

# 2950 BROADWAY STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

## AN ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Built in 1922, 2950 Broadway was commissioned by Stetson George Hindes and designed in the Jacobethan Revival style by Frederick H. Meyer, a distinguished and prolific local architect. The house features the parapeted front-facing gable, polygonal bay with a crenellated railing, and first-floor terrace that characterize the Jacobethan Revival style. It also includes more general Tudor Revival elements: brick cladding, massive chimneys, a slate roof, and tabbed cast stone detailing and Tudor arches around window and door openings. Groups of tall multi-light casement windows with stone mullion dividers allow for generous natural light to enter living spaces. The building's asymmetrical floor plan accommodates a gabled wing containing a large garage, as well as a shorter wing containing the living room and the master bedroom. This wing, which commands views of the front garden to the south and San Francisco Bay to the north, displays a particular advantage of the asymmetry of the Tudor Revival floor plan. The informality of the Tudor Revival layout also allows 2950 Broadway to adapt to its steep site, as no rigid interior symmetry dictates the layout of multiple floor levels. The house is set back from the street, and a landscaped garden partially screens it from view.

Architect Frederick H. Meyer (1876-1961), a San Francisco native was a well known and respected architect in early San Francisco. Meyer was forward thinking and produced an eclectic body of work. In addition to 2950 Broadway, Meyer designed significant private residences such as 2430 Pacific and 1916 Octavia (currently occupied by the Academy of Art University) and downtown apartment buildings all notable for their elegance, stylistic variety, and modern features. In addition he designed many prominent downtown buildings including the Monadnock Building (1906) and the Humboldt Bank Building (1906). Meyer worked with two other well-known local architects to plan the new Civic Center in 1912; he also served as architect for hotels, industrial buildings, schools, museums, firehouses, power stations and hospitals.

Stetson George Hindes, the original owner of 2950 Broadway, was an engineer and the president of the San Francisco Bridge Company. The bridge company was founded in 1877 by John McMullen, who secured contracts to build a variety of bridges, docks, piers, and canals in the Bay Area and expanded to the rest of the west coast and Hawaii. Stetson Hindes joined the company in 1903 and had risen to president by 1919. Under Hindes' leadership, the company dredged and constructed the drydock at Pearl Harbor, built a large shipyard at Alameda, and secured the first contract for filling the cove where the triumphant Panama-Pacific International Exposition was held in 1915, in view of the house. Hindes and his wife had two children whom they raised in 2950 Broadway. Hindes was an amateur photographer and model railroad aficionado, and the top floor of the house was occupied by a darkroom, a photography gallery, and a space for his electric trains.

After Hindes' death, the house was purchased in 1968 by Joseph Blumenfeld, a local real estate and movie theater magnate who also owned the Oakland Oaks baseball club. The Blumenfeld family had opened its first theater, a North Beach nickelodeon, in 1917 and eventually owned over 60 theaters in California. Later, the Blumenfelds expanded to develop shopping malls and bowling alleys. In 1975, they sold 2950 Broadway to Sanford Lowengart Jr., an investment counselor. The property was purchased in 1978 by Melvin Belli, a nationally prominent lawyer who was both acclaimed and criticized for his successful personal injury lawsuits and innovative litigation tactics. Belli represented many celebrity clients, authored a number of respected legal texts, laid the legal foundation for consumer rights law, and acted in films and television shows. The property was sold to the current owner in 1992.