

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

UNIVERSITY MOUND NURSERY (Garibaldi Brothers Nursery)

HALS NO. CA-153

Location: 770 Woolsey Street occupies a full city block bounded (moving clockwise) by Woolsey Street to the south, Bowdoin Street to the west, Wayland Street to the north, and Hamilton Street to the east, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California.

37.723751, -122.409163 (Center of building at the southern boundary of the property addressed as 770 Woolsey Street, Google Earth, WGS84)

Significance: The subject property is historically significant for its association with the commercial flower-growing industry (floriculture) in San Francisco, and because it includes the last extant commercial greenhouses in a district that was once so thoroughly characterized by nurseries that it was known as the city's Garden District.

Description: NATURAL SYSTEMS AND TOPOGRAPHY
The University Mound Greenhouses are in the Portola neighborhood in the southeastern quadrant of San Francisco, a city known for its hills. The property is sited within a shallow valley on the eastern slope of a hill called Visitation Knob that rises to an elevation of more than 500 ft.

The topography of the block containing the greenhouses slopes downward from the northwest corner of the site to the southeast corner at Woolsey Street. While portions of the Portola neighborhood are buffeted by high winds and fog, the block containing the greenhouses is generally sheltered from inclement conditions due to the contours of the surrounding terrain.

Woolsey Street (the southern boundary of the property) reflects the historic location of Yosemite Creek, which originates at Yosemite Marsh in nearby McLaren Park (on Visitation Knob) and flowed east toward the San Francisco Bay before it was channelized underground in the 1930s.

The property was first platted in 1862 as part of the University Mound Survey during San Francisco's early urban development. It was used for grazing and remained ungraded, until the property was purchased by the Garibaldi family, who gradually graded the block to facilitate the construction of the nursery greenhouses. Woolsey Street was paved and graded by 1938; Hamilton Street by 1946; Wayland Street by 1956; and Bowdoin Street by 1968.

SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT

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770 Woolsey Street (APN 6055/001) consists of a rectangular city block that was first subdivided and recorded in 1862 as part of the University Mound Subdivision in southeastern San Francisco. The block historically included eight lots which were merged in 1952, and currently encompasses slightly less than 95,997 square feet.

The site includes eighteen greenhouses, each aligned along an east-west axis and clustered in two parallel rows separated by a north-south aisle. The greenhouses were intentionally sited to create optimal environmental conditions for growing commercial roses.

BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES, AND CONSTRUCTED WATER FEATURES
Each greenhouse is one story in height with a rectangular footprint, capped by an asymmetrical end gable roof (also known as uneven or three-quarter span roof) with a longer south-facing run. Seventeen of the greenhouses are approximately 30 feet wide by 120 feet long; the eighteenth is approximately 30 feet wide by 90 feet long.

The row of greenhouses along the east side of the lot contains ten greenhouses, nine of which abut the lot line along Hamilton Street: the northernmost eight greenhouses are contiguously sited in an arrangement known as ridge-and-furrow, and the two southernmost greenhouses are free-standing. The southernmost greenhouse is located behind the boiler house building (described further below) and has a smaller 30 by 90-foot footprint. Historic photographs indicate that the eight contiguous greenhouses and one free-standing greenhouse were constructed prior to 1925, likely in 1922, the year directly after the property was purchased by the Garibaldi family, and the smaller greenhouse behind the boiler house was constructed between 1925 and 1938. The free-standing greenhouses on the east side of the lot are partially collapsed and in poor condition.

On the west side of the lot, along Bowdoin Street, there are eight greenhouses. The greenhouses are largely obscured from view at the street level by a vertical board and plywood fence, and some details of their construction were not discernable during a site visit. The northernmost greenhouse is sited approximately 60 feet from the north lot line, and the remaining greenhouses are arranged either very closely or contiguously. Historic photographs and permit records indicate that the northernmost three greenhouses were designed by architect Robert Nordin and constructed in 1951; the four greenhouses south of these were constructed between 1921 and 1925; and the southernmost greenhouse was constructed between 1925 and 1938. The northernmost greenhouse is partially collapsed, while the three directly south of it are nearly completely collapsed.

