

## **Appendix C**

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**Historic Resource Evaluation to California Register Criteria, for 1870 and 1876 El Camino Real, Burlingame**

**HISTORIC RESOURCE EVALUATION  
to California Register criteria, for  
1870 EL CAMINO REAL, BURLINGAME**



*View looking southeast, perspective view*

by

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## **Summary**

This is a two-story office building that was built in 1961 and was designed by architect Henry Yanaga. During the 1960s and 1970s it held a variety of occupants, including principally corporations, professional associations, non-profits, insurance companies, and physicians. A variety of consultants and other solo-practitioners also occupied offices here. Due to lack of significance, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under criteria 1, 2, or 3. Please see the “Evaluation” section below, on pages 8-9, for more details.

## **Description**

### Vicinity and lot

This building is located on the east side of El Camino Real, about 125 feet south of Murchison Drive. The Burlingame-Millbrae border, and the Caltrain-BART station, are one block to the north, while the Caltrain right-of-way is just across California Drive to the east.

The immediate neighborhood is commercial in character. A gas station is immediately adjacent to the north of this building and is being evaluated in a separate report. Several office buildings, generally similar to this one, are to the immediate south. The gas station and all of the other office buildings appear to have been built in the 1950s and 1960s and thus are contemporaneous with the subject building, which was built in 1961.

This building’s nearly rectangular lot has an average width of 139 feet along El Camino Real, an average depth of 249 feet, and extends to California Drive to the east. The building itself fronts on El Camino Real and occupies slightly less than half of the lot, while the balance of the lot, to the east, is paved and is devoted to parking.

This building does not front directly on El Camino Real. It fronts on a service road that is parallel with and very close to El Camino Real. In the narrow strip of land between El Camino Real and the service road is a row of several eucalyptus trees that were planted by gardener John McLaren in the 1870s. This row of trees extends along both sides of El Camino Real throughout Burlingame.

### The subject building

This is a two-story office building built in 1961. Very roughly, it is 111 feet square in dimension. The building appears to have a mixed structural system. On the east side (rear) the foundation of the building rises to form a high base and this is clearly made of reinforced concrete. Above this foundation, the walls appear to be either concrete blocks or reinforced concrete that has been scored to resemble masonry. In some places (in the

front of the building) where some of the material has degraded or been chipped away, the wall is clearly concrete blocks with mortar (see photo). Finally, the spandrels that separate the windows between the floors, and a blank frieze across the top of the building, are faced in stucco. The structure behind these expanses of stucco is unknown. Lacking original plans or an original building permit, the details of the structural system remain uncertain.

Windows have steel sash with steel muntins, are set in wooden frames, and appear to be original. Like the building itself, the emphasis of the windows is strongly horizontal, and they impart an International style to the building. Paired doors in both the front and rear sides are of glass and are clearly non-original. These doors are the only obvious alteration to the exterior of the building. The front doors are set flush with the wall, while the centrally-placed rear doors are recessed and are reached by a short flight of steps.

Because the front lot line is very slightly curved, the front wall of this building is staggered to accommodate that line. The southernmost 45 feet of the building projects forward about eight feet relative to the more northern part. Thus, while the rear facade is symmetrical, the front is not. The front entrance is placed in the recessed northern portion, in roughly the middle of the facade. A tall sidelight can be found immediately right of this entrance, and a wooden awning reading “1870 The Plaza” overhangs this entrance and sidelight composition.

Both the north and south walls project several feet forward beyond the front wall plane, taking the form of buttresses. These buttresses are made of concrete blocks and are pierced with rectangular openings. Whether they are decorative or serve a structural purpose is unknown.

The north side of this building, which faces the gas station at 1876 El Camino Real, generally matches the front and back sides in its materials and composition. Here, the concrete foundation rises to form a low base. The windows form long bands of glass, and there is no entrance. The south wall of this building is entirely hidden by the adjacent building at 1860 El Camino Real.

## **History**

### History of Burlingame

Burlingame, and nearby Hillsborough, were part of a vast Mexican-era land grant, Rancho San Mateo, owned by the pioneer San Francisco merchant W. D. M. Howard. After Howard’s death in 1856 future owners planned park-like residential developments, but none of them were realized for four decades. They included an 1860s plan by the diplomat Anson Burlingame, one in the 1870s by the San Francisco banker William Ralston, and another in the following decade by Ralston’s business partner William

Sharon. Sharon got as far as having a survey and map made, and naming the putative town Burlingame, but no development had occurred by the time of his death in 1885.

Sharon's son-in-law Francis Newlands finally realized Sharon's plans in the 1890s. He hired architect A. Page Brown to design five large Tudor-revival houses (three of them survive) and the Burlingame Country Club, which attracted well-to-do buyers from San Francisco. With the construction of the Burlingame train station in 1893 (it also survives), Burlingame was on its way to becoming a prosperous town. The population grew further after most of San Francisco was destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1906. The older commercial buildings in Burlingame's downtown date from this period.

