



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: June 14, 2021

ITALIAN-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO

Application No.: LBR-2020-21-017
Business Name: Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco
Business Address: 25 Russia Avenue
District: District 11
Applicant: Julie A. Clima, General Manager
Nomination Letter Date: October 8, 2020
Nominated By: Supervisor Ahsha Safai
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

The Italian American Social Club of San Francisco (IASC) is a social hall founded on February 1, 1935 with origins dating seven years earlier. In 1928, a group of Italian friends who referred to themselves as the “Gorgonzola Cheese Club” established the organization in the basement of the home of Mario Blengino at 251 Naples Street in the Excelsior District. After merging with another Italian social club called The Aurora, the group moved to a larger space at 5 Russia Avenue. On February 1, 1935, the club consolidated again with the Alfieri Club and the new group was named the Italian American Social Club.

A few years later in 1938, the IASC purchased the lot at 25 Russia Avenue to build a three-story club house complete with banquet hall, bar, kitchen, meeting rooms, recreation room, auditorium, and bocce ball alleys. The project was financed with the sale of stock and a loan from Bank of America with several club members mortgaging their own homes to guarantee the loan. The building was designed and constructed by IASC member and local contractor Joseph Ragni. Upon completion in August of 1940, a banquet and carnival were held in celebration.

In the late nineteenth century, the Excelsior was populated with families of Italian, German, and Irish descent who worked in the surrounding farms and flower nurseries. After the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, the neighborhood transitioned from an agricultural suburb to a thriving, urbanized, working class neighborhood. The area saw an influx of Maltese, Russian Jews, and Italian immigrants making the Excelsior the second main hub in San Francisco for Italian immigrants after North Beach. The IASC was founded as a place for local Italians to gather and celebrate their ethnicity by enjoying traditional games, food, and festivities that celebrate Italian and local culture. During World War II, the IASC served as a meeting place for merchants and politicians and hosted several wartime fundraisers and dinners for local organizations including the Outer Mission War Savings Committee.

Created initially as a social club primarily for Italian American men, the IASC currently maintains approximately 200 members, some of whom are the descendants of the founders. The IASC holds several member’s events monthly as well as a yearly Christmas dinner dance. Additionally, the IASC currently rents event and meeting spaces to a diverse group of cultural, religious, and community organizations for private and public events in San Francisco. During the coronavirus pandemic, the IASC was forced to close the venue intermittently due to shelter-in-place restrictions.

CRITERION 1

Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Legacy Business Program

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Yes, Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

5 Russia Avenue from 1935 to 1940 (5 years)
25 Russia Avenue from 1940 to Present (81 years)

CRITERION 2

Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes, Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco has contributed to the history and identity of the Excelsior neighborhood and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The organization is associated with the Italian-American community in the Excelsior neighborhood and in San Francisco.
- In addition to the property's associations with the Italian American community, information provided by the applicant indicates the property was constructed in 1940 in the Art Deco style by a member of the Italian-American Social Club, contractor Joseph Ragni. The property was included as part of the Neighborhood Commercial District Survey (2015) and identified for prioritized follow up. The subject building was also identified in the Draft Excelsior and Portola Context Statement (2017) as significant under Criterion A/1 (Events) for its association with the Excelsior's Italian and Italian American community.
- The IASC has been referenced in various local print media. Herb Caen regularly announced events hosted by the IASC in his San Francisco Chronicle column. The IASC has also been referenced in other San Francisco Chronicle features in addition to features on San Francisco Heritage's website and the Marin Independent Journal.

CRITERION 3

Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes, Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Maintaining IASC's role as a membership organization for residents of Italian descent.
- Providing event space and meeting venues for a variety of local cultural, religious, and community organizations.
- Restaurant and catering services that provide traditional Italian cuisine.
- Monthly member events.
- Art Deco style façade including green, white, and red ornamentation along the roofline and center medallion with club's initials "I.A.S.C."

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CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Restaurant and entertainment venue.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco currently located at 25 Russia Avenue in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Program Manager
Legacy Business Program

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Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

June 14, 2021

ITALIAN-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO

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Business Address: 25 Russia Avenue
District: District 11
Applicant: Julie A. Clima, General Manager
Nomination Letter Date: October 8, 2020
Nominated By: Supervisor Ahsha Safaí
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco, currently located at 25 Russia Avenue.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on June 14, 2021, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Maintaining IASC's role as a membership organization for residents of Italian descent.
- Providing event space and meeting venues for a variety of local cultural, religious, and community organizations.
- Restaurant and catering services that provide traditional Italian cuisine.
- Monthly member events.
- Art Deco style façade including green, white, and red ornamentation along the roofline and center medallion with club's initials "I.A.S.C."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Restaurant and entertainment venue.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on June 14, 2021.

Regina Dick-Endrizzi
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2020-21-017
Business Name: Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco
Business Address: 25 Russia Avenue
District: District 11
Applicant: Julie A. Clima, General Manager
Nomination Letter Date: October 8, 2020
Nominated By: Supervisor Ahsha Safai

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes No

5 Russia Avenue from 1935 to 1940 (5 years)
25 Russia Avenue from 1940 to Present (81 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes No

NOTES: N/A

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: April 21, 2021

Richard Kurylo
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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October 8, 2020

Richard Kuylo
Legacy Business Program
City and County of San Francisco
Office of Small Business
1 Dr. Carlton B Goodlett Place, Room 110
San Francisco, CA 94102

RE: LEGACY BUSINESS STATUS FOR THE ITALIAN AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB

Attention Legacy Business Program:

I am nominating the Italian American Social Club to represent District 11 in the Legacy Business Registry. The Italian-American Social Club, of San Francisco was founded in 1928 in the basement of Mario Blengino's home (251 Naples Street) in the Excelsior District. Blengino, a hardwood floor layer, was the de-facto leader of a group of Italian friends and associates who privately called themselves the "Gorgonzola Cheese Club". They met often and soon merged with another Italian social club called the Aurora. This merger necessitated the move to a larger space at 5 Russia Ave. On February 1, 1935 the Club merged with another social community called the Alfieri Club and the new entity was dubbed the Italian American Social Club (IASC).