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The greenhouses are wood frame construction. Side walls are four feet six inches to the eaves, while the total height of each greenhouse is approximately 14 feet at the ridgeline. Side walls are composed of a 12-inch concrete perimeter wall, surmounted by a 29-inch cheek wall clad in horizontal redwood siding, above which redwood framing holds 16 by 18-inch panes of glass. The ridge-and-furrow greenhouses have continuous interior spaces. Greenhouse roofs are supported by redwood posts and are composed of redwood sash bars and purlins holding 16 by 18-inch panes of glass. The glazing throughout the property has deteriorated over time and is in poor condition.

Some support posts are set within concrete cone footings with steel bottom braces. The ridgeline of each greenhouse is articulated by a roof ventilator which is operated from within the greenhouse by a metal pulley and chain system. Dimensional lumber embedded in the packed earth floors of the greenhouses divides the area into planting beds; the original above-ground beds have been removed and their historic arrangement is unknown.

Each greenhouse has two entrance doors located at the center of each end wall. Entrances are above the concrete perimeter wall and consist of flush vertical wood door panels that slide sideways on interior rails: some doors are operated by simple finger holes cut into the panel. At the ridge-and-furrow greenhouses, wood box gutters span the conjunction of the eaves and are capped at their ends by projecting metal downspouts with a tapered profile.

On the west side of Hamilton Street, approximately 65 feet north of Woolsey Street, there is a one-story building with an approximately 20-foot by 30-foot rectangular footprint, clad in horizontal wood siding and capped by an asymmetrical front-gable roof with a longer south-facing run. This building was constructed prior to 1925 (likely in 1922, the year after the Garibaldi family purchased the property) and historically housed the boiler used to heat water and pump heated water into the greenhouses. A tall wide-gauge metal chimney with a metal chimney cap rises from the ridgeline at the west side of the building and is currently anchored by cables. At the primary (east) façade there is a boarded-over pedestrian entrance left of center and a rectangular vented opening at the gable peak. At the south façade there is a horizontally-oriented five-lite wood-sash hopper window at the left side. At the rear (west) façade there is a wide boarded-over entrance door and a rectangular vented opening at the gable peak. The north façade has no fenestration. Metal pipes project from the rear (west) and north facades and travel along the center aisle of the site, supported on an aluminum trellis system, and connect to each greenhouse. The roof of the boiler house has collapsed and is in poor condition.

Infrastructure used to transmit heated water to steam heat the greenhouses connect the boiler house and the greenhouse structures. Metal pipes traveled from the boiler along the central aisle before branching off into each greenhouse.

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Drip hoses are also visible along the packed earth floor of the greenhouses and were likely connected to the same water distribution system.

On the north side of Woolsey Street at the south end of the central aisle there is a one-story building with an approximately 36-foot by 60-foot rectangular footprint, clad in horizontal wood siding and capped with a low-pitched front gable roof with projecting boxed eaves. This building was constructed prior to 1958 (ca. 1958) and historically served as an office and storage. The primary (south) façade is set back from Woolsey Street approximately three feet and includes a large plywood overhead vehicular entrance at right, accessed by a short, paved driveway. At left there is a fixed, nine-light steel sash window, which has no glass and is boarded over from the inside of the building. The east and west facades have small vented openings evenly spaced below the eaves and no fenestration. The rear (north) façade was not directly viewed during a site visit but has three boarded-over windows and a pedestrian door. A shed-roof addition clad in vertical wood siding projects from the right side of the east façade and has no fenestration.

There are two horizontally-mounted metal tanks directly east of this building: one is located east of the shed-roof addition and the other, an 18,000-gallon boiler tank, is located south of the shed-roof addition. The boiler tank was installed in 1953. An underground cistern or artesian well covered by a wood platform is located at the southwest corner of the lot.

VEGETATION

Two types of vegetation are present on the property: vegetation that was historically cultivated during the nursery's period of significance and remains extant (but unmanaged), and invasive vegetation that has been introduced to the site since the nursery closed in the 1990s.

Inside the greenhouses roses that date to the historic period continue to grow but are not maintained and are in poor health. They have contributed to the deterioration of the greenhouses structures by expanding through the foundations and the glazing. Further information on the types of roses and other flowers that were historically grown at the nursery is included under History. Additional vegetation including grasses and volunteer trees (species unknown) have also taken root in the greenhouses since the nursery closed. Clusters of blackberry bushes are located along the western edge of the property and it is unknown if they date to the historic period of cultivation on the property or took root more recently.

