State of California — The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary #
HRI #
Trinomial
NRHP Status Code
Other Listings
Review Code Reviewer Date

 *Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder) 54 Waller St.

P1. Other Identifier: First Baptist Church

*P2. Location: ☐ Not for Publication ☒ Unrestricted *a. County: San Francisco

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: San Francisco North, Calif. Date: 1956 (rev. 1973)

*c. Address: 54 Waller St. City: San Francisco Zip: 94102

d. UTM: Zone: 10 mE/ mN (G.P.S.)

e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number (Map, Block, Lot): 0856/003

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries.)

The First Baptist Church at 54 Waller Street is located on a 137' x 221' corner lot on the north side of Waller Street between at Octavia Boulevard. Built in 1909, the First Baptist Church is a four-story, steel frame religious building designed in the Classical Revival style. The square-plan building, clad in wood and masonry veneer, sits on a concrete perimeter foundation and is capped with a flat roof and dome. The raised basement story has stucco covering simulating ashlar masonry, and beltcourses divide the raised basement (first story) and second story, and the second story from the upper stories. The primary elevation faces south toward Waller Street and is thirteen bays wide, consisting of a seven-bay wide main block and six-bay wide wing. The secondary elevation faces east to Octavia Boulevard and is ten bays wide. The primary elevation has three entry bays centered on the elevation rising from the raised basement story through the truncated second story level. The center entry bay now houses an elevator shaft providing access to the street level. The entry has a shallow door hood with scroll brackets and the words "First Baptist Church" on the frieze. The central five bays on the upper stories of the main block have (continued)

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (list attributes and codes) HP16: Religious Building

*P4. Resources Present: ☒ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐ Site ☐ District ☐ Element of District ☐ Other

P5a. Photo

P5b. Photo: (view and date)
View from south
8/11/2006

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources: ☒ Historic
1909
SF Assessors Office

*P7. Owner and Address:
First Baptist Church Of SF
21 Octavia St
San Francisco, CA

*P8. Recorded by:
Page & Turnbull, Inc.
724 Pine Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

*P9. Date Recorded:
8/11/2006

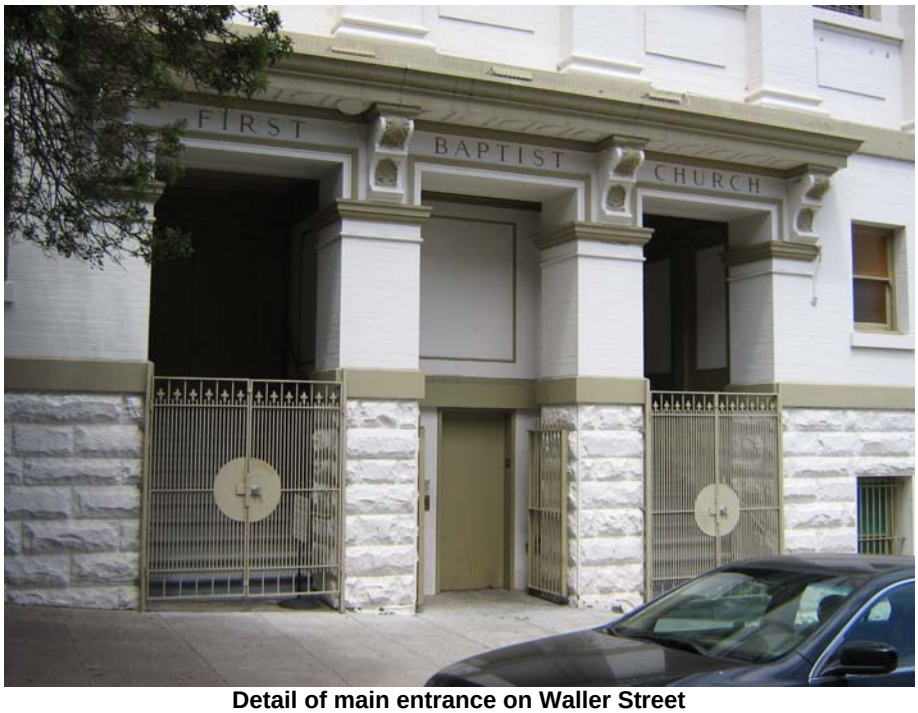
*P10. Survey Type:
Reconnaissance

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none") None

*Attachments: ☐ None ☐ Location Map ☐ Sketch Map ☒ Continuation Sheet ☐ Building, Structure, and Object Record ☐ Archaeological Record ☐ District Record ☐ Linear Feature Record ☐ Milling Station Record ☐ Rock Art Record ☐ Artifact Record ☐ Photograph Record ☐ Other (list)

