

Draft

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Four Fifty Sutter Building

Other names/site number 450 Sutter Building; Medical-Dental Building; Four Fifty Building

2. Location

street & number 450 Sutter Street N/A not for publication

city of town San Francisco N/A vicinity

State California code CA county San Francisco code 075 zip code 94108

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Deputy SHPO

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

or Federal agency and bureau

State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

entered in the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register _____

removed from the National Register _____

other (explain:) _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-Contributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

-0-

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE – Business – Office Building

HEALTH CARE – Medical Business/Office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE – Business – Office Building

HEALTH CARE – Medical Business/Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT – Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Terra Cotta

roof: Asphalt

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1929

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Pflueger, Timothy L.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: San Francisco Public Library

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.61 acre (23,687 SF)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 10 0552140 4182629
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John M. Tess, President

organization Heritage Consulting Group

date March 27, 2008

street & number 1120 NW Northrup Street

telephone 503-228-0272

city or town Portland

state OR

zip code 97209

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name Jordan Schnitzer, Harsch Investment Realty, LLC, Series A

street & number 1121 SW Salmon Street, Suite 500

telephone 503-242-2900

city or town Portland

state OR

zip code 97205

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Four Fifty Sutter Building
San Francisco, California

Section number 7 Page 1

The 26-story Four Fifty Sutter Building is located at 450 Sutter Street in San Francisco. Specifically, the building is located on Lot 6 of Block 285 in the City and County of San Francisco, California. The building was designed by Timothy L. Pflueger for the architectural firm of Miller & Pflueger as a medical office building, opening in October, 1929. It has functioned in that use since opening.

Setting: The building is located a block north of Union Square in downtown San Francisco. The surrounding area is densely urban and has a variety of uses ranging from hotels, specialty retail, restaurant and residential.

Block 285 is a standard downtown San Francisco block. It is bounded by Sutter Street on the south, Bush Street on the north, Stockton on the east, and Powell on the west. It has three alleyways, two south off Bush – including Burritt Street that connects to the Allison – and one west off Powell. The block slopes steeply (approximately 45 degrees) up from Sutter to Bush, and less so (perhaps 15 degrees) from Powell to Stockton.

The block has 14 buildings. These are a high density mix of ages, size, style and uses, generally reflective of the surrounding area. Most of the buildings date between 1907 and 1913 and range in height between 4 and 10 stories. Four Fifty Sutter faces south onto Sutter on an interior lot. Adjacent to the east at 420 Sutter is a low-rise 1909 retail building. Adjacent to the west at 480 Sutter is the high rise Crowne Plaza hotel.

Site: Four Fifty Sutter is located on a 23,687 square foot parcel. It is rectangular in shape though the north (rear) boundary is irregular where meeting with the alley, extending slightly further on the east half. The building is built to the lot line at the south with no character-defining landscape features. The east and west walls are party walls. At the north (rear), the building has a loading dock and access to the parking structure that opens onto the Chelsea Place alleyway.

Structure: The building has three structural elements. The rear half of the lot contains a 7 story reinforced concrete parking structure that is generally built to the lot lines on the north, east and west. The south half of the lot, fronting onto Sutter, has a steel frame structure, also built to the lot lines. Above the 7th floor, the building is steel frame with concrete infill. Typical floor slab-to-slab ceiling heights are 11 feet.

Exterior: In form, Four Fifty Sutter consist of two parts: The first is a 7-story box built to the lot lines. On top of the box is a 19 story “T” shaped building with the length of the “T” running along a center north-south axis and the cross running east-west fronting onto Sutter. The exterior facades are similar in form. The building is vertically defined by repeated bays of slight “V” shaped windows separated from floor to floor by Mayan-decorated terra cotta spandrels shaped to match the windows; alternating between each window is a lighter beige colored terra cotta pier running from the ground to the roof.

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The south façade ground floor houses retail with terra cotta bases, cast metal frames and plate glass windows. At the center is a dramatic four story slightly recessed entry with Mayan-decorated grillwork covering windows; at the base of the entry is an uplifted metal marquee. At these levels, the windows are flush with the plane of the façade. Stylized Mayan hieroglyphics are carved into the terra cotta and are featured in cast metal window frames. Windows are similar throughout, casement style, metal and paired; at the corners, they are grouped into bays.