As Burlingame continued to grow, notable institutional buildings were built. They include Burlingame High School (1923), St. Paul's Episcopal Church (1927), the Burlingame Public Library (1930), and the First Church of Christ, Scientist (1930), all of which still stand. Other important church buildings include Our Lady of Angels Roman Catholic Church (1950) and St. Catherine of Siena Roman Catholic Church (1951-1952). The latter replaced an older church built in 1909.

In the 1950s and 1960s a building boom occurred in the eastern and northeastern parts of Burlingame, close to the Bayshore highway and San Francisco Bay. This included the area where the subject building is. One 1962 newspaper article ("Firms Locate in Burlingame," *San Mateo Times*, April 16, 1962) stated that three years earlier, the 1800 block of El Camino Real "was nothing but empty lots." Now it had become filled with administrative office buildings. The article named some of the new tenants, which included national firms such as Ford Motor Co., General Electric, Dupont, Foremost Dairies, and Western Electric Company. According to the article, the latter company would lease all four floors of the newly-built 1860 El Camino Real. The proximity of San Francisco airport and the Bayshore freeway (U. S. 101), and the availability of lots of parking, were cited as advantages that drew companies here.

### History of this building

This building was built in 1961 for owner Delcon Realty by contractor Congdon Construction Company at a cost of \$250,000. The architect was Henry Yanaga, who is profiled below.

Because the County Recorder's Office is closed at present, a chain-of-title cannot be researched for this building. However, city directory listings list most of the building's occupants from 1963 through 1977. These occupants are classified by business types below.

#### *Corporations and larger businesses*

1963-1967. E. I. Dupont Company, film distributors

1963. Foremost Dairies industrial division  
1963-1977. Ford Motor Company Marketing Institute training school  
1967. Periodical Publishers  
1972. Monex Trading Co., Ltd, imports and exports  
1973. Western Polymer Co., chemical manufacturers  
1975-1977. Tago Inc.

*Professional associations and non-profits*

1967-1977. Family Service Agency, family counseling  
1971-1975. California School Employees Association  
1972-1974. Professional Airmen's Association  
1973-1976. Golden Gate Regional Center, agency for mentally retarded  
1974. Arthritis Foundation

*Financial and insurance businesses*

1963. General Electric Credit Corporation, finance  
1963. O. M. Olsen and Associates, general insurance  
1972-1975. Safeco Insurance  
1973. Peninsula Credit Union  
1973-1974. Markel Services Trucking, insurance  
1973-1977. Continental Casualty Co. Insurance  
1973-1975. R. B. Gooden and Associates financial advisors  
1976-1977. Select Investment Management

*Physicians*

1972-1975. Harry Alton  
1973. Arnold Bookspun  
1973. Marvin Shapiro  
1973. M. F. Monfort  
1974-1977. Ronald Woo  
1975-1977. Barbara Cohen  
1976-1977. Gary M. Goldberg

*Other consultants and solo practitioners*

1965-1967. Dial-Economy Communications Consultant  
1973-1977. Barbara Chase, social worker  
1973-1977. Thomas F. Thompson, geologist  
1973-1974. Frank C. Vorsatz, lawyer  
1976-1977. Margaret Hill, social worker  
1976-1977. Robert E. Xavier, accountant  
1976-1977. Manuelito P. Bautista, accountant  
1976-1977. Robert A. Mitchell, accountant

As can be seen from the above, this building was devoted to general office use and did not specialize in a particular kind of tenant. This was in contrast to some office buildings that specialized in occupancy by physicians, or by larger corporations and law firms.

Only two of the above remained for longer than five years. They were Ford Motor Company Marketing Institute (1963-1977) and Family Service Agency family counseling (1967-1977). No substantial information could be found on the internet about the Ford Motor Company Marketing Institute. It seems to have been a training school for marketing Ford automobiles.

The Family Service Agency appears to have been a branch of the charity by that name in San Francisco. It was founded in the late 19th century as Associated Charities, was later run by Katherine Felton (1873-1940), and built its own building in San Francisco at 1010 Gough Street in 1928. That building still stands and is well-known because it was designed by architect Bernard Maybeck. In 1938 Associated Charities changed its name to Family Service Agency, and in 2006 it changed its name again to the Felton Institute, after its early leader. It is currently located at 1500 Franklin Street and offers services to low-income families, children, the elderly, and the disabled. Its website states that it offers 46 programs in multiple sites around the Bay Area.

#### The architect, Henry Yanaga

Henry Kazuma Yanaga (1927-2009) spent almost his entire career in San Mateo County, living and working as an architect in Burlingame, San Mateo, and Redwood City. Most of his work remains unknown, but he appears to have principally designed houses and office buildings.

In 1957 he was a draftsman working for Stanford University. City directories list him as an architect working for the San Francisco firm of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons during 1958-1962, but if that is accurate he also took on some jobs of his own while working for them. One was the subject building at 1870 El Camino Real (1961). The other was a two-story office building seven blocks to the south, at 1101-1103 Juanita Avenue at California Drive (also 1961).

