

FINDINGS AND DETERMINATION
OF THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF SANTA MONICA IN THE MATTER OF
THE DESIGNATION OF A LANDMARK

DESIGNATION OF A COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE
LOCATED AT 227 BROADWAY AS A CITY LANDMARK

08-LM-007

SECTION I. An application was filed by the City of Santa Monica Landmarks Commission on August 12, 2008 to designate the commercial structure at 227 Broadway as a City Landmark. The Landmarks Commission, having held a Public Hearing on October 13, 2008, hereby designates the commercial structure located at 227 Broadway (commonly known as Keller Block Building) as a City Landmark and the property commonly known as 227 Broadway as a Landmark Parcel based on the following findings:

- (1) *It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.*

The Keller Block building, constructed circa 1893 at 227 Broadway, possesses sufficient historical importance and architectural merit to warrant individual recognition as a City of Santa Monica Landmark. The Keller Block is a rare example of a large, architecturally distinctive, 1890s masonry multi-use commercial building in Santa Monica. The subject property retains the majority of its primary character defining features on the exterior including the brickwork; arched openings; rectangular openings with contrasting stone lintels and sills; and cast-iron storefronts by the Llewellyn Ironworks of Los Angeles. The interior of the building has been extensively renovated and the fenestration has been replaced throughout; however, the cast-iron storefronts have been retained and the in-kind window replacements are compatible in design with the overall architectural character of the building.

Beginning in the 1880s, the Santa Monica's commercial district was centered on 2nd Street from Broadway to about a half block north. During the 1890s, the development of the Keller Block anchored a new phase of development that saw Santa Monica grow as an urban center and 3rd Street become the City's principal commercial street. As one of the earliest and the most prominent commercial buildings in this immediate area of downtown on 3rd Street, the building's design, materials, workmanship, and association manifest the feeling of early commercial life in the Central Business District. The property also represents the significant investment Henry W. Keller made to Santa Monica's emerging downtown district. Although alterations have been made to the building, the property still retains sufficient contextual, architectural, and overall physical integrity in its design, workmanship, materials and feeling to manifest the economic and architectural history of the City of Santa Monica. Therefore, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

- (2) *It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.*

The subject property is aesthetically pleasing in its decorative details and form. Its balance of voids and intricately ornamented solids rendered upon an asymmetrical façade is highly satisfying, reflecting the work of a master designer who is highly skilled at implementing this distinct architectural style. Therefore, as an excellent and rare local example of the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival style as applied to a commercial structure, the subject property possesses sufficient aesthetic and artistic value necessary for designation under this criterion.

- (3) *It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.*

The subject property was developed and owned by Henry W. Keller who is important in the development and history of Santa Monica and the Los Angeles area and was, along with his father Matthew Keller, the one time owner of the Rancho Malibu. Henry W. Keller was an active member of Santa Monica society who became involved in real estate ventures after selling his Malibu Ranch in 1891. His financial investment in Santa Monica contributed to the development of the 3rd Street commercial district. Henry W. Keller and his family moved from Santa Monica to Boyle and Fourth Street in 1907, into a Mission-Revival style house designed by the same architect as the Keller Block. Henry W. Keller was instrumental in bringing the first zoo and municipal golf course to Griffith Park as a member of the Los Angeles City Park Commission in 1915, and also served as president of the South Coast Land Company and the Bolsa Chica Land Company, the vice-president and general manager of the Riverside Portland Cement Company, and the director of the Automobile Club from 1908 to 1938. In addition, he served as the chairman to the committee that designated Los Angeles' first traffic plan in 1920. When he died at the age of 89 on November 9, 1958, his obituary in the Los Angeles Times honored him as a "pioneer and civic leader."

- (4) *It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.*

The Keller Block Building at 227 Broadway is an excellent regional representation of the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival style, exhibiting distinguishing architectural characteristics of the style including the massing, roof form, parapets, turret, brick and ashlar brownstone, as well as other signature trademarks of the idiom in its overall design. In addition, because it is the oldest and last remaining example of this style as applied to commercial buildings within the Central Business District in the original Santa Monica townsite, it is very important in illustrating the historic architectural context of the area. Despite alterations to its storefront, the subject property is valuable to a study of the architectural history of the late 1800s and the

Richardsonian Romanesque Revival style. Therefore, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

- (5) *It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.*

The architect of the Keller Block, Carroll H. Brown, was a significant local developer, builder, and architect in Santa Monica and Los Angeles during the 1890s and early twentieth century. Brown was born in 1863 in Illinois, moved to Los Angeles in the 1880s and practiced architecture in Los Angeles until his death on November 17, 1920. Based upon research of existing buildings attributed to Carroll H. Brown, it appears that he was highly skilled in the regional interpretation of the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival style. The articulation of Romanesque Revival detailing in the Keller Block reveals the skill of Carroll H. Brown as a designer. In addition, two of his other most notable Romanesque Revival style buildings in Los Angeles are the Stimson House at 2421 Figueroa Street (Historic-Cultural Monument in the City of Los Angeles in 1979 No. 212) and the Stimson Block (1893), which once stood at the corner of Third and Spring Streets but was demolished in 1963.

Carroll H. Brown designed many residences, commercial buildings, and institutional buildings around Southern California for prominent clients. Withey's Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, describes Carroll H. Brown, as a charter member of the Architectural Association of Southern California, which was formed in 1892 and became the Southern California Chapter of the AIA in 1894, of which Carroll H. Brown became a president in 1907.

Given the amount of work attributed to Carroll H. Brown in the Los Angeles region, it is notable that the subject property appears to be the only commercial building he designed in Santa Monica. Therefore, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

- (6) *It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.*

The Keller Block building located at 227 Broadway has a highly visible location on the northwest corner of Broadway and the popular 3rd Street Promenade commercial area. The building's massing, proportions, primary elevation facing Broadway and large turret on the corner of 3rd Street Promenade makes the property a notable, established and familiar visual feature of the City's Central Business District. Due to the structure's unique form, pronounced corner treatment and high visibility from many vantage points in the City both historically and today, it has become a local icon and a defining feature of Santa Monica's downtown. Therefore, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

SECTION II. The property commonly known as 227 Broadway (Lot L of Block 172 of the Town of Santa Monica Tract in the City of Santa Monica) is designated as a Landmark

Parcel in order to preserve, maintain, protect, and safeguard the Landmark commercial structure.

SECTION III. I hereby certify that the above Findings and Determination accurately reflect the final determination of the Landmarks Commission of the City of Santa Monica on October 13, 2008 as determined by the following vote:

AYES: Bach, Berley, Genser, Fresco, Lehrer, Shari, Chair Kaplan
NAYES: None

Each and all of the findings and determinations are based on the competent and substantial evidence, both oral and written, contained in the entire record relating to the Project. All summaries of information contained herein or in the findings are based on the substantial evidence in the record. The absence of any particular fact from any such summary is not an indication that a particular finding is not based in part on that fact.

Respectfully Submitted
November 10, 2008

Barbara Kaplan, Chairperson

Attest:

Roxanne Tanemori, AICP
Landmarks Commission Secretary