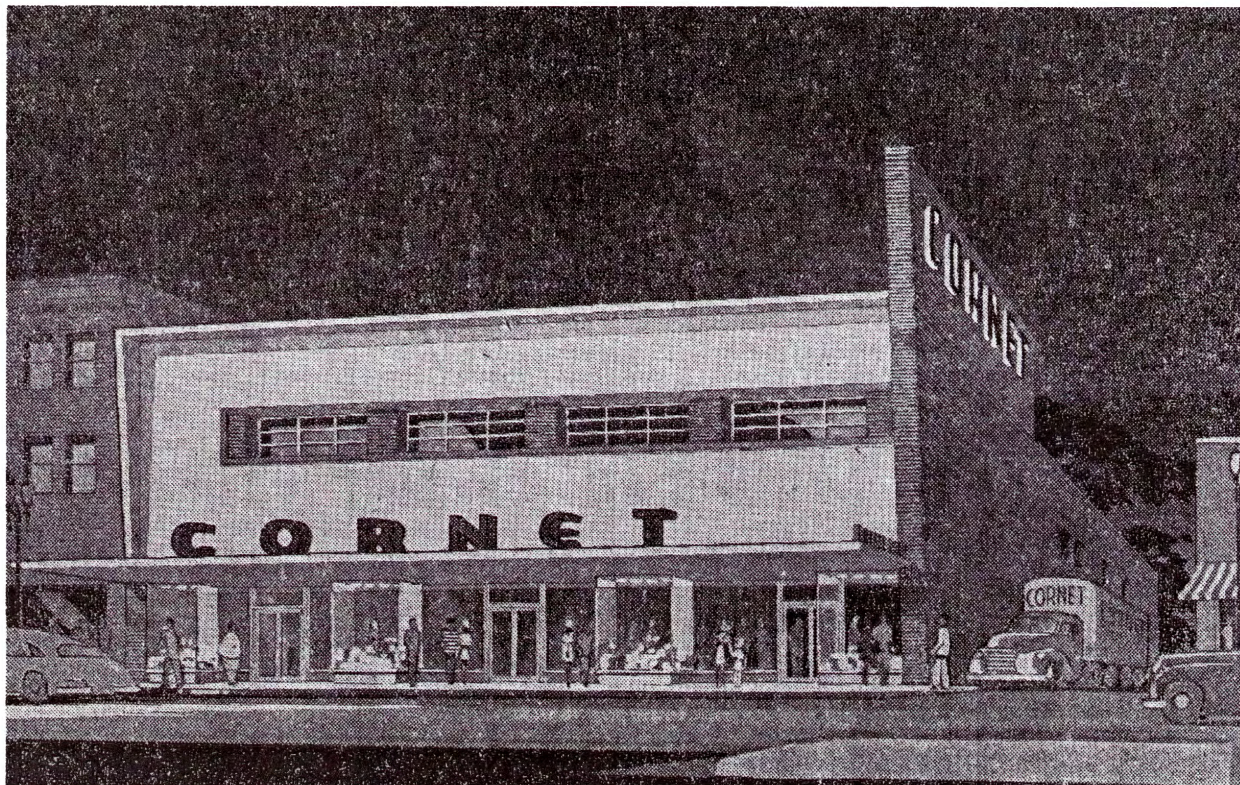


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EAST BAKERSFIELD CORNET STORE
Milton Lawrence Anderson, AIA, Architect
1948



Local historic buildings cannot by themselves give voice to their own histories, except through their physical appearance. Unfortunately, outward appearance is too often misinterpreted – even by professional city, regional, and redevelopment planners. Nonetheless, there is a factual narrative behind every architectural facade. Such written accounts are often both compelling and significant, as are the “broad patterns of history” revealed by the East Bakersfield Cornet Store.

The following research template is in working-draft format. Further comprehensive research is required by the City of Bakersfield to corroborate, footnote, and annotate both the built history and the ancillary contexts of the property, to meet CEQA and NHPA Section 106 compliance standards.

Basic Timeline for the East Bakersfield Cornet Store submitted to the *Bakersfield Californian* †

1947: Building designed in Los Angeles.

1947: Building permit pulled circa 29 October 1947.

