

# San Francisco City Hall Glows Again With Illumination From Phoenix Products Company, Inc.

*Called “the Spirit of San Francisco” when it opened in 1915, the French Renaissance-style City Hall features a magnificent dome set like a sparkling jewel in an elaborate Beaux Arts building. At its original dedication, then-mayor “Sunny Jim” Rolph said, “Our City Hall is like a phoenix rising from the ashes,” referring to three successive fires that had razed San Francisco’s downtown. Now, in 1999, at the dawn of the next millennium, those words seem almost prophetic: it is the new fixtures from Phoenix Products Company that make the newly renovated San Francisco City Hall sparkle at night, welcoming city dwellers and visitors alike.*



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***Phoenix Products exceeded the design requirements for lighting performance, fixture durability and fast delivery.***



MG Series Above Ground Accent Lights with 100 Watt PAR 38 MH lamps were used to light the colonnades at City Hall.

*The MG Series also features:*

- Knuckle-free vertical and horizontal aiming outside the fixture
- Copper-free aluminum housing to prevent against corrosion
- Flood, spot or wall wash optics available
- Accepts ED-17, PAR38 and double-ended lamp options
- Vandal-resistant cast rock guard and hardware available upon request
- UL Listed for use in Wet Locations

*D*arkness fell on City Hall in 1995, when damages from the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake forced its closure for substantial repairs and public safety improvements required by law.

Due to its prime position anchoring the Civic Plaza, City Hall's exterior lighting had to conform to plans developed in the early 1990s. City architects Tony Irons and Mary Hanni worked with Horton·Lees Lighting Design to create a plan for illuminating the entire Civic Plaza. A key element of this design was to illuminate the architectural detail of City Hall – and make its fully restored lead-and-gilt dome glow brilliantly at night, as a beacon to downtown visitors and visible to travelers from miles around.

Lighting designer Angela McDonald of Horton·Lees worked with Irons, project architect from the City Bureau of Architecture, and with principals from Heller-Manus Architects, to devise an exterior lighting plan that would fit the city's budget and timeline for delivery. Required earthquake retrofits, such as the 600-plus rubber-base isolators installed in the foundation to accommodate any future shock waves, accounted for the majority of the \$300 million renovation budget. And, an additional \$400,000 was required to re-gild the dome.

**Durable, Distinctive Lighting Required!**

*S*uch investment in infrastructure set the tone on quality for other areas of the refurbish project, and City Hall required lighting fixtures of exceptional durability and lighting performance. Designer McDonald and electrical contractor Barry Boehm, senior project engineer, Rosendin, Inc., San Francisco, chose to purchase the rugged, high-quality fixtures from Phoenix Products Company, Inc.

"Exterior fixtures had to accept our specified lamps, the Phillips PAR 38 Metal Halide," says Angela McDonald, "to provide a clean white light that meshes with the incandescent light of the Opera House across the Plaza." The PAR 