Interior: Four Fifty Sutter has 26 floors with approximately 268,587 leaseable square feet. Developed as a speculative office building for medical and dental offices, it has ground floor retail spaces flanking a central monumental entry. The most dramatic space is the lobby – a powerful architectural statement of marble and metal, crafted with Mayan designs and hieroglyphics to create a unique vaulted two-story space.

On floors 2 through 7, the building typically consists of a split-level parking garage at the north half that wraps around the elevator lobby and a single open floor along the south fronting onto Sutter. Above the 7th floor, the building typically has a double loaded “T” floor plate with the top of the “T” at the south, running east and west parallel to Sutter. Along the north-south stem, at the juncture with the top, is the elevator lobby with two facing sets of four elevators. Elevator lobbies are consistent from floor to floor with brown variegated marble walls with black marble baseboards, painted metal elevator frames and doors, plaster ceiling with a simple rectilinear cornice and wall-to-wall carpet. Light fixtures are modern and vary from floor to floor. Fire stairs are located behind the elevators on the east and west, with access from the top of the “T”. Toilets are located to the north of each stairwell, with access off the stair landing.

As speculative office space, floor plates and finishes have changed over time to meet the requirements of tenant leases. Some corridors have been slightly truncated. Corridors typically continued the finishes of the elevator lobby without the marble. Walls are gypsum board. Corridor floors are concrete with wall-to-wall carpet. Ceilings are plaster with a simple cornice. Office doorways have been inserted and removed. Doorways are typically metal frame with assorted doors from full glass in painted wood frame to modern hollow metal or wood. Demising walls between offices also have been inserted and removed based on tenant requirements and preferences; these are gypsum board. Ceilings are typically acoustical drop tile. Tenant floors are carpet over concrete. Office finishes are typically modern.

Alterations: On the exterior and interior public spaces (lobby, elevator, elevator lobbies), Four Fifty Sutter is largely intact. As noted, some hallways have been truncated based on leases. Leased interiors on all floors have been modernized over the years with new demising walls and finishes. The most significant change in recent history is the replacement of windows; the replacement window is a near match in form but of aluminum frame rather than steel. The new window has been reviewed and approved by the City of San Francisco, the California Office of Historic Preservation and the National Park Service.

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Four Fifty Sutter Building
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Four Fifty Sutter Building, located at 450 Sutter Street in downtown San Francisco, is eligible for the National Register of historic Places at the local level under Criterion C as an important example of the work of noted San Francisco architect Timothy L. Pflueger. The building is also an excellent example of the Art Deco style of architecture. The building has been previously evaluated on several occasions, each supporting this determination. This includes a December 21, 1998 letter from the then acting State Historic Preservation Office, supported by a State Historic Resource Inventory, a determination by the Federal Communications Commission at the same time, and a more recent, 2005, SHPO/NPS Part 1 – Determination of Eligibility. As noted in the survey, “[Four Fifty] remains of the city’s most architecturally important commercial structures.”

History of the Building

Four Fifty Sutter, San Francisco’s newest skyscraper, which towers to an imposing twenty-six story height above Sutter Street, opens today. The opening marks the completion of what is without a doubt the world’s most modern building devoted to the sole occupancy of dentists and physicians and closely affiliated activities.

(San Francisco Chronicle, October 15, 1929)

It is undoubtedly destined to influence the development of architecture not only on the Pacific Coast, but throughout the country, and perhaps the whole world when, if ever, the whole world builds as we do.

(Bernard Cahill, The Architect & Engineer, April, 1930)

With changes in real estate financing and construction technology, the 1920s was a boom era for real estate development nationwide. In particular was the rise of special use buildings, be it a movie theater, social hall, retail building or specialty office structure. Development in San Francisco reflected this pattern, with the addition of numerous new high rise structures. Examples include 225 Bush Street (1922), Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building (1925), Russ Building (1927), Sir Francis Drake Hotel (1928) and the Shell Building (1929). Much of this development occurred around Union Square which served as the City’s retail core with buildings such as the City of Paris and O’Conner Moffatt, and the St. Francis Hotel.

It was in this era that a Santa Cruz dentist by the name of Francis E. Morgan, Jr. met with architect Timothy Pflueger of Miller & Pflueger. They talked about developing a medical office building in downtown San Francisco. Without formal training (or as some would say, because of this), Pflueger was a rising star in the city’s architectural circles. Predominately a theater designer in the first part of the decade, he established himself at the city’s design forefront by receiving the commission to design the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building in 1923. Morgan’s proposed new building would be the second largest in the city – second only to Pflueger’s PT&T building.¹

¹ Pflueger, Milton T., *Time and Tim Remembered* (San Francisco, CA: Pflueger Architects, 1975), passim; Four-Fifty Sutter, 1929-39. (San Francisco, CA: Taylor & Taylor, n.d.), passim.