1948: Grand Opening on 14-15-16 October 1948. ††

1948: East Bakersfield store officially completed 27 October 1948. †††

Basic Timeline for the East Bakersfield Cornet Store (continued)

Cost: \$150,000 for a 2-story building and basement at 1006 Baker Street.

Property Owners: Joe Cornet (1890-1976) and Gladys Cornet (1898-1972) of Pasadena.

Mercantile Operator: Cornet 5-10-25 Cent Stores.

Architect: Milton Lawrence Anderson, AIA (1895-1987), of Los Angeles (License B-1649, issued 26 September 1928). Anderson's 1949 J. C. Penney store, located on the 3rd Street Promenade in Santa Monica, was determined a contributing property under National Register Historic District guidelines as a representative Moderne-influenced commercial building.

General Contractor: The historically significant general contracting firm of Trehwhitt-Shields & Fisher, headquartered in Fresno, had at least three other major projects under construction in Bakersfield during 1947-1948, including school facilities at Union Avenue and Bernard Street for the Bakersfield School District, Valley Glass on Chester Avenue, and alterations for the Cohn Estate on 19th Street. Trehwhitt-Shields & Fisher has previously been recognized by the National Register of Historic Places for constructing the 1935 Tower Theatre in Fresno.

Narrative summary forming the basis for National Register Criterion B Social Evaluation and Assessment

A Classic History of Immigrant Success in America

In 1915, a 25-year-old aspiring Flemish merchant, Joe Cornet, boarded the steamship Rotterdam in Holland, where he had been living in the seaside resort community of Scheveningen, and sailed to the United States. He settled in Eastland, Texas, a petroleum boomtown during the 1920s, located 96 miles southwest of Fort Worth. There this French-speaking immigrant married and entered the confectionery business. After his first son was born in Texas in 1921, Joe Cornet and his wife, Gladys, moved to California, where the couple opened a small five & dime store in Covina in 1923. The transformation from single store to chain was reported by the *Independent Star-News* in 1961:

Between 1923 and 1929, five [more] stores were opened in Monrovia, Azusa, Bellflower, Upland and Baldwin Park. Another expansion took place beginning in 1931, when a store was opened in Culver City. In 1934, the first out of state [sic] store was opened in Yuma, Arizona; in 1935, a store in Las Vegas, Nevada was opened; and in 1936, one in Helper, Utah.

The Cornets opened their first outlet in East Bakersfield during the summer of 1939, located at 1006 Baker Street. This initial Bakersfield-area store was demolished during the fall of 1947, to accommodate the construction of a much larger structure, at that time the merchandiser's "largest retail store to date." With the completion of the new Baker Street store in 1948, the chain was comprised of 66 stores in seven states. By 1952, the Cornet's original 15-foot wide by 50-foot deep Covina shop had grown into a Western-states mercantile empire, with 77 stores in seven states. The chain continued growing over the ensuing 12 years to 147 stores in 1964, with locations in California, Arizona, Oregon, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, Washington, and Hawaii. The company's corporate headquarters and its distribution warehouse were located in Pasadena, California.

*Narrative summaries forming the basis for National Register Criterion C
Architectural Evaluation and Assessment*

Architect

Milton Lawrence Anderson was born in the small, Swedish community of Swea City, Iowa, on 15 November 1895. His father, C. J. Anderson, a retail furniture merchant, was a first-generation Swedish-American; his mother, Emma, had emigrated as a young girl from Sweden circa 1880. Milton Anderson completed his high school education in Swea City in 1913, then entered the University of Minnesota in 1918. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Architecture from the School of Engineering and Architecture on 15 June 1921. Shortly thereafter he began his apprenticeship as "Chief Draftsman" for the Chester M. Williams Co. in Sioux City, Iowa, working under engineer and general contractor Chester M. Williams (1887-1984).

In 1922, Milton Anderson moved to Los Angeles as "Chief Engineer" for the architectural and engineering firm of John Montgomery Cooper (1883-1950). Anderson worked for Cooper until 1928. Cooper is recognized in Bakersfield for designing the historic Padre Hotel.

