarian character of early settlement in this neighborhood." The Neighbors of the Excelsior stepped up and, with help from Heritage and the city, a compromise was reached to preserve the house at the corner of Paris Street and Italy Avenue, where it remains to this day.

Thirty years later, Heritage will return to the Excelsior District in March to launch an innovative new program—*Heritage in the Neighborhoods*—that aims to partner with residents in lesser-known parts of the city to identify, document, celebrate, and protect the historic resources and legacy businesses that define them. One such icon of the Excelsior is Royal Baking Company, our cover story, which Heritage is currently helping nominate for City Landmark designation.

San Francisco is a city with a rich cultural history—home to waves of immigrants from Latin America, China, Japan, the Philippines and many other countries, a beacon for the gay-rights movement, and birthplace of the radical culture of the 1960s. From the Italians and Chinese, who have defined large neighborhoods over a long time, to the Germans and Irish, whose strong presence has been absorbed into the city at large, to smaller but significant groups like the Salvadoran, Maltese, and Danish, the legacy of these communities can be seen in the architecture, businesses, and traditions of ethnic, religious, and social enclaves throughout San Francisco. Yet many of these communities and their important contributions remain virtually unrepresented in the city’s official inventories of landmarks, legacy businesses, and cultural districts deserving of protection and assistance.

In an era when neighborhood vigilance is often attacked and dismissed as knee-jerk NIMBY-ism, *Heritage in the Neighborhoods* seeks to empower residents to proactively manage change and growth in their communities while retaining their physical and intangible essence. Led by Woody LaBounty and Kerri Young, this new initiative will also leverage existing Heritage programs and resources to advance preservation projects in the targeted areas, such as the Landmark Fund, Annual Lecture Series, and the Alice Ross Carey Preservation Grant Fund.

Later this year, *Heritage in the Neighborhoods* will expand to include the Parkside section of the Sunset District and the Marina, with additional neighborhoods to be announced for 2021. Read more about *Heritage in the Neighborhoods* on page 7.
La Reyna Bakery

BY KERRI YOUNG

La Reyna Bakery is one of many Latinx-owned businesses that comprise the cultural fabric of San Francisco’s Mission District. On the verge of completing its application to join the Legacy Business Registry, La Reyna will join a growing list of esteemed bars, restaurants, service-providers, and arts organizations in the neighborhood.

Husband-and-wife team Clemente and Josephina Gutierrez started La Reyna Bakery at 3114 24th Street in 1977. The Gutierrez family had prior experience working in bakeries around California, previously operating a bakery in Woodlake in the 1960s and working for Josephina’s sister at Dominguez Bakery in the Mission prior to opening La Reyna. In 1977, Josephina and Clemente purchased the three-story building at 3114-3116 24th Street and opened La Reyna in the ground-floor storefront. Josephina and Clemente raised their four children, Alicia, Luis, Patricia, and Alfred, in the apartment over their business, and today La Reyna remains family-owned and operated.

Alongside other longtime Mexican and Salvadoran panaderías such as Dominguez (1967), La Mexicana (1989), La Victoria (1951), and Pan Lido (1981), La Reyna is dedicated to providing traditional breads and pastries like pan dulces (sweet breads) of concha, certno, and elote, that reflect Latinx heritage. Holiday-specific baked goods like their Rosca de Reyes for Dia de los Reyes (Three Kings’ Day) and Pan de Muerto for Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) demonstrate their commitment to cultural traditions, and since 1995 they have hosted a fourth-generation pastry maker from Puebla, Mexico, to make authentic sugar skulls for the latter holiday.

La Reyna has supported many other artistic and cultural events in the neighborhood. From 2015 to 2017, it hosted the fortnightly meeting of the Pan Dulce Poets, an open mike for poets of the Mission to perform their work for the community; after a revival in 2018, discussions around returning to a monthly event are ongoing. The Gutierrez family is responsive to many issues and needs of the community and has hosted fundraisers for local Native American groups, Chicano heritage groups, and a 2014 music fundraiser in honor of Alejandro “Alex” Nieto, a young man who was shot and killed by police while on his way to work in Bernal Heights.

