



A little steam train carried passengers and new settlers out to the Hayes Valley, shown here in an engraving from the 1860s. At right center is the amusement park built by Colonel Thomas B. Hayes, at Hayes and Buchanan Streets. On the hill at left is the Protestant Orphan Asylum, built by General Henry Halleck at Haight and Laguna Streets. The building later became the home of the first California State Teachers' College, the progenitor of San Francisco State University. Today the site is occupied by the University of California Extension. (Courtesy California State Library)

THE WESTERN ADDITION

THANKS TO THE courageous last stand of San Francisco's fire-fighters, the flames of 1906 penetrated only a few blocks beyond the west side of Van Ness Avenue. Their success ensured that today, despite the inroads of the Redevelopment Agency in the 1950s and 1960s, we still have a good idea of how the Western Addition must have appeared in its prime. Indeed, enough remains to support author Charles Caldwell Dobie's assertion that the entire quarter was "a delirium of the woodcarver."

Established in the settlement of early land disputes by the Van Ness Ordinance of 1855, "The Western Addition" included the entire area west of Larkin Street, from Fort Mason southward to the slopes of Twin Peaks. The ordinance even established the sites for parks and streets which would one day follow the grid plan laid down for Yerba Buena by Jasper O'Farrell. For twenty years after 1851 the area was shown on city maps as "The Big Sandy Waste." Sometime before the turn of the century, fashion-conscious developers renamed the east-west ridge overlooking the Golden

Gate as Pacific Heights. Official city maps still do not identify Pacific Heights and its western neighbor, Presidio Heights, as geographical entities; the Western Addition encompasses both districts. Thus there is understandable confusion as to the boundary lines. We follow here the custom of regarding California Street as the dividing line between Pacific Heights and what most people today call the Western Addition.

Stretching westward from Van Ness to Presidio Avenue and southward to Market Street, the Western Addition encompasses more than four hundred city blocks. Of the approximately 14,000 Victorian houses to be found in San Francisco at least half are in the Western Addition, ranging from the Gothic Revival, Italianate, Eastlake, and Queen Anne styles through the Stick Style, Richardson Romanesque and even the French Second Empire style, occasionally combining elements of two or three of these styles in a single house. Fifteen of these houses and three churches have been named official San Francisco Landmarks.