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The site, an interior parcel, was approximately a half-acre of vacant land. It had been the site of Temple Emmanu-el. The temple was the wealthier of two original Jewish congregations, representing German-born Jews in early San Francisco. Built in 1864, the temple was considered by many to be one of the most beautiful buildings in the city until its collapse in the 1906 earthquake. The land was cleared and the site left undeveloped through the 1910s and most of the 1920s.²

Morgan, in the guise of the Four Fifty Sutter Corporation, secured the land and in May, 1928, the new building was announced. As designed, it was to be dedicated specifically to the needs of the medical and dental professions, and in working up plans, considerable time was spent in conversation with doctors and dentists.³

Opening on October 15, 1929, the 26-story steel frame with terra cotta sheathing building took less than a year and a half to construct. The general contractor was Lindgren & Swinerton, while the terra cotta was provided by Hock & Hoffmeyer. By the time of its completion, Four Fifty Sutter had consumed 5000 tons of Bethlehem steel and with over 2,500 windows was the largest plate glass installation in the west.⁴

Adorned with Mayan hieroglyphics, the building blended dramatic design in the facades and first floor lobby with functionality and flexibility on the interior. The rear of the building features a 7-story, 450-car parking garage, accessed primarily by a ramp at the east off Sutter Street but with additional access from the rear off the rear alley. Floors 2-7 at the south with party walls to adjacent structures and limited natural light, were designed for medical supply operators with a single loft space per floor. Floors 8 and above featured a “T” hallway with a central elevator lobby and flexible space off the corridors. Office spaces were only finished out at the direction of the tenant. The design called for “V” shaped windows to maximize natural light and the building featured innovations as a water de-aerating machine that would be attractive to doctors. The first floor housed retail spaces fronting onto Sutter, with three spaces to the east of the entrance, two to the west and three interior retail spaces. Retailers included a florist, barbershop, cigar store, drug store and garage waiting room. Certainly, the most dramatic space was the lobby – composed of marble and cast metal, crafted with Mayan designs and hieroglyphics.⁵

Upon opening, the building was 75% leased. Among the tenants was the California Medical Association. At full capacity, it housed 286 doctor and 200 dentists—approximately 20% of the City's

² www.shapingsf.ctyme.com

³ Pflueger, Milton T., *Time and Tim Remembered* (San Francisco, CA: Pflueger Architects, 1975), passim; *Four-Fifty Sutter, 1929-39*. (San Francisco, CA: Taylor & Taylor, n.d.), passim.

⁴ San Francisco Chronicle, October 15, 1929, p. 28.

⁵ Ibid.

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total—with reportedly 18,000 people going in and out daily. The entire complex, including land, cost \$5 million of which \$1.5 million was for the parking garage.⁶

For over a quarter of a century, Four Fifty Sutter remained one of San Francisco's five tallest buildings. In 1953, it was sold by the owners to Max Abell, a Chicago real estate investor for \$6,500,000; at the time, it was the largest single real estate transaction in the city's history.⁷ The current owners acquired the building in 1962. The building continues as predominately an office for medical-related offices.

Timothy L. Pflueger, Miller & Pflueger

Timothy L. Pflueger . . . worked himself up from office boy to become the biggest downtown building architect in San Francisco.

(San Francisco Chronicle, November 21, 1946)

The son of a close-knit German immigrant family, Timothy Pflueger was born in San Francisco on September 26, 1892. His mother, Otilie Quandt, and father, August, immigrated to the United States separately in the 19th century. They met in Los Angeles, married in 1890 and shortly thereafter moved to San Francisco. They settled in a house at 1050 Guerrero Street, where Timothy was born and lived his entire life. His father was a merchant tailor with his shop on the ground floor. Timothy Ludwig Pflueger was the second of seven boys.⁸