His other known office buildings date from very shortly afterward and were by the short-lived firm of Yanaga and Jordan. They include the four story building at 1860 El Camino Real (1962) and an office building on Pioneer Court in San Mateo (address unknown; 1962-1963).

Regarding the three office buildings whose addresses are known, all are in the International style, and of these, 1860 El Camino is the purest example. Its exterior is almost entirely glass set within grids, and it has a mid-facade recess topped by a W-shaped hood to give relief to the composition. At four stories, it is also much the tallest

of these buildings. This is the building mentioned above that was to be leased to the Western Electric Company. It is immediately adjacent to the subject building.

The largest project of Yanaga's that was mentioned in newspapers was a housing tract on Vista Grande near Hillcrest Boulevard in Millbrae Highlands. The developers were Julian Basin and Ben Iscoff, working under the name of Basin-Built Homes; planning and design occurred in 1959; and houses opened to the public in 1960. They were two and three stories in height, wooden in exterior materials, and modern in style; and buyers had two models to choose from. The Marquessa featured a raised living room and a patio deck, while the more expensive Contessa featured a Japanese-style fireplace and a small, sunken family lounge area known as a "conversation pit." A few photographs in newspaper articles reveal stylish interior features. According to these articles the developers had purchased all of the unsold lots in Millbrae Highlands and intended to develop them as well, but whether they did, and if so whether Yanaga was involved, is unknown.

In 1970 Yanaga joined Dukor Associates as a vice-president. Dukor Modular Systems of Redwood City was a developer of modular buildings, and Dukor Associates was their design arm. It consisted of three architects plus Henry Yanaga, who was identified not as an architect but as a "registered building designer." Whether any of their projects were realized has not been researched.

More articles were probably written about the Wooz than about any of Yanaga's other projects. This was a twelve-acre theme park built along Interstate 80 just outside of Vacaville in 1988. The developers were Sun Creative System of Japan, where mazes were popular. Their plan was to build sixty mazes across the United States, of which the one in Vacaville was to be the first. They hired Yanaga to design the buildings and other architectural features, and perhaps to supervise the construction. The Wooz featured seven-foot walls that customers would enter and find their way through on their own time. The walls were movable so the maze could be reconfigured at intervals. It did not prove to be popular, in part because summer heat was too much for people, and in part because (as one article speculated) this activity was too meditative for Americans. The restaurant that was part of the project was also a financial loss, and after four years the park closed. None of the other Wooz parks were ever built.

Undoubtedly there were many more projects of Yanaga's than the ones described above. Their locations are unknown, and none of his works appear to have been included in local architectural guidebooks. Nor could any obituary for him be found in newspapers that are searchable on the internet.

### International style office buildings in Burlingame

There is a moderate number of such buildings in Burlingame, especially east of El Camino Real. As mentioned above, three are by Henry Yanaga (1860 and 1870 El Camino Real and 1101-1103 Juanita Avenue). 1838 and 1840-1846 El Camino Real are also in this style, as is 199 California Drive, a half-block to the north. Farther away are sprawling two-story International style office buildings at 1290 and 1499 Bayshore. There must be others in Burlingame as well.

The Crowne Plaza Hotel at 1177 Airport Boulevard is by far the largest International style building found during a driving survey for this report. It has been remodeled some since it was built; the crown at the top is an addition, and the fenestration may have been partially changed, but it still conveys its original style to a large degree.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation under Criterion 1 of the California Register: Resources that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.

This building was part of a small commercial building boom that occurred in the eastern and northeastern parts of Burlingame during the 1950s and 1960s. Several buildings from these decades, including the subject building, are clustered together on or near the 1800 block of El Camino Real, while others are scattered to the south.

It is not clear that this period of construction is very important in Burlingame's history. It is the older part of Burlingame, centered around the city's downtown, that is well-known today. The newer parts are sprawling in character and remain little-known. At any rate, the subject building does not evoke this 1950s-1960s development theme in any distinctive way compared to others that have been found.

Regarding the building's occupants, only two remained for more than a few years. The Ford Motor Company's Marketing Institute was a minor part of that company's operations. The branch of the Family Service Agency in this building was subordinate to the headquarters in San Francisco,

For these reasons, the subject property does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under this criterion.

Evaluation under Criterion 2 of the California Register: Resources that are associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.

Most of the occupants of this building are known only by their business name, and not their personal names. Most were here for only a few years or less, and most were here less than fifty years ago. None of the occupants are known to have been important in local, state, or national history. For these reasons, the subject property does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under this criterion.

Evaluation under Criterion 3 of the California Register: Resources that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values.

This is a perfunctory example of the International style, and like most office buildings of this style in Burlingame, it lacks distinction. This building suffers in comparison with its immediate neighbor at 1860 El Camino Real (also by Henry Yanaga). That building, besides being much larger, is a purer example of the International style; and with its central recess topped by a hood, has a more dramatic composition.

