

Descriptions of the buildings in Larkspur's Historic Downtown District. The District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Buildings that no longer contribute to this designation are enclosed in a box. **Non-Contributing Structure**



1. LARKSPUR CITY HALL, 400 Magnolia Ave.

The city was incorporated on March 1, 1908, and the first official election was held April 13, 1908. The present Mission Revival style building, with influences of Italian Villa, was designed by San Francisco architect Charles O. Claussen and cost \$15,100.50. It was dedicated on April 20, 1913. The building has many Mission style details: twin towers with tile caps and strong projected bracketed cornice and arched opening, Mission style false front on gable with curved pediment that echoes the quatrefoil window below it, and bracketed roof above a second floor porch. Note the pruned city name hedge and old drinking fountain. Visit the second floor photo gallery to view Larkspur's historic past.



2. LARKSPUR PUBLIC LIBRARY, 400 Magnolia Ave. (City Hall)

When the Larkspur Women's Club founded the library in 1913, it was squeezed into a small room on the first floor of City Hall. In 1939 the old fire station, located where the children's library is today, moved into new quarters next door and that space was taken over by the library. After a 1983 remodeling and expansion, the library now boasts the ambiance of a private retreat with plush upholstered wing chairs, brass lamps, and Victorian trim, wallpaper, and moldings. The sensitive attention to the historic nuances of the building by architect Sally Swanson & Associates in the remodeling earned the project a Special Commendation for Interior Reconstruction in the Renaissance '84 awards of the National Association of Home Builders.



3. LARKSPUR FIRE STATION, 420 Magnolia Ave.

In 1906, the people of Larkspur organized the Volunteer Fire Department. It started with one hose cart, and by 1910 it had grown to 24 volunteers, with a double chemical engine, hook and ladder, and 500 feet of hose for the original cart. See tour stop #5 for information about the first firehouse. The present fire station was built in 1939 with proceeds from the Rosebowl dances. Since at that time the fire chief lived on the second floor, the building was designed with a mix of residential and commercial Mission details. The station ties in architecturally with City Hall with its Mission style false red tiled roof, the stucco exterior, and the medallion and arches.

Without its Volunteer Fire Department, Larkspur's history would probably not be very different from many small towns. But the firefighters made Larkspur famous locally and nationally with their Rosebowl dance fundraisers that were held in a redwood grove on Cane Street, site of the Rosebowl Apartments today.



4. 444 MAGNOLIA

The current building is a replica of the original Alpine Garage structure. An example of a new/old building complementing the Historic District.



5. 450 MAGNOLIA

Prior to 1909 a blacksmith shop occupied this two-story Italianate false-front building. After the blacksmith era, the site became a market but found its real calling as a bar. When the building was transformed into a bar in the 1930s, the lower floor was remodeled with typical 1930s bar motifs: glass blocks framing the door, extended band between floors, rounded corner, neon martini sign, the keyhole windows. The barn doors of the smithy shop are visible on the Cane Street side. The second floor has retained its false front Italianate style with double-hung windows; thus, two architectural periods are represented in the one building.

After World War II, it was sold to Chester Wolmack who was in the Philippines when the Japanese took control of the islands. A Navy diver, he had witnessed the government dumping of silver pesos into Manila Bay. When the war was over, he and two fellow divers went back and found a great number of pesos where they had been dumped. For the first week of business, he gave away silver pesos and named the bar the Silver Peso. The bar still exudes a special flavor echoing the town's flamboyant past.

The annex section of the Silver Peso was the location of the first firehouse built in 1911 with lumber from the adjoining Larkspur Lumber Company. After the 1913 move to City Hall, the firehouse was adapted to commercial use with storefront windows and recessed entrance.



6. 460 MAGNOLIA

Built in 1925, the stucco building has a Mission style cornice and trim with a flat roof. A line of transom windows above the plate glass windows on the front is a typical 1920s commercial style that was used for the infill buildings between the blacksmith shop and the lumber yard. Originally the building appeared to be a twin to 470 Magnolia Ave.



7. 464 - 470 MAGNOLIA

The Pioneer Corte Madera Telephone exchange was housed in this single-story Classical Revival brick building after it was built in 1925.

A modified false front hides a flat roof. The recessed entry at the right is decorated with a white pediment and molding. 470 Magnolia Ave., originally a twin to 460 Magnolia Ave., was remodeled in the early 1920s.