All of the children worked at an early age to support the household and Timothy was no exception. At the age of 11, he started work at a picture framing shop. While in high school, at the age of 15, he apprenticed at the architecture firm of Miller & Colmesnil, starting as an office boy. Pflueger eventually forsook education for work and dropped out of high school. In lieu, he joined the San Francisco Architectural Club, formed to provide education and social activities for aspiring architects who could not afford college; Pflueger remained a member with enthusiasm. In 1910, Miller & Colmesnil appointed the now 18-year-old Pflueger draftsman. Less than two years later, in 1912, Pflueger design his first project, Our Lady of the Wayside in Portola Valley south of San Francisco. The "country church", today a California Landmark, is a successful if restrained Mission Revival design. At this same time, the firm's major project was the expansion of the Pacific Coast headquarters of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, a full-block "Temple of Commerce" neo-classical landmark originally designed by Napoleon Le Brun & Sons of New York. The original building was built to house the life insurer for a decade, but had to be expanded only five years after it opened. Miller and Colmesnil bid \$127,000 and won the contract to design two symmetrical wings

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ San Francisco Chronicle, August 33, 1953, p. 11.

⁸ Pflueger, Milton T., *Time and Tim Remembered* (San Francisco, CA: Pflueger Architects, 1975), passim; Withey, Henry F. AIA and Withey, Elsie Rathburn, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architecture* (deceased) (Los Angeles, CA: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970), p. 470-71.

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with balconies. The wings were constructed in conjunction with the Stockton Tunnel, which links Union Square to Chinatown. The 28-foot wide wings, opened in 1914, more than doubled Metropolitan Life's office space.⁹

Miller & Colmesnil dissolved their partnership in 1913, with Pflueger remaining a draftsman with Miller. During World War I, the twenty-six year old architect worked as a civilian with the Army Corps of Engineers. His work there concentrated on designing training facilities in Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico.¹⁰

Following the war, Pflueger returned to San Francisco and rejoined the now J. R. Miller firm as chief draftsman. One of first projects was yet further expansion of the MetLife Building, adding another 140 feet from Stockton Street to California Street. It was at this time that Pflueger worked with noted sculptor Haig Patigian and gained an appreciation for the integration of art and architecture – a hallmark of Pflueger's later works. At the same time, Pflueger was named President of the San Francisco Architectural Club.

The beginning of the 1920s were active for the Miller firm, with commissions that included Jefferson School, a Dodge Showroom, a firehouse in Redwood City as well as a number of smaller offices and residents. In this era, Pflueger worked largely in the classical palette but also began to expand his design repertoire. His first opportunity break the mold so to speak came in the spring of 1920, when a trio of brothers, William, Elias and George Nassar, came to see Pflueger about designing a \$300,000 movie theater in their Eureka Valley neighborhood. It was at this time, June of 1920, that Pflueger passed his architectural licensing exam and became a full-fledged architect. With this, Miller advised him to work on the Nasser theater alone. In the resulting design, Pflueger offered a dramatic and ornate Spanish Baroque. As their theater business grew, the Nasser Brothers both called on Pflueger again and recommended him to their friends in the movie theater business. In time, Pflueger designed a dozen theater the Alhambra, Tulare, Chico and Oroville, working in the Moorish, Egyptian and Moderne idioms.¹¹

In 1923, Miller named Pflueger partner and renamed the firm Miller & Pflueger. That summer, the firm went after one of the most hotly contested jobs in San Francisco: designing a corporate headquarter high rise for the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company. The building was to house two thousand employees for the wholly owned AT&T subsidiary. PT&T's President George McFarland interviewed principals in five architectural firms; with the recommendation of his chief building engineer, he select Miller & Pflueger. It was considered at the time an audacious gamble by PTT and represented Miller & Pflueger's biggest commission to date.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

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In developing the design, Pflueger initially experimented with Gothic styles, using conventional cathedral-like arches and spires. But he came across a sketch by Finish architect Eliel Saarinen for the Chicago Tribune Building. The Chicago newspaper had organized a competition for the “most beautiful and eye-catching building in the world”. Saarinen produced a design of unrelieved verticality creating a soaring, aspiring form. Ironically, the Tribune awarded the project to a gothic-inspired design while Saarinen received the second prize.¹²

With the Saarinen sketch in his mind, Pflueger spent a weekend at Fallen Leaf Lake near Tahoe mulling over his problem. There, in the mountains, Pflueger envisioned a design that embodied the powerful vertical lines of Saarinen’s tower and the clean, uncluttered strength and light reflecting textures of the Sierra granite. In July, 1924, Miller & Pflueger unveiled the design for what would be the tallest building in San Francisco – a \$3 million 26-story skyscraper. The resulting 435 foot tall Telephone Building, \$4 million in construction, was completed in 1925, the first architecturally modern skyscraper in San Francisco, embraced as “A Prayer to Stone and Steel”.¹³