La Reyna’s building, built in 1910, has a stucco façade in a Mediterranean-Revival style, featuring a colorful mural of the Virgin of Guadalupe, painted by Antonio Z. Chávez in 2004, and a retro back-lit blade sign with a blinking arrow pointing to the bakery’s entrance.

La Reyna Bakery is now part of the Calle 24 Latino Cultural District, which runs along the tree-lined lower 24th Street corridor. This area is known as El Corazón de la Misión, the Heart of the Mission, and has served as the center of Latinx activism, arts, commerce, and culture in San Francisco since the 1940s. Officially designated a cultural district in 2014, Calle 24’s mission is to help prevent the displacement of Latinx businesses and residents and preserve the character of the cultural district.

San Francisco Heritage, in partnership with Calle 24, is grateful for the opportunity to assist La Reyna in its Legacy Business application. Like other city establishments who qualify for Legacy status, it is often difficult for businesses to embark on the application process in the midst of vital day-to-day work, so Heritage provides support as much as possible through our Landmark Fund program.

La Reyna is an important part of the intangible heritage embodied in the family-owned businesses, murals, festivals, and cultural movements that define Calle 24’s unique sense of place.
For 84 years, the Royal Baking Company building’s distinctive three-pointed parapet has ruled Mission Street as an abstract sunburst, a figurative mountain range, or, perhaps most appropriately, a metaphorical crown. Now the Excelsior District’s neighborhood icon, built in 1935, is on track for designation as a San Francisco City Landmark.

The Royal Baking Company property at 4769-4773 Mission Street between Russia and Persia Avenues appears from the front to be two separate structures, but is actually an unusual mix of commercial façade styles sharing a single building. Metapan Pupuseria, a Salvadoran restaurant occupying 4769 Mission Street, has a Storybook-style façade resembling a gabled country cottage with false chimneys, a shallow tiled-roof parapet, small-scale non-operable windows, and a rustic stone bulkhead. Next door, the New Royal Bakery at 4773 Mission Street occupies one bay of a larger Art Deco façade with green-and-yellow polychromatic terra-cotta tile and an upper register of molded banding, fanned reliefs, curved recesses, and the three-pointed parapet. In addition to the two storefront businesses, a plumbing company currently rents space in the rear of the building, which occupies all of the 100-by-108.5-foot lot.

In late 2019, the property was put on the market for $1.6 million as part of a probate sale. District 11 Supervisor Ahsha Safai, concerned for its future, directed the San Francisco Planning Department to initiate a landmark designation.

San Francisco Heritage is co-authoring the nomination. The Royal Baking Company building is significant not just for its unusual and distinctive architectural design but also for its connection to the Italian-American community and the history of San Francisco’s important bread-baking and macaroni-manufacturing industries.

**An Italian Colony**

While North Beach is the best-known center of Italian-American life in San Francisco, the Excelsior District in the Outer Mission has a relevant history almost as old. Truck farmers known as *giardinieri* (gardeners) from Liguria, Tuscany, and other parts of Italy leased land in the area as far back as the 1850s, growing lettuce, cabbage, and artichokes alongside hog farmers and dairy ranchers. The streets and European-capital street names of the Excelsior District were created as part of an 1869 homestead association, but true infrastructure, transportation, and building activity didn’t arrive until decades after the platting of the district map. Into the early twentieth century, a great deal of the Outer Mission and Excelsior remained agricultural fields with a few scattered home sites and Italian families of the thinlypopulated area had to travel hours to attend mass in North Beach. In 1898, an Italian

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**A New City Landmark Rises in the Excelsior**

BY WOODY LABOUNTY

*PHOTO BY DAVID BRICKER, HERITAGE ARCHIVES*

*Royal Baking Co. building at 4769-4773 Mission Street, taken November 1990.*
National Church, Corpus Christi, was founded on the modern-day corner of Alemany Boulevard and Santa Rosa Avenue, and the first branch of the Bank of Italy was established on Mission Street a mile north of the Excelsior District in 1907.