With a San Francisco-born and -trained architect, Alvan Edward Norstrom (1897-1946), also of Swedish descent, Anderson formed the partnership of Norstrom & Anderson in Los Angeles in 1928. The Norstrom & Anderson practice included residential, commercial, and industrial commissions. Their client list included the Eastern-Columbia Syndicate; J. C. Penney; F. W. Woolworth Company; Thrifty Drug Stores, Inc.; Allied Properties (in Huntington Park and San Bernardino); the Holmes Estate; Aero Industries Technical Institute, San Fernando; Kerr Glass Manufacturing Company, Los Angeles; Security-First National Bank; Bank of America; White Taverns Cafe; J. J. Newberry Company; O. & F. Thom Properties; the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company; Greenfields Grocery Company; Harold G. Ferguson Corporation; Belvedere Bowling Center Corporation; and the Peter Nolan Company. Norstrom & Anderson completed a number of high-profile commercial projects in Westwood Village, developed by Janss Investment Company adjacent to UCLA, and Spanish Revival-style hillside homes in Los Feliz Glen for the Peter Nolan Company.

Following Norstrom's death in 1946, at age 49, Milton Anderson continued that practice for clients J. C. Penney, F. W. Woolworth, Cornet Stores, Carpenter Paper Company, and the Azusa Foothill Citrus Company (for the Foothill Park Shopping Center, with pioneer general contractor C. L. Peck of Los Angeles). By 1969, Milton Lawrence Anderson, AIA, a resident of San Marino, had retired from the practice of architecture. He died on 14 February 1987.

One should note that Milton Anderson did not design the 1949 J. C. Penney store in downtown Bakersfield. That property was designed by Harold S. Johnson, AIA (1890-1962) of Los Angeles, formerly of Noerenberg & Johnson, and Gogerty Noerenberg & Johnson.

General Contractor

The prominent Central San Joaquin Valley general contracting firm of Trehwitt-Shields & Fisher was founded in 1910 in San Francisco, by W. D. Trehwitt (1863-1945) and H. W. Shields (1881-1957). For many years the firm operated as Trehwitt & Shields. Its first San Joaquin Valley office was located in Hanford. In 1912, the partners moved their headquarters to Fresno. The firm incorporated in 1925. Amended articles of incorporation were filed in 1935, renaming the company Trehwitt-Shields & Fisher Incorporated. R. R. Fisher (1891-1968) served as chief structural engineer

for the company. Between 1910-1953, the parent company and Trehwhitt-Shields & Fisher, separately and in several short-term partnerships with other firms, built more than 267 commercial, industrial, municipal, military, and school projects throughout California and Nevada. Its superb Tower Theatre (1939) in Fresno is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The call for bids for the construction of the East Bakersfield Cornet Store was published in Los Angeles on 12 September 1947. Bids were due on 1 October 1947. Those bidding included Robert E. McKee of Los Angeles, Ashby & Opperman of Bakersfield, Guy E. Hall of Bakersfield, L. H. Hansen & Son of Fresno, and Trehwhitt-Shields & Fisher of Fresno. The request for subcontract bids was also posted in Los Angeles on 12 September 1947. Awarding of the contract to Trehwhitt-Shields & Fisher was announced in Los Angeles on 17 October 1947. The building permit was pulled circa 29 October 1947.

Subcontractors assembled by Trehwhitt-Shields & Fisher for the East Bakersfield Cornet project included W. H. Flynn Co., Armstrong tile flooring; George F. Haddigan Plumbers & Electricians; Hurum E. Reeve Co., counter equipment; Interstate Restaurant Supply; The Isotherm Company, Contracting HVAC/Mechanical Engineers, air conditioning and insulation; Paul Manuel, painting contractor; Waltrip Sheet Metal; and Weber Showcase & Fixture Co. – *Adapted and revised from a Memorandum of Understanding that received a Governor's Award in Historic Preservation in 2005, prepared by John Edward Powell and William B. Secrest, Jr., for the Fresno County Public Library and the California State Office of Historic Preservation*

Draft Supplemental Architectural Context for Chester Monroe Williams

Chester Monroe Williams was born in Spring Prairie, Wisconsin, on 26 April 1887, to Franklin P. Williams and Elizabeth Kebler Williams. He was later raised in Albion, Iowa, and completed his early education in nearby Parkersburg, Iowa. While in high school he was active in the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Parkersburg, where he sang in the Chorus Choir and served as recording secretary for the Sunday School Teachers Board. In 1905, he began four years of collegiate study at Iowa State College (present-day Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa).

