

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION OF HISTORICAL LANDMARK

Name of Proposed Landmark Giant Powder Company Site

Location Glen Canyon Park, San Francisco

County San Francisco

Name and Address of Landowner upon Whose Property Landmark is Proposed San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, McLaren Lodge, San Francisco 94117

Name and Address of Applicant Jean Krutum Phone No. 415-566-
Merced Ave., San Francisco 94127 Bus. Phone No. _____

Is this landmark of statewide significance as described in the State of Policy? yes

Explain (use extra sheet if necessary):

Glen Canyon Park in San Francisco (located north of Bosworth Street, south of Portola Drive, west of Diamond Heights Blvd, and east of O'Shaughnessy Blvd) was the place where the first commercial manufacturing of dynamite in the United States occurred. This was done by the Giant Powder Company, which continued to produce explosives at various sites around the San Francisco Bay Area until it was absorbed by the Atlas Powder Company in 1915. Besides this distinction of being the first in the nation, the pioneering company was so influential in the west during the 19th century that the term "Giant" became a virtual synonym for dynamite. At Glen Canyon the Giant Powder Company produced a product that, paradoxically through its destructive power, became a vital ingredient in the growth of California. Dynamite profoundly influenced the development of two of the most important industries shaping the state through the 19th century, gold mining and railroading, and played an important role in others as well. It all began in Glen Canyon -- today a quiet, natural setting. It was there Alfred Nobel's patented dynamite began to exercise its profound influence on our history.

Is bibliography complete? (To enable verification of statements and claims made herein.) _____ yes

Is permission of property owner for registration attached? _____ yes

Is approval of property owner to place a plaque attached? _____ no

Is proof of reasonable protection for requested landmark attached? _____ yes

Are photographs, prints, or drawings (two views) attached? _____ yes

BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION (Corresponding to one or more items under I, II, or III of the Statement of Policy.)

Before the Civil War, blasting (black) powder used on the west coast was brought in by ship from the east. This was a difficult and potentially dangerous activity, especially because the powder had to be unloaded at Panama and carried to the Pacific side. When the Civil War began, powder shipments dried up, in large part due to fears of Confederate raiders at sea. The price of powder in California skyrocketed to \$13 a keg, threatening the gold mining industry. This powerful demand led to the formation of the California Powder Works Company, which was incorporated on December 28, 1861. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:282)

Apparently it was not until 1863 that the pioneering west coast black powder maker constructed its first mill, four miles outside Santa Cruz, in San Lorenzo Valley. Relying on a Chinese work force, the company began production in May 1864, with the earliest known invoice dated July 16, 1864. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:284-85)

By the end of the Civil War, European advances in explosives technology were being exported to the United States. In 1859, Alfred Nobel had begun experimenting with nitroglycerine. On July 15, 1865, the first demonstration of this "patent blasting oil" in America took place in New York City. Otto Burstenbinder, a friend of Nobel's partner, Dr. Charles Edward Bandmann, had brought the sample with him from Hamburg. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:324)

The following year Alfred Nobel himself visited the United States to promote American production of his explosives. Before leaving he signed an agreement with American businessmen to create the United States Blasting Oil Company, to produce nitroglycerine in America. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:327)

Nobel and his associates, after pioneering the use of nitroglycerine, improved it by mixing it with kieselguhr, a porous and inert diatomaceous earth capable of holding three times its weight in nitroglycerin. Nobel found he could mold the nitroglycerine-soaked kieselguhr into plastic shapes, like putty. This combination became Noble's Dynamite No. 1. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:328)

While American production of nitroglycerine occurred first on the east coast, the dynamite industry got started in California. The state's mining and railroad industries needed great quantities of explosives, needs which only the California Powder Works at Santa Cruz was meeting through local production. On the other hand, in the east part of the country the explosives industry was well established and heavily invested in black powder technology, and tended to resist the innovative dynamite.

Julius Bandmann, a merchant and importer in San Francisco in the 1860s, was a brother of Alfred Nobel's business partner, Charles Edward Bandmann. Through this connection, Julius' company became California agents for Noble's nitroglycerine, and marketed the product in the gold fields. Privy to the discoveries

of the Nobel firm, Bandmann became aware of the new dynamite. Nobel sent a representative to San Francisco where, on July 24, 1867, he made 3 pounds of dynamite at the Judson and Sheppard (San Francisco) Chemical Works. On August 13, 1867, the Giant Powder Company was incorporated in California to produce the new explosive commercially. Ten months later it got exclusive rights to Nobel's U.S. dynamite patent (which actually was not issued until May 26.)

