

# 717 Market Street is an ordinary building

*But even ordinary buildings on Market Street have cool stories*



**KAMM BUILDING.** South side of Market Street, near Third. The facade consists of Colusa sandstone, which remains in first-class condition. The steel center has fallen away. The rear half of this building was wrecked by the failure of columns in the basement story, where a large stock of highly inflammable wall paper furnished fuel for a fire that burned continuously for a whole month. In the front portion of the building, where normal conditions prevailed, the steel skeleton frame and the working concrete floors and walls both and plaster ceiling, remain in their original condition. The building was left and plaster partitions remain standing, but are deluged out of ground in some places. The illustration shows also the half of the front of the Spreckels Building, lower on the left-hand side.

**KAMM BUILDING.** Showing the collapsed rear portion of the building caused by column failure in the basement. The tenacity of the connections of the wall girders at the entrance is remarkable. Two beams flamed in them, when canted downward in the center, have twisted the girders in the middle section through an angle of about 90 degrees from the vertical. The working concrete floors cling to the beams; seven tiers in the rear of the building being inclined at an angle of about 33 degrees, and other sections of the floors being warped and distorted into almost every conceivable shape. Note the curved skyline of the rear where the central columns have been shown twisted by the collapse.

**MARR & FAVILLE** Architects. **KAMM BUILDING**. **MANNING BROS.** Builders.

Built in 1905 by Mr. Kamm from Portland, OR, it could have survived the earthquake. The front looks okay, right? But the back was wrecked because the basement had a huge stock of wallpaper, which was on fire for a whole month. It got rebuilt.

What happened next? [Flip over to read more]

## 717 Market (the Kamm Building) reflects the history of SF...

**1900s:** Before the building got built in 1905, the site had a shoe retailer.

**1910s-20s:** It was a merchant building, with wholesalers dealing in school books, jewelry, adding machines, etc. Also the office of the Avicultural Society of California.

**1930s:** The Federal Writers' Project (part of the WPA) had an office here during the Depression! They published a "Guide to the Golden State" - a cool travel book.

**1940s:** During WWII, it had the Twelfth Naval District Intelligence Office, "engaged in extensive counterintelligence operations against the Japanese community on the west coast..." (According to a book called *Day Of Deceit*.)

**1940s-60s:** More offices, including the California Grape and Tree Fruit League. They were anti-union and anti-boycott; Cesar Chavez sent a letter to this address in 1969.

**1960s-1990s:** I couldn't find much online for this era.

**2000s-10s:** Might have developed into condos, then bought in 2007 and switched plans to "creative" office space. The market crashed in 2008, but it found tech office tenants.

**2012:** Bought by a Japanese VC firm - now tech office space and coworking/event space.



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