Portions of the lot that were historically used for outdoor flower cultivation are overgrown with scrubby grasses and shrubs, including approximately 5,500-sf at the southwest corner of the lot; 6,120-sf at the southeast corner of the lot; and 6,450-sf at the northwest corner of the lot. Three fruit trees (species unknown;

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possibly a mix of stone fruit and/or apple varieties) are located within the former outdoor cultivation area at the southwest corner of the lot, immediately to the west of the office and storage building. Three more are within the outdoor cultivation area at the northwest corner of the lot. They were planted by the Garibaldi family at an unknown date and were likely grown for consumption by the family. The trees adjacent to the office are staked, but all the fruit trees are in poor condition due to a lack of maintenance and care during the two decades since the nursery ceased operation.

CONDITION

Today, the east facades of the nine greenhouses that abut Hamilton Street are boarded over with plywood above their curtain walls. The remainder of the site, including the perimeter along Woolsey and Bowdoin streets and a portion of Wayland and Hamilton streets, is enclosed by a vertical board fence reinforced in places by additional plywood. The city maintains concrete sidewalks along the east and south edges of the property, along Hamilton and Woolsey Streets, and concrete curbs enclose the full block.

The property has not been occupied since the nursery ceased operation in the 1990s (see *History* section below). The greenhouses and the boiler building appear to have fallen into disrepair between the years 2000 and 2020 as a result of general neglect and non-use. During this period the block also became overgrown, with scrubby brush taking over the former outdoor cultivation areas and a mix of roses and other types of vegetation taking over the interior of the greenhouses. Overall the property is in poor condition.

SETTING

The surrounding neighborhood contains a mix of open space and residential use. The property faces residential buildings across Wayland, Hamilton, and Woolsey Streets, all of which are one or two stories in height and were constructed between 1929 and 1961. The south basin of the University Mound Reservoir, built in 1936, is located west of the property across Bowdoin Street. Three one-story buildings associated with the operation of the reservoir are located at the northwest corner of Woolsey and Bowdoin streets. The reservoir basin sits within a raised mound above the greenhouses and is capped with a concrete cover. The perimeter of the raised mound is lined with Monterey cypress trees.

History:

FLOWER NURSERIES IN THE PORTOLA DISTRICT

Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, the area then called the University Mound District was largely characterized by cattle grazing and dairy uses. These uses declined around the turn of the twentieth century, due in part to increased residential development and new homeowners who protested wandering cattle and the smell of animal waste. Departed cattle corrals and dairy farms left behind open land and well-fertilized soil, ideal for the establishment of the flower nurseries. The district also was well connected via roads to the downtown

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wholesale flower markets and the cemeteries in Colma, just south of San Francisco.

The first commercial flower-growing operation in the University Mound District was established in 1865 by Scottish-born farmer William Patterson. In 1887, Columbus Ferrari became the first Italian immigrant to establish a flower nursery in the University Mound District. Ferrari grew roses and, after his death in 1903, three of his five sons expanded the family nursery to cover multiple blocks, where they grew roses, orchids and gardenias. The Ferrari Brothers nursery was the largest nursery in the University Mound District and was described in the press as one of the largest flower-growing establishments on the West Coast. In 1889, Belgium-born immigrant Joseph Gregoire (sometimes anglicized to Gregory) established a nursery in the district, which he expanded to cover multiple blocks by 1900. Gregoire grew carnations and was credited in his obituary as the first grower to develop and widely distribute carnations in California.

In the years directly before the turn of the twentieth century, flower nurseries in the University Mound District were established and operated by European immigrants from a spectrum of countries. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, the number of nurseries in the district began to rise sharply, and most of these new nurseries were established by Italian immigrants. Between 1880 and 1920, more than 20,000 Italians immigrated to San Francisco, eighty percent of them from agricultural regions of northern Italy. These immigrants overwhelmingly moved to the city's southeastern districts and settled into work in the agricultural industry.

Most Italian nursery owners, as with nursery owners of other nationalities in the neighborhood, were married with large families, and brothers-in-law, grown sons, and sons-in-law worked in the family business. Daughters worked as well, generally in a lesser or part-time capacity, with specific tasks or lighter chores. Wives raised the children, kept house, and fed the family and other workers. Nursery work was labor-intensive and year-round, and nursery owners often hired additional laborers, generally recent immigrants who spoke their same language. Nursery owners generally lived in a single-family home on their property, while hired laborers lived elsewhere in the neighborhood, or on-site, in older houses or other ancillary buildings.