Regarding Henry Yanaga himself, it is difficult to say that he is an important architect in San Mateo County history. His career began in about 1959, and very few (if any) San Mateo county architects from after that date have been studied or written about. As far as is known, he has never been studied previously to this report. It is entirely possible that he could emerge as an important architect with further study. Both the office building at 1860 El Camino Real and the housing tract he designed in Millbrae Highlands for Basin-Built homes indicate sensitivity and skill.

Even considering that he might emerge as an important architect, the subject building does not appear to be one of his better works.

For these reasons, the property does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under this criterion.

## **References**

### On the subject building:

*Daily Pacific Builder*, March 30 and April 4, 1961. Building notice re: this property

Burlingame city directory listings 1963-1977 for residents of 1870 El Camino Real.

Note: Online Sanborn maps were viewed, but none cover this part of Burlingame.

On Burlingame:

Mitch Postel and Ward Hill. "San Mateo County." In Susan Dinkelspiel Cerny, ed. *An Architectural Guidebook to San Francisco and the Bay Area*. Gibbs Smith: 2007; pages 139-141.

Carey and Co., Inc. "Inventory of Historic Resources: Burlingame Downtown Specific Plan (2008). Neither this report nor the guidebook listed above mention the post-WWII period of development in Burlingame.

On Henry Yanaga:

"\$2,000,000 Millbrae Project." *San Mateo Times*, November 3, 1959.

Brian W. H. Taylor. "Conversation Pit with a Peninsula View." *San Francisco Examiner*, August 21, 1960.

Robert J. Keeley. "Multi-Level Homes for Millbrae." *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 11, 1960.

"Girl Scout House." *San Mateo Times*, March 29, 1961. The drawing by Yanaga in this article does not exactly match the appearance of the building at 1101-1103 Juanita Avenue, but the 1963 city directory proves that the Girl Scouts did move their office into this building, as reported in the article.

"Firms Locate in Burlingame." *San Mateo Times*, April 16, 1962. On 1860 El Camino Real.

"Bacon St. Apt. Bldg. Project." *San Francisco Examiner*, November 25, 1962. Re: Pioneer Court in San Mateo.

*Oakland Tribune*, August 23, 1970, p. 49. On Yanaga joining Dukor Associates.

Molly Colin. "Vacaville Journal: They Lose Themselves in a New Maze Madness." *New York Times*, August 19, 1988.

Katie Dowd. "The history of the hottest, most ill-advised theme park ever made: The Wooz." *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 9, 2020.

Building permits for this address. At Burlingame City Hall. Available permits were summarized by city staff and sent to this writer. All permits are from recent years (1990 and later) and pertain to minor alterations, such as signage and interior work.

**Photographs of 1870 El Camino Real**



Two partial views of the front. (See the cover page for a full-width view.)





Two views of the front entrance bay. Note the non-original doors, and the sidelights to the right of the doors. A setback from the property line allows space for low concrete planters and some plants.





Top: The entrance and sidelights.



At left: The south part of the front of the building, showing a buttress-like extension of the south wall and a concrete planter.



Detail of steel sash window set in a wooden frame.



At left and below: Buttress-like extension of the north wall, with detail of wear. The photo below reveals the construction to be concrete block. Broken bits of brick on the surface reveal what may have been the intended coloration of the building before it was painted.





The north side of the building. Note the concrete base that increases in height with the slope of the land. The adjacent driveway is part of the subject property.



Above: The rear facade.

The white base is of reinforced concrete. Wall areas above, painted gray, are either concrete block or are of reinforced concrete scored to resemble masonry.

At left: Detail of the recessed entrance. Treads and risers are covered with vinyl. The paired doors are non-original.

## Other International style buildings in Burlingame

Close to the subject building



Above: 1860 El Camino Real (Henry Yanaga, architect; 1962). This is a purer example of the style than the subject building is. Note the recessed entrance bay topped by a W-shaped hood.

At right: 1850 and 1840-1846 El Camino Real. Only the latter of these (at right) is an example of this style.





1838 El Camino Real. Here the bands of windows are recessed behind a balcony.



199 California Drive. This is a half-block north of the subject building.

**Other International style buildings in Burlingame**



1499 Old Bayshore Highway (ca. 1960-1962)



1290 Old Bayshore Highway

1177 Airport Boulevard. The crown is a late addition, and fenestration may have been changed at the same time.



### Miscellaneous photographs



Above: Gas station at 1876 El Camino Real (built 1955). This property is being evaluated in a separate document.



At left: Row of eucalyptus trees across the subject property, in the median strip between the service road and El Camino Real. They are part of tree rows planted by gardener John McLaren in the 1870s.

