

ABOUT OUR FOUNDER, REV. FLORENCE BECKER AND THE FORMATION OF OUR CHURCH

The Golden Gate Spiritualist Church was granted its charter from the National Spiritualist Association on April 5, 1924. The church was founded by Rev. Florence Harwood Becker with the support of a small group of devoted Spiritualists. Florence Harwood Becker, born February 16, 1892, was the church's founding pastor, principal medium, and beloved teacher. She continued in those roles until she passed to Spirit on July 12, 1970.

Rev. Florence was probably the most outstanding, highly developed medium in Spiritualism's history. She was a dead trance medium. For a few decades, one of her Guides in Spirit, Dr .E. J. Briggs, gave trance addresses through her. Another of her guides, a Native American woman in Spirit, Squaw Sally, was the message bearer through her at church services.

In Rev. Becker's séances, trumpets (megaphone-like cones) would float around the circle and the room as Spirit voices spoke through them. She had the gift of direct Spirit voice, where Spirit voices could manifest anywhere in the séance room. As Rev. Becker was in trance during these séances, people from Spirit would also talk through her. Music boxes would float about the séance room, playing.

A building fund was begun early on. Money for a church property and building was raised through holding socials at each other's homes on a regular weekly basis. This began early in the church's history and continued through the 1940's

The church first held services in the Redman's Building at 240 Golden Gate Avenue and continued there until the building was sold in April, 1947. The congregation moved to the Native Sons building at 414 Mason Street.

Having accumulated sufficient funds in the Church Building Fund, an offer was made in 1951 for the property at 1901 Franklin Street, known as the Crocker Mansion. The congregation purchased the building. The members then set about remodeling the interior to make it suitable to be a church.

The building was built in the Italian Renaissance style for Margaret E. Crocker, widow of Judge Edwin B. Crocker of the California Supreme Court. A photograph of the house in the collection of the California Historical Society notes that it was built in 1895. However, SF Water Dept. records show that water service to the house was not turned on until Jan. 31, 1900.*

The building is surrounded by a granite retaining wall. The upper steps and front porch are white marble. "A mosaic covers the floor of the pink marble entry hall, the ceiling of which is carved in a motif similar to the used in the stained glass window which is placed in the second storey ceiling but which can be seen from the main floor through an interior balcony."*

The house originally had fourteen rooms, six fireplaces, and five baths. The dining room, now the church Healing Chapel, is the “jewel of the house, being richly carved and almost unchanged from its original state.”*

Two of the original fireplaces remain. The bricks from the other fire places were used to convert the service entrance on the Clay St. side of the building into the Church’s Clay St. entrance. Much of the interior wall paneling was retained and used in the remodeling of the building to serve as a church.

The Golden Gate Spiritualist Church continues at this location. Services presently are held twice weekly, on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening.

*Nancy Dibble, The House at Franklin and Clay Streets, (unpublished paper for Prof. Davenport, San Jose State University.)