Nurseries ranged in size from one greenhouse on a single lot to multi-greenhouse complexes that filled a full city block or even multiple blocks. By 1925, the area that was by then called the Portola District reached its peak concentration of flower growers, with 21 nurseries operating in the neighborhood, 15 of which were operated by Italians. Nursery expansion was abruptly halted by the onset of the Great Depression, when existing businesses suffered financially or through displacement via infrastructure expansion in the district. In 1936-37, the massive

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University Mound Reservoir was expanded, displacing several greenhouses. And, beginning in the 1930s and continuing through the 1950s, the city incrementally purchased private land, and later condemned and forcibly possessed certain lots, to expand the size of McLaren Park. By 1940 only ten nurseries continued to operate in the Portola District.

During World War II, the celebrations and memorials of wartime enabled many Portola District flower nurseries to stay in business, and the industry was boosted by a strong post-War economy. In the 1950s and 1960s, nurseries invested in modernized equipment including new boilers to pump warm moist air through greenhouses and new systems to circulate chemical pesticides and fungicides.

However, post-War population increases created a very strong demand for single-family housing, and many nursery owners opted to sell their large land holdings to developers. Growers in the Portola District were also significantly impacted during these years by changes in the wholesale flower market (see FLORICULTURE IN THE BAY AREA below). Demographic factors also contributed to the decline of the Portola District's flower nurseries. The majority of the district's nurseries were established between 1900 and 1920 by Italian immigrants, many of whom were able to pass their family businesses on to a second generation. But financial success enabled later generations to attain higher education and transition into professional fields, leaving the hard labor of flower growing in the past. Additionally, as first- and second-generation growers retired, some experienced the negative health effects of their industry's reliance on unregulated pesticides, potentially further souring younger generations' desire to continue in this line of work. For these reasons, many nurseries in the Portola District closed after the second generation of growers retired.

By 1970, there were five flower nurseries operating in the Portola District, four of which had been operating in the neighborhood for over fifty years. However, all were closed by the early 1990s, and the only remaining greenhouses in the Portola District are located at the University Mound Nursery site.

THE GARIBALDI FAMILY

On March 15, 1921, dairy farmer Bernard Cassou sold his dairy farm, including the block where the greenhouses were later constructed and the block directly to the east, to five brothers: Vittorio, Antonio, Giovanni, Ernesto, and GioBatta Garibaldi. The Garibaldi brothers established a nursery at the subject site which they ran for the following seven decades.

The Garibaldi brothers were born in Italy in Frissolino, a small community in Ne, an agricultural area in the Liguria region, directly east of Genoa. Vittorio Garibaldi (1881-1941) was the eldest and the first to arrive in the United States in 1900. He initially settled in the Italian enclave of North Beach. In 1904 he married Margaret Valpone, and by 1907 the couple lived in a house that they

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owned at 14 Crane Street in the Portola District. The remaining four Garibaldi brothers arrived in San Francisco in order of birth between 1903 and 1921, married, and lived with their oldest brother on Crane Street.

Prior to purchasing the property and establishing their nursery, the Garibaldis do not appear to have had any experience growing flowers, and they did they not work at any of the established Italian-owned flower nurseries in the University Mound District: of the four brothers who were residing in San Francisco in 1920, Vittorio was a carpenter, Antonio a blacksmith, Giovanni a boilermaker, and Ernesto a laborer. Collectively the brothers were familiar with construction, physical labor, and the operation and maintenance of machinery, all of which were integral to the work of wholesale flower-growing. Additionally, Italians and Italian Americans had access to capital via the Bank of Italy, which would become the enormously powerful Bank of America.

After the Garibaldis purchased the property and the block directly east in March of 1921, they set about organizing the largely undeveloped land into a commercial flower growing operation. Vittorio Garibaldi, as the oldest brother, was understood to be the “boss” of the business, and he moved with his wife and children to the southeast corner of Hamilton and Wayland streets. The rest of the brothers remained at Crane Street for several years as the greenhouses were constructed and the flower crops became established. According to family recollection, the Giovanni brothers constructed the greenhouses and the boiler building themselves, a practice common amongst the other flower-growing families in the neighborhood.