His own father having died when he was quite young, Williams put himself through college. He was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering on 10 June 1909. His Iowa State senior thesis was entitled “Study of Stresses and Deflections in Steel and Copper Telegraph, Telephone and Electrical Conductors.” Circa 1915-1923, Williams was self-employed as a general contractor in Sioux City, Iowa, and served as Milton Lawrence Anderson’s first mentor in the building industry, just after Anderson had graduated from the University of Minnesota to begin the required professional apprenticeship in architecture and engineering. Both Williams and Anderson relocated to California during the early 1920s.

By 1930, Williams had established his contracting and engineering firm in Los Angeles, where he resided in Beverly Hills at 1037 Hayworth Avenue. Among his clients was the Hollywood Cemetery Association, for which he constructed the Southland Masonic Temple, designed by famed architects Morgan, Walls & Clements, and a major Egyptian Revival-style expansion of the cemetery’s mausoleum, adding 638 crypts. Williams served as both engineer and builder of that 1931 “steel, marble and reinforced concrete” burial structure. The historic Hollywood Cemetery is known for the high caliber of funerary architecture on the site.

By the mid-1930s, Williams had built a “hacienda-style” hillside home with a traditional red-tile roof for his wife and children in Victorville, California. The site included a natural spring, and is adjacent to “a historic marker denoting that the Mormon Trail passes close by the property.” The home’s monumental front room was designed two stories in height, and included “three tall stained-glass windows, huge 5-foot flagstones on the floor and an installed air-pump organ with tall pipes that emitted a smooth, breathy stream of music when played.” The residence reflected “his pride of careful and straightforward construction, and a love of natural materials.”

Williams’ grandson recalled that his grandfather was a consummate engineer, “... even with things like [making] a sandwich.” As recounted to the author, “... he built a sandwich like you build a porch. The square slice of bread was laid out on the plate and the mustard or mayo was evenly spread over the bread with care like a trowel smoothing the surface of a fresh concrete walk way. The thin-sliced lunch meat was then trimmed to fit the bread as, too, was the lettuce.”

Williams was one of several building professionals who submitted letters of recommendation when Milton L. Anderson applied to the California State Board of Architecture for a certificate to practice architecture in this state. Chester M. Williams died in San Diego, California, on 9 April 1984 at the age of 96. ††††

Supplemental Architectural Context for John Montgomery Cooper

John Montgomery Cooper (1883-1950) completed his early education in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and his college studies at Yale University's Sheffield Scientific School (Class of 1906). His training in engineering included working on the Panama Canal. After settling in Los Angeles in 1910, Cooper built an influential architectural practice in Southern California that included the design and construction of fine residences, a synagogue, theaters, commercial blocks, and municipal buildings. At the time of his death, Cooper was acknowledged for designing the Hollywood Knickerbocker Hotel, Shell Oil Building, and Pepperdine College. He had been socially active in Los Angeles, holding memberships in the University Club, Wilshire Country Club, Jonathan Club, Sons of the Revolution, Masons, and the Malibour Lake Club. At the time of his death, John Montgomery Cooper was a resident of Beverly Hills, California. – *Adapted and expanded from a Letter to the Editor to the Bakersfield Californian, as submitted by John Edward Powell on 2 June 2003.*

Partial Supplemental Context for other Kern County Corner Stores

In April of 1938, influential Delano builders Graham & Dormandy began construction on a single-story brick and concrete store site for Joe and Gladys Cornet in that North Kern community. The building site occupied a lot between the J. C. Penney and Federated stores on North Main Street. The Delano Cornet Store opened on 25 June 1938.

By 1952, the Cornet chain had expanded its presence north of downtown Bakersfield’s business district, occupying a mid-block Westchester storefront at 2815 F Street. This modernist-style property was completed 14 June 1951, by Kansas-native and prominent regional building contractor, Guy E. Hall (1894-1966), for client C. Elmer Houchin (1884-1953). The West Virginia-born Houchin had founded the town-site of Buttonwillow. A pioneer rancher circa 1908, who amassed 100,000 acres of “highly cultivated land” and “large cattle holdings,” Houchin was also a major cotton gin operator and the principal developer of the Westchester residential and commercial district northwest of Bakersfield’s central district.