It was shortly thereafter, that dentist Morgan approached Pflueger about the medical office building: “A building exclusively for physicians, dentists and affiliated activities . . . with garage facilities for up to 1000 cars.” In this design, according to his brother,

*Tim made his greatest contribution to the San Francisco skyline. With 450 Sutter the exhilaration that comes with sure awareness, insight and creativity bursts forth in every aspect . . . there is a strength and beauty unequalled in the previous eclectic work of the affluent '20s, here in San Francisco, or for that matter, in our county . . . it remains an example of architecture at its finest.*¹⁴

In his design for Four Fifty Sutter, Pflueger delivered an architectural triumph. He exploited the steel frame to create a unique building using setbacks, massing and decorations to emphasize the vertical. The exterior was a contrast of textures with bands of glass alternating with the sculptured Mayan designed panels and lighter colored piers extending from the street to the roof. The storefront level is decorated in terra cotta, marble and cast metal detailed with Mayan hieroglyphics flank a four story terra cotta and cast metal entry. The lobby, considered by some one of the greatest office lobbies in America, is 18 feet wide and two stories tall is finished in marble with elaborate Mayan hieroglyphic decorations crafted in marble, steel, glass, aluminum, bronze and silver with patterns picked out in red.

All the while, the upper floors serve efficiently as flexible office space arranged around double loaded corridors centered off distinctive, yet functional elevator lobbies. The front portion of the first seven floors is devoted to retail store and loft space, the latter intended to the accommodation of medical

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Pflueger, Milton T., Time and Tim Remembered (San Francisco, CA: Pflueger Architects, 1975), p. 11

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supply houses. All spaces above the seventh floor are devoted to physicians, dentist suites and clinical and work laboratories. All suites were initially built to the order of tenants, at the time a rather innovative quality. At the rear was a ramp-style split floor parking garage that incorporates both an elevator and man lift. It was estimated that a car might be delivered to the entrance within one minute.

When finished, Four Fifty Sutter marked the end of an era. Completed in October, 1929, the building opened just as the New York stock market crashed. It was the last major downtown building in San Francisco for nearly a quarter of a century.

As designs for Four Fifty Sutter evolved, Pflueger was also working on the 12-story San Francisco Stock Exchange Building at 155 Sansome Street. The building opened in 1930 and housed the offices of the brokers who worked the floor. Believing that great art should be an integral part of great architecture, Pflueger, one of California's earliest architects to incorporate Classic European Modernism into his work, commissioned a number of the era's most renowned artists and craftsmen to work on the project. The Pacific Stock Exchange Lunch Club is considered one of the best interiors in the Art Deco style in San Francisco, and among the best in California.¹⁵

Pflueger's success in the 1920s, both with interiors and exteriors, led the Paramount-Publix Theater, one of the great studio-theater chains that dominated the industry, to hire the architect for the Paramount Theater in Oakland. Financial pressure however forced Publix to sell the theater prior to its completion. It opened as the Oakland Paramount on December 16, 1931 as one of the Fox West Coast Theaters.¹⁶

In the later years of Pflueger's practice his outstanding achievements included the Cocktail Lounge at the St. Francis Hotel (1939), the "Top of the Mark" at the Mark Hopkins Hotel, Science Building and Gymnasium for the San Francisco Junior College, George Washington High School (1940), Union Square Garage (1942), I. Magnin Stores in San Francisco and other cities (1945) and his last work, the Medical Center for the University of California. During the mid-1930s, he served on the 5-member Board of Architects planning the 1939 Exposition on Treasure Island and personally designed the auditorium. He was also Chairman of the Board of Consulting Architects on the San Francisco-Oakland Bridge Project.¹⁷

On November 20, 1946, Pflueger died suddenly of a heart attack at his car on Post Street after his nightly swim at the Olympic Club. He was 54. In addition to his architectural work, Pflueger was noted for his activities in the arts community, being an active patron to the art schools, a board member and officer of the San Francisco Art Association and Vice President of the San Francisco

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.; www.paramounttheater.com

¹⁷ Withey, Henry F. AIA and Withey, Elsie Rathburn, Biographical Dictionary of American Architecture (deceased) (Los Angeles, CA: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970), p. 470-71.

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Museum of Art. In addition to the Olympic Club, he was a member of the Bohemian and Family Clubs, a Mason and a member of the Islam Temple of the Shrine.¹⁸

Comparative Analysis of Timothy Pflueger's Body of work

[The Four Fifty Sutter Building is] the best and most original of Pflueger's many contributions to Downtown San Francisco.