CONSTRUCTION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NURSERY

While it is not known if the Garibaldi brothers used a pattern book or some other blueprint for construction of their greenhouses, they do appear to have followed standard greenhouse design for “rose houses,” the form of which were “practically the same the country over,” as described in *Greenhouse Construction; A Complete Manual on the Building, Heating, Ventilating and Arrangement of Greenhouses and the Construction of Hotbeds, Frames, and Plant Pits*, a manual for home and commercial greenhouse construction published in 1893. The manual describes typical rose houses as capped by a three-quarter span (asymmetrical) gable roof, and ranging in width from 16 to 20 feet, with roses grown in three or four rows of shallow beds. Wood construction, with “wooden walls up to the plate,” are described as the cheapest to build and easiest to heat, with an estimated construction cost of between \$1,098.50 and \$1,208.50 (between \$2,080 and \$2,289 in 1921), including lumber, glass, and heavy outlays for the necessary water heater and metal pipes. The cost of labor was included in this estimate, and it was presumed that many growers would do this work themselves.

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The earliest photograph of the University Mound Nursery was taken circa 1925 and shows 13 greenhouses, including nine on the east side of the rectangular lot, facing Hamilton Street, and four on the west side of the lot, facing Bowdoin Street, as well as the boiler building. Additional features include two large wood water tanks on wood risers at the northwest corner of the lot, and a windmill on the south side of the lot, near Woolsey Street. The northwest portion of the lot appears to have been cultivated, and there was standing water at the southeast portion of the lot, likely seepage from the creek bed of Yosemite creek. The block to the east, part of the Garibaldi family property, was cultivated with row crops, known as “outside stock.” A wood fence and hedge created a border and wind break on the west side of this lot, sheltering the field crops from the occasional fierce winds from the neighborhood’s western heights.

At the outset of their new endeavor, the Garibaldis planted roses in nine of their greenhouses, snapdragons in two greenhouses, and ferns in two greenhouses. However, ferns, a crop traditionally associated with Italian growers, were found to be unprofitable, and were soon replaced by more roses. Every two years rose bushes were pruned down to their stems, to promote regrowth. Outside stock included dahlias, delphinium, French marigolds, pansies, coreopsis, and several other varieties of flowers. All five brothers worked at the greenhouses, which produced flowers year-round, with little seasonal variation in output. Work included grading the roses – selecting similar size blooms and length stems – and tying them into bundles. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, Vittorio Garibaldi drove the flowers to the wholesale flower market in San Francisco in the family’s truck. In early summer, the greenhouses would be whitewashed to protect the flowers from the long hours of sun; winter rains washed the paint away.

Sons of the Garibaldi brothers worked at the nursery during the summer, and the family hired two full-time hands, also Italian immigrants, who lived on-site in buildings left over from the former dairy and ranching operations on the property. Work was done in heavy denim pants and jackets, to protect against thorns, and rubber boots, to protect against moisture. The University Mound Nursery appears to have been financially successful to a degree that it was able to support the construction of four new homes for the Garibaldi family directly east of the greenhouses, and the livelihood of five families plus two additional employees, within its first eight years of production.

An aerial photograph taken in 1938 indicates that two additional greenhouses were constructed before that year, including the smaller, southernmost greenhouse on the east side of the lot, behind the boiler house, and the southernmost greenhouse on the west side of the lot, facing Bowdoin Street.

Vittorio Garibaldi died in 1941, and Ernesto Garibaldi took over leadership roles at the nursery, including driving the flowers to the city on market days. Both

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Ernesto and Vittorio before him were members of the San Francisco Flower Growers Association (SFFGA), the Italian and Italian American flower-growers organization established in 1923, which, along with corresponding Japanese and Chinese growers organizations, set policies and managed the wholesale market (see FLORICULTURE IN THE BAY AREA below). While flower growers did not generally socialize with each other in the Portola District, the meetings of the SFFGA, held at the flower market, were usually followed by large, informal meals, or “feeds,” where growers and their families gathered and strengthened community bonds.

In 1951, Ernesto Garibaldi received a permit to construct two new greenhouses on the west side of the lot. The permit describes the new greenhouses as double-gabled, 60 feet wide and 110 feet deep, separated by a five foot passageway. The architect and construction supervisor for the new greenhouses was Robert Nordin (1896-1961), the son of prominent Swedish-born San Francisco architect August Nordin. An aerial photograph taken in 1956 indicates that one double-gabled greenhouse and one single-gabled greenhouse were constructed.

GioBatta Garibaldi died in 1951, after which his son Gerald Garibaldi joined in full-time operation of the nursery. In 1953, the Garibaldis installed an 18,000-gallon water boiler at the University Mound Nursery, which sent more moisture and heat, mixed with chemical pesticides and fungicides, into the greenhouses by a system of central piping.