**HISTORIC RESOURCE EVALUATION  
to California Register criteria, for  
1876 EL CAMINO REAL, BURLINGAME**



*Above: View looking southeast, showing 1876 El Camino Real*



*At left: An early photograph*

by

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## **Summary**

This is a gas station that was built in 1955 for the Union Oil Company. In 1976 the original canopy was replaced by a larger one, and at an unknown date alterations were made to the window bay and one of the garage bays of the office-garage building. Due to lack integrity and a lack of significance, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under criteria 1, 2, or 3. Please see the “Evaluation” section below, on pages 7-8, for more details.

## **Description**

This is a gas station that was built in 1955 and is located in the northeastern corner of Burlingame. The immediately surrounding area is commercial in character and was largely developed in the 1950s and 1960s. South of the gas station, on El Camino Real, is a row of several two- to four-story office buildings that were built around 1960. To the north, across Murchison Drive, are more commercial buildings, including an office building and shops. A parking lot is to the east, and beyond that are California Drive and the Caltrain right-of-way. The Burlingame-Millbrae city limit, and a Caltrain-BART station, are about one block to the north.

This gas station sits on a lot at the southeast corner of El Camino Real and Murchison Drive and that measures 125 feet (on El Camino) by 124 feet. Not counting a shipping container and a storage shed to the rear, five structures stand on the lot. They include the gas station itself, two small pump station islands, a large canopy, and a free-standing sign. These are described below. The rest of the property is paved for parking and maneuvering of automobiles.

The gas station is one story high and measures about 40 feet wide by 24 feet deep. The larger part of the building is devoted to an office, and the smaller part (to the right) is a garage bay for auto repairs. Most of the building is clad in sheet metal, and the rest is three narrow spans of brick veneer on the front. Visually, these spans of brick take the form of piers. Two of them are found at the corners, rise from ground to just above the roofline, and are three feet wide; while the third pier flanks the main entrance, is shorter, and is two feet wide. Windows have steel sash; on the front, they are grouped as pairs to either side of the entrance. The pedestrian door is wooden, with nearly full-length glazing. The garage bay has a roll-up door.

The rectangular canopy is clad in sheet metal, measures about 20 feet by 50 feet, and stretches from the building to just past the gas pumps. It is supported by the building at one end and by a single square post at the other.

Two gas pump islands are located beneath the front end of the canopy. The pumps themselves are modern, but the low concrete bases they rest upon appear to be original.

The sign is located at the northwest corner of the lot. It consists of a non-original “76” globe supported by a curved steel pole mounted on an original concrete base.

An early photograph of this building supplied by the owner, most likely from the County or the City of Burlingame, is very grainy but reveals that the front of the office and garage building has been altered. There were originally two garage bays, but one of the openings has been filled in to accommodate a larger office. The window to the left of the entrance was originally much larger, but it has been largely filled in by wall space, leaving smaller paired window.

The photo also reveals that the original canopy was much smaller than the current one. It had a somewhat trapezoidal shape instead of a rectangular one. According to building permits the new canopy was built in 1976.

## **History**

### History of Burlingame

Burlingame, and nearby Hillsborough, were part of a vast Mexican-era land grant, Rancho San Mateo, owned by the pioneer San Francisco merchant W. D. M. Howard. After Howard’s death in 1856 future owners planned park-like residential developments, but none of them were realized for four decades. They included an 1860s plan by the diplomat Anson Burlingame, one in the 1870s by the San Francisco banker William Ralston, and another in the following decade by Ralston’s business partner William Sharon. Sharon got as far as having a survey and map made, and naming the putative town Burlingame, but no development had occurred by the time of his death in 1885.

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As Burlingame continued to grow, notable institutional buildings were built. They include Burlingame High School (1923), St. Paul’s Episcopal Church (1927), the Burlingame Public Library (1930), and the First Church of Christ, Scientist (1930), all of which still stand. Other important church buildings include Our Lady of Angels Roman Catholic Church (1950) and St. Catherine of Siena Roman Catholic Church (1951-1952). The latter replaced an older church built in 1909.

In the 1950s and 1960s a building boom occurred in the eastern and northeastern parts of Burlingame, close to the Bayshore highway and San Francisco Bay. This included the area where the subject property is. One 1962 newspaper article (“Firms Locate in Burlingame,” *San Mateo Times*, April 16, 1962) stated that three years earlier, the 1800 block of El Camino Real “was nothing but empty lots.” Now it had become filled with administrative office buildings. The article named some of the new tenants, which included national firms such as Ford Motor Co., General Electric, Dupont, Foremost Dairies, and Western Electric Company. According to the article, the latter company would lease all four floors of the newly-built 1860 El Camino Real. The proximity of San Francisco airport and the Bayshore freeway (U. S. 101), and the availability of lots of parking, were cited as advantages that drew companies here.

#### History of this gas station

This has always been a Union or Union 76 gas station. A building permit reveals that it was built in 1955 for \$12,000. The owner was the Union Oil Company, with an address at 425 First Street in San Francisco. Occupants over the years, as revealed by city directories, were:

1958-1963. Jim’s Union Gas Station.