(The Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California)

Pflueger's greatest contribution to the city's skyline was the medical building simply known by its address – 450 Sutter.

(Harold Gilliam, San Francisco Chronicle, April 23, 1961).

Timothy Pflueger was not necessarily a prolific architect. Therese Poletti's Art Deco San Francisco: The Architecture of Timothy Pflueger identifies roughly 50 projects, including many smaller projects, dating back to Pflueger's start at an office boy at Miller & Colmesnil. These include office buildings, theaters, restaurant interiors, schools and hotels.

But what distinguishes Pflueger's work in general was his ability to create drama in his designs, while at the same time achieving the requisite functionality. He was noted for integrating art into his works, but as much this was simply a logical extension of his drive to create distinguishing places. A Pflueger building was to be experienced.

It is useful to compare his three major office projects: The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building (PT&T), the Four Fifty Sutter Building, and the San Francisco Stock Exchange. All three stand distinct, but carry similarities suggestive of a common approach. In each, he relied on massing and scale to create a modernist sense of verticality. Yet, for Pflueger, this was not sufficient; perhaps due to his theater designs, Pflueger also created a clear dramatic entry to the office tower that then ushered the visitor into an equally dramatic building lobby that gave the visitor a sense of arrival. It is this last quality, where Pflueger marries the traditional treatment of a movie palace entry/lobby to the office tower that he was particularly unique.

The PT&T Building was Pflueger's major commission. In scale, at 26 stories, 377,000 square feet, and \$4 million, it dwarfed his previous works. The building is distinguished by a strong verticality. When first unveiled, the design was both inspired by and compared to the seminal works of Eliel Saarinen, particularly his concepts for the Tribune Tower. The Pflueger designed offered clean vertical lines complemented by light-reflecting terra cotta textures and a tapering silhouette that the architect's likened to mountain peaks. The exterior was fancifully decorated in terra cotta with the signature "bell" and arrays of "short tubes" (suggestive of the receivers of candlestick phones). The

¹⁸ Ibid.; San Francisco Chronicle, November 21, 1946, p. 17; San Francisco Examiner, November 21, 1946, p. 1.

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interior featured sumptuous public spaces with a lobby of polished dark marble walls, contrasting marble floor, lacquered gold leaf metal work and intricately designed ceilings. At the same time, the building was designed to accommodate PT&T's 2,000 employees and serve as the division's headquarters. While New York's Woolworth Tower has been aptly named a "Cathedral of Commerce", the PT&T was called "A shimmering, gleaming monument to Talk".

The next major project was the Four Fifty Sutter Building. In scale, it was extremely similar to PT&T. It too was 26 stories but with a slightly smaller floor plate offered relatively less square footage. Located on an interior parcel just north of the retail core, the design challenge differed from the full-block and more isolated PT&T. And while also an office building, functional also substantially differed. In PT&T, 2000 employees worked a traditional schedule with a morning and evening rush to arrive and leave. Four Fifty housed roughly 500 doctors and dentists, in mostly self-contained suites, with patient traffic calculated at 4,000 people a day in a constant ebb and flow.

In design and materials, Pflueger again embraced the verticality and the decorative opportunities offered by terra cotta. He accented the vertical lines with the use of bay windows throughout, this aided the ventilation and light of the medical offices as well. To distinguish the ground level and entry, he created a dramatic recessed doorway and a cantilevered canopy. To further create a sense of the exotic, he relied on Mayan-inspired decoration both at the ground level storefronts and in the spandrels and facing. This exotic atmosphere was further crafted in the lobby of dark variegated marble complemented by contrasting marble floor and a stunning Mayan-inspired silver leaf ceiling, silver metal fixtures and elevator doors, almost suggestive of entering a tomb. Yet after leaving the lobby, the elevators lead to a very cost-effective and flexible "T" shaped double loaded corridor that offered a high degree of flexibility in organizing medical offices as potential tenants required.

The third office project was the Pacific Stock Exchange. Here the challenge was a bit different. His clients acquired the Sub Treasury Building at Sansome and Pine. Pflueger was asked to integrate an office tower addition to the south. In scale, it is considerably less than either PT&T or Four Fifty. Ironically, the corner setting in the middle of the Financial District was perhaps the most prominent of the three. Here, he delivered a strong simple modernist high rise counterpoint to the classically detailed façade of the Sub Treasury. Pflueger envisioned the north façade of the addition rising above and forming a backdrop. At the same time, to give the addition a sense of place, Pflueger continued his use of an enlarged recessed entry capped by a monumental element. And upon entering, the lobby follows the dark dramatic palette of both PT&T and Four Fifty, but in a stunning almost stage-like assemblage.