The new company leased property in San Francisco's Rock House Canon, (also known as Glen Canyon, and now as Glen Canyon Park) put up several buildings, and began actual manufacture of dynamite (nitroglycerine in a kieselguhr absorbent base) on March 19, 1868. The first production run ended on March 26, after 1,300 pounds of dynamite were produced. The new explosive was then demonstrated in various mining areas in the state. As was the case with the California Powder Works, the Giant Powder Company relied on a Chinese work force. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:402-06, 433)

The Giant Powder Company posed a threat to its older rival, the California Powder Works. Already, prices for black powder had fallen because of resumption of shipments from the east coast. With the new dynamite adding another competitive threat, especially because it was excellent for hard rock mining, California Powder Works responded by building a new plant, in San Francisco, and producing its own version of dynamite within the year. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:287, 431)

The competition led to improvements in the explosives. The California Powder Works came out with a stronger dynamite that replaced the inert kieselguhr with an active absorbent. By 1872, Giant Powder Company dropped kieselguhr in favor of its own active "dope" dynamite. This became known as Giant Powder No. 2. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:408) Eventually, over fifteen companies established dynamite factories in the San Francisco Bay area, making it the dynamite capital of the country. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:407)

On November 26, 1869, an explosion completely destroyed the Giant Powder Company's pioneering factory in Rock House Canon, turning every one of the buildings on the place, and the surrounding fencing, into "hundreds of pieces," according to a newspaper account..

As the Alta reported in its issue of November 27, 1869:

A terrible accident, such as we have rarely to record, occurred about a quarter before seven o'clock last evening, at the Giant Powder Works, situated on the left of the old County road, about five miles from the City Hall, and nearly half way between St. Mary's College and the Industrial School....The grounds lying between two hills, consist of about an acre of land, around the whole of which was an 9 foot fence. On the place were five frame buildings. The factory, a building about 25 X 60 feet, was on the east side on level ground. In the centre was a building in which the three white men employed at the works lived. On the west side was the

large stable; above this was a shanty occupied by the eight Chinamen employed there, and at an elevation of about forty feet was the depository for the nitro-glycerine and acids used in manufacturing the powder.

In response to the disaster, the company moved its operations to a 100-acre site on the sand dunes south of what is now Golden Gate Park. This second plant seems to have run south from "where Kirkham Street is now laid out to Ortega Street or beyond, and from 20th Avenue to 32nd Avenue." The second Giant plant began operations in early 1869. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:433-34)

In January 1879, the second factory of the Giant Powder Company blew up in an accident. The company then moved to its third location, Clement Point in Alameda County. This was "just beyond West Berkeley," and then known as Ocean View. The new factory began production that fall, with a work force consisting of 13 whites and 25 Chinese. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:437)

The heavy competition that marked the west coast explosives trade led the major California producers to seek an amicable division of the market. In 1884, discussions resulted in an agreement to which the Giant Powder Company, the California Powder Works, and other companies were parties. The agreement apportioned the market and provided for patent sharing (with the exception that Giant Powder Company retained exclusive rights to Nobel's blasting gelatine patent). By its terms the market was apportioned 37.5 percent each to the Giant Powder Company and the California Powder Works, with 11.5 percent to the Safety Nitro Company, 7.5 percent to the Vulcan Company, and 6.25 percent to the Vigorite Company. The agreement held to 1888, but then collapsed. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:511)

With competition open once again, the Giant Powder Company began producing black powder in 1889 for the first time, in direct competition with California Powder Works' main product. The factory, located at Clippergap, seriously cut into the California Powder Works' market share. (In 1925, the Giant Powder Company's Clippergap operations were moved to San Pablo Bay, to which the company had moved its dynamite production in the 1890s.) (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:292)

On July 9, 1892, the Giant Powder Company dynamite works at Fleming Point outside of Berkeley blew up in another of the periodic explosion disasters that hallmarked the industry. By then, the city of Berkeley was growing uncomfortably close to the once-isolated plant.