On March 21, 1938 a building corporation was formed for the IASC with the aim of purchasing the lot at 25 Russia Avenue and building a three-story clubhouse complete with banquet hall, kitchen, bar, meeting rooms, a large recreation room, an auditorium and bocce ball alleys. When the building was finished, the dedication festivities included a banquet and a carnival over August 9-11, 1940. They were some of the largest events ever held in the Excelsior district.

The IASC since its founding has been a place for local Italians to gather and celebrate their ethnicity by enjoying traditional games (such as bocce), traditional food and festivities that celebrate Italian and local culture. The IASC also served a crucial role in the community starting at the beginning of the second World War as a meeting place for merchants and politicians, as a venue for wartime related fundraisers, and host for important dinners. The IASC has also played this role, as facilitator of cultural expression, to the Excelsior community at large by providing a venue – via rental at a reasonable cost

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– of its meeting room spaces for parties, concerts, dances, other performances; and pivotal life events such as weddings, anniversaries, graduations, dances, celebrations of life and other memorials.

The IASC is a membership organization as well as a public space. At this time there are about 200 members, some of whom are the descendants of the founders. In order to maintain the tradition of the IASC as being a place to meet and relax with other members of the IASC and the Italian community, there are several “members’ events” on the calendar such as the Tuesday evening members’ dinner, “members and guests” night on the second Tuesday of the month, the “Guys and Dolls” dinner on the fourth Wednesday of the month; and the Christmas dinner dance. These members events are cherished and enjoyed throughout the year and serve as a vehicle for driving membership growth and solidarity.

The historic nature, the impact this business has made for the Italian-American community, as well as the broader Excelsior community, and hub for cultural and civic activity make the Italian American Social Club an ideal District 11 representative in the San Francisco Legacy Business Directory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ahsha Safai".

Ahsha Safai
District 11 Supervisor

Section One:

Business / Applicant Information.

Please provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

NAME OF BUSINESS:	
Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco	
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business):	
Mario Gentile (President) Owned by all Members	
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE NUMBER:
25 Russia Ave San Francisco Ca. 94112	415 585-8059
	EMAIL ADDRESS:
MAILING ADDRESS – STREET ADDRESS:	MAILING ADDRESS – CITY AND STATE:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business Address	San Francisco Ca.
	MAILING ADDRESS – ZIP CODE:
	94112
WEBSITE ADDRESS:	
www.iascsf.net	
FACEBOOK PAGE:	
Italian American Social Club	
TWITTER NAME:	
APPLICANT'S NAME:	APPLICANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER:
Julie A Clima	
APPLICANT'S TITLE:	APPLICANT'S EMAIL ADDRESS:
General Manager	
SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	
0014372	
SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (If applicable):	
C0161359	

Section Two:

Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS	ZIP CODE	START DATE OF BUSINESS
5 Russia Avenue	94112	February 1, 1935
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	1935 to 1940	

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
25 Russia Avenue	94112	Start: August 1940
		End: Present

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

Section Three:

Disclosure Statement.

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

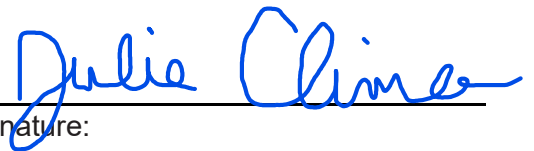
In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Julie A Clima

9-18-2020



Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:

ITALIAN-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB

Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

CRITERION 1

a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.

The Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco (“IASC”), currently located at 25 Russia Avenue in the Excelsior District, was founded on February 1, 1935, with origins dating back seven years earlier.

In 1928, a group of Italian friends and associates who privately called themselves the “Gorgonzola Cheese Club” established their club in the basement of the home of their de-facto leader Mario Blengino – a hardwood floor layer – at 251 Naples Street in the Excelsior District. They met often and soon merged with another Italian social club called the Aurora. This merger necessitated the move to a larger space at 5 Russia Avenue.

On February 1, 1935, the club merged with another social community called the Alfieri Club, and the new entity was dubbed the Italian-American Social Club.

On March 21, 1938, a building corporation was formed for the IASC with the aim of purchasing the lot at 25 Russia Avenue and building a three-story clubhouse complete with banquet hall, kitchen, bar, meeting rooms, a large recreation room, an auditorium, and bocce ball alleys. To finance the project, approximately \$25,000 was raised by the sale of stock (10,000 shares of stock were issued at \$5 per share), and an additional \$12,000 was borrowed from the Bank of America. Many club members mortgaged their homes to guarantee this loan.

When the building was finished, the dedication festivities included a banquet and a carnival over August 9 to 11, 1940. They were some of the largest events ever held in the Excelsior district.

Today, the IASC continues as a neighborhood restaurant with two bars and meeting, banquet, and party spaces complemented by full catering services.

b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?

The Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco has not ceased operations in San Francisco since it was established in 1935 with the exception of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020-2021, which closed the venue intermittently.

c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.

The Italian-American Social Club is not a family-owned business; it is a C corporation. “A C corporation is a legal entity that exists separately from the people who own, manage, control, and operate it. It can enter into contracts, pay taxes, and is liable for its debts. A C corporation issues shares of its stock, as evidence of ownership, to the person(s) or entities that contribute the money or business assets the corporation uses to conduct its business.”¹

d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.

Not applicable. The Italian-American Social Club is a nonprofit organization.

e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Documentation of the existence of the business verifying it has been in operation for 30+ years is provided in this Legacy Business Registry application.

f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The historic resource status of the building at 25 Russia Avenue is classified by the Planning Department as Category B, Unknown / Age Eligible, with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act. However, the building was constructed in the late 1930s and features a notable and attractive Art Deco façade.

