

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

Primary #
HRI #
Trinomial
NRHP Status Code

Other
Review Code

Reviewer

Date

Listings

Page 1 of 7 *Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) The Paul A. Christenson Buildings

P1. Other Identifier: _____

*P2. Location: ☐ Not for Publication ☐ Unrestricted

- *a. County Fresno and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)
*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Fresno South, CA Date _____ T ____; R ____; ____ of ____ of Sec ____; ____ B.M.
c. Address 375-383 N Fresno Street City Fresno Zip 93701
d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone __, __ mE/ __ mN
e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, decimal degrees, etc., as appropriate)
APN 459-173-14

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

The property located at 375-383 N Fresno St, consisting of the Paul A. Christenson Buildings, is located within a rectangular parcel on the west side of N Fresno Street, mid-block between E Belmont and E McKenzie avenues. The subject property consists of two attached commercial buildings; one is a two-story commercial building on the northern portion of the lot (377-383), and the other is a one-story commercial building on the southern portion (375). Each building takes up about one-third of the parcel, with primary elevations abutting the east property line and facing east towards N Fresno Street. (See Continuation Sheet)

*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 #) September 17, 2018

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: ☒ Historic ☐ Prehistoric

P5a. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



☐ Both

1918, Fresno County Assessor

*P7. Owner and Address:

373 N Fresno LLC

934 E Mildreda Avenue

Fresno, CA 93701

*P8. Recorded by: (Name, affiliation, and address) Laura Groves van Onna
Historic Preservation Specialist
City of Fresno

*P9. Date Recorded: September 17, 2018

*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)
Intensive

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.")
Evaluation of 375-383 N Fresno
Street for Consideration as a
Heritage Property

*Attachments: ☐ NONE ☐ Location
Map ☒ Continuation Sheet ☒ Building,
Structure, and Object Record

☐ Archaeological Record ☐ District Record ☐ Linear Feature Record ☐ Milling Station Record ☐ Rock Art Record
☐ Artifact Record ☐ Photograph Record ☐ Other (List): _____

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) The Paul A. Christenson Buildings *NRHP Status Code 5S3
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B1. Historic Name: _____
B2. Common Name: The Paul A. Christenson Buildings
B3. Original Use: Commercial/Mixed Use B4. Present Use: Vacant
*B5. Architectural Style: Elements of Italian Renaissance and Craftsman

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)
According to the building permit record, the two-story commercial building (377-383) was constructed in 1922, and the one-story commercial building (375) was constructed in 1948.

*B7. Moved? ☒ No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features: _____

B9a. Architect: Milton Louis Wertheimer (375) b. Builder: Moore & Crouch (377-383)
*B10. Significance: Theme Early 20th Century Commercial Development Area Yokomi Neighborhood

Period of Significance 1922-1948 Property Type Streetcar Commercial Applicable Criteria Local Register
Criteria i and iii (Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope.
Also address integrity.)

These commercial buildings are located on lots 46-48 (14), Block 1 (173) in the Hill's Addition Subdivision, which was surveyed and platted in 1888. They are also located within what is known as the Yokomi Neighborhood. According to the building permit record, the two-story commercial building (377-383) was constructed in 1922, and the one-story commercial building (375) was constructed in 1948. These dates are supported by available Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, historic aerial maps, city and county directories, and newspaper articles.

The building permit record for this property identified Moore & Crouch as the contractor for 377-383 N Fresno Street; an architect has yet to be identified. The building permit record did not identify an architect or a builder for 375 N Fresno Street; however, among the records was a copy of original plans for the building which note the architectural draftsman, "Milt Wertheimer" (Milton Louis Wertheimer) as well as the owner, "Paul A. Christenson." Based in Fresno, Wertheimer assisted in drafting the design for the Fresno County Hall of Records (NR; CR; HP #017), originally constructed in 1935-1937 and located at 2281 Tulare Street. He was a partner in Allied Architects, a consortium among Fresno architects during the Great Depression, which is also credited for the Fresno Memorial Auditorium (NR; CR; HP #052) - originally constructed in 1935-1936 and located at 2425 Fresno Street. (See Continuation Sheet)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) _____

*B12. References:

Building Permit Records
City and County Directories
SurveyLA, "Neighborhood Commercial Development,
1880-1980," 2017
(See Continuation Sheet)

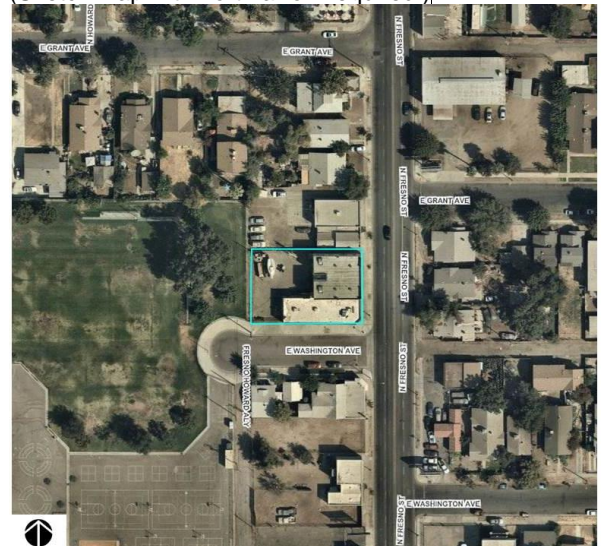
B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator: Laura Groves van Onna
Historic Preservation Specialist, City of Fresno

*Date of Evaluation: February 15, 2019

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch Map with north arrow required.)