Forced to move from Berkeley as it had been forced in 1879 to leave its second San Francisco site, the company quickly bought out (or consolidated with) the smaller Safety Nitro Company, located on Benson's Ranch on Point Conchal (Point Pinole). The site was four miles west of Pinole (Hercules), where the California Powder Works had relocated directly from San Francisco in 1879. The new

company, Giant Powder Company, Consolidated, was incorporated on August 22, 1892. (Van Gelder and Schlatter, 1927:443,446-47)

While the reorganized Giant Powder Company was able to remain out of the hands of the duPont interests at the turn of the 20th century, it could not for long escape the consolidation that the rest of the industry had experienced. In 1916, the pioneer dynamite manufacture became part of the Atlas Powder Company. Under that name, the company continue to manufacture explosives until 1960, when all production ceased just a few years short of the 100th anniversary of the first production of dynamite at San Francisco's Rock House (Glen) Canyon.

AUTHORIZATION FROM PROPERTY OWNER OF PROPOSED LANDMARK SITE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
PARKS AND RECREATION FOR NUMBER, REGISTRATION, AND ERECTION OF A HISTORICAL LAND-
MARK.
CONSENT CALENDAR (Continued)

f. GOLDEN GATE PARK RES. NO. 15960

RUN TO THE
ROAD CLOSURE

San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission
Approval of Landmark Designation

RESOLVED, Action date: Thursday, March 11, 1991

road closures from Rhoads Productions on behalf of the California Academy of Sciences to stage the sixth annual "Run to the Far Side VI" on Sunday, December 1, 1991.

g. GOLDEN GATE PARK RES. NO. 15961

SKATEFEST

MULTIPLE DAY EVENT/ONE DAY ROAD CLOSURE

RESOLVED, That this Commission approves the request for the Golden Gate Park Skate Patrol/Explorer Post #582 to hold a two-day "Skatefest" (the California Outdoor Rollerskating Championships) on Sunday, September 1, and Monday, September 2, 1991 and for a road closure at the intersection where Stow Lake Drive intersects King Drive on Sunday, September 1, 1991.

h. GOLDEN GATE PARK RES. NO. 15962

MULTIPLE DAY EVENT
MUSIC CONCOURSE

RESOLVED, That this Commission approves a multiple day event at the Music Concourse, Bandshell for a major exhibition of Tibetan Art sponsored by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco August 15-17, 1991.

i. GOLDEN GATE PARK - SHARON MEADOW RES. NO. 15963
TWO-DAY EVENT (JOHN McLAREN FESTIVAL)

RESOLVED, That this Commission approves a two-day event at Sharon Meadow on Saturday, June 29, and Sunday, June 30, 1991 for a festival honoring John McLaren.

j. RECREATION DIVISION RES. NO. 15964
WEST SUNSET BASEBALL TEAM
MEMORIAL DAY TOURNAMENT

RESOLVED, That this Commission grants approval to the West Sunset baseball team to travel to Anaheim, California for annual Memorial Day Youth Baseball Tournament.

→ k. GLEN CANYON PARK RES. NO. 15965
STATE HISTORICAL LANDMARK

RESOLVED, That this Commission grants approval to designate Glen Canyon Park as a State Historical Landmark.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: CITE THE BOOKS, RECORDS, AND OTHER AUTHORITIES SUSTAINING THESE FACTS.

Van Gelder, Arthur Pine and Schlatter, Hugo. *History of Explosives in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1927. 1132 pp. This is the most comprehensive historical account of the explosives industry, and contains much information on the Giant Powder Company. The Glen Park location of the Giant Powder Company is documented in this work.

San Francisco Alta, November 27, 1869. Account of the destruction of the Giant Powder Company at Rock House (Glen) Canyon.

Signature

Jean Horton

Date

April 15, 1991

This form and all related correspondence is to be sent to the State Historical Resources Commission, Post Office Box 2390, Sacramento, California 95811.

An application must be considered solely on its historic or architectural merits and not for commercial gain, political benefits, or other non-historical reasons.

An individual commission member can advise and counsel an applicant, but all applications must be considered by the full commission meeting in regular session.



LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

450 McALLISTER STREET, 4TH FLOOR • SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

TEL. (415) 558-6345 • FAX. (415) 558-6409

January 17, 1991

JAN 22 1991

ONE

Marvin Brienens
Office of Historic Preservation
Department of Parks and Recreation
P. O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

**RE: The Giant Powder Company and the First Dynamite Factory
Located Within Rock House Canon (Glen Park Playground)
San Francisco, CA**

Dear Mr. Brienens:

At its Regular Meeting of December 19, 1990, the Landmarks Board reviewed and commented on the background information provided on the Giant Powder Company and Dynamite Manufacturing in the San Francisco area.

After public testimony and Board discussion, the Landmarks Board voted 8-0 to support the proposed nomination of the above referenced site as a California State Historical Landmark.

The Board is available to provide additional assistance with the nomination if needed.

Very truly yours,

VINCENT MARSH

Vincent F. Marsh, Secretary
Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board

VFM:mj:898

Statement Regarding Reasonable Protection for Requested Landmark

The site of the Giant Powder Works is Glen Canyon, which is now a part of Glen Canyon Park, a unit in the San Francisco park system managed by the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department. The general site is maintained as an undeveloped, natural site by the Department. The intention of the Department is to maintain the site into the foreseeable future in substantially the same condition as now exists, for public recreation purposes.

Dear Marvin:

I'm not sure the boundaries Rec. & Park gave you are accurate. I don't think Glen Park goes to Diamond Heights Blvd. but rather that the Park Dept. owns a playground (Geo. Christopher) going that far.

And the southern boundary is Elk, not Bosworth. Bosworth goes into the park for about a block with privately-owned lots on either side. But Elk is the boundary; you enter the recreation area from Elk.

O'Shaughnessy becomes Bosworth just after the "leg" into the park.

I suggest you wait to define the boundaries until you get my map from the Assessor's office.

RECEIVED

APR 19 1991

OHP

Enclosed is the contour map I mentioned, plus a second one with the streets highlighted. Also a xerox of the Triple A map.

Regards,

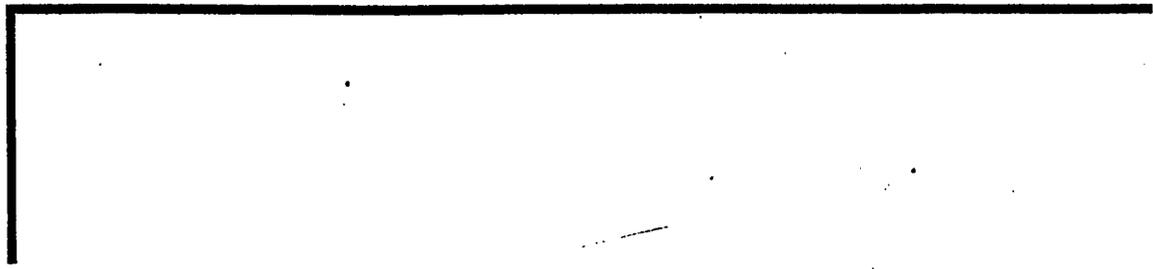

Jean Kortum



COMMUNITY AREA LAND USE STUDY

DIAMOND HEIGHTS

COMMUNITY 7 · PLANNING AREA 5



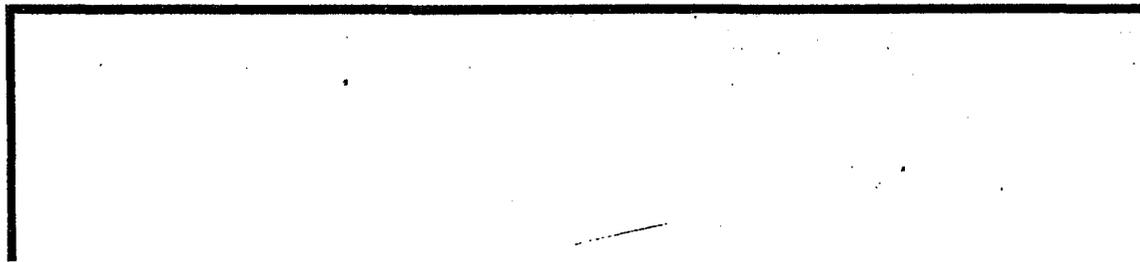
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COMMUNITY AREA LAND USE STUDY