“The Art Deco style Italian American Social Club is a hidden-gem in the Excelsior,” according to San Francisco Heritage. Dedicated in 1940, the building features a series of piers inset with floriated molding and decorative green, white, and red Deco ornament along the roofline (the colors of the Italian flag), along with a center medallion with the Club’s initials “I.A.S.C.” The awnings of the first story echo this color scheme.²

CRITERION 2

a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.

¹ <https://www.taxes.ca.gov/CorpC.html#What>

² <https://www.sfheritage.org/features/top-5-institutional-buildings-in-the-excelsior/>

In the late nineteenth century, the Excelsior area was populated heavily by Italian, German, and Irish families who labored in the surrounding farms, nurseries, and dairies. After the earthquake and fire of 1906, the region rapidly transitioned from agricultural suburb to a thriving, urban, working class neighborhood. The area was particularly attractive to Maltese, Russian Jews, and the Italian and Italian-American community who soon made the Excelsior the second main hub in San Francisco for that ethnicity after North Beach³.

By World War II, the Excelsior was famous for its strong cosmopolitan presence. Its streets, named after foreign countries and cities, were peppered with ethnic restaurants, bakeries, groceries, and churches of many different denominations. Today, the Excelsior's character is further enhanced by Latin American and Asian communities, primarily Mexican, Salvadorian, Filipino, and Chinese⁴.

The IASC since its founding has been a place for local Italians to gather and celebrate their ethnicity by enjoying traditional games (such as bocce), traditional food, and festivities that celebrate Italian and local culture. The IASC has also played this role, as facilitator of cultural expression, to the Excelsior community at large by providing a venue – via rental at a reasonable cost – of its meeting room spaces for parties, concerts, dances, other performances; and pivotal life events such as weddings, anniversaries, graduations, dances, celebrations of life, and other memorials.

b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?

The IASC began to serve a crucial role in the community starting at the beginning of the second World War as a meeting place for merchants and politicians, as a venue for wartime related fundraisers, and host for important dinners. In June 1942, for example, the IASC was the host for the Outer Mission War Savings Committee's mass meeting for merchants regarding the sale of war bonds and stamps⁵. Later that year in October, the IASC hosted a carnival as a fundraiser that sold over \$7,000 in bonds and stamps and featured a "Victory Dinner."⁶

c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?

The IASC has been mentioned in the media as the venue for events such as political fundraisers, banquets, concerts, neighborhood meetings, and personal parties. Herb Caen regularly announced events hosted by the IASC in his San Francisco Chronicle column. For example, in 1961 he joked "Incidentally, the visiting Holiday panjandrums might like to know that a local group called The Cosmopolitans is staging its St. Patrick's [Day] party tomorrow at the Italian-American Social Club on Russia Ave., and we trust this will underline their belief that this is truly

³ Simonson, Hannah Lise, *Excelsior and Portola Historical Context Statement* (draft), Planning Department, City and County of San Francisco, 2017, p 15.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sunday, June 28, 1942, San Francisco, CA, page 60.

⁶ *San Francisco Chronicle*, Thursday, October 29, 1942, San Francisco, CA, page 24.

the international city.”⁷ In 1976, he pronounced “What is more ‘Ah, San Francisco’ than the Italian-American Social Club on Russia Avenue in the Mission?”⁸ and in 1991, he joked, “Is it only-in-S.F. that the Italian American Social Club is on Russia Ave.?”⁹

The Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco has been mentioned in other articles in the San Francisco Chronicle and other publications including, but not limited to, the following:

- **“San Francisco neighborhood honors one of its own, the Grateful Dead’s Jerry Garcia”**
Marin Independent Journal, August 1, 2019
<https://www.marinij.com/2019/08/01/san-francisco-neighborhood-honors-one-of-its-own-the-grateful-deads-jerry-garcia/>
- **“San Francisco knocks Christopher Columbus off his pedestal before protesters do”**
San Francisco Chronicle, June 18, 2020
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Christopher-Columbus-statue-by-Coit-Tower-removed-15349812.php>
- **“Italian-American Life in the Excelsior”**
San Francisco Heritage, March 5, 2020
<https://www.sfheritage.org/features/italian-american-life-in-the-excelsior/>

d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?

No.

e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

The IASC was founded as a community space – a place for individuals to bond over a bocce game or a family dinner; and as a venue for civic events. Since its beginnings, the IASC has served the local neighborhood associations as a meeting place. For example, soon after the 25 Russia Avenue building opened, the Cayuga Improvement Club of the Outer Mission began to hold whist games, symphony nights, holiday parties, and talks and films on topics of social-political significance for the community at large. In September 1941, the Cayuga Improvement Club showed the film “More Than Shelter” in order to educate the community at large about the burgeoning problem of homelessness and sub-standard housing.¹⁰ In February the following year, the Cayuga Improvement Club in partnership with the Red Cross screened “Minutes That Count” about first-aid.¹¹

Other examples of IASC’s community commitment include the hosting of fundraisers. In partnership with Excelsior merchants, the IASC hosted in September 1950 an event for the

⁷ *San Francisco Chronicle*, Thursday, March 16, 1961 San Francisco, CA, page 19.

⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, Friday, January 30, 1976, San Francisco, CA, page 23.

⁹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, Wednesday, March 20, 1991, San Francisco, CA, page 19.

¹⁰ *San Francisco Chronicle*, Thursday, September 17, 1941, San Francisco, CA, page 13.

¹¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, Tuesday, February 18, 1942, San Francisco, CA, page 22.

benefit of the rebuilding of Corpus Christi Church.¹² In 2002, in collaboration with the Neighborhood Parks Council, an effort was made to sell t-shirts decorated with Jerry Garcia (Grateful Dead) artwork to raise funds to rebuild the dilapidated Crocker Amazon Playground.¹³

More recently, in March 2020, the IASC planned to host an Excelsior Heritage Night at which residents could learn about the Excelsior's architectural and cultural history, and vote on buildings slated to become City Landmarks. Unfortunately, this event was cancelled due to the regionwide shelter-in-place order but will be rescheduled.

