

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Corder Building, also (Whitecotton Building & Witter Building)  
and/or common Shattuck Apartments, Stone-Pierce (1935-80), Continuing Educ. of the Bar (1980-

**2. Location**

street & number 2300-2350 Shattuck Avenue not for publication  
city, town Berkeley vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 8  
state California code 06 county Alameda code 001

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name M. K. Blake Estate Company  
street & number 3824 Grand Avenue  
city, town Oakland 94610 vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state California

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alameda County Courthouse  
street & number 1225 Fallon Street  
city, town Oakland 94612 state California

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

1. State Historic Resources Inventory  
title 2. Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1. Dec. 1978 2. June 1978 federal  1. state county  2. local  
depository for survey records 1. Office of Historic Preservation, Box 2390/ 1220 K street,  
2. Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assn., 1930 Addison Street,  
city, town 1. Sacramento 95811 2. Berkeley 94704 state California

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Four-story classical-styled concrete & stucco store & apartment building, occupying a whole block of downtown street frontage (265'). Impressive in the streetscape for its sheer size, the Corder Building is also distinguished by its clean unified appearance despite the large number of different shops on the ground floor. Never seriously altered from its original 1925 design, it has recently been refurbished to emphasize the classical detailing & restore the **transoms** on the shopfronts.

Building is painted greenish-gray, & stands 50' high, topped on the 3 street frontages by a white balustraded parapet & wide cornice with large dentils & egg-&-dart. Shattuck Av. facade is designed in 13 20' sections, each with a shopfront, show window, or doorway on the ground floor, & 3 windows (double-hung, wood sash) in a group on each of the upper floors. In front of the 2nd, 7th, & 12th sections of the upstairs main facade, & on each side, are fire escapes & balconies supported by 4 big scrolled brackets each. A narrow band of molding runs under the 4th-floor windows, & relief panels of shields & foliage decorate the walls below each window of the 3rd & 4th stories. Immediately below the 2nd floor windows is a sill or molding & a sign panel/frieze about 2' wide with the shop names in discreet white letters. **Transoms** have recently been uncovered & awnings placed below them, just above the main show windows, as originally intended (though fixed in position, as awning boxes are no longer there).

Shopfronts generally preserve their original shape if not construction: plate glass in Kawneer (?) metal frames (now aluminum), inset center entrances, metal ventilators in concrete baseboard. (Only one shopfront has been substantially reshaped.) Each of the 13 bays is framed by octagonal embedded columns with slender leaf capitals. **Transoms** are made up of 11 tall narrow panes of textured glass (some hinged to open), with a row of 22 tiny panes across the top at the level of the capitals. They were reasonably well preserved, & have been restored as necessary (one shop still to be done). Each shop extends straight back through the building in the same pattern--display window, shop, storage or workroom, back door opening on driveway. The 4 bays at the north end, occupied by a single large business from the start, follow the same exterior pattern except for the inset doorways.

To meet seismic safety standards, shear walls have been inserted in the 3 ground floor bays below the fire escapes & balconies--the apartment entrance, doorway of the CEB premises at the north end, & one of the small shopfronts at the south. (These bays have higher awnings, covering the concrete-filled clerestory area.) Building is reinforced concrete & steel, & originated in 1921 as a 1-story block, designed to support additional stories on top when business warranted it. It was raised to 4 stories in 1925-6 by its original architect, elaborating & reusing the same ornamental motifs. There is a plain warehouse/workshop addition at the north rear, industrial in character, also reinforced concrete, constructed in 1946, connected to the main building by a bridge over the driveway that serves the shops' back doors.

The rear warehouse, along with the north third of the building where all 4 stories were occupied until recently by a succession of big furniture stores, has been refurbished inside into frankly modern office, library, & conference space for the Univ. of Calif.'s Continuing Education of the Bar. Store mezzanine has been turned into an additional floor of offices, using the **transoms** as its windows. Throughout the project there has been an effort to use natural light & ventilation from the windows.