After a fire damaged the initial F Street site in 1960, the Westchester Cornet Store relocated to a free-standing building at 3015 F Street, adjacent to the Montgomery Ward parcel. The new location was constructed specifically for the chain in 1962, by regionally-notable general contractor, David M. Biggar (1921-2002). David Macdonald Biggar, II, ("Bud"), graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1947, after service in the O.S.S. in France and Germany during World War II. He was the son of historic Central Valley architect, Charles Howatt Biggar, AIA (1882-1946).

Cornet Stores also established a number of other retail shops in the outlying rural communities of Kern County, including sites in Taft (1958), Lamont (1963), Shafter (1964), Mojave (1975), Lake Isabella (1978), and renewed activity again in Delano (1966, 1969 and 1988). †††††

Partial Supplemental Context for the East Bakersfield Cornet Store Baker Street Site

During the spring of 1939, property owner and East Bakersfield landlord Henry Harrison Brown (1860-1939) ordered repairs to a 29-year-old, white brick structure at 1006 Baker Street, in preparation for his new tenant, Cornet Stores. General contractor William Eisler, electrician H. T. Rogers, and plumber Jack Bergman undertook the work in April of 1939, after the end of a lengthy occupancy of that site by Safeway Stores since the mid-1920s. Safeway had relocated to a new facility farther north at 1124 Baker and Monterey Streets.

The old Safeway site at 1006 Baker Street had been in use as a retail market since 1910, long associated with Hand & Metzner Grocers, and later the Economic Store. Safeway had absorbed the lease from Economic in 1925, then occupied the address along side Feister's Meats and C. W. Skelton Meats. By 1930, Los Angeles-based Safeway Stores Incorporated had become the sole occupant, and on 4 April 1931 it entered into a corporate lease with H. H. Brown for that 41 feet of high-profile Baker Street frontage. Stipulated in the lease was unrestricted use of the adjoining alley. [Plate 1]

Indiana native H. H. Brown had begun consolidating ownership of key commercial lots in Block 56 as early as 1909, and in 1911 began construction of the adjacent H. H. Brown Building at the corner of Kentucky and Baker. Fronting on 1000-1004 Baker Street, the imposing three-story building had a footprint measuring some 75 feet square, accommodating retail space at street level with apartments above. General contractor L. A. Bates and masons Barrett & White constructed the \$25,000 mixed-use structure. By September of 1928, H. H. Brown had also initiated construction of what would become known as the Granada Theatre at 620 Kentucky Street. Going into the 1930s, Brown controlled one of the most prominent commercial corners in East Bakersfield.

The City of Bakersfield signaled the coming change of tenancy at Safeway's old Baker Street site in June of 1939, when it issued a business license for a "5c, 10c & 25c Store" at that address.

By 26 June 1939, the Cornets had entered into a contract with K. E. Norris to install air conditioning in what would become their pioneer East Bakersfield location on H. H. Brown's business block.

Kenneth Edward Norris (1904-1990) was at that time associated as a plumber with his father, Edward G. Norris (1881-1974), the owner of Kern Plumbing & Hardware and later the mayor of Bakersfield. A plumbing contractor for 50 years, K. E. Norris was the grandson of pioneer Kern County rancher and carpenter-builder James N. Norris (1849-1919). James Norris had followed his brother Robert T. Norris (1841-1926), a pioneer Kern County cattle rancher and farmer, to California

from Missouri in 1883. Robert T. Norris had donated land for the establishment of the historic 1882 Norris School, now preserved in the Kern County Museum's Pioneer Village.