P3a. Description, continued:
two-story arched windows divided by Ionic pilasters supporting a wide frieze, cornice with modillions, and a pediment. The arched windows have thematic stained glass windows. The end bays have sets of three windows consisting of arched and rectangular window openings divided by a spandrel panel. The Octavia Boulevard (east) elevation has a similar scheme, though there are no entrances on this elevation, and the central five bays have a straight cornice, without a pediment. The words “First Baptist Church” are centered on the frieze on this elevation. The wing extending west along Waller Street has two entrances with minimal architectural decoration at ground level. The central four bays of the wing project slightly and a beltcourse divides the raised basement (first) and second stories. The Waller Street elevation of the wing is clad in stucco, while the west elevation has wood channel siding. Windows on the wing are vertically divided three-over three-light, wood, double-hung sash. The street elevations of First Baptist Church terminate in a paneled parapet. The main block has a raised dome clad in metal shingle roofing, topped by a cross. A neon sign in the shape of a cross is affixed to the southeast corner of the building, and reads “First Baptist.” A later, single-story, steel frame and masonry addition extends west from the wing along Waller Street. This addition has a rectangular plan; a flat roof; and a gated, integral porch with concrete steps. The building appears to be in good condition.

View looking northeast from Waller Street



Detail of main entrance on Waller Street

Modern addition west of building on Waller Street

State of California The Resources Agency
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Primary #
HRI No.

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*NRHP Status Code 3S

Page 1 of 3 *Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 54 Waller Street

B1. Historic Name First Baptist Church

B2. Common Name 54 Waller Street

B3. Original Use Religious Building B4. Present Use: Religious Building

* B5. Architectural Style Classical Revival

*B6. Construction History
54 Waller Street was constructed in 1909. Alterations include an elevator shaft in the center entry bay and a one-story addition west of the building on Waller Street.

*B7. Moved? ☒ No ☐ Yes Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features One story addition located on Waller Street, west of building.

B9a. Architect Wright, Rushforth, Cahill . Builder n/a

*B10. Significance: Theme 1906 Earthquake and Fire Reconstruction Area: Hayes Valley - Market Street Corridor

Period of Significance 1906-1926 Property Type Religious Building Applicable Criteria A and C

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)

In regard to National Register Criterion A and California Register Criterion 1 (History/Events) this property is considered under the 1906 Earthquake and Fire Reconstruction context of the Historic Context Statement, Market & Octavia Neighborhood Plan Area, since it is both an identified building type (Religious Building) and dates from the Period of Significance (1906-1926) of that context. Based on its appearance, the building is also considered under National Register Criterion C and California Register Criterion 3 (Design/Construction). There is no indication the property is eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 2 (Important Persons) or Criterion 4 (Information Potential). Note: 52 and 54 Waller Street are located on the same parcel.

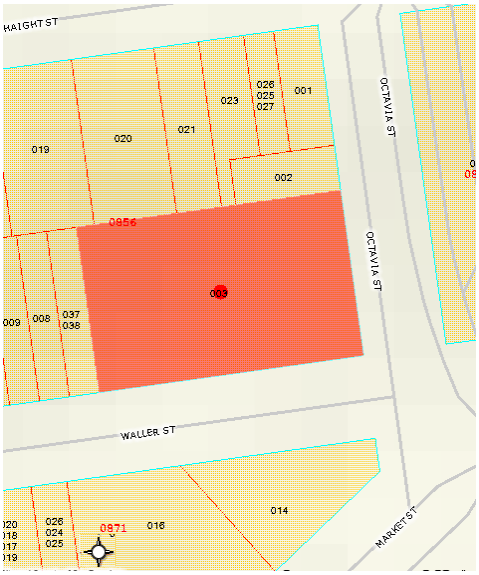
Criterion A/1:
54 Waller Street was designed by architects Wright, Rushforth, & Cahill and constructed in 1909 as the home of the First Baptist Church of San Francisco. (continued)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP16: Religious Building

*B12. References: Historic Context Statement, Market & Octavia Neighborhood Plan Area, Page & Turnbull, Inc. July 20, 2007

B13. Remarks

(Sketch Map with north arrow required.)