Among his works, Four Fifty Sutter stands notably apart and above. The building was the first west coast skyscraper designed to withstand an earthquake and the first San Francisco building planned specifically for doctors and dentists. But it is the creativity and boldness of integrating Mayan elements into the building that set it apart and distinguished it, and gives a sense of drama to the public spaces. And it is the attention to subtle details of function and efficiency for the building's very

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specific tenants that make it work. The total impact is that of a unique and successful building. Compared to the PT&T, Four Fifty Sutter is far superior in terms of the clearly defined entry with integrated lobby. Here, Four Fifty Sutter shows Pflueger's design progression and his growth in marrying his experience with theaters with offices. Compared to the Stock Exchange, while the entry and lobby are strong, the size of the commission – 3 bays deep and half as tall – does not allow Pflueger the skyscraper statement opportunity of Four Fifty.

The strength of Four Fifty Sutter has brought recognition: In 1939, the American Federation of the Arts included the ten-year-old building in an international exhibit on one hundred distinguished buildings. In 1984, the Art Deco Society of California designed Four Fifty Sutter as an Art Deco Landmark. The following year, on October 17, 1985, it was designated a City of San Francisco Landmark. The lobby is considered by some to be one of the great office lobbies in America and the building is typically featured as one of the "must see" buildings in the City's architectural guidebooks.

Timothy L. Pflueger – Chronological List of Projects¹⁹

Our Lady of the Wayside (Portola Valley, CA; 1912)
Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Addition (San Francisco, CA)
Jefferson School (San Francisco, CA; 1920)
Howard Bricknell Residence (San Francisco, CA; 1926)
Gunn Residence (San Francisco, CA; c. 1920)
Naify Residence (San Francisco, CA; 1926)
Paul Pflueger Residence (San Francisco, CA; 1926)
Family Farm Camps #104, 31, etc. (Portola Valley, CA; c. 1920)
J. E. French Dodge Showroom (San Francisco, CA; 1923)
Redwood City Firehouse (Redwood City, CA; 1921)
Castro Theater (San Francisco, CA; 1922)
Alamo School (San Francisco, CA; 1926)
Roosevelt Junior High School (San Francisco, CA; 1929)
Tulare Theater (Tulare, CA; 1927)
Alhambra Theater (San Francisco, CA; 1926)
Stock Exchange (San Francisco, CA; 1923)
Stock Exchange (San Francisco, CA 1930)
Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building (San Francisco, CA; 1925)
State Theater (Oroville, CA; 1928)
E, R. Dimond House (Woodside, CA; 1928)
Senator Theater (Chico, CA; 1928)
Royal Theater (remodel) (San Francisco, CA; 1928)
Four Fifty Sutter (San Francisco, CA; 1929)

¹⁹ Pflueger, Milton T., Time and Tim Remembered (San Francisco, CA: Pflueger Architects, 1975), p. 129-135; Therese Poletti, Art Deco San Francisco, p. 224-225.