By the mid-1950s, while production at the nursery remained steady, ancillary operating costs had risen to a degree that profits were not strong enough to support the livelihood of the Garibaldi families. Between May and July of 1958, first-generation members of the family sold their ownership percentages to second-generation family members Steve and Andrew L. Garibaldi. Between 1958 and 1959, the Garibaldi family also sold the lot directly east of the greenhouses, with the exception of their three homes on Holyoke Street, and the block was quickly subdivided for housing. The one-story office building at 770 Woolsey Street was constructed around 1958 to replace the older buildings on the east side of Hamilton Street which were lost after the sale of that block.

Of the remaining founding Garibaldi brothers, Antonio Garibaldi died in 1963, Giovanni Garibaldi died in 1967, and Ernesto Garibaldi died in 1987. Steve and Andrew Garibaldi operated their family’s nursery for over three decades, continuing to grow roses from the eighteen greenhouses at the subject site. Steve Garibaldi was the public face of the nursery, taking the flowers to the San Francisco Flower Terminal, while Andrew Garibaldi preferred to stay behind and run the nursery. The University Mound Nursery was one of the last active nurseries in San Francisco, outlasting a score of other nurseries that used to populate the Portola District. The nursery stopped operating following Steve Garibaldi’s death in 1990. Andrew Garibaldi died in 2002. The greenhouses and

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buildings on the site have been unused for 35 years, during which time the site has been neglected and fallen into disrepair.

BAY AREA FLORICULTURAL INDUSTRY

The first commercial nurseries in California followed the Gold Rush as some discouraged prospectors turned to plants to make their “fortune.” By the 1850s, Sacramento, San Francisco and the East Bay’s Niles area (now part of Fremont) held a number of extensive nurseries specializing in fruit trees, ornamental trees and flowers. A voluntary group of nursery and fruit growers, the State Horticultural Society, began meeting in San Francisco in 1879 to share knowledge and secure state aid for their endeavors. County Boards of Horticultural Commissioners followed soon after.

By the 1890s large nurseries (at times comprising hundreds of acres) circled the San Francisco Bay with greenhouses and fields planted in roses, camellias, shrubs, vines, fruit and ornamental trees. In 1901, San Francisco’s Academy of Sciences hosted the first Pacific States Floral Congress under the auspices of the California State Floral Society. Over three days more than one hundred scholars, botanists and enthusiasts gathered to “advance the art of ornamental horticulture” and to “promote acquaintance and interchange of ideas.” The event program does not indicate that commercial flower growers were in attendance, but the gathering underscores how deep the vein of passion for floriculture had grown in the region.

According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, residents spent \$1 million dollars on flowers per year during the early twentieth century; no city of its size “buys so lavishly,” the reporter claimed. One of San Francisco’s earliest wholesale flower markets was held twice weekly at Kearny and Market Street. Chinese flower growers gathered nearby on Stevenson Street alley off Third Street. Flowers at both locations were picked over by retail florists who bought the wares in just minutes.

These open-air wholesale flower markets were located close to the Ferry Building, the Southern Pacific train station, and a cable car stop, making them accessible to growers and retailers. Transit by ferry, train, and trolley allowed wholesale flower growers to cultivate land on the outskirts or outside of the city, which was less expensive and offered better weather. Location was important for flower growers whose product was perishable. Clusters of nurseries emerged in Richmond, Berkeley, Oakland, Alameda and Fremont/Niles east of the city, and to the south in Colma, Menlo Park, Belmont, San Mateo and Mountain View. By 1904, the Domoto brothers’ Oakland enterprise was the largest flower-growing business on the West Coast, utilizing national and even international distribution and employing workers recruited from the Domotos’ home prefecture in Japan.

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Immigrants from China, Italy and Japan dominated the Bay Area floricultural industry. All had suffered varied types of discrimination that led them to form strong ethnic associations and look for their livelihoods in self-employment or entrepreneurial opportunities within the boundary of their immigrant community. Members of these three immigrant groups made up “an army of growers” that the *San Francisco Chronicle* tellingly described as “swarming” into the city from the east and south. According to historian Gary Kawaguchi, each group developed a separate area of expertise. Chinese growers, whose nurseries were concentrated on the peninsula south of San Francisco, specialized in asters, sweet peas, and pompon chrysanthemums. Japanese nurseries in the peninsula and East Bay grew larger chrysanthemums, roses, carnations and other greenhouse crops. Italians in the Portola, South San Francisco, and Colma dealt in field varieties such as violets, stock, snapdragons, daisies, and ferns.