DIAMOND HEIGHTS

COMMUNITY 7 · PLANNING AREA 5



FILE 838 7-8 11
DATE 1975
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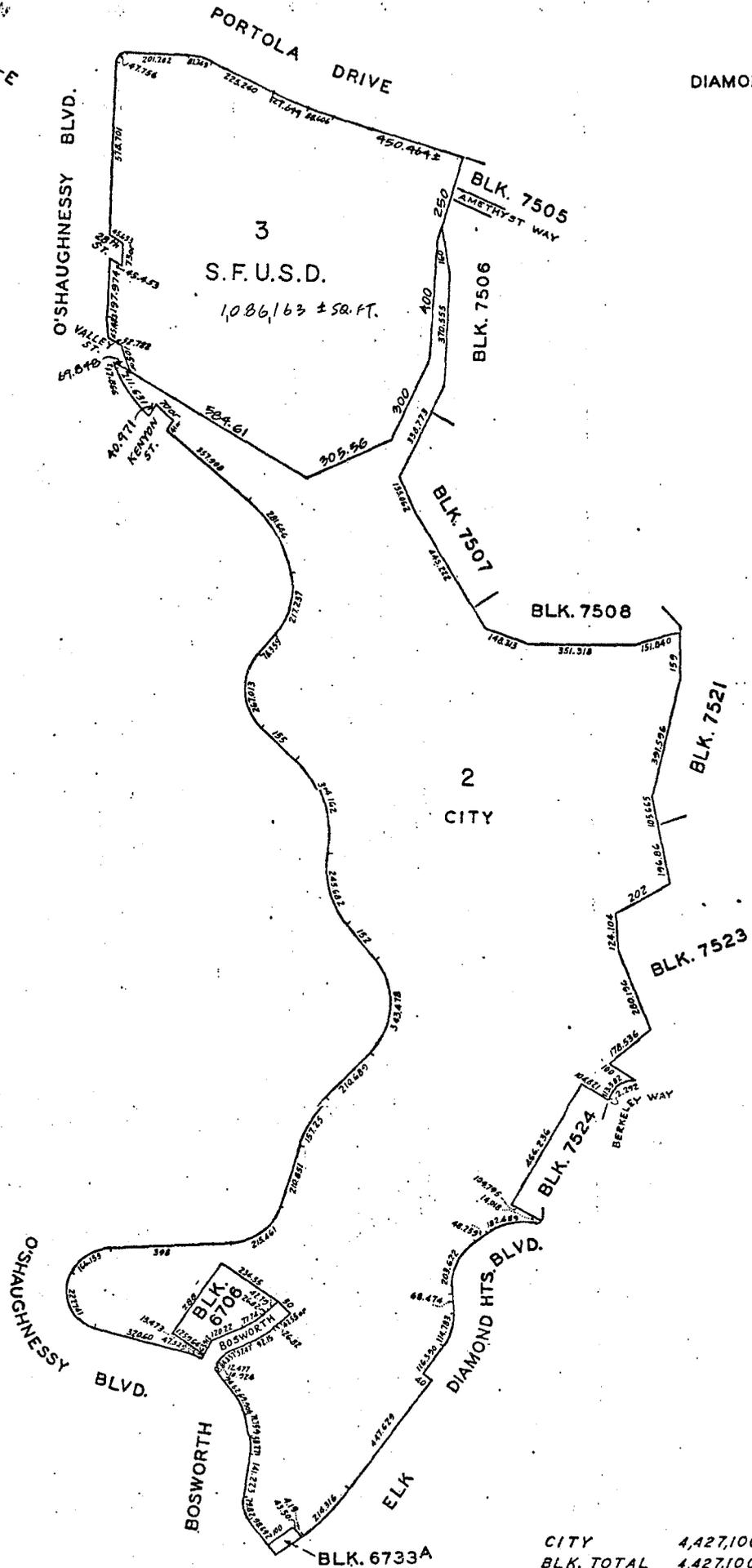
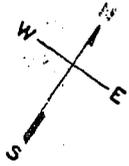
NOTE: BLOCK 7561 LOT 1 BECAME BLOCK 7560 PORTION OF LOT 3 IN 1988

7560

DIAMOND HTS. & GLEN PARK

SCALE: 1"=300'

REVISED '88



CITY 4,427,100 SQ. FT.
 BLK. TOTAL 4,427,100 SQ. FT.