8. 472 MAGNOLIA

Built in 1925 as a single-story brick pharmacy with an interesting key false front, the exterior was stuccoed in 1949. . At that time the false front was removed, the entrance was moved to the side and the transom windows were eliminated. In an attempt to partially restore the building in the 1960s, a Mission style false front was added.



9. 474 - 476 MAGNOLIA

From about 1905 until 1925, the Larkspur Lumber Company occupied most of the east side of Magnolia Ave. between Ward and Cane streets. This building was the office, with residential quarters above. The original facade was the only example of shingle style architecture in the downtown. A recessed arch was located within the gable. This two-store building with a medium gable roof is an example of the Mission style renovation that became popular in Larkspur after City Hall set the tone in 1913.

During the 1920s and 1930s, when the Mission style was popular, the building was stuccoed and the tile cornice added above the bay. The commercial transom windows and double-hung windows on the second floor, typical of residential/commercial buildings, were retained. The second-story bays and the storefront windows define the two different uses.



10. 482 MAGNOLIA

Built between 1900 and 1905, this two-story structure has been a cobbler's shop for three decades and then a variety store. With its gable roof and false front, it is another example of an old building being dressed up with Mission details. The original wood was covered with stucco in the 1920s or 1930s and a Mission tile cornice added.



11. 488 - 490 MAGNOLIA

A two-story building with a flat roof, false front with a modified Mission Revival influence, bracketed cornice, and stucco exterior appears to be a single structure. However, 488 Magnolia was built in 1923, and 490 Magnolia was built in 1925. A row of transom windows runs the width of the storefront above the street windows which flank the double entry doors. The leaded glass doors are new.



12. 494 MAGNOLIA

A typical example of bank buildings of the 1920s, it has kept its banking identity through the years. This is Larkspur's best example of an untouched Classical Revival style building with its projected cornice featuring hanging ornaments and dentil frieze line, bas-reliefs, and arched windows.



13. CITY PARKING LOT, Ward Street and Magnolia Avenue.

The city parking lot is located where a park was developed in 1913-14 by the Larkspur Women's improvement Club. After the railroad station closed in 1941, the park deteriorated and became a neglected mud hole until the parking lot was developed in 1974.



14. 25 WARD

Originally a single-store building, this is an example of one that has been enhanced to reflect the historic style of the downtown by adding detailing and a false front to a boxy second floor addition.



15. 12 WARD

The Ward Street end gable section was built prior to 1909 as the railroad stationmaster's residence. The cross gable at the north was added in the 1960s and the porch extended to unify the two buildings.



16. RAILROAD STATION

Located abutting the bike path between Ward Street and the Larkspur Plaza Parking Lot. The area around the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Station was the hub and heart of Larkspur in its heyday. In addition to the station and the warming room opposite it were the home of the stationmaster, the baggage room, the warehouse, and the railroad right-of-way with its concrete platforms that still seem to echo the clickety-clack of trains.

The railroad station was a goal of early land developer C. W. Wright. He had exacted a promise from the railroad that passenger service would commence when five more houses were built and inhabited in the city. Wright fulfilled his part of the agreement and a wooden North Pacific Coast station was completed by 1891 for passenger service. The Mission Revival style station with its tile roof and arched doorways was built in 1929. The railroad ceased operation on this line in 1941.



17. HISTORIC MARKER, DOHERTY PARK

This plaque, installed by the Larkspur-Corte Madera Historical Society in 1972, commemorates the site of the former Indian mounds, the government sawmill operation and the Jonathan Bickerstaff home, all located in the general area. Before Spanish settlers claimed Marin lands, the Coast Miwok Indians of the Penutian language family had built their homes in this area.

In 1936, an Indian burial ground was discovered nearby. When the Larkspur Plaza shopping complex was built in 1971, a former knoll at this site was bulldozed for fill for the center.



18. 551 - 549 MAGNOLIA

The Lark Art Deco theater with its Streamlined Moderne style of graduated panels was built by the Blumenfeld family in 1937 and is Larkspur's only Art Deco building. The neon sign and stopped tower are typical details used for 1930s movie theaters. The two small buildings on either side of the theater were originally used as office and storage space for the theater.