The three groups had varying access to land and capital; racist legal restrictions meant that Asian immigrants could not purchase land, forcing Asian growers to lease or circumvent the law. Immigrants from Japan and China also had few banks to turn to for loans because “white” banks would not work with them and banks within their own communities were relatively small. Conversely, Italian Americans had access to capital via the larger Bank of Italy, which later became the Bank of America. Commercial flower nurseries required relatively small capital outlays for land and product, so they were a good fit for cash-strapped immigrants, yet the labor required to produce and market flowers was intense and unremitting. Bay Area flower growers had to orchestrate production to match growing demand and find efficient means of distributing their extremely perishable products to buyers.

Growers understood that controlling sales to wholesalers and retailers was essential to the health of their enterprises. Over time three organizations were formed and partnered to set policies and manage the wholesale market: the California Flower Market (CFM), made up of Japanese growers and founded in 1912, the San Francisco Flower Growers Association (SFFGA) formed in 1923 of primarily Italian growers, and the Chinese American Peninsula Flower Growers Association (date of establishment unknown).

World War I and the years afterward saw improvements in flower transport, such as refrigerated train cars, that opened markets for California flowers in the Midwest and East Coast cities. By 1921, Bay Area floriculture employed 3,000 people growing cut flowers and an equal number growing seeds and bulbs; another 2,000 were involved in floral retail. Sales of these crops totaled an estimated \$7 million. As the industry expanded it became clear that having one grower-controlled location where wholesalers and retailers could come to buy flowers would be optimal. Italian and Japanese growers leased a new 22,000 square foot building at 171 Fifth Street which opened in March 1924. Chinese growers leased a small space within the new market.

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The Great Depression proved a challenge to Bay Area flower growers when the owner of 171 Fifth Street refused to renew the building's lease. In 1936, the growers used money from their lease buyout and a loan from the Bank of America to purchase property one block away, at the intersection of Sixth and Brannan streets, with the goal of erecting a specially designed market. However, the market remained at 171 Fifth Street for two more decades, suggesting that the building owner backed down on the planned ousting.

World War II impacted the nursery growing communities in various ways. For the first time, the Chinese community was treated sympathetically by many Americans as representatives of an ally who was suffering terribly at the hands of Japan. Immigrants from Italy, Germany, and Japan, on the other hand, were targeted for their connections to Axis nations. Many first-generation Japanese growers came under increasing restrictions and their adult children assumed responsibilities for the family business. By spring 1942, all people of Japanese descent on the West Coast had been forcibly relocated and began several years of incarceration by the U.S. government.

As Japanese Americans were notified that they were to be "evacuated" from their communities and businesses, individual Japanese growers and florists scrambled to make arrangements for their businesses and homes. In several cases, Italian American growers, wholesalers and shippers leased or outright bought Japanese American enterprises. Like other growers, the wartime labor shortage made staffing and managing multiple nurseries very difficult for these caretakers. The CFM arranged for the Italian American SFFGA, under the leadership of president S.V. Armanino, to act as caretakers of the CFM until World War II ended. These steps ensured that the wholesale flower market would avoid bankruptcy, but the organization operated at a financial loss for the duration of the war. By the end of World War II, a number of Japanese American families in the Bay Area had lost their nurseries during internment because they could not make payments on mortgages and property taxes; other families were successful in reestablishing the businesses they had spent decades creating.

The post-war period marked a boom in Northern California floriculture. The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce's research department published a report in 1946 on the Bay Area cut flower industry that compared floriculture to gold in its ability to generate new wealth. In addition to ideal climate and an established network of growers, the article attributed the sector's strength to "excellent transportation by rail and air," the wholesale flower market, and the number of shippers who understood the national market and developed new ways to pack and ship delicate flowers.

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By the 1950s all of the surviving Bay Area nurseries profited from increasing sales to national markets, and their higher quality and lower prices ensured that California growers gained an increasing share of the national market. New associations such as Society of American Florists and Florists' Telegraph Delivery Association were formed to coordinate expanded post-war floral marketing. Land-rich nursery owners found they had better access to loans in the booming post-war period through banks that used their nurseries as valuable collateral.