The Excelsior grew in the aftermath of the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, as displaced San Franciscans from the city’s core moved into less-affected outlying areas. Real estate broker Ambrose B. Frank considered himself a pioneer and key figure in the neighborhood’s post-earthquake growth. He opened his real estate office at 4607 Mission Street in 1907, and by the 1930s he was “hailed by his neighbors as the mayor of the district,” according to the San Francisco Examiner. In 1935, Frank had the “new modern type” building at 4769-4773 Mission Street constructed without an identified architect, but with a long list of local contractors and suppliers.

Italians and Italian-Americans remained the neighborhood’s dominant ethnic group, with many businesses on Mission Street and Geneva Avenue featuring signs in the window assuring customers they spoke Italian (Si Parla Italiano). When Ambrose Frank’s building was completed, two Italian-affiliated businesses moved in.

### Making Macaroni

In 1935, Gaetano Ferrigno, Vice President, stockholder, and member of the Board of Directors of the Golden Grain Macaroni Company, decided he wanted out of the company.

Legally known as Gragnano Products, Golden Grain made macaroni, vermicelli, egg noodles, and semolina products at 966-970 Bryant Street and was the largest of some dozen macaroni manufacturers in San Francisco, most based near the Italian population of North Beach. Bread and bakery products, including the making of pasta, was the third-ranked industry in San Francisco by annual value in the early 1930s.

In an acrimonious split with his relatives, Ferrigno arranged to be bought out of Gragnano Products to launch his own competitive business. He chose A. B. Frank’s new Mission Street building for the Sorrento Macaroni Company, leasing 5,000 square feet. It wouldn’t be the first macaroni factory in the area; the Green Valley Macaroni Factory had operated just across the street at 4736 Mission Street from about 1914 to 1923. (Green Valley was a promoted alternative name for the Excelsior in the 1910s.)

The Storybook-style storefront at 4769 Mission Street served as Sorrento’s sales space while an alleyway behind the rustic garage doors accessed the macaroni factory in the back of the full lot. Sorrento Macaroni, while never reaching the commercial success of the company Ferrigno left, stayed in business into the 1970s. Angelo Ferrigno, Gaetano’s son, later made the 4769 Mission Street storefront into the Sorrento Delicatessen.

### Baking Bread

After securing the lease for the Sorrento Macaroni Company, Ambrose Frank advertised the remaining 4,500 square feet of the building as “splendid for Super Market, Department Store, Furniture, 5-10 & 15¢ Store, Music and Radio, Auto Sales Room, Cookies, Cracker and Food.” His last three suggestions proved the most accurate when he quickly came to terms with the Royal Baking Company, which leased the ell of the building not occupied by Sorrento Macaroni. Frank filed a permit application to install two large double-brick Dutch ovens in October 1935, and the Royal Baking Company applied for a sign permit the following month.

Royal Baking Company had been in business at 704 Filbert Street in North Beach before joining the Excelsior’s Italian-American community. While the owners, Pellegrino Matteucci, John Mazzini, Jack Cima, Mario Cafferata, and Rudolph Paladini, kept the Filbert Street location for a few years as a branch of their company, four of the five lived within half a mile of the new location and soon the entire business was run on Mission Street.

Owners and partners over the years have included members of the Italian and Basque communities, with Royal Baking daily supplying bread to restaurants across San Francisco and Daly City and selling...
to local customers at the Mission Street storefront. In the 1970s, as Latino and Filipino populations overtook the Italian community as dominant ethnic groups of the Excelsior, the Royal Baking Company continued as an island of Italian culture, offering grissini, panettone, buccellato, focaccia, and “special Italian cookies” while being recognized as one of the city’s foremost purveyors of French and Italian breads.

Today the Royal Baking Company building reflects some of the broader demographic changes in the neighborhood since the Excelsior’s days as an Italian outpost. The false diminutive windows, bulkhead stone, and other elements of the original Storybook-style treatment remain at Metapan Pupuseria, but the former wooden garage doors to the alley have been replaced by a corrugated metal roll-up door painted with a mural featuring martyred El Salvadoran priest and saint Óscar Romero. The “New Royal Bakery,” a descendant business of the Royal Baking Company storefront at 4773 Mission Street, no longer carries baked Italian specialty goods. In 2007, Benedito Brigada painted murals of pastoral bread-making scenes and the biblical Last Supper in the parapet recesses and across the glass brick in-fill of the ground-floor window openings.