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19. 545 - 539 MAGNOLIA

Although asbestos shingles now cover this two-story building, it originally had shiplap siding when it was built in 1909. The simplified Commercial Italianate building has a false-front facade and a half mansard cap with corbels beneath. An overhang suspended from support cables fastened to the second story projects the main entry and storefront windows. The building abuts the one to the south at the second floor level. A passageway leads to the rear.



20. 537 - 531 MAGNOLIA

This two-story Commercial Italianate building, built in 1909 with low hip roof, bracketed cornice, and false front, abuts the building to the north on the second floor level, giving the two the appearance of one building. In the downtown storefront tradition, businesses are housed on the first floor and residences on second.



21. 507 MAGNOLIA

Built in 1895, the Blue Rock Inn was originally a two-story Queen Anne style hotel with a tower, shiplap siding, double-hung windows, and front and side porches. Located on the major north/south county road, the hotel was a popular stopping spot.

Prior to being named the Blue Rock Inn, it was originally called the Hotel Merwin, for the first owner, and then the Hotel Larkspur. Serefino and Elizabeth Marilli and William Stringa, who bought it in 1910, had local designer-builder Gustave Nagel remodel it with the locally quarried blue basalt rock pillars that give it its name. The hexagon tower with its witch's cap remains although the windows have been changed. The neon sign was added in the 1920s.

The hotel was popular with vacationing San Franciscans, and the restaurant enjoyed a reputation for fine food and drink. During this period, bars proliferated along Magnolia Avenue, and Larkspur earned a reputation as a playground for fun-seekers.

During Prohibition, rumor had it that a still was located in the basement. However, when the authorities raided, all they found was a tank of water.

The third story was added in the 1950s. Although the hotel has lost much of its original character, the Blue Rock remains a local landmark with whose name is synonymous with Larkspur throughout the Bay Area.



22. 503 - 501 MAGNOLIA

In 1890, the building housed Gus Frizzi's Exchange, a saloon. In subsequent eras, it was a candy store, an antique shop, and soda fountain. The original Classical Greek Revival commercial building has been modified by enclosing the front porch but retains its storefront look. The shop at 501 Magnolia, which was shoe-horned between



23. 499 MAGNOLIA

Visible in late 1890s photographs, this false-front building is reported to be one of the first in town and today is a good example of a simple 1890s commercial building. The original, a wooden structure with a medium gable roof, was covered with stucco in the 1920s.



24. 489 MAGNOLIA

A grocery store and a hardware store were early uses of this building. This building features an Italianate facade and four slanted bays with a dentil cornice and double-hung windows. The mix of residential and commercial uses is reinforced by the residential scale of the bays and the lower storefront windows, while retaining the symmetry of an

Italianate building.



25. 485 MAGNOLIA

This building is believed to have been built in the late 1800s. In the early 1890's, a movie house run by Mr. LaBora furnished Saturday night entertainment. A grocery store has been located here for many years. It originally was an Eastlake false-front commercial building with an Italianate bay at one end. A 1945 fire destroyed the original second story.



26. 479 - 473 MAGNOLIA

A barber shop has been at 475 Magnolia since the 1920s. Inside is a collection of antique barber equipment.



27. 469 MAGNOLIA

Built prior to 1909, the wooden two-story structure with a low gable roof was originally the barn for Stolzenberg's butcher shop. Cattle grazed in the pasture behind it and were slaughtered on the premises. When adapted for commercial uses, the scale and detailing were kept consistent with the barn.

The buildings between the barn and the street are new additions. The new covered walkway joining the buildings recreates the old downtown feeling.



28. 467 MAGNOLIA

This commercial/ residential building, with its slanted bay windows and bellcast gambrel roof, was built prior to 1909. The building has a false front with a projected cornice and an asymmetrical bay with a cornice

above the first floor ties into the bay. After Stolzenberg's butcher shop, there were dress, liquor, and TV repair shops located here.



29. 457 MAGNOLIA

This building has always housed commercial uses, ranging from a market to a liquor store to a print shop to a thrift store. Built in the late 1920s, the building is a single-story, flat-roofed shop with a stucco exterior, a Mission style mansard with brackets, and a cornice with a line of transom windows below. The brick facing replicates the feeling of the original tile with a rounded sill and bullnose detailing.