In addition, IASC continues to engage with the community by offering its services at a reasonable price for private and public events. The IASC's Yelp, Instagram, and Facebook pages demonstrate how the IASC's facilities are used by a wide spectrum of the community for a variety of purposes. At these social media streams, one will find a wealth of testimonials and images including a traditional Chinese wedding; Dungeness crab feeds; Mardi Gras parties; a Mexican fiesta; jazz and salsa bands; church services of various denominations; Friday Night Socials, Hawaiian traditional dancers; swing, salsa and ballroom dancing; proms, quinceañeras and Sweet 16's; open mic singing and comedy; Cyr wheel, yoga, and other fitness classes; weddings; anniversaries; and many full Italian family-style dinners.¹⁴

f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.

The Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco was created primarily for social activities by Italian-American men. Its early days focused on game play such as cards, pool, and bocce, before transitioning to hosting large family functions such as dinner parties and wedding banquets.¹⁵

Today the Excelsior district is a melting pot of ethnicities and cultures from around the world with "possibly the largest immigrant population in the city."¹⁶ The largest ethnic population, since the 1960s includes Latinos, especially those from Central America. Filipinos are reportedly the fourth largest demographic group within the Excelsior and Asian residents now make up about a quarter of the district's total population.¹⁷ The Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco serves all these populations.

g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?

The IASC building was built by general contractor Joseph Ragni, a native of Italy and member of the IASC, in the Art Deco style in 1940. The exterior is largely intact with the exception of the replacement of the second story windows – the original ones were with divided lights. Despite

¹² *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sunday, September 17, 1950, San Francisco, CA, page 21.

¹³ *San Francisco Chronicle*, Tuesday, October 1, 2002, San Francisco, CA, page D8.

¹⁴ IASC's [Yelp.com page](#), [Facebook page](#), and [Instagram page](#).

¹⁵ <https://www.sfheritage.org/features/italian-american-life-in-the-excelsior/>

¹⁶ Simonson, Hannah Lise, *Excelsior and Portola Historical Context Statement* (draft), Planning Department, City and County of San Francisco, 2017, p 124.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

this, the building has been deemed significant under Criteria A/1 (events) for its association with the Excelsior’s Italian and Italian-American community and “the building still meets the threshold of retaining enough integrity that a member of the community from 1940 would recognize the building.”¹⁸

h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

If the IASC were sold, relocated, or shut down the Excelsior community would lose a significant portion of its local and ethnic color.

CRITERION 3

a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.

The IASC functions as a membership organization for residents of Italian descent, a neighborhood restaurant and bar, and an event venue with four rooms of varying size and capacity. The rooms include the Grand Ballroom, which has a capacity of 200-300; the American Room, which holds up to 75 people; and the Italian Room, which can handle up to 150. There are two bars, one in the Grand Ballroom and another on the main level with a lounge area. The Restaurant has a 45-person capacity and is also available for rent. Complete catering services round out the services provided.

b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)

The IASC is a membership organization as well as a public space. At this time there are about 200 members, some of whom are the descendants of the founders. In order to maintain the tradition of the IASC as being a place to meet and relax with other members of the IASC and the Italian community, there are several “members’ events” on the calendar such as the Tuesday evening members’ dinner, “members and guests” night on the second Tuesday of the month, the “Guys and Dolls” dinner on the fourth Wednesday of the month, and the Christmas dinner dance. These members events are cherished and enjoyed throughout the year and serve as a vehicle for driving membership growth and solidarity.

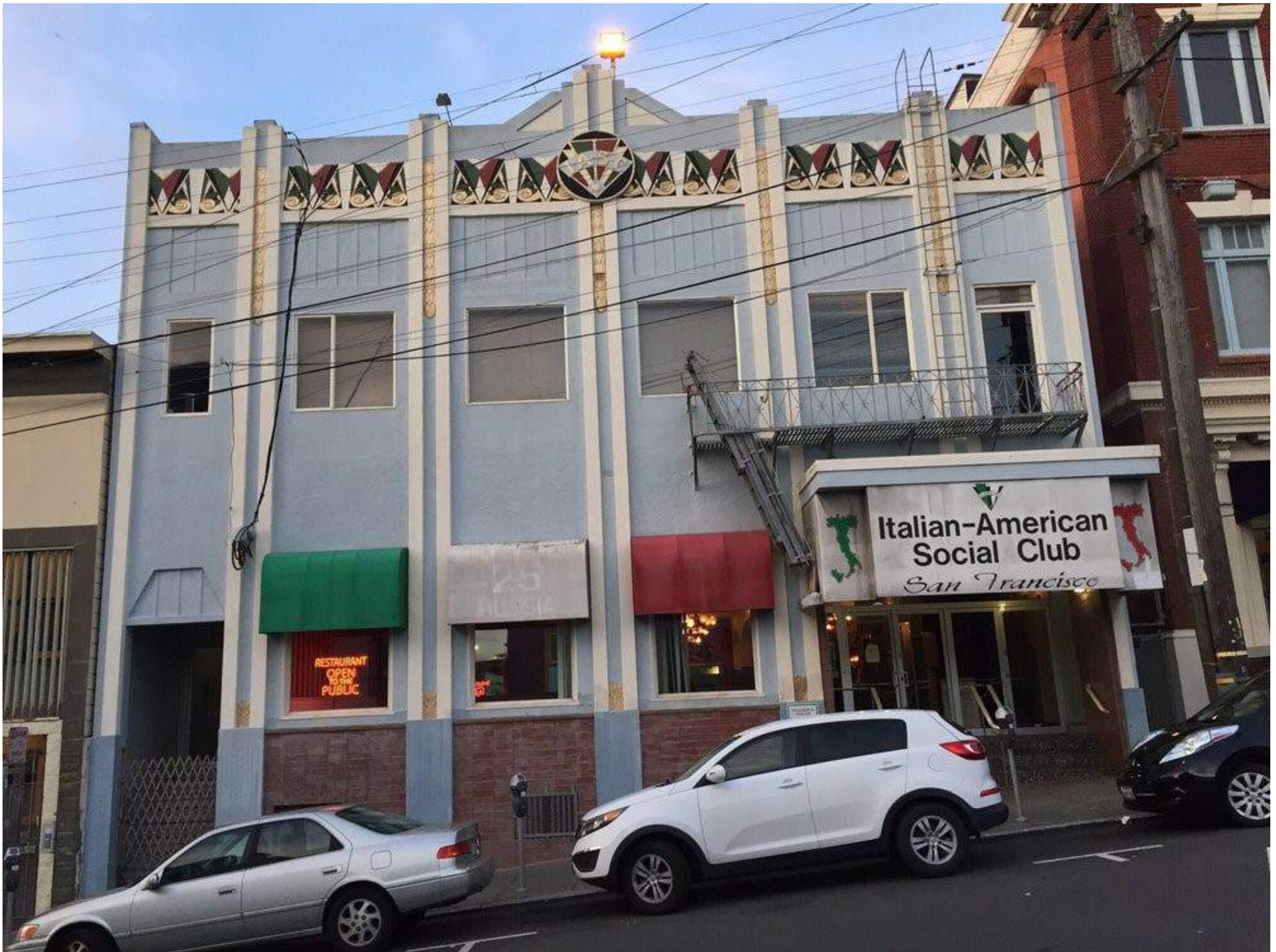
c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).