**A New Landmark**

In recent years both Heritage and the San Francisco Planning Department’s preservation staff have made a concerted effort to bring the protections and recognition of City Landmark status to traditionally overlooked neighborhoods, and identify important but under-represented cultural affiliations and building types. Despite these efforts, only seven of the 288 properties designated San Francisco City Landmarks are within a mile and a half of Persia Avenue and Mission Street, the heart of the Excelsior. Four of those seven have received designation just within the last four years. A similar circle around 16th and Mission Streets would capture a dozen landmarks, and in older parts of the city many more.

Balboa High School (#205) and the Alemany Emergency Hospital (#227) are the only two landmarks that could be considered within the broader Excelsior neighborhood, although each technically lies within the boundaries of Geneva Terraces. The Royal Baking Company building has the potential to be the first designated City Landmark of the Excelsior District proper.

Introduction of the nomination is scheduled to go before the Historic Preservation Commission in the next few months, and landmark status could be conferred by the Board of Supervisors by the summer. Outside of a few modifications, including the replacement of the alley doors, the integrity of 4769-4773 Mission Street façade is high.

With its distinctive architectural design, its connection with San Francisco’s baking and macaroni industries, and its significant association to the city’s Italian-American community, the Royal Baking Company building is a deserving addition to the city’s registry of significant historic resources.
As San Francisco’s leading preservation organization, Heritage is looked to whenever the city’s historic buildings, public artwork, or legacy businesses are threatened. Increasingly, those threats are arising in the city’s outlying neighborhoods. From the Marina to the Bayview, Potrero Hill to the Outer Sunset, significant single-family homes, legacy businesses, and cultural cornerstones are being lost.

**What's at Risk**

Older houses are victims of intense development pressures. When replaced by new market-rate units, their loss exacerbates the city’s affordability crisis. Neighborhood cafes, retail stores, and restaurants are closing because of rent increases from out-of-town landlords and decreased profits from the rise of online delivery companies. Each loss creates a vacant storefront and one less community meeting space.

Heritage has always weighed in on large and high-profile projects and worked on a citywide level to craft legislative protections such as historic districts and the popular Legacy Business Registry. But with limited resources, Heritage on its own cannot identify and protect all of the small but significant buildings, artwork, and businesses in all of San Francisco’s neighborhoods.

*(continued on the next page)*
Taking Action

In response to this great need, Heritage is launching an original and innovative program to amplify the power of local communities to preserve what’s special in vulnerable neighborhoods, while building awareness for preservation across San Francisco.

In 2020, the Heritage in the Neighborhoods program will foster new local affinity groups to celebrate and defend the unique characteristics of three San Francisco neighborhoods: Excelsior, Parkside, and Marina districts. Presentations by Heritage staff on local architectural styles, legacy businesses, and cultural cornerstones will be followed by conversation and shared strategies for defending historic resources. We will create a section on the Heritage website dedicated to each neighborhood, including existing research on its history and architecture, longtime cultural and commercial cornerstones, and preservation resources.

A focused week to spotlight the neighborhood citywide will feature a Heritage-led public walk, online short videos, slideshows, and posts, and will include partnerships with community stakeholder groups and Heritage allies across the city to raise the neighborhood’s profile.

Follow-up activities will be tailored to work with each neighborhood’s strengths and needs, but Heritage will help convene affinity group meetings with possible agenda items including landmark nominations, legacy-business registrations, and the possibility of a context statement, survey, or historic district work. More people signing on to a group will show strength as we work toward these local initiatives, and will provide a welcoming space for an array of voices to contribute and brainstorm ideas.

As we grow neighborhood by neighborhood, Heritage in the Neighborhoods affinity groups will extend preservation work and capacity to defend historic resources to every corner of the city.