H. H. Brown, a Kern County resident since 1891, died 1 December 1939, and his wife Emily died 17 December 1940. Joe Cornet, Jr. initiated purchase of the 1006 Baker Street site from the Browns' heirs in 1944. The Cornets proceeded to demolish the old property dating from 1910 to make way for the construction of an advanced Modern-style retail store. Designed by Milton L. Anderson, AIA, of Los Angeles, this new facility, at the same site, allowed the Cornets to maintain their well-established Baker Street retail address. [Plate 2]

Selected Explanatory Endnotes

- † Timeline submitted, in part, to the *Bakersfield Californian* 13 January 2010, 11:17 p.m.
- †† See Grand Opening article with a superb architect's rendering on 13 October 1948, in the *Bakersfield Californian*, pp. 15+, and a typical advertisement on 22 October 1948, p. 7.
- ††† Book 1570, Page 144 of Kern County Official Records.
- †††† The career of Chester Monroe Williams, also known as Chester Menno Williams, appears to be of singular importance to the building history of both the State of Iowa and Southern California, and will require additional archival research in Sioux City, Iowa, and collections at the University of Southern California; University of California, Los Angeles; and Iowa State University.
- ††††† For a corresponding and comparative national mercantile context, see: Thomas, Bernice L. *America's 5 & 10 Cent Stores: The Kress Legacy*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., in association with the National Building Museum and Preservation Press, 1997).

Plate 1: Safeway Market and East Bakersfield Cornet Store Site at 1006 Baker Street

Plate 2: Original Architectural Rendering, Milton Lawrence Anderson, AIA

Major Institutional, Archival, and Individual Resources Consulted

American Institute of Architects Archives, Washington, D.C.
Aplington-Parkersburg High School Archives, Parkersburg, Iowa
Beale Memorial Library Genealogy Room, Bakersfield
Beale Memorial Library Jack Maguire Local History Room, Bakersfield
Beale Memorial Library Microforms Collection, Bakersfield
California Architects Board, Sacramento
California History and Genealogy Room, Fresno County Public Library, Fresno
California State Library Information System, Sacramento
City of Delano Historic Building Permit Archives, Delano
Heritage Square Museum, Los Angeles
Interviews: Descendants of Chester Monroe Williams
Interviews: Descendants of The Isotherm Company, Inc.
Interviews: Descendant of Valley Glass Company
Iowa State Census Records, 1895, 1905, 1915

Major Institutional, Archival, and Individual Resources Consulted (continued)

Iowa State University, Office of the Registrar, Ames, Iowa
Iowa State University, Parks Library, Department of Special Collections, Ames, Iowa
Kern County Assessors Office, Bakersfield
Kern County Hall of Records Grantee/Grantor Indices, Bakersfield
Kothe Memorial Library, Parkersburg, Iowa
La Jolla Athenaeum Library, La Jolla
Los Angeles Public Library California History Collection, Los Angeles
Michael Corbett, Architectural Historian, Berkeley, San Francisco Architectural Club Archives
Milwaukee Public Library Local History Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Parkersburg *Eclipse News-Review* Archives, Parkersburg, Iowa
Parkersburg United Methodist Church Archives, Parkersburg, Iowa
San Diego Genealogical Society, San Diego
San Diego Recorder/County Clerk, San Diego
San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco
Sioux City Historic Preservation Commission, Sioux City, Iowa
Sioux City Public Library, Sioux City, Iowa
State Historical Society of Iowa Archives, De Moines, Iowa
Sutro Library, San Francisco
United States Census Records, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930
University of California South Regional Library Facility, Los Angeles
University of Minnesota Archives, Minneapolis, Minnesota
University of Wisconsin Archives and Records Management Services, Madison, Wisconsin

Note about the Preparer

John Edward Powell, A.B., M.A., studied design, art history and architectural history at Stanford University and Stanford-in-Britain. He completed graduate work at Stanford University; California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland; and the University of Idaho, Moscow. He subsequently undertook sabbatical studies at Haystack Mountain School, Deer Isle, Maine. Since 1977, Powell has worked professionally in the fields of historic preservation and California architectural history. His formal emphases are architectural biography and the archival conservation of architectural records, renderings, and drawings. His research has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts; the College of Fellows Fund of the American Architectural Foundation; the American Institute of Architects, California Council; the California Committee for the Promotion of History; the Leon S. Peters Foundation; a 2005 Governor's Award in Historic Preservation with the Fresno County Public Library; and as one of 22 authors contributing to *Architecture, Ethnicity and Historical Landscapes of California's San Joaquin Valley*, which received a 2009 Governor's Award in Historic Preservation for its publisher, the Planning and Development Department, City of Fresno.