¹⁸ Simonson, Hannah Lise, *Excelsior and Portola Historical Context Statement* (draft), Planning Department, City and County of San Francisco, 2017, p 150.

The IASC has an Art Deco façade. The paint, brickwork, and sculptural details along the roofline are carefully maintained, and the paint is freshened as needed. New awnings, in Italian colors that are nearly identical to what have historically graced the door and ground floor windows, have recently been installed. The interior is kept up as needed: the woodwork of the bars and floors are polished often, and the vintage lighting is kept clean and in working order.

d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Documentation that demonstrates the business has been a social club for 30+ years is included in this Legacy Business Registry application.



Italian-American
Social Club
San Francisco

RESTAURANT
OPEN
TO THE
PUBLIC

ITALIAN AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB



25
RUSSIA AVE.

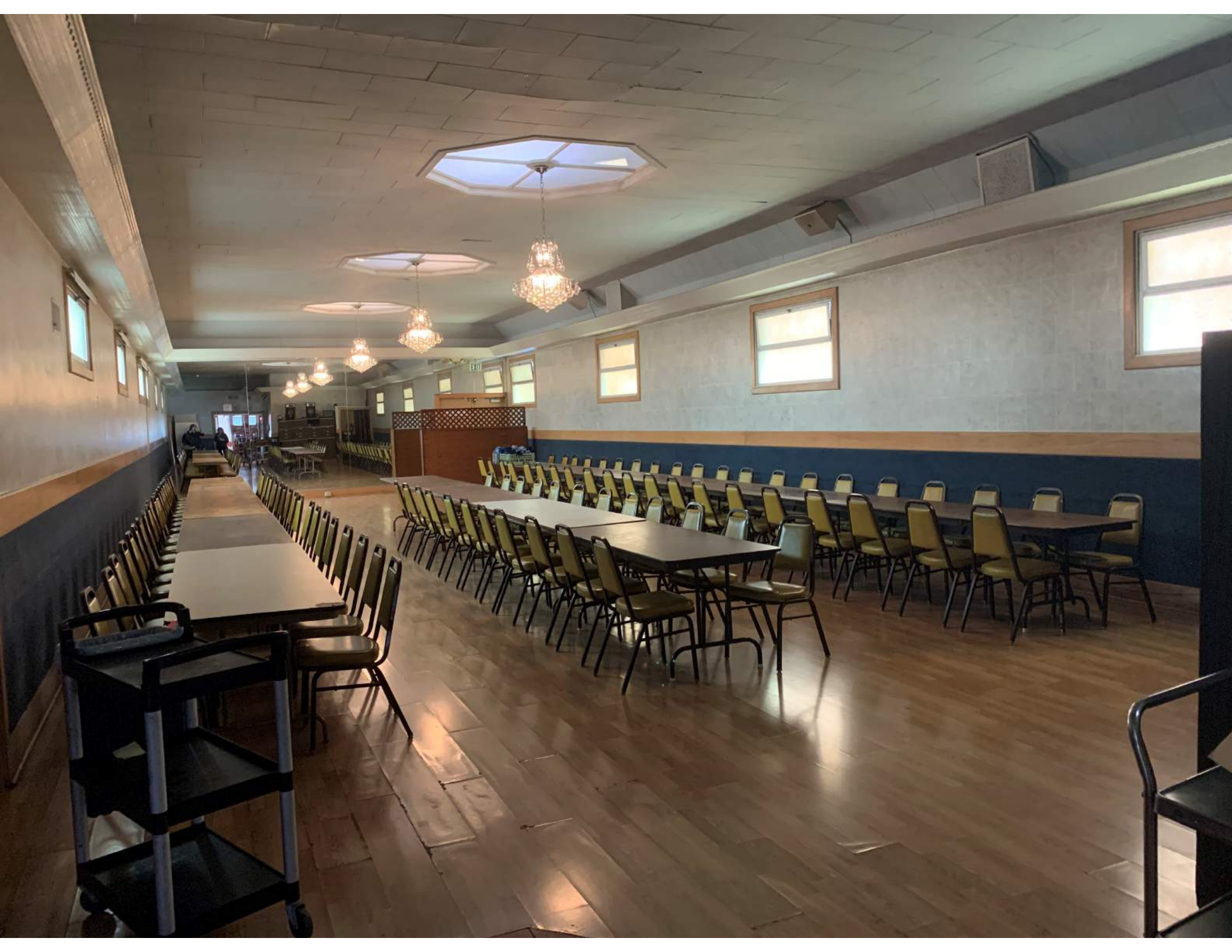
Italian American
SOCIAL CLUB
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ITALIAN - AMERICAN
SOCIAL CLUB
DEDICATION DINNER
AUG 11, 1940











*Italian-American Social Club
of San Francisco, Inc.*



25 RUSSIA AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

August 11, 1940



Italian-American Social Club of San Francisco

INCORPORATED

25 RUSSIA AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO

Mother's Day, May 10, 1942

Dear Members:

The time is near when we will again be given the opportunity to pay honor to our mothers on a day set aside for her.