The Shattuck Apartments, occupying the rest of the upper stories, have been like the exterior well maintained but never radically altered. There are 48 apartments, mostly studios, on the 3 floors, arranged around light courts at the back of the building in an E-shape. Kitchen & bathroom fixtures have been modernized over the years, but the apartments still have their original coved ceilings, picture moldings, wood floors, & built-in shelves & dressers; some have original light fixtures. 1920s elevators are still working, big sturdy circuits & relays in sheds on the flat asphalt roof. There is a small roof garden, & partial basement with furnace & storage. Lobby has dark wood stair rails, moldings, & doors, original light fixture, and glazed front door framed by tall windows, set a few feet in from the shear wall, beyond a vestibule with mailboxes & doorbells. Hanging horizontal hotel-type scalloped marquee over apartment entrance, which is at the center of the Shattuck Avenue facade.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and Justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1921, 1925

**Builder/Architect** James W. Plachek

### Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Corder Building, with the Shattuck Hotel a block north, is one of the two immediately noticeable major buildings of downtown Berkeley, its sheer size & resolutely preserved elegance lending the area a heightened degree of urban dignity for over 50 years. Its construction filled in a whole previously undeveloped block at a single stroke, & was thus a major step in merging the smaller historic train-stop business districts of Shattuck-Center & Dwight-Shattuck into one continuous downtown. Built as an income property in the booming 20s by a prominent Bay Area capitalist, it symbolized the era's faith in growth & speculation: not only did the block-long building challenge in size the older Shattuck Hotel (once "longest in the Bay Area"), its 1925 lease was "the largest of its kind ever effected in Berkeley", & even the building itself was meant to grow--originally 1 story, expanded to 4 stories 4 years later. Its designer James Plachek was associated more than any other architect with downtown Berkeley's growth in the late 1910s & 20s; the solidly built brick & concrete second-generation Main Street that we see today is still largely his work. His career, combining civic leadership with a near monopoly of public building commissions in Berkeley for 30 years--libraries, schools, civic buildings--typifies the fraternal, small-town climate of American business in the interwar years, & the Corder Building is a fine example of his classical-styled commercial work in the 1920s.

Downtown Berkeley west of Shattuck Avenue was from 1852 the 160-acre claim of Francis Kittredge Shattuck, who with his brother-in-law George Blake & 2 other partners acquired a square mile that became Berkeley out of the lands of José Domingo Peralta. In 1876 James L. Barker bought 40 acres of the Shattuck claim, & subsequently developed it as the Barker Tract. His own commercial building, the city landmark Barker Block (1905), stands at Dwight Way at the south end of the tract, where the existence of a Southern Pacific stop (thanks largely to Barker's own influence) led to the development of a secondary business district. The blocks between stations were slower to develop, until the coming of the auto & the general economic & population growth of the 1920s. The land was apparently on the market for a long time, & when the Corder Building went up on Barker Tract Block 1 in 1921-2, it replaced only a couple of small corner gas stations, & the 2 blocks to the south were also a sparsely-built auto row.

Except for its length, the original 1-story Corder Building was typical of what was going up in neighborhood shopping strips, downtown side streets, & developing business districts all over Berkeley & the nation at the time: one story, several small shops, brick or stucco in classical motifs framing big expanses of glass (frequently in fittings by Berkeley's Kawneer Co.). Also common, though less often fulfilled, was another feature of the Corder Building's design: the 1-story building was planned to support additional stories later. The American Pharmacy across the street, also by Plachek, was designed with the same provision in 1923, but was still 1 story when demolished in 1978; while his 1922 Federal Land Bank gained 3 stories in a complete remodeling by another architect in 1949. The Corder Building seems to be the only one in Berkeley expanded as planned, & by the original architect.

The owner behind this construction project was Thomas W. Corder (1844-c.1929) of Oakland, whose primary business--& his father's before him--was the Corder tannery & wool business, in Emeryville since 1873. Related interests included directorships of an Emeryville packing company & an Oakland bank; beyond that he was by profession what was in those days matter-of-factly called a capitalist ("In his political convictions Mr. Corder is a staunch advocate of Republican principles, but has never cared for office. He is recognized as one of the citizens who have contributed very largely to the development of business enterprises"--J.M.Guinn, 1907).