1965. De-Bo’s Union Service (Robert Knops, proprietor)

1967-1977. Burlington Plaza Union Station (Robert Knops, proprietor)

Other businesses were also located at this address during some of these years, according to directories. During 1961-1963 Purity Store and Grocery was here, and during 1974-1977 Steam System Carpet and Upholstery Cleaners was here. Whether these businesses occupied the office and garage building on the site is unknown.

As mentioned above, the new canopy was built in 1976. The date of alterations to the main building is unknown.

#### Union Oil Company of California

This corporation was created in southern California in 1890 as a result of the merger of three smaller firms. It began with twenty-two wells and one refinery, and eventually owned four refineries in California. Most of its gas stations were in southern California, in contrast to Standard Oil’s domination of northern California. By the end of the Depression it operated in six western states (Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, and Arizona, in addition to California).

The corporation produced more petroleum than it could market through its own gas stations and as a result sought to merge with a larger petroleum company to sell its surplus and broaden its reach. This it did in 1965 by purchasing the Pure Oil Company, which was strong throughout the east and the midwest. Although Pure Oil was much larger than Union Oil, it was the Union Oil name that persisted on gas stations as “Union 76.” In 1983 Union Oil reorganized as Unocal, and in 1997 Unocal sold its western assets and Union 76 brand to the Tosco Corporation. Tosco was subsequently acquired by Phillips Petroleum, which later merged with Conoco.

### Gas station styles through the 1960s

Five books on gas station design in the United States have been written about the architectural appearances of gas stations in the United States through the 1960s. These books are:

Daniel I. Vieyra, *Fill ‘er Up* (1979)

John Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance* (1993)

John A. Jaekle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (1994)

Michael Karl Witzel, *Gas Stations Coast to Coast* (2000)

Tim Russell, *Fill ‘er up!* (2007).

In addition to these books, photographs of early gas stations found at the Library of Congress and the San Francisco Public Library were studied for this context. Surviving early gas stations in San Francisco and in San Mateo County were also photographed.

In San Francisco during the 1920s and 1930s, the most common gas station type was a minimalist box built of steel and glass, from which radiated one or two sheet-metal canopies. Three examples of this gas station type still stand at 1100 Potrero Boulevard (1925), 1500 19th Avenue (1936; canopy removed), and 645 Judah Street (1938). By contrast, an equally small but more attractive gas station built of brick at 1455 Irving Street (1926) was rare or unique in its appearance; it was recently demolished.

During the 1930s and 1940s, in an attempt to make larger gas stations on prominent sites attractive, architectural styles similar to those used in regular buildings were used. Mediterranean-styled gas stations can be found at 1600 Mission Street in San Francisco (1930) and 1641 Palm Avenue in San Mateo (1932). An Art Deco station at 1601 Mission Street in San Francisco (1931) still stands but has been partially altered. A dramatic Streamlined Moderne gas station 888 El Camino Real in San Carlos (1946) is still used as an auto repair shop. According to an architectural guidebook (Cerny, 2007), it was once a Union 76 station.

The five books on gas stations cited above, and the photographs at the Library of Congress, reveal a somewhat similar progression of styles over time, but with

differences. In the 1920s the Pure Oil Company employed in-house architects to design homey, picturesque gas stations, first with Classical detailing and then in variations of English cottages. The intention was two-fold: to create a consistent, signature style throughout Pure Oil's geographic reach, and to defuse resistance toward gas stations in residential areas. The books suggest that the English cottage style persisted at Pure Oil into the 1950s.

Other petroleum companies also built picturesque gas stations, some with and some without historical references. The most common historical styles were probably Colonial and Tudor revivals, as well as English Cottage. Other gas stations were in what have come to be called "Googie" styles. These were located not in towns but along highways. Built in the shape of gigantic hats, or teakettles, or with dramatic sculptures such as shells (Shell Oil) or dinosaurs (Shamrock), they were intended to catch the eye of speeding motorists.

In the 1940s the Streamlined Moderne style became common for gas stations across the country. Some were merely rectangular boxes with rounded corners, while others were more flamboyant, with towers and sculpted canopies. The 1946 station in San Carlos is an example of this type. Another Moderne-style Union Oil Company station is pictured in Margolies' *Pump and Circumstance* (page 80). It was in Tucson, Arizona.

1950s gas stations are not well-represented in the books listed above, and this may be because these were the plainest gas stations of all. If that is the case, then the subject property at 1876 El Camino Real is typical of the period. It is a plain steel box that once had a small, trapezoidal-shaped canopy. Its three narrow, brick-veneer piers may have been an attempt to add some texture to the building's otherwise stark appearance.

Before long, a reaction against this type of gas station emerged. In 1956 or 1960 (accounts differ) the Shell Oil Co. developed a new style for a station in Millbrae. The new design, called variously the "ranch" or "blend-in" style, was meant to blend in with new suburban tracts but ended up being used in cities as well. Both the shop buildings and the canopies had overhanging gabled, or faux-gabled roofs, and the shop buildings had low bases of brick veneer. Although they were made mainly of metal, they "mustn't look like metal," according to a review in the *National Petroleum News*. Shell built 3,500 such stations by 1966. (Jaekle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 1994.) Many of these still exist in the Bay Area.

