

State of California – The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary #  
HRI #  
Trinomial  
NRHP Status Code 3S

Other Listings  
Review Code

Reviewer

Date

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\*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Thomas Block

P1. Other Identifier: LaLoma Apartments / Wawoma Apartments / 2132-2154 Center St.

\*P2. Location:  Not for Publication  Unrestricted  
and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

\*a. County Alameda

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Oakland West Date 1993 Township & Range No data

c. Address 2142 Center St. City Berkeley Zip 94704

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 10S; 564488mE/ 4191682mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)

Assessor's Parcel Number: 57-2031-13, -14, -15;

South side of Center Street between Shattuck Avenue and Oxford Street.

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

A long, low, two-story Mediterranean-Revival-inspired building, the Thomas Block at 2142 Center St. is a Contributor to the Shattuck Avenue Downtown Historic District. Built in 1904 and altered in 1925, much of the historic fabric has been preserved. The proportions and materials of the two-story façade continue today to serve as a clear example of an early-twentieth-century commercial design in the downtown core.

The Thomas Block is part of a setting of mostly historic buildings that form the primary corridor of commercial buildings lining Shattuck Avenue and the transit center that connects the city with the University of California campus. From 1908 through 1938, the Berkeley train depot sat at the end of this block on Shattuck Avenue. The Thomas Block was developed when the station was active in the city, and when Center Street was the main thoroughfare between the station and the University.  
*(Continued on next page)*

\*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP6. 1-3 story commercial building

\*P4 Resources Present:  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)



P5b. Description of Photo: (View, date, accession #)

View facing southwest, December 2014.

\*P6. Date Constructed/Age & Sources:  
 Historic  Prehistoric  Both

1904, 111 years old, based on COB permits files and newspaper article.

\*P7. Owner and Address:

Oxford Development Group, LP  
1442A Walnut St. #116  
Berkeley, CA 94709

\*P8. Recorded by: (Name, affiliation, and address)

F. Maggi, L. Dill, & S. Winder  
Archives & Architecture, LLC  
PO Box 1332  
San Jose CA 95109-1332

\*P9. Date Recorded: May 8, 2015

\*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)

Intensive

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

None.

\*Attachments:  NONE  Location Map  Sketch Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure and Object Record  Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling State Record  Rock Art Record  Artifact Record  Photograph Record  Other (List)

DPR523A

\*Required information

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\*Recorded by Franklin Maggi, Leslie Dill, & Sarah Winder \*Date 5/8/2015  Continuation  Update

*(Continued from previous page)*



View of façade extents, facing southeast.

This commercial building is notable for its long-low façade and horizontal Mediterranean Revival materials and details. The building is divided in half horizontally between the full-height glazing and narrow posts at the storefront level and the stucco bands that span the upper façade.

The ground floor features an almost continuous width of original transom windows above a series of roll-up cloth awnings and a mix of storefronts. The transoms feature a banded pattern of lites. Many of the storefronts are original, with bronze frames, butted glass, and original vents and tiles at the bulkheads. Interrupting the storefronts are two upstairs entrances. One original door is topped by a massive 3x4-lite transom; the other has been altered with a 1-lite transom and a narrow sidelight. Both doorways are framed beneath archways that are supported on scrolled consoles and feature mosaic tiles on the face of the arch. Between the storefronts are narrow square posts that support the upper floor. The stucco is divided horizontally into bands. The lower band is features art tiles between wide, slightly recessed panels; it serves as a sill band for the windows. The windows are arrayed in a series of paired and individual units. They are wood replacement units in a one-over-one pattern. Above the windows is a frieze band that features square tile insets. The building is topped by a red Spanish-tile Mansard roof that conceals the flat roof of the building. The eaves are shallow, with a shallow cornice in a repetitive-arch pattern.

This property serves pedestrian traffic that flows from the primary commercial strip on Shattuck Avenue and the University campus. The footprint of the building is roughly rectangular, wide rather than deep. The building is approximately 180 feet wide and 60 feet deep.

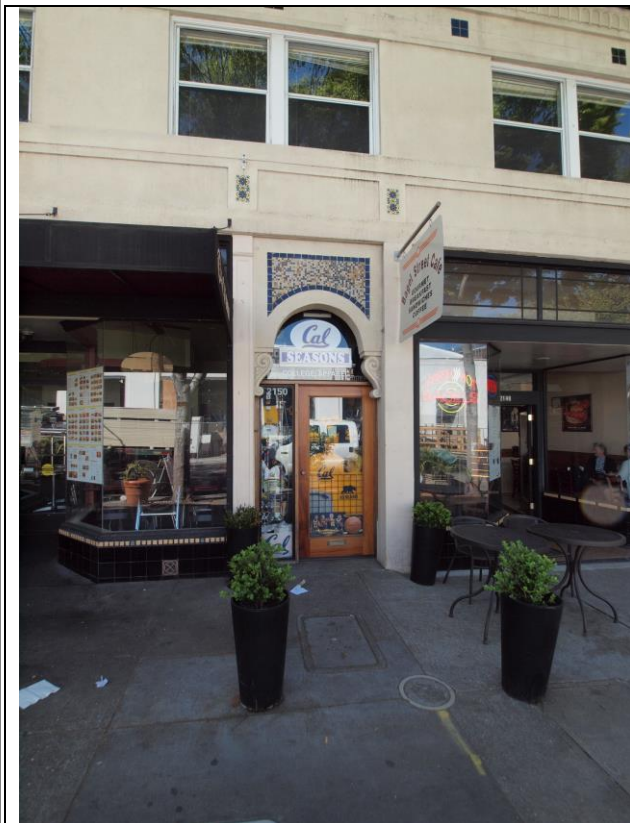
Character-defining features include: Mansard-topped front wall and party-wall construction; original windows with banded pattern of lites; storefronts with bronze frames, butted glass, and vents and tiles at the bulkheads; two arched upstairs entrances, with consoles and mosaic tiles; one original door with its transom; bands of stucco siding; art tiles; window placement; square tile insets; red Spanish-tile Mansard roof with shallow eaves; decorative stucco cornice. Alterations include the second-story window sash, the retractable cloth awnings and one of the entrance doors. The historic elements of the building appear in very good condition.