(cont'd → )

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Polk-Husted Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda Directories, 1907-1935.  
block books, tract maps, & Sanborn books, c.1900-1930, Berkeley Architectural Heritage archive  
George A. Pettitt, Berkeley: The Town and Gown of It, Berkeley, 1973.  
Louis Stein & Ormsby Donogh, interviews on downtown Berkeley history, 1977-80, Berkeley  
Architectural Heritage Assn. archives (see continuation sheet →)

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**  
**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Acreeage of nominated property 0.87  
Quadrangle name Oakland West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A	1 0	5 6 4 4 6 0	4 1 9 1 1 3 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Book 55, Block 1894, Parcel 100; formerly Barker Tract Block 1, Lots 1-7. West side of Shattuck Avenue from Bancroft Way to Durant Avenue (265') S side of blg. extending W along Durant 83', N side 103 feet W on Bancroft. Depth of building tapers from 103' to 83', following gently diagonal course of Shattuck Avenue.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Jeffrey Leiter	Betty Marvin	Nov. 20, 1980
organization	M.K.Blake Estate Co.	Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assn.	
street & number	3824 Grand Avenue (415)893-3824	Box 1137, Main Post Office (415)845-6591	
city or town	Oakland 94610	Berkeley 94701	California

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *K. M. Ellison*

title *State Historic Preservation Officer* date *10-13-81*

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date *1/1/82*

Attest:

Chief of Register

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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Berkeley CA

By 1906 he had built at least 2 business blocks in downtown Oakland, & in the 1910s he participated briefly in the motion picture equipment business as president of the American Photo Player Co. of Berkeley. The building on Shattuck Av. was likewise purely an income property, unconnected with the wool business: early occupants included Cain Electric, Skaggs Cash Grocery furniture, paint, variety, & confectionery shops, & the whole building was so soon leased to another local entrepreneur that it was often popularly known by his name, as the W. W. Whitecotton Building.

In contrast to the enduring Corder firm, which owned the building until 1976, William Whitecotton's Berkeley career was of the meteoric & perhaps slightly gauche kind stereotypically associated with the 1920s. A clerk at the Shattuck Hotel, originally from Utah, he married one of the guests, the wealthy widow Leila Wishon, bought the hotel with her money in 1920, & changed its name to Whitecotton, regardless of the local associations of the Shattuck name. In rapid succession there also arose under his name the W.W.Whitecotton Building behind the hotel, & the Hotel Whitecotton Apartments, the residential 2/3 of the upper floors added to the Corder Building ( since 1930 called the Shattuck Apartments).

On 12/5/25 the Chamber of Commerce Courier reported "The new Whitecotton building, to cost \$200,000, construction upon which will start immediately following Christmas, will house the much expanded & improved store of the University Furniture Company"—also a Whitecotton enterprise. "It is stated that the lease, which was negotiated by B.H.Graff for W.W.Whitecotton from T.W.Corder, Inc., owners of the property, totals \$1,200,000 and is the largest of its kind ever effected in Berkeley."

Whitecotton departed from the Berkeley financial scene in the Depression, & died in Los Angeles in 1933--though his name remained for years on Berkeley's two largest buildings. Even before the crash the University Furniture Co. had been succeeded by Paul Swedberg Co. (another long-lived Berkeley business, which finally closed in 1979 at its later location), & from 1935 until 1980 by Stone-Pierce, a prestigious 4-story furniture emporium to the end.

The architect of the Corder/Whitecotton Building, & of much of downtown Berkeley in the boom period of the 20s, & of public buildings during the Depression too, was James W. Plachek (c.1885-1948). Born in Chicago to Czech immigrant parents, he apprenticed in an architect's office at 15, & studied structural engineering. This brought him west in 1906 to report to the mayor of Chicago on the effect of earthquake & fire on building materials. He stayed, worked for the state of California & city of San Francisco, joined the office of the noted architect, William Weeks, & opened his own practice in Berkeley in 1912. "A lodge man & a club man, ...most active on all civic & charitable drives," by 1918 he was president of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, & soon after appointed to the city Planning Commission & Library Building Committee, all the while cultivating the reputation that "he wouldn't walk across the street to promote himself for a job, & yet he has more orders than he can take care of." Throughout his career, his commissions were overwhelmingly in Berkeley; out of town jobs frequently came about through Berkeley connections, like the Glide Foundation in S.F.(1930) whose donor was a Berkeley resident & previous Plachek client.