Join Us

The Heritage in the Neighborhoods program will kickoff in the Excelsior District with a free and open public meeting on March 25, 2020, at the Italian American Social Club of San Francisco (25 Russia Avenue), a neighborhood gathering place for over 80 years. More details will be announced soon along with an event listing, but please save the date for this local kick-off event. Heritage affinity groups in the Parkside section of the Sunset District and the Marina District also will launch this year. If you have any thoughts, ideas, and questions as we plan this program, please reach out to Kerri Young at kyoung@sfheritage.org or call 415-441-3000 x22. We welcome interest and participation from anyone and everyone for this exciting program.
Alice Ross Carey Preservation Grant Fund

San Francisco Heritage is proud to continue stewarding the Alice Ross Carey Preservation Fund, a grant program to help document, preserve, and celebrate the diverse historic places and cultural assets that define San Francisco. Alice Ross Carey (1949-2013), the grant’s namesake, dedicated her life and career to historic preservation and cultural sustainability in San Francisco.

Heritage will provide small grants for planning, outreach, capital improvement, and interpretive programs or projects.

By providing tangible financial assistance to small-scale, community-based preservation projects, this grant program is a powerful tool to advance Heritage’s advocacy and education work in neighborhoods throughout San Francisco. Grants ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 are awarded in two rounds each year, with application deadlines of February 1st and August 1st. Under special circumstances, awards up to $10,000 may be considered. Eligible applicants include 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, 501(c)(6) business leagues, public agencies, and unincorporated associations with a nonprofit fiscal sponsor. Grants to the same organization are limited to three within a two-year period.

Examples of projects funded for recent recipients include a paid printing apprenticeship for the Grabhorn Institute/Arion Press, funds towards a larger building retrofit project for the Mechanics’ Institute, a three-day Neon Speaks Symposium for San Francisco Neon, and expanding digital neighborhood newspaper collections for Shaping San Francisco. For more information on the Alice Ross Carey Preservation Grant Fund and a list of previous grantees, visit sfheritage.org/alice-ross-carey-preservation-fund.

Save the Date: Soirée 2020 Celebrates North Beach

On Friday, May 1, 2020, Heritage will celebrate the landmarks, luminaries, and legacy businesses of North Beach. Soirée 2020 will be an evening filled with the sights and sounds of Bimbo’s 365 Club, “a landmark that’s destined to stand as long as San Francisco stands for good times.” Recognized by San Francisco Heritage in 2014 as one of our 100 Legacy Bars and Restaurants, Bimbo’s (1025 Columbus Avenue) is now being nominated—with Heritage’s assistance and support—to the San Legacy Business Registry.

For more than 45 years, Soirée has saluted the city of San Francisco, and this year promises to include the spirit and merriment of this special neighborhood. Reminiscent of Bimbo’s throughout the years, special performances will abound at Soirée 2020. Come in black tie or creative supper-club attire and enjoy cocktails, dinner by McCall’s, silent and live auctions, and dancing to the big band sounds of the Dick Bright Orchestra. We anticipate selling out due to limited seating. For more information on Soirée 2020 and underwriting opportunities, visit sfheritage.org/soiree.
Heritage wishes to thank our generous 2019 supporters

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February 2020

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 12:30 PM
Pacific Heights walking tour
Haas-Lilienthal House
2007 Franklin St.
Heritage's docent-led walking tours of Pacific Heights, which happen every Sunday at 12:30 PM, cover approximately 15 to 20 blocks and take about two hours. The tour starts in front of the Haas-Lilienthal House and ends at (or near) Jackson and Gough streets.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 8:00-11:00 PM
Victorian Valentine Ball
Haas-Lilienthal House
2007 Franklin St.
Step back in time and have a ball at the historic Haas-Lilienthal House! Learn to dance 19th-century forms of waltz and polka with dance instructors from the SF Waltzing Society, enjoy delectable finger foods, and play Victorian trivia games for exciting prizes. Tickets at sfheritage.org.

March 2020

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2:00-5:00 PM
Rooftop Tours of San Francisco
Visit the top privately-owned public open spaces in San Francisco, with rooftop views of the Palace Hotel, Hobart Building, Hearst Building, and more. Led by the California Preservation Foundation. Tickets at californiapreservation.org/programs/tours/

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 6:30-8:00 PM
Heritage Excelsior kick-off event
Italian American Social Club of San Francisco
25 Russia Avenue, American Room
See page 8 for more details.