Members of the CFM and the SFGGA began to consider sites for a new, purpose-built facility that would hold flower sales by growers and wholesalers. The two organizations created a new legal entity, Flower Growers Inc., to handle leasing and buying properties. After exploring other sites, they decided to build close to the existing market at 171 Fifth Street, on the property at Sixth and Brannan which they had purchased in 1936. In September 1956, opening ceremonies were held for a new San Francisco Flower Terminal, described as the “biggest in the nation”, with Mayor George Christopher as the ceremony’s keynote speaker.

California was a national leader in production of flowers by the 1960s, and the primary producer of the four popular cut flowers—roses, carnations, chrysanthemums and gladiolas. The prosperity of this period was enhanced by continued expansions in air freight and developments in chemical fertilizer and herbicides, as well as soil steam sterilization that ended the need for traditional rotation of growing sites to protect against root diseases. As nurseries found the resources to expand physically, they needed to augment their workforce beyond the small number of family members and immigrant workers from their home countries that had been their traditional mainstay. New workers, many from Mexico, meant that nurseries had to face issues related to employee rights and unionization for the first time.

In 1965, the U.S. Agency for International Development introduced floriculture to Colombia in an effort to lure farmers from the lucrative growth of coca plants, which supplied cocaine to the U.S. drug trade. The federal government kept duties low and fought trade barriers as part of the “war on drugs.” As flower growing took hold in parts of South America, foreign growers benefited from lower land and labor costs, warmer climates, and government support. Flowers imported from South America swept out the flower industry first on the East Coast and in the Midwest, and later California.

Northern California growers became more reliant on local markets for sales and saw their profit margins dwindle as the oil shortages of the 1970s and 1980s made heating costs for greenhouses soar, just as government increased regulations over labor and pesticide use. By 1986 only San Francisco, Los

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Angeles, Portland and Boston retained flower markets that connected growers to wholesalers.

Despite these changes, the CFM embarked on a lengthy process of expansion, which resulted in 1982 in the purchase of a 45,000 square foot property on Fifth Street, adjacent to the existing Flower Terminal. The other flower grower associations elected not to participate in the expansion; SFFGA's stock-holding board of directors was dwindling, as were the number of tenants in their market. The second and third generations of the immigrants who established nurseries found wider employment opportunities than their parents and grandparents: many were college-educated and did not choose to enter the difficult and increasingly precarious floriculture industry. Rising land values led many nursery families to decide to sell their land to developers. Population growth and urbanization put pressure on growers as escalating property values encouraged nursery owners to relocate their operations and move to areas further on the Bay Area periphery, such as Half Moon Bay, Gilroy, Watsonville and Salinas.

By the early twenty-first century, the pressures of global competition and local development clearly diminished the Flower Terminal's future. Only a fraction of the SFGGA members were active and many were open to capturing the market's ballooning value as real estate in a hot market. The SFGGA sold their property in October 2014, and the CFM elected to work with Kilroy Realty Corporation, a west coast developer, as master tenant in planned new development at the site. Development plans for the market site remain under consideration in 2020.

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Historian: Stacy Farr, Historian, Oakland; Eleanor Cox, Historian, San Francisco

Completed July 31, 2020.

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East facades of typical greenhouses at Garibaldi Nursery/University Mound Greenhouse, viewed facing southwest from Hamilton Street (Stacy Farr, 2018).



East façades of representative greenhouses, viewed facing west from Hamilton Street (Stacy Farr, 2018).

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North facade of greenhouse, viewed facing southeast from Wayland Street (Stacy Farr, 2018).



Overview of nursery property, viewed facing southeast from Bowdoin Street with fence and blackberry bushes in the foreground (Stacy Farr, 2018).

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Detail of greenhouse ridgelines, viewed facing east from Bowdoin Street (Stacy Farr, 2018).



Typical interior at ridge-and-furrow greenhouses, viewed facing west (Stacy Farr, 2018).

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Typical sliding door with finger holes at east facade of greenhouses, viewed facing west from Hamilton Street (Stacy Farr, 2018).

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Former outdoor cultivation area at the northwest corner of the site and former site of the greenhouse's water tower, viewed facing northeast (Stacy Farr, 2018).



South facade of the boiler house building (ca. 1922) across one of the former outdoor cultivation areas at the southeast corner of the site, viewed facing north (Stacy Farr, 2018).