In April 1922, as the first Corder Building was completed, the Courier reported that "more buildings from six story warehouses to bungalows are under construction from his plans & under his supervision than all others of his profession put together." Some of his jobs contemporary with the Corder Building were the Whitecotton Office Building, Western Auto & Studebaker buildings on the auto row south of the Corder Building, & the Federal Land Bank in full-blown Ionic temple design. The Corder & bank buildings in particular represented an advance in scale, elaboration, & sophistication over Plachek's previous Berkeley work, &

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Corder Building,  
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over Berkeley's previous image of itself. (Courier again, "Berkeley's Bigger Building Boom. James W. Plachek is among the men of today with a vision of just what is happening to this Bay Territory. What is more, he had this vision for past years when only a very few had faith in the wonderful...growth of this territory..") His work of the 1910s, featured in a 20-page article in the Feb.1919 Architect & Engineer, had emphasized "home-like simplicity" in John Muir School & the "Berkeley Bungalow Church", while the downtown commercial buildings were unpretentious, utilitarian, minimally classical, 1 to 3 story brick structures. The concrete construction, stucco finish, & refined & elaborate classical ornamentation of even the 1-story Corder Building—as well as its 265' length—were something new in Berkeley store buildings.

In addition, Plachek & Corder & Whitecotton planned with faith in the building & in the economy: it was not only strong enough to support 3 additional floors, it was called upon to do so in less than 4 years. Plachek did not just pile 3 more stories on top--the swags at the top of the 1-story building, for instance, were covered or removed but were repeated in the design of the new stories, & a further salute to prosperity added in the rather overstuffed cornice & balustrade at the top. When a final addition was made to the building in 1946, the warehouse-workshop for Stone-Pierce, the architect was again James Plachek, nearing the end of his career after a notable series of WPA public buildings in Berkeley (including fine Moderne Farm Credit Bldg., & main & branch libraries) & Oakland (co-designer of Alameda Co.Courthouse).

Continuity has been a hallmark of the history of the Corder Building--Plachek's 25-year involvement, the 45-year tenancy of Stone-Pierce (& nearly that of some of the apartment residents), the 55-year ownership by the Corder family (allied by marriage with the Dean Witter financial family, thus sometimes Witter Building, or Corder-Witter). This continuity is largely responsible for the building's fine state of preservation. For a time it had the motley storefronts of commercial buildings everywhere, each shop with its own veneer, & the whole north third of the building painted a different color; this was cleaned up in 1961 & all the shops given matching classically-ornamented awnings & signs. There had been little structural alteration over the years, so the recent restoration (by Research/Planning/Design Associates of S.F.) found, for example, nearly all the transoms in good condition & ready to be uncovered. Moreover, Jeffrey Shattuck Leiter of the M. K. (for Kittredge) Blake Estate Co., the building's present owner, notes the appropriateness of its coming back to the Shattuck-Blake family, the historic owners of the land in downtown Berkeley.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES , continued.

James W. Plachek papers--photos, clippings, correspondence--Berkeley Arch.Heritage archives.  
City of Berkeley Housing Dept. property file: building permits 12/5/21 & 1/20/26; plans in city hall attic dated 9/28/25; alteration permits 1922-80.  
Architect & Engineer, Feb. 1919, p.60-80, "Buildings in Berkeley Designed by James W. Plachek, Architect"; Feb. 1926, p.122, news item on Corder Bldg.; Aug. 1923, p.50-61, Land Bank etc.  
Berkeley Chamber of Commerce Courier, 4/22/22 (Plachek feature); 6/24/22; 6/2/23; 11/17/23; 6/20/25; 12/5/25 (Univ.Furniture feature).  
Berkeley Gazette, 9/23/05 (real estate); 3/29/26 (Univ.Furn.Co.); 12/17/38 (Plachek biog.); 3/25/43 & 5/12/48 (Whitecotton biog.); 11/9/62 (remodeling); 1/18/78 & 6/20/78 (history); 8/29/79, 2/15/80, & 7/16/80 (sale & remodeling).  
Chamber of Commerce, Berkeley Tourist & Business Survey, 1924.  
J.M.Guinn, History of the State of California & Biographical Record of Oakland & Environs..., Historic Record Co., Los Angeles, 1907.

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Corder Bldg., 2300

Shattuck Av., Berkeley

CONTINUATION SHEET

CA 94704

ITEM NUMBER 10

PAGE 1 - location map