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William Taylor Hotel (San Francisco, CA; 1930)
 Family Farm Alterations (Portola Valley, CA; 1937)
 Paramount Theater (Oakland, CA; 1931)
 Spencer Buckbee Residence Alterations (San Francisco, CA)
 Bethlehem Steel Company Building (San Francisco, CA; 1931)
 El Rey Theatre (San Francisco, CA; 1931)
 Alameda Theatre (Alameda, CA; 1932)
 New Mission Theatre (San Francisco, CA; 1932)
 New Filmore Theatre (San Francisco, CA; 1932)
 Standard Oil Company of California Prototype Service Station (San Francisco, CA; 1933)
 Bal Tabarin Night Club (San Francisco, CA; 1934)
 Pacific Greyhound Corporation Shops (San Francisco, CA; 1934)
 Cirque Lounge, Fairmount Hotel (San Francisco, CA; 1935)
 Vollmer House (San Francisco, CA; 1935)
 George Washington High School (San Francisco, CA; 1936)
 Delprat House (San Francisco, CA; 1936)
 San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (San Francisco, CA; 1936)
 Transbay Terminal (San Francisco, CA; 1938)
 Paulson's Store Additions (San Francisco, CA; 1937)
 Angelo J. Rossi Florist Shop (San Francisco, CA; 1939)
 Golden Gate International Exposition (San Francisco, CA; 1939-40)
 (Federal Building, California State Building, California Auditorium, Court of the Pacific)
 Livingston Brothers Store Alterations (San Francisco, CA; 1939)
 Patent Leather Lounge, St. Francis Hotel (San Francisco, CA; 1939)
 Top of the Mark, Mark Hopkins Hotel (San Francisco, CA; 1939)
 I. Magnin Store Interiors (Los Angeles, CA; 1939)
 Abraham Lincoln High School (San Francisco, CA; 1940)
 Mark Hopkins Hotel Annex (San Francisco, CA; 1943)
 United States Army General Depot (Ogden, UT; 1941)
 City College of San Francisco (San Francisco; 1940)
 (Science Building, Gymnasiums, Horticulture, Athletic Field)
 Union Square Garage and Plaza (San Francisco, CA; 1942)
 Hunter's Point Theater (San Francisco, CA; 1945)
 I. Magnin & Co. Store Building (Beverly Hills, CA; 1947)
 Department of State Transmitter Buildings (Dixon ad Delano, CA; 1946)
 Associated Broadcast Studios (San Francisco, CA; 1946)
 Office of War Information, Radio Station (San Francisco, CA; 1946)
 U. S. War Housing (San Francisco, Vacaville, Fairfield and Albany, CA; 1946)
 I. Magnin & Co. Store Building (Santa Barbara, CA; 1947)
 I. Magnin & Co. Store Building at Union Square (San Francisco, CA; 1948)

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Four Fifty Sutter Building is located on Lot 6 of Block 285 in the City and County of San Francisco, California.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary is the original and legally recorded boundary lines for the property for which National Register status is being requested.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Address: Four Fifty Sutter Building
450 Sutter Street
San Francisco Co., San Francisco, CA 94108

Photographer: Heritage Consulting Group
1120 NW Northrup Street, Portland, OR 97209

Date: August, 2005 (marked with *); March, 2008

Ink and Paper: Photographs printed on Epson Premium Glossy Paper with Epson Ultra
Chrome K3 Pigmented Inks

Location of Negatives: Digital images in possession of preparer

1 of 27*	Exterior View, Looking Northeast from the Southwest at Primary Facade
2 of 27*	Exterior View, Looking North from the South at Primary Facade
3 of 27*	Exterior View, Looking North from the South at Primary Façade Terra Cotta Mayan Detail
4 of 27*	Exterior View, Looking Northwest from the Southeast at Primary Facade
5 of 27*	Exterior View, Looking West from the East at East Facade
6 of 27	Exterior View, Looking West from the East at East Façade
7 of 27	Exterior View, Looking West from the East at East Façade Lower Floors
8 of 27	Exterior View, Looking Southwest from the Northeast at North and East Facades
9 of 27	Exterior View, Looking South from the North at North Facade
10 of 27	Exterior View, Looking Southeast from the Northwest at North and West Facades
11 of 27	Exterior View, Looking East from the West at West Facade
12 of 27*	Exterior View, Looking North from South at Main Entry at Primary Facade
13 of 27*	Exterior View, Looking North from South at Storefronts at Primary Facade
14 of 27	Exterior View, Looking North from South at Main Entry at Primary Facade
15 of 27	Exterior Detail, Looking North from South at Mayan Details at Storefront at Primary Facade
16 of 27	Exterior Detail, Looking North from South at Mayan Details at Storefront at Primary Facade
17 of 27	Interior View, First Floor Lobby, Looking North from South
18 of 27	Interior View, First Floor Lobby, Looking South from North
19 of 27	Interior View, First Floor Lobby, Looking West from East at Elevator Door
20 of 27	Interior View, First Floor Lobby, Looking South from North at Ceiling
21 of 27	Interior View, First Floor Lobby, Looking East from West at Corridor to Parking Garage

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- 22 of 27 Interior View, 4th Floor Elevator Lobby, Looking North from South – Typical of Elevator Lobbies on Floors 2-7
- 23 of 27 Interior View, 10th Floor Elevator Lobby, Looking North from South – Typical of Elevator Lobbies above 7
- 24 of 27 Interior View, 10th Floor North-South Corridor, Looking S - Typical
- 25 of 27 Interior View, 10th Floor, East-West Corridor, Looking West from Center - Typical