*B14. Evaluator Kelley & VerPlanck
*Date of Evaluation 5/1/2010

(This space reserved for official comments)

B10: Significance (continued)

Prior to construction of this building, the congregation, which was established in 1847 by the Reverend O.C. Wheeler, had relocated twice in 10 years: In 1900 the church was located on Eddy Street between Jones and Levenworth, and in 1907 it was at 1620 O'Farrell Street. In 1909, the present building was constructed on a large vacant lot. At the time of construction the church was headed by Reverend George Burlingame, who was later president of the Pacific Coast Baptist Assembly. The building continues to house the First Baptist Church of San Francisco.

The majority of Hayes Valley escaped destruction during the 1906 Earthquake and resultant fire, although some earthquake damage occurred. Afterwards, every available space seems to have acquired infill construction. As the demographics of the neighborhood shifted with the influx of earthquake refugees, the newcomers erected new buildings or adapted existing buildings to serve their needs. Ethnically, the Hayes Valley neighborhood had become much more diverse as evidenced by the profusion of ethnic organizations and religious congregations. Joining old-stock American Protestant denominations were a synagogue, a Japanese YMCA, and St. Paul's German Methodist church. The First Baptist Church of San Francisco is one of the more prominent church buildings extant in San Francisco, with a dramatic corner lot adjacent to the rise in the mid-Market Corridor.

54 Waller Street, with its 1909 construction date, Hayes Valley location, and building typology, clearly demonstrates an association with the 1906 Earthquake and Fire and Reconstruction period of significance.

Criterion C/3:

Architects G. Alexander Wright (1858-1918), George Rushforth (1861-1943) and Bernard Cahill (1866-1944) were partners from 1907-1913. In 1913, Cahill left the firm, which continued as Wright & Rushforth until Wright's death in 1918. Notable buildings completed by the firm include the Terbush Building at 515-19 Bush (1907) and the Hotel Whitcomb at 8th and Market streets, which served as the temporary City Hall after the 1906 earthquake and fire.

The Classical Revival style began to emerge in the United States during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, particularly in the wake of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The style became popular during the Progressive Era for major public buildings and churches, gradually disseminating down to residential buildings during the first decade of the twentieth century. Characteristics of the Classical Revival style include symmetrical massing and façade arrangement, typically massive scale (for most non-residential buildings), masonry cladding or stucco scored to resemble masonry, and the incorporation of classically inspired elements derived from both Classical Roman and Italian Renaissance architecture, including segmental arched openings, full-height piers and pilasters rendered in one of the classical orders, quoins, prominent door and window hoods, classical entablatures and stringcourses, modillioned cornices, and details such as cartouches or garlands on the spandrels panels and friezes. For public assembly or civic buildings, full classical porticos or domes were often used. In San Francisco, the Civic Center was designed in a monumental Classical Revival style known as the "American Renaissance."

54 Waller Street exhibits many characteristics of the Classical Revival style, including its symmetrical facades, rusticated water table, two-story arched windows divided by Ionic pilasters, modillioned cornice and pediments, and prominent dome.

54 Waller Street retains sufficient integrity to embody the distinctive characteristics of the Classical Revival type, period and method of construction.

Integrity:

54 Waller Street appears to have undergone few substantial alterations since its construction in 1909. Alterations include a recessed elevator within the center entry bay and neon sign, which has arguably acquired significance in its own right. The building retains all aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Conclusion:

54 Waller Street appears to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1 (History/Events) as a major church erected in the Hayes Valley neighborhood during the 1906 Earthquake and Fire and Reconstruction period of significance. 54 Waller Street also appears eligible under Criterion C and Criterion 3 (Design/Construction) as a well-preserved and intact example of a monumental Classical Revival-style religious building. Recalling the design of new government buildings being planned in the nearby Civic Center District, the building clearly expresses its association with a broad pattern of San Francisco's history, embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period and method of construction.

The one-story addition does not appear to be eligible for listing in the California Register because it was constructed outside of the period of significance.

(continued)

B10: Significance (continued)
Character Defining Features:
Character-defining features include the building's four-story height and rectangular massing, wood and masonry veneer cladding, fenestration pattern with two-story arched windows filled with thematic stained glass, Classical Revival ornament including string courses, two-story arched windows divided by Ionic pilasters; modillioned cornice and pediment, neon sign, flat roof, and dome.