Other oil companies copied this style. At the intersection of Fourth Avenue and Delaware Street in San Mateo, for instance, two gas stations with gabled shop buildings can be found. One of these gas stations has a gabled canopy, while the other has a flat-roofed canopy. A Union 76 station at 3701 Noriega in San Francisco (1965) had a gabled shop building with some faux-stone cladding, a flat-roofed canopy, and a brick planter box.

Despite some Ranch style references, these gas stations, in fact, did look metallic, and before long, all pretense of homey design was dropped. By the 1970s, it seems, new gas stations once again had a strictly functional look, with flat-roofed shop buildings and canopies. Walls were all metal, without texturing brick or faux-stone touches. The main difference between these gas stations and the plain boxes of the 1950s was that the 1970s gas stations were larger.

## **Integrity**

The seven areas of integrity are location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, association, and setting.

This building has never been moved, and so it has integrity of location.

Because the original canopy has been replaced, because the window to the left of the entrance has been filled in with new wall space and smaller windows, and because the garage bay to the right of the entrance has also been filled in, this building has lost integrity of design. For the same reasons integrity of workmanship and feeling have been mostly lost.

It seems likely that this steel frame and sheet metal building retains integrity of materials.

This still looks like a 1950s gas station, so integrity of association is largely retained.

Office buildings of the 1960s still stand to the south along El Camino Real and across Murchison Drive to the north, so integrity of setting is retained for the period of the 1960s onward.

Overall, because of the alterations, integrity is poor for this property.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation under Criterion 1 of the California Register: Resources that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.

This must be one of the older gas stations on the San Francisco peninsula. However, the alterations to the building — the replacement of the original canopy with a much larger one, and the filling in of openings to either side of the entrance — are very substantial alterations; thus, overall integrity is poor. For this reason, and because there are at least seven older gas stations in San Mateo County and in San Francisco that possess higher integrity, the subject property does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under this criterion.

Evaluation under Criterion 2 of the California Register: Resources that are associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.

None of the occupants of this building appears to have been notable in Burlingame or San Mateo County history. Thus, the subject property does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under this criterion.

Evaluation under Criterion 3 of the California Register: Resources that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values.

From the available early photograph and an examination of the present building, it is clear that this building has always been a plain box with an attached canopy. By any measure, it lacked distinction when new and still does. Accordingly, the property does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under this criterion.

## **References**

### About this building:

Original permit to build, dated 1955. From the City of Burlingame.  
Building permit for new canopy, dated 1976. From the City of Burlingame.  
Historic photograph ca. 1960s, supplied by the owner.  
Listings for 1876 El Camino Real from Burlingame city directories, 1958-1977

### About historic gas stations:

Daniel I. Vieyra, *Fill 'er Up* (Collier Books, 1979)  
John Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance* (Little, Brown and Co., 1993)  
John A. Jaekle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994)  
Michael Karl Witzel, *Gas Stations Coast to Coast* (MBI Publishing Co., 2000)  
Tim Russell, *Fill 'er up!* (Voyager Press, 2007).  
Mitch Postel and Ward Hill. "San Mateo County." In Susan Dinkelspiel Cerny, ed. *An Architectural Guidebook to San Francisco and the Bay Area*. Gibbs Smith: 2007. Old gas stations in San Mateo County are listed on pages 147 and 150.  
William Kostura. Research on surviving old gas stations in San Francisco.

### On Burlingame:

Mitch Postel and Ward Hill. "San Mateo County." In Susan Dinkelspiel Cerny, ed. *An Architectural Guidebook to San Francisco and the Bay Area*. Gibbs Smith: 2007; pages 139-141.

Carey and Co., Inc. "Inventory of Historic Resources: Burlingame Downtown Specific Plan (2008). Neither this report nor the guidebook listed above mention the post-WWII period of development in Burlingame.

**Early photo of the subject building**



The resolution of this photograph is poor. It is nevertheless evident that the window to the left of the entrance was much larger than the present window is; and that this building had two garage bays, instead of the one now present. Note also the smaller canopy. This photo was supplied by the owner.

Photos of the subject building



Perspective views looking SE (top), NE (middle), and SW (bottom)



Above: Perspective view looking NW. These steel windows are probably original.

Below: The front of the office building. The windows are non-original. Two of the three brick-veneer piers are visible in this photo.





The non-original canopy



Gas pumps with original base, and pole sign



Building permits

18757

Plumbing Permit No. .... Street El Camino & Murchison  
 Contractor ..... Lot 1 Block 0 Sub Mills Es. #1  
 No. Fixtures ..... Fee ..... Date 1/26/55 Setback .....  
 Permit No. I-299 Dep. ....  
**INSPECTION**  

IST	SEWER	FINAL
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 Cost 12,000. Fee .....  
 Owner Union Oil Co.  
 Address 425 First St. S.F.  
 Electric Permit No. .... Builder ?  
 Contractor ..... Address .....  
 Lights ..... Sw. .... Pg. ....  
 Date Inspection ..... Fee ..... New Service Station  
 Fixture Permit No. ....  
 Contractor .....  
 No. Fixtures ..... Fee .....  
 Date Inspection .....