Members of the Italian-American Social Club are fortunate to have a fine club where we can gather with our families and friends to entertain our mothers on that day of days.

A fine program of entertainment has been arranged by the Irish members, who have charge of the club for that day, a typical Irish dinner, speakers and music to fit the occasion, so make your reservations early and BRING MOTHER ALONG, for this is her day.

BANQUET—A REAL SURPRISE

Our dinner will be prepared by famous Irish chefs and will be served starting promptly at 1:30 p.m. by the Daughters and Sweethearts of club members. A real treat is in store for you.

You will enjoy it, and Mother will, too.

Admission: Members \$1.25, Children 75 cents, Guests \$1.50

SPEAKER OF THE DAY

We are fortunate to have Hon. George R. Reilly agree to honor our program this day. He is a delightful speaker and we know you will enjoy hearing him.

MUSIC

We have arranged a delightful musical program which everyone will enjoy.

COME AND DANCE WITH MOTHER

COMMITTEE ON ARRANGEMENTS

JOE GILMORE, Chairman

JAMES H. REILLY, JR.
ALBERT V. COOKE
KENNETH FAHY

JACK HANSBURY
ROY KOREN
FRANK O'CONNOR

PATRICK (MARIO) BLENGINO—General Advisor



RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE BY FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 8th

PICTORIAL

Vol. 2 No. 12

JULY 6, 1965

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Win a Luxurious Mink Stole!
Coupons Available At Your Favorite Store!



15¢

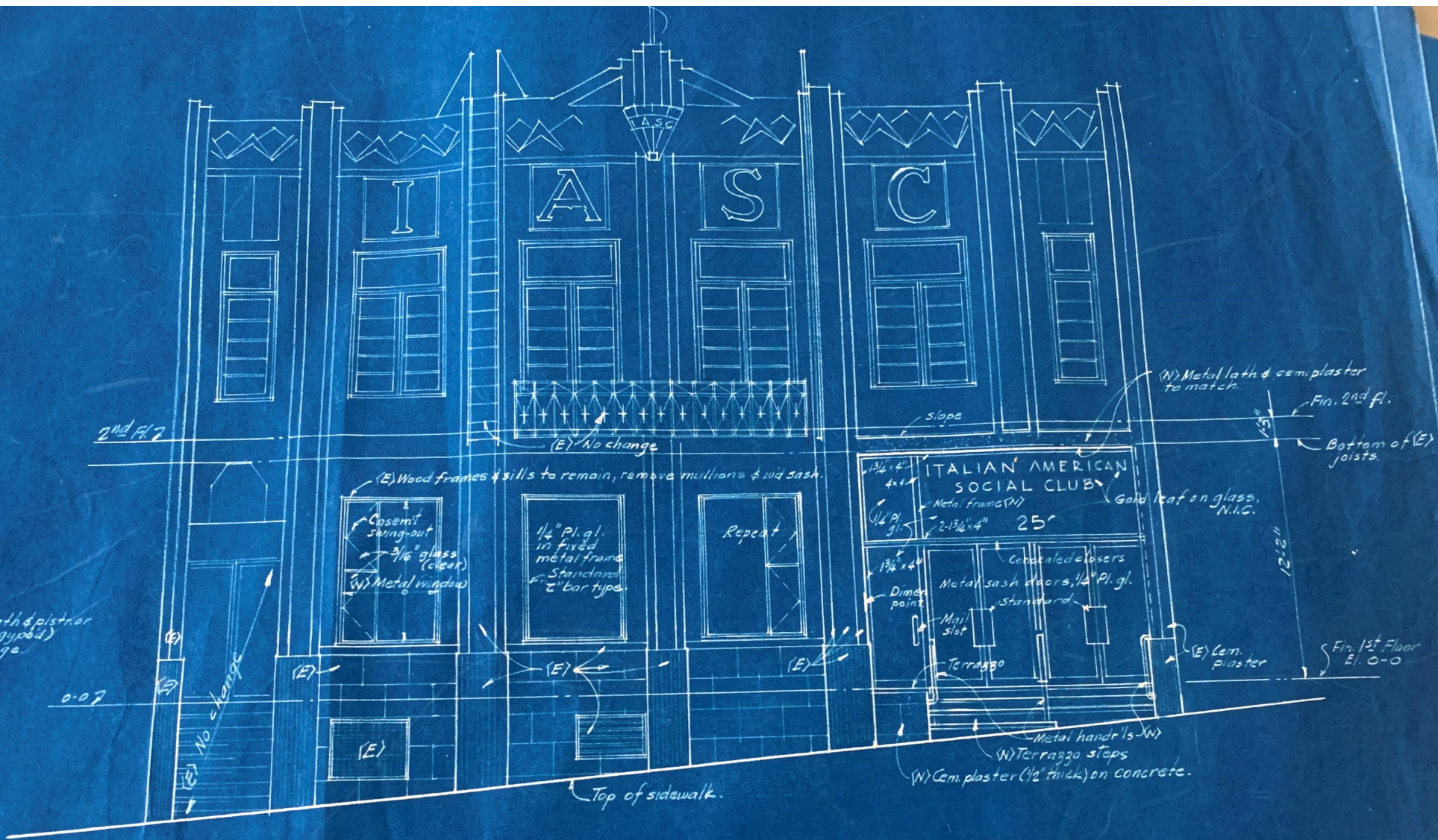
COMPLIMENTARY

See Puritan Market on Page.....8 Classified.....8
See Excelsior Fish & Poultry on Page.....8 Business Directory.....5



THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB, INC. BEGINS PLANNING FOR 30th ANNIVERSARY

Officers of the Italian American Social Club, Inc. have set October 24 as date of special 30th year celebration. (Left to right) Edward Del Carlo, chairman of the board; and directors Louis Canepa, Tony Gulsto, A. Giannini, Albert Spediacci, and Albert Pardini. For Club history and full list of directors, see story inside cover.



