

# WALTER D. BLISS & WILLIAM B. FAVILLE

Architect  
(1872-1956)

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(1866-1947)

Walter Danforth Bliss was born in Nevada in 1872, the son of Duane Leroy and Elizabeth Tobey Bliss. Duane Bliss had made his fortune in opening up the Lake Tahoe Basin for industry and development. Walter was their third son and after graduating from local schools obtained his architectural education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he met his future partner William Baker Faville. Faville, more than 5 years older than Bliss, was originally from San Andreas, California, but had grown up in western New York State and had already served an apprenticeship in Buffalo with Green & Wicks prior to MIT. They both left MIT in 1895 and began working at the prominent New York firm of McKim, Mead & White.

Although neither appears to have attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, they would have been exposed to its teachings in New York at McKim, Mead & White and also at the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects of which John Galen Howard was President. In 1898 the pair decided to form a partnership and selected San Francisco as the city in which to work. Walter Bliss was able to use his close connections with local society to secure commissions and the firm quickly established a strong reputation. Examples of their early residential work in San Francisco can be seen in:

- Pacific Heights - 2898 Broadway (1899, for Walter's parents), 3020 Pacific (1900),  
- 2800 Scott (1905), 2520 Pacific and 3001 Pacific (1906).

Early in the century the firm was commissioned to design the St. Francis Hotel at 301-45 Powell. Originally built in 1904 as a U shape, the building was damaged in 1906, but repaired and enlarged into an E shape in 1907 and further enlarged by them in 1913. Other fine examples of their classical architecture include the Bank of California (400 California, 1908, now S. F. Landmark #3), the Geary Theater and Annex (415 Geary/333 Mason, 1909, now S. F. Landmark #82), the Security Pacific Bank (1 Grant, 1910), the Metropolitan Club (640 Sutter, 1916), the Southern Pacific building (1 Market, 1916), the Bank of America (1 Powell, 1920), the Matson building (235 Market, 1921), and the Marines Memorial Club (609 Sutter, 1927). Faville was also the designer of two Palaces and some of the unifying features of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

After the 1906 earthquake and fire, they continued to design homes and apartments, including in:

- Presidio Heights - 3660 Jackson & 3540 Washington (1908),  
- 3581 Clay & 18 Presidio Terrace (1909);
- Pacific Heights - 2222 Broadway (1912), 2990 Vallejo (1914),  
- 2100 Broadway (1917), 2332 Baker (1918),  
- 1755 Jackson (1923, 12 apts., now condos);
- Sea Cliff - 880 El Camino (1916), 290 Sea Cliff (1921);
- Russian Hill - 807 Francisco (1917, a complete remodel).



2100 Broadway

Faville was recognized for his work by being made a Fellow of the AIA in 1914. He unified the San Francisco Chapter during 2 years as President (1915-16) and was AIA National President 1922-23. Bliss & Faville dissolved their partnership in 1925. Faville continued in practice by himself and Bliss formed a new partnership with their chief designer, J. Stewart Fairweather (1877-1947).