CONTINUATION SHEET

Property Name: The Paul A. Christenson Buildings

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***P3a. Description Continued:** The two-story commercial building (377-383) was constructed in 1922 of brick as a Streetcar Commercial property type - more specifically as multi-story and mixed use - with elements of the Italian Renaissance and Craftsman architectural styles. It has a square plan. The roof is flat with a surrounding parapet. The brick bond pattern is a running bond. The primary (east) elevation of the building is organized symmetrically. The first story is topped by a ribbon of upright bricks and has a central arch accented by brick which frames the two main entries to the residential units upstairs on the second floor (379 and 381). The doors for these entries are topped by a wood-framed fanlight. On each side of the central arch is a recessed entry to the ground floor commercial spaces (377 and 383), alcoved and centered between wood-framed storefront windows. Each storefront is topped by a wood-framed transom. The second story has four central arched, single-hung wood windows, each with eight divided lights on top and accented by brick framing and an exaggerated keystone. On each side of these windows is a set of 3 single-hung wood windows accented by brick framing and vertical projections along the roofline. The central window within each set has eight divided lights on top and is flanked by windows with six divided lights on top.

The one-story commercial building (375) was constructed in 1948 of brick as a commercial building. It has a rectangular plan with a chamfered corner on the southeast. The roof is flat with a surrounding parapet. The brick bond pattern is an American bond. The primary (east) elevation faces towards N Fresno Street; however, the main entry is located within the chamfered corner of the building, facing southeast. In addition to the main entry which is obscured by a metal roll up security door, all storefront openings are currently covered by metal security doors or plywood.

Extant original interior features in the two-story commercial building (377-383) include wood flooring and brick walls throughout as well as wood-framed doorways, windows, railings, and built-in cabinets on the second floor.

***B10. Significance Continued:** According to city and county directories as well as newspapers articles, these buildings have hosted various tenants. However, the one person who appears most frequently is Paul A. Christenson. As an electrician, he began utilizing the commercial space at 377 N Fresno Street in 1947 as a base for his goods and services and living upstairs at 379 with his wife Eva. By 1948, he had commissioned and constructed an addition to his commercial space located at 375 N Fresno Street. By the late 1950s, they had relocated. Another tenant worth mentioning is the engineering firm of Hanna & Preble, which began utilizing the commercial space at 383 N Fresno Street by 1955 and continued to at least until 1970. Hanna & Preble are noted as the engineers for the construction of Highway 168 and as the civil engineers for the construction of the Fashion Fair regional shopping center in Fresno.

The two-story commercial building located at 377-383 N Fresno Street is what Richard Longstreth refers to as the "two-part commercial block...the most common type of composition used for small and moderate-sized commercial buildings throughout the country," in his book entitled *The Buildings of Main Street*. He traces the origins of this public-lower-level and private-upper-level block type to Roman antiquity. This mixed-use form continued to be a standard in European cities during the late Middle Ages and through the Colonial Era. The "shop-house form" continued to be constructed through the early 20th century in American cities, and according to Longstreth, is most often found in towns and neighborhood commercial areas "that developed along streetcar lines."

CONTINUATION SHEET

Property Name: The Paul A. Christenson Buildings

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***B10. Significance Continued:** The Paul A. Christenson Buildings are a remnant of a historic streetcar route. The Fresno & F Street Line was constructed and opened in 1909, and by 1923 extended from F Street and San Diego Street to Fresno Street and Olive Avenue. Edward Hamm, Jr. notes in his book entitled *When Fresno Rode the Rails*, that Fresno Street between Divisadero Street and Olive Avenue was known as the main northbound business artery and consisted of a mixture of small business and residential uses. This Line was abandoned on April 30, 1939. By the 1930s, the automobile was starting to replace the streetcar as the most common mode of transportation.

Within SurveyLA's Citywide Historic Context Statement, under the theme of "Neighborhood Commercial Development, 1880-1980" and sub-theme "Streetcar Commercial Development, 1880-1934," the defining characteristic of Streetcar Commercial property types is proclaimed as "their relationship to this specific mode of transportation." Convenience of location and access from the streetcar was key. This property type illustrates orientation towards a pedestrian lifestyle with easy access to public transportation, and little, if any, accommodation for the automobile. Building types within this property type can be one or multi-story and single or mixed-use. Multi-story, mixed-use buildings typically have commercial space on the ground floor and office or residential use on the upper floors. Buildings with residential use on the upper floors could be referred to as "early versions of today's live/work buildings." The storefront is the most prominent architectural character-defining feature of this property type – often consisting of a recessed entry and display windows, immediately abutting the sidewalk.