RUSSIA AVE. ELEVATION Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"

JOB NO. 67-2
 JACK E. O'ROURKE, ARCHITECT C-2419
 4675 MISSION ST. SAN FRANCISCO
 Approved for construction:
J.E. O'Rourke
 Aug. 14, 1967

REVISION
 ALTERATIONS TO A BUILDING FOR
 ITALIAN AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB R.1
 25 RUSSIA AVE. SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA OF
 ZONE C-2, LOT 18A, TYPE 5 CONSTRUCTION 4 SHEETS

ITALIAN-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB, INC.



40th Anniversary
Dinner - Dance

1935 – 1975

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1975

25 RUSSIA AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Founding

OF THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB

In 1928, in the basement of Mario Blengino's home located on Naples Street, several men from the Excelsior District met to form what was known as the "GORGONZOLA CHEESE CLUB". This Club soon outgrew Mario's basement as a meeting place and so a larger space was rented at 5 Russia Avenue (now the health club on the corner) to hold the meetings. The Club name was changed to the Aurora Club in 1929. In February, 1935, the Aurora Club and the Alfieri Club joined as one and the name of the Italian-American Social Club was assumed. The Alfieri Club was a separate group also located in the Mission.

On March 21, 1938, the Italian-American Social Club Building Corporation was formed. Louis Scaletti was elected and remained Chairman of this Corporation until 1947. Ten thousand shares of stock were issued at \$5.00 per share for the building at 25 Russia Avenue. Approximately \$25,000.00 was raised by the Club by stock issues and an additional \$12,000.00 was borrowed from the Bank of America. Many members mortgaged their homes to guarantee this loan. Then, in order to pay this loan off as soon as possible, money was borrowed from member Biagio Balma to pay off the First Deed of Trust held by the Bank of America in May, 1943.

Due to the work of members and their wives actively participating, and the help of member-manager, Mario Lertora, who is still active, many functions were sponsored to raise funds to pay off our indebtedness, and on March 23, 1944, the loan was finally paid. In June, 1947, the Building Corporation turned over all property to the Italian-American Social Club, Inc., of San Francisco. The stock was liquidated at a special ceremony and during the following years, our members continued to manage and assist in the operations of the Club.

On March 16, 1964, the membership hired Vince Rumolo as manager of the Club and since that date, approximately \$140,000.00 of the Club's funds has been spent for the improvement and betterment of the Club.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Founders and Organizers of the Club, many of whom now are deceased.

ITALIAN-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB, INC.



46th
Anniversary Banquet

1935-1981

Sunday, February 22, 1981

25 RUSSIA AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Date, (M)____(D)____(Y)____

Subject to the by-laws and rules of the Italian American Social Club, I hereby apply for membership in The Italian American Social Club: as a **Voting Member:** **Social Member.**

Name in full: (Last)____(First)____(Initial)____

Residence Address: _____

City _____ Zip _____ Phone: (____)-____-_____

Occupation _____

Employer _____ (Address) _____ Phone (____)-____-_____

Place of Birth: (City) _____ (State) _____ DOB (M)____(D)____(Y)____

Citizen Yes ___ No ___ Married: Yes ___ No ___ Wife's First Name _____

Are your parents of Italian extraction? Yes ___ No ___

Have you applied for membership before? Yes ___ No ___

If so give details _____

Fathers Name _____ Fathers Birth Place _____

Give names of two (2) persons, non-members, you have known for at least 10 years:

(1) Name: _____ Address: _____

(2) Name: _____ Address: _____

Give names of clubs and fraternal organizations of which you are a member:

I hereby certify that the proponent has explained the aims and ideals of the IASC to me.

Signature of Applicant _____

Proposer has known applicant for _____ Years

1. Proposed by: _____

2. Sponsor: _____

3. Sponsor: _____

Before applicant can be presented to the membership for consideration, the Membership Committee must interview the applicant.

Applicant will be notified when he is to appear before the Membership Committee for interview.

When applicant is notified to appear, he should be prepared to pay the initiation fee of \$ _____ and one (1) year's dues (prorated) of \$ _____

DANCING

EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT

ADMISSION

LADIES 25c, 3c Tax

MEN 40c, 4c Tax

DANCING

From 9 P.M. 1 A.M.

UNION MUSIC

Louis Chiappari's Orchestra

ITALIAN-AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB BALL ROOM

25 RUSSIA AVENUE at MISSION

No Jitterbug Dancing Allowed

NOTICE: IASC Hall and Club Rooms are available for Dances, Parties, Weddings, Card Parties and All Occasions. Rentals Reasonable — Phone: RAndolph 9631



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: MAY 19, 2021

Filing Date: April 21, 2021
Case No.: **2021-004015LBR**
Business Name: Italian American Social Club
Business Address: 25 Russia Avenue
Zoning: NCD-Excelsior Outer Mission Street Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District
65-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 6084/018A
Applicant: Julie Clima, General Manager
25 Russia Avenue
Nominated By: Supervisor Ahsha Safai
Located In: District 11
Staff Contact: Melanie Bishop- 628.652.7440
melanie.bishop@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

The Italian American Social Club of San Francisco (IASC) is a social hall founded on February 1, 1935 with origins dating seven years earlier. In 1928, a group of Italian friends who referred to themselves as the “Gorgonzola Cheese Club” established the organization in the basement of the home of Mario Blengino at 251 Naples Street in the Excelsior District. After merging with another Italian social club called The Aurora, the group moved to a larger space at 5 Russia Avenue. On February 1, 1935, the club consolidated again with the Alfieri Club and the new group was named the Italian American Social Club.