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Typical storefront, viewed facing southwest.



Upstairs entry from Center Street (left)



Upstairs entry from Center Street (right)

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BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

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\*NRHP Status Code 5B

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Thomas Block

B1. Historic Name: Thomas Block - La Loma Apartments

B2. Common Name: None

B3. Original use: Retail Commercial B4. Present Use: Retail Commercial

\*B5. Architectural Style: Mediterranean Revival

\*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

Original construction in 1904. Remodeled in Mediterranean style in 1925.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: n/a Original Location: n/a

\*B8. Related Features:

None

B9a Architect: William Wharff

b. Builder: S. S. Quackenbush, Lindgren-Hicks Co.

\*B10. Significance: Theme Commerce and Architecture Area Downtown Berkeley

Period of Significance 1904-1958 Property Type Commercial Applicable Criteria A (1), C(3)

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

The subject building at 2132-2156 Center St. is popularly known as the Thomas Block. It was surveyed in 1978 by Berkeley Architectural Heritage, and was found eligible for the National Register at that time (addressed as 2132 Center St.) The property has not received local designation or listing as a Landmark or Structure of Merit. The resource name Thomas Block was used in the 1978 survey, but the origin of that name was not determined as a part of the current survey. The State Historic Property Directory identifies the resource as Thomas Block Building - La Loma Apartments.

The Thomas Block was constructed during the building boom experienced by Berkeley in the early twentieth century responding to the expansion of the University of California and a period of growth in downtown commerce. The site had a proximity to the railway station on Shattuck Avenue, and provided commercial support to the university population. The building continues to be populated with a large grouping of restaurants and commercial establishments that today serve students passing through the Center Street corridor from the downtown transit hub to the university campus.

(Continued on next page)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) None

\*B12. References:

Berkeley Block Books, 1907 and 1921.  
Berkeley Courier, 9/18/15, 12/11/1915, 1/22/1916.  
Berkeley Gazette, "Imposing Block for Berkeley's  
Business Center," 95/9/1904.  
Marvin, B., Historic Resources Inventory form, 1978.  
City of Berkeley Design Guidelines, 1994.

B13. Remarks: Proposed historic district

\*B14. Evaluator: Franklin Maggi

\*Date of Evaluation: May 8, 2015

(This space reserved for official comments.)



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The two-story building was constructed in 1904, with storefronts on the first floor, with apartments and offices on the second floor. The building was designed by William H. Wharff, a prominent Berkeley architect during the early twentieth century whose work in Downtown Berkeley include the Masonic Temple building and Chase Building.

The site of the building was originally part of the Berkeley School Board's Kellogg School property, which extended from Center Street to Allston Way between Shattuck Avenue and Oxford Street. This site was originally subdivided as Block B of the Blake Tract Map No. 1 (Maps Book 2, Page 59). The property covers Lots 10 through 12 of that tract as well as a portion of Lot 9. The *Berkeley Daily Gazette* announced the construction of the subject building in an article dated May 9, 1904. The building cost \$28,000 at the time, and occupied nearly half of the 2100 block of Center Street, the business center of Berkeley at the time (an honor that bestowed the block with the first electric street lamps in 1910).

Prominent Berkeley architect William Hatch Wharff was born in Maine. He never received formal architectural training, but instead learned carpentry from his maternal uncle, Hiram Hatch. In 1860, he became a master carpenter and his uncle's business partner. The Wharff family moved to San Francisco in 1875, where Wharff worked as a draftsman, architect, contractor, and builder. The majority of Wharff's pre-1906 buildings in San Francisco were destroyed by the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and fire.

Wharff moved to Berkeley in 1899, and his career expanded in his later years as the demand for his services in Berkeley grew. Wharff lived to be 99 years old.

The subject building was constructed by the Lindgren & Hicks under the supervision of S. S. Quackenbush, who were said to have planned the Thomas Block to be a "showpiece of the modern builder's art." Lindgren & Hicks and Quackenbush all moved their offices to the subject building when it opened.

The building was purchased by John Breuner in 1925 (owner and operator of a chain of furniture and appliance stores in the East Bay area). The subject building has served a variety of commercial tenants over the years, including the Linden Realty Co., Campus Florist, P.I.P., McPhee's Boots, and various restaurants. The second floor has been named the La Loma Apartments as well as the Wawona Apartments.

A parking area is located to the rear of the building adjacent Oxford Place, which bisects the block with an outlet on Oxford Street. Zoning approval was granted in 2014 to construct an 85-room six-story extended-stay hotel in this area.

#### **Integrity**

The Thomas Block has integrity of location and setting in Downtown Berkeley; it retains integrity of the Mediterranean Revival altered design, along with integrity of historic materials and workmanship. The building continues to have visual associations with commercial Berkeley from the 1920s and remains readily identifiable as an historic building.

#### **Prior Surveys**

The property was surveyed in 1978 and found eligible for the National Register and given a status code of 3S by the State Historic Preservation Officer.

#### **Evaluation**

The building is historically significant due to its association with important patterns of development in the downtown core, and is architecturally distinctive. The property remains an important contributor to the establishment of a downtown Shattuck Avenue historic district. The form and detailing of both the building and its original commercial storefronts maintain an important link to the past of downtown Berkeley.