Eligibility

According to the Ratkovich Plan Historic Resources Survey (1994), the building located at 377-383 N Fresno Street appeared to be eligible for individual listing in the Local Register of Historic Resources.

The Paul A. Christenson Buildings are greater than 50 years of age; are associated with early 20th century commercial development in Fresno and have distinction as a Streetcar Commercial property type; and retain historic integrity. They are potentially eligible for listing in the City of Fresno's Local Register of Historic Resources under Criteria i and iii.

The owner is currently pursuing designation as a Heritage Property in order to make timely use of the California Historical Building Code for a rehabilitation project; and may pursue listing to the Local Register of Historic Resources at a later date.

It appears to easily meet the definition of a Heritage Property, as a "resource which is worthy of preservation because of its historical, architectural or aesthetic merit..." (FMC 12-1603(n)).

***B12. References Continued:**

Edward Hamm, Jr., *When Fresno Rode the Rails*, 1984
The Fresno Bee
Fresno County Assessor
Fresno County Atlases
Fresno County Recorder
The Los Angeles Times
Ratkovich Plan Historic Resources Survey, 1994
Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street*, 2000
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
Virginia McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2014

CONTINUATION SHEET

Property Name: The Paul A. Christenson Buildings

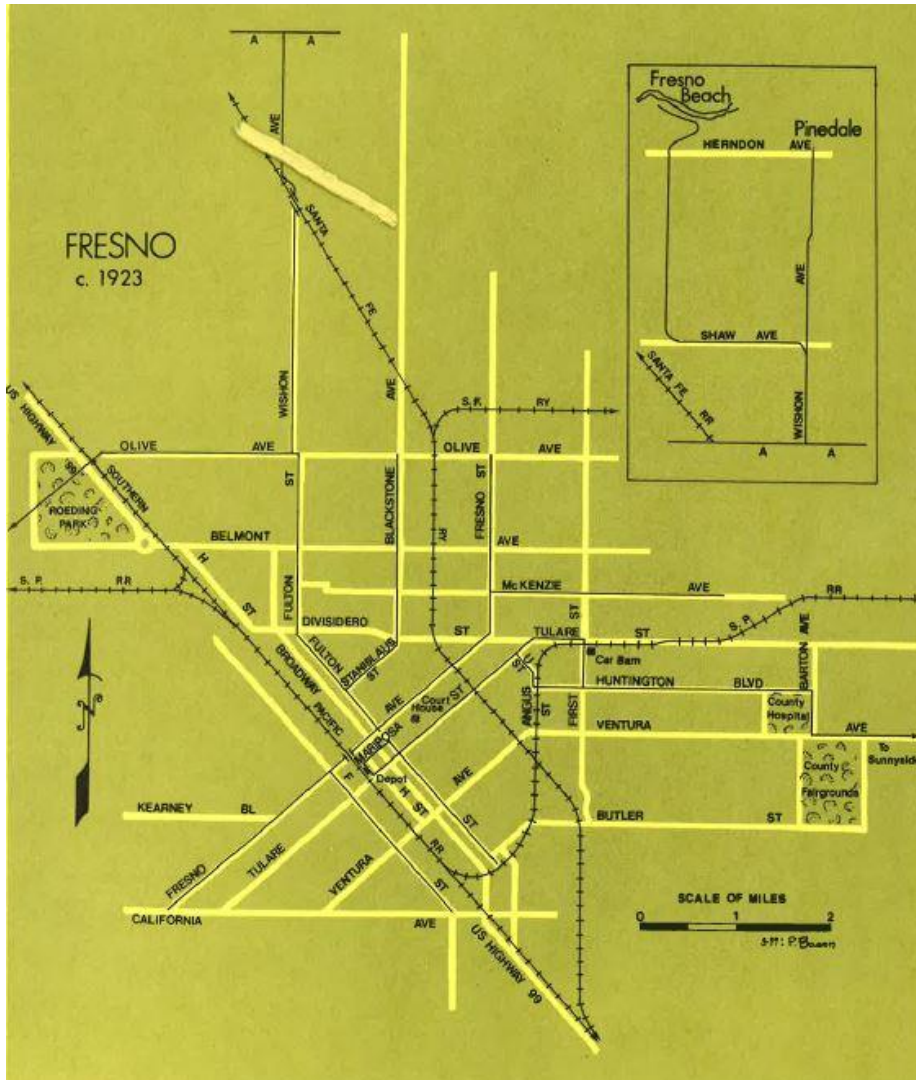
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CONTINUATION SHEET

Property Name: The Paul A. Christenson Buildings

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Property Name: The Paul A. Christenson Buildings

Page 6 of 7

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