Researched, Prepared and Revised by John Edward Powell: 13 January 2010 – 22 March 2010

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Plate 1: Safeway Market and East Bakersfield Cornet Store Site at 1006 Baker Street
Courtesy of the Beale Memorial Library Jack Maguire Local History Room

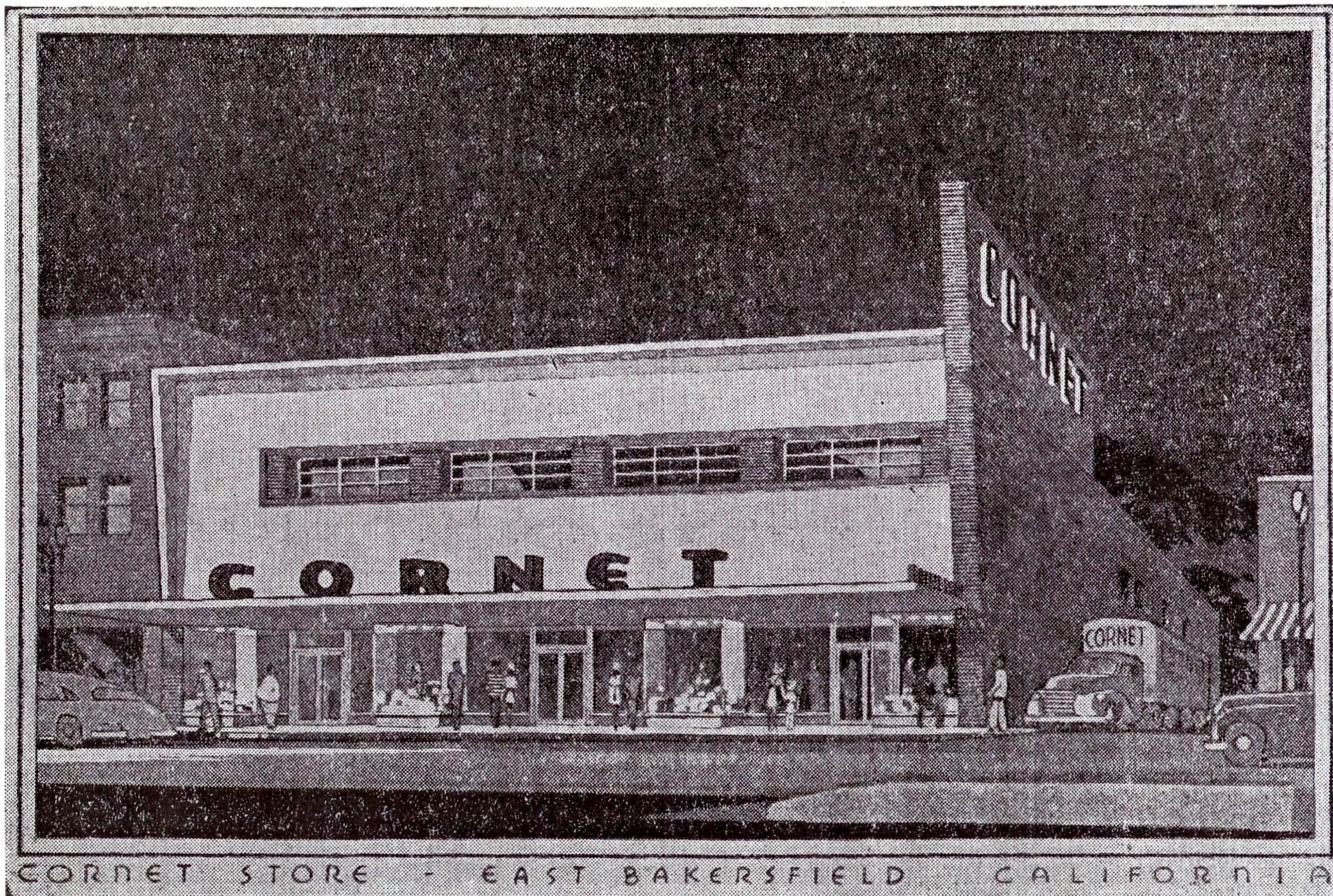


Plate 2: Original Architectural Rendering, Milton Lawrence Anderson, AIA
Courtesy of the Beale Memorial Library Regional Periodicals Archives