30. 455 MAGNOLIA

The original building was one of four identical Italianate style rental houses on a lane that ran between Locust and Magnolia avenues. When the demand for more stores developed in the 1920s, the house was lifted and a store built under it. The encapsulated house can be seen from the side. First a food store, it later became the Rosebowl Chateau, a popular watering hole for thirsty Rosebowl dancers until 1963 when the Rosebowl dances ended. It became a restaurant after 1972.



31. 435 MAGNOLIA

Built about 1924, this stucco bungalow has retained much of its original exterior appearance with a broad porch and concrete floor that is typical of a 1920's California bungalow. It is the only remaining bungalow on Magnolia Avenue downtown. The ground floor has housed a plumbing office, a coffee and doughnut shop, a dentist's residence and office, and most recently restaurants.



32. MAGNOLIA & KING STREETS St. Patrick's Church

The typically Spanish Colonial Revival style church with patterned mosaic tile steeple roof was designed by Henry Minto and built in 1940 on a former prickly pear farm.

Exterior repainting highlights the door and tower bas-reliefs. The curved balconies and arched openings give the tower a strong architectural character. The buttresses on the side give the building the appearance of a larger scale. The stained glass windows are set in a sand finish.



33. 105 KING / Patrick King (James Costello) House

In 1869, Patrick King established his cattle and dairy operations at the corner of Magnolia and King streets and built a farmhouse. In the 1890s the farmhouse was moved to the corner, and a new two-story Queen Anne style residence was added.

The James Costello Family has lived there from 1898-2007. James Costello, and later his son William, owned and operated O'Connor-Moffatt & Company, a major San Francisco department store where Macy's is now located on Union Square in San Francisco.

The wonderfully preserved house seems to be caught in a time warp in the downtown. It is the only architecturally significant residence in the Historic District.



34. 115 - 123 KING / Brown Shingle Houses

The three brown-shingle houses, built in 1905 as rental units by James Costello, are one-story with hip roofs, dormers with a gable roof, and covered porches. They are unique as a group.



35. 282-286 Magnolia

Built in 1922 by George and Jean Durston. After completion it was rented to the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company while their building at 464 Magnolia was being completed. Jean Durston and family members lived there after 1925, and eventually it became part of the Lark Creek complex. It has been a restaurant since the 1970's and is now the popular Yankee Pier restaurant operated by the Lark Creek group.



36. 272-274 MAGNOLIA

Now the north end of the Lark Creek complex it was built sometime before 1909 as main house for a group of seven cabins grouped downhill to the road of 274 and 286, only one the cabins survives today near the creek as 276 Magnolia Ave. Ernest and Grace Probert lived here while their son's adjacent automobile showroom was being constructed.



37. 242-270 MAGNOLIA

Kaiser Auto Agency built in 1945 by Hil Probert (see 234 Magnolia) using the old beams and skylight from the Sausalito Ferry Terminals.



38. 236-240 Magnolia.

Probert's Personal Service Station. 1937. A portion of the service station featured in the film *Impact* survives today as the hair salon at 238 Magnolia with the service bays to either side as small shops at 236 and 240 Magnolia. .

By repeating the Greek Revival style of the house at 234 Magnolia, the small shops were given a unified theme.



39. 234 MAGNOLIA

The two-story house with shiplap siding, boxed cornice with brackets, and double-hung windows with decorated lintels. Its early history is now considered to be uncertain, but its construction is traditionally dated to about 1888. The Murphy family moved in approximately in 1910. Because of the owner's bizarre habits, it became known as "Crazy Murphy's" house. One story was that his epileptic son was kept in an upstairs bedroom. Another story says that his "daughter was ahead of her time because she went around without her clothes on."

When vacant in the 1920s and 1930s Larkspur children dubbed it "haunted." Hil Probert, who had been scouting a gas station location, brought it in 1937 and later constructed a gas station at 236 Magnolia. In 1949 the house gained national fame when it was used as a location for the Brian Donlevy-Ella Raines movie *Impact* which also featured the Larkspur City Hall and Fire Station. The house and assorted buildings were converted into the Lark Creek Inn and Shops (see 36-38)-by Skip Sommers in the 1970s. The solarium addition echoes the house's hooded windows and bull's-eye brackets and pediment.

From the 1970s until 1989, the Gotti family of Ernie's restaurant fame operated the establishment. Renowned chef Bradley Ogden and partner Michael Dellar took over the restaurant in 1989 and converted it recently into the Tavern at Lark Creek. .