Top: original permit (1955). Bottom: permit for new canopy (1976).

8660 1500

**BUILDING INSPECTION DEPARTMENT**  
**CITY OF BURLINGAME**

**APPLICATION FOR BUILDING PERMIT**

APPLICANT (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)		CLASS OF WORK		File	Approval	Bldg. Permit No.
OWNER	Name <u>UNION OIL COMPANY</u>	New	Demolish	<u>1/5</u>	<u>1/1</u>	<u>W4103</u>
	Mail Address <u>1148 CANAL BLVD.</u>	Alteration	Repair			
	City <u>BURLINGAME</u> Tel. No. <u>235-7000</u>	Addition	Moving			
ARCHITECT/ENGINEER	Name <u>ROBERT W. LEE &amp; ASSOC.</u>	Use of Building <u>03 674 RC</u>		B. F.	<u>93 HO</u>	Date Issued <u>5/25/76</u>
	Address <u>PIER 40</u>	Size of Building			<u>59 84</u>	VALUATION Sw. <u>90,000</u> Tot.
	City <u>S.F.</u>	No. of Rooms	No. of Families		<u>19,477 07 22</u>	
State License No. <u>751-3155</u>	No. of Floors	Size of Lot				
CONTRACTOR	Name	PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS		DESCRIPTION OF WORK		
	Address	SUBMITTED: Date		NEW canopy.		
	City	Approvals:		PJ AMT INC.		
REGISTRATION	Subdivision <u>BULLS ESTATE #1</u>	Bldg. Dept. _____ Date _____		TABLE ALL READER		
	Lot No. <u>242 101</u> Blk. No. <u>1</u>	Fire Dept. _____ Date _____		WORK ORDER SIDEWALK		
	Street <u>1876 EL CAMINO REAL</u>	Planning Dept. _____ Date _____		TO 11413.		
Nearest Cross Street <u>MURCHISON</u>		I certify that I have read this application and state that the above information is correct. I agree to comply with all City Ordinances and State laws relating to building construction. I certify that in the performance of the above work I shall not employ any person in violation of the Labor Code of California relating to Workmen's Compensation Insurance.				
<b>REQUIRED INFORMATION</b>		<b>CONTRACTORS SIGN BELOW</b>				
Use of Building (Occupancy) <u>SERVICE STATION</u>	I certify that I am a licensed contractor and that my license is in full force and effect.					
District (RI etc.)	Contractor _____ By _____ Authorized Agent					
Fire Zone	<b>OWNER-BUILDER SIGN BELOW</b>					
Type of Construction	I certify that I am exempt from the provisions of Chap. 9, Div. 3, B. and P. Code (Contractor's License Law) because: (check one)					
Floor Area—Main Fl.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am the owner of the above property and will personally perform the above work.					
Floor Area—Accessory Bldg.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am the owner of the above property and I will contract to have all of the above work performed by licensed contractors.					
Total Floor Area	Owner's Signature <u>[Signature]</u> By _____ Authorized Agent					
Number of Stories	Total Height	REVISIONS APPROVED: _____ Date _____				
Number of Living Units	I hereby acknowledge that I have read this application and that the above statements are correct. I agree to comply with all ordinances and laws regulating building construction and zoning adopted by the City of Burlingame and the State of California.					
Area of Lot to be Covered	OWNER <u>ROBERT W. LEE &amp; ASSOC.</u>					
Front Yard Setback from Property Line	By <u>[Signature]</u>					
Side Yard Setback from Property Line	Name _____					
Rear Yard	Address _____					
New Construction	Alter.	City _____ Zip _____				
Change of Occupancy from	Approved: <u>BUILDING INSPECTOR</u>					
Permit required from City Engineer for construction on or obstruction of any street or sidewalk.		By <u>[Signature]</u>				

## Surviving old gas stations in San Francisco and San Mateo County



1100 Potrero Boulevard (1925). This is what most 1920s gas stations in San Francisco looked like.



1500 19th Avenue (1936). If this had a canopy it has been removed.



645 Judah Street (1938)



At left: 1600 Mission Street (1930). At right: 1601 Mission Street (1931)



1641 Palm Avenue in San Mateo (1932)



Former Union 76 gas station at 888 El Camino Real, San Carlos (1946)

**Early Union 76 gas stations from John Margolies Roadside America photograph archive (1972-2008), Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division**



At left: In Tuscon, Arizona. At right: In Boise, Idaho.



At left: In Conneaut, Ohio. At right: In Jackson, Mississippi.



At left: In Kingsland, Georgia. This dates to ca. 1950s and of the buildings shown on this page is the closest to the subject building.