A few years later in 1938, the IASC purchased the lot at 25 Russia Avenue to build a three-story club house complete with banquet hall, bar, kitchen, meeting rooms, recreation room, auditorium, and bocce ball alleys. The project was financed with the sale of stock and a loan from Bank of America with several club members mortgaging their own homes to guarantee the loan. The building was designed and constructed by IASC member and local contractor Joseph Ragni. Upon completion in August of 1940, a banquet and carnival were held in celebration.

In the late nineteenth century, the Excelsior was populated with families of Italian, German, and Irish descent who worked in the surrounding farms and flower nurseries. After the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, the neighborhood transitioned from an agricultural suburb to a thriving, urbanized, working class neighborhood. The area saw an influx of Maltese, Russian Jews, and Italian immigrants making the Excelsior the second main hub in San Francisco for Italian immigrants after North Beach.¹ The IASC was founded as a place for local Italians to gather and celebrate their ethnicity by enjoying traditional games, food, and festivities that celebrate Italian and local culture. During World War II, the IASC served as a meeting place for merchants and politicians and hosted several wartime fundraisers and dinners for local organizations including the Outer Mission War Savings Committee.

Created initially as a social club primarily for Italian American men, the IASC currently maintains approximately 200 members, some of whom are the descendants of the founders. The IASC holds several member's events monthly as well as a yearly Christmas dinner dance. Additionally, the IASC currently rents event and meeting spaces to a diverse group of cultural, religious, and community organizations for private and public events in San Francisco. During the coronavirus pandemic, the IASC has been forced to close the venue intermittently due to shelter-in-place restrictions.

The business's primary location located at 25 Russia Avenue is a Category B (Unknown/Age Eligible) structure on the northeast side of Russia Avenue between Mission and London streets in the Excelsior neighborhood. It is within the Excelsior Outer Mission Street Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District and a 65-X Height and Bulk District. 25 Russia Avenue was included as part of the *Draft Neighborhood Commercial District Survey* (2015) where it was identified for prioritized follow up along with 31 other individual buildings within the Excelsior Outer Mission Street Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District.² The findings of the *Draft Neighborhood Commercial District Survey* are not conclusive, therefore the property remains classified as a Category B (Unknown/Age Eligible) property.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1935.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Italian American Social Club qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Italian American Social Club has operated continuously in San Francisco for 86 years.

¹ Hannah Lise Simonson, *Draft Excelsior and Portola Historic Context Statement*, City and County of San Francisco, 2017, 15.

² San Francisco Planning, "Draft Excelsior Outer Mission Street Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD)", *Draft Neighborhood Commercial District Survey*, 2015, 11.

- b. Italian American Social Club has contributed to the history and identity of the Excelsior neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Italian American Social Club is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with the Italian American community in the Excelsior neighborhood and in San Francisco.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events/persons and/or architecture?*

Yes. In addition to the property's associations with the Italian American community, information provided by the applicant indicates the property was constructed in 1940 in the Art Deco style by a member of the Italian American Social Club, contractor Joseph Ragni.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local/state or federal historic resource registry?*

No.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

As previously mentioned, the subject property was included as part of the Neighborhood Commercial District Survey (2015) and identified for prioritized follow up. The subject building was also identified in the *Draft Excelsior and Portola Context Statement* (2017) as significant under Criterion A/1 (Events) for its association with the Excelsior's Italian and Italian American community.³

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature/newspapers/journals/etc?*

Yes. The IASC has been referenced in various local print media. Herb Caen regularly announced events hosted by the IASC in his *San Francisco Chronicle* column. The IASC has also been referenced in other *San Francisco Chronicle* features in addition to features on San Francisco Heritage's website and the *Marin Independent Journal*.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 25 Russia Avenue (August 1940-Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 5 Russia Avenue (1935-1940)

Recommended by Applicant

- Maintaining IASC's role as a membership organization for residents of Italian descent
- Providing event space and meeting venues for a variety of local cultural, religious, and community

³ Ibid., 150.

organizations

- Restaurant and catering services that provide traditional Italian cuisine
- Monthly member events
- Art Deco style façade including green, white, and red ornamentation along the roofline and center medallion with club's initials "I.A.S.C."

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None

Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
 - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
 - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
 - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 1188

HEARING DATE: MAY 19, 2021

Case No.: **2021-004015LBR**
Business Name: Italian American Social Club
Business Address: 25 Russia Avenue
Zoning: NCD-Excelsior Outer Mission Street Neighborhood Commerical Zoning District
65-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 6084/018A
Applicant: Julie Clima, General Manager
25 Russia Avenue
Nominated By: Supervisor Ahsha Safai
Located In: District 11
Staff Contact: Melanie Bishop- 628.652.7440
melanie.bishop@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR ITALIAN AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 25 RUSSIA AVENUE BLOCK/LOT: 6084/018A.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on May 19, 2021, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that Italian American Social Club qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Italian American Social Club

Location(s):

Current Locations:

- 25 Russia Avenue (August 1940-Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 5 Russia Avenue (1935-1940)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Maintaining IASC's role as a membership organization for residents of Italian descent
- Providing event space and meeting venues for a variety of local cultural, religious, and community organizations
- Restaurant and catering services that provide traditional Italian cuisine
- Monthly member events
- Art Deco style façade including green, white, and red ornamentation along the roofline and center medallion with club's initials "I.A.S.C."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2021-004015LBR to the Office of Small Business on May 19, 2021.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Nageswaran, Black, Foley, Johns, Pearlman, So, Matsuda

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: May 19, 2021

Resolution No. ###
May 19, 2021

CASE NO. 2021-004015LBR
Italian American Social Club

ADOPTED: May 19, 2021