

THE HOLDEN-ANGUS COMPOUND IN COW HOLLOW

2557-2571 Filbert Street
(1908-1930)

Christopher St. George Holden was born in San Francisco on October 22, 1879. His father, Samuel, was Irish and his mother, Hester (Rathborne), was Scottish. They had seven children, of whom St. George (he dropped his first name) was the youngest. A practical woodworker, his first job was as office manager and then co-owner of Holden-Deuprey, makers of sash doors and millwork. Hillyer Deuprey was his partner and their successful business was located on Mission Street near 13th Street in San Francisco.

On September 2, 1908, Holden married 20-year old Betsy Burton Angus, at her parents' home at 2520-22 Union Street. Hillyer Deuprey was his best man. Betsy's parents were James Stewart Angus (a Scot) and May (Burton). In the late 1890's James and May Angus had bought a 55' wide parcel of land fronting on Union Street and an even larger parcel (123' wide) fronting on Filbert Street. When their older daughter Mary came of age she was given the house at 2522 Union Street (while her parents continued living at 2520), and, as a wedding gift, their younger daughter Betsy was given the parcel that holds 2557- 2571 Filbert today. It is 100' west of Divisadero and extends 63' to the east and 137'6" to the south. This wide lot was formally transferred to Betsy on February 11, 1909.

With that expectation, however, on July 16, 1908 a published contract notice indicated that St. George Holden was ready to build the first house on that parcel. Then known as 2559 Filbert (and now 2557), it is a 3-story shingle-style house. No architect was listed. By the time of the 1910 census, they were living there with a newly-born son, Angus.

AT 8 o'clock this evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Stewart Angus, Miss Betty Angus will become the bride of St. George Holden. Only relatives and a few very intimate friends have been bidden to the ceremony, which will be performed by Rev. A. N. Wood of San Rafael. The bride, who will be given away by her father, will be gowned in white satin with a tulle veil and will have as her bridal bouquet a shower of lilies of the valley. She will be attended by her sister, Miss Mary Angus, as maid of honor, and Miss Milward Holden and Miss Marian Wright as bridesmaids. It was the intention of the bride to keep the color-scheme a secret, but it has been whispered that her favorite colors—white and green, only—will be in evidence. Hillyer Deuprey will be Mr. Holden's best man and the ushers will be John Fuller and Edward Belau. A beautiful home in Filbert street is the gift of her father. The honeymoon will occupy several weeks and will be spent in the southern part of the state.

San Francisco Call Sept. 2, 1908



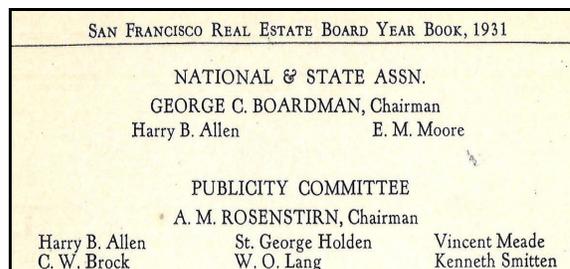
2557 (left), 2567 (rear) & 2571 (front) Filbert Street

On August 17, 1910 a contract notice was published for another shingled 3-story house (2567), built at the rear of the wide lot in a French style with a mansard roof. Again, no architect was listed. The Holdens moved into the new house when it was completed, with their expanding family, renting out 2559.

Holden progressed from supplying building materials, to being listed in the City directory in 1914 as a builder himself. In 1916 he took a position as sales manager for Merritt Terrace, a new development in West Portal, while maintaining his own real estate office downtown in the Crocker Building. He moved the family to one of the new houses, at 81 Allston Way, where they stayed through to 1922, when the new development was sold out, before moving back to 2567 Filbert.

A fire in the late 1930's resulted in the top of the roof of 2567 Filbert being leveled off in 1941.

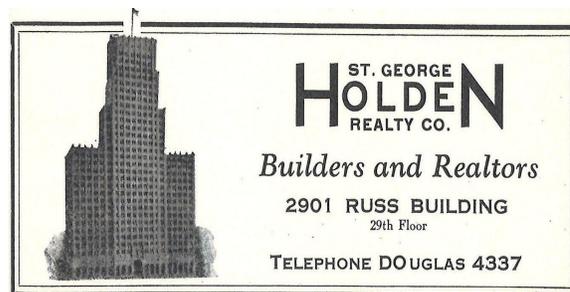
By the mid-1920's St. George Holden was well established as a developer and a real estate broker. He moved into an office on the 29th floor of the latest Russ Building at 235 Montgomery when that building was completed in 1927. He was also an active contributing member of the San Francisco Real Estate Board, as these extracts from the Real Estate Board's 1931 Year Book show.



Holden as a member of the Publicity Committee

Holden was very well acquainted with architect Charles F. Strothoff (1892-1963), one of the primary architects of West Portal, Westwood Highlands, Westwood Park and Sunset district houses. Holden, in his capacity as a developer, had hired Strothoff to design many homes in West Portal and the Sunset.

In addition to his work in those San Francisco districts however, the prolific Strothoff was also the architect for a number of Pacific Heights, Cow Hollow and Marina district houses and apartments, including 2533 and 2541 Filbert (for Holden in 1925), 2380 California (24 apartments in 1927), 2030, 2040, and 2050 Jackson, 2627 and 2633 Steiner (all in 1929).



Holden Realty ad in the Board 1931 Year Book

In addition to the houses at 2533 and 2541 Filbert, Strothoff designed 2547 and 2555 Filbert for Holden in 1930 and 2741 Buchanan, also for Holden, in 1931.

During that same period (in October 1930) Strothoff designed the front structure of the 63' wide lot, 2571 Filbert. It is a 4-car garage with an apartment above it, which was built for the Holden's eldest son, Angus. His initials, AHS, are in the stained glass window of the entry door. By then St. George and Betsy Holden had two sons and two daughters - Angus being the eldest at 20, St. George, Jr. the youngest at 10, with their daughters, Dorothea (17) and Mary (14), in between.

Prior to the construction of the garage at 2571 Filbert, the Holden's autos were brought up when needed from a public garage at 3060 Fillmore (on the southeast corner of Filbert), which many locals will remember. That garage was converted to a Real Food Company store in 1997, which operated there for almost 20 years, closing only recently.

In the mid-1930's Holden was able to buy 2524 Union, next door to Betsy's sister, Mary Angus. After her parents died, Mary combined the two structures at 2520 and 2522 Union into the L-shaped house that survives there today. A few years later 2567 Filbert caught fire and St. George and Betsy moved into 2524 Union. In re-building 2567 Filbert they flattened the mansard roof to improve the Bay view from 2524 Union.

St. George Holden died of a heart attack at his 2524 Union home on March 31, 1957, having contributed significantly to the development of housing in the West Portal and Sunset neighborhoods and along the southern side of the 2500 block of Filbert Street. His wife, Betsy, had pre-deceased him in 1952. Holden had retired from real estate 5 years before, succeeded by his sons, Angus and St. George Holden, Jr. Holden's obituary noted that one of his other civic contributions had been to serve for many years as a director of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

To this time, the property at 2557-71 Filbert has been occupied by five generations of the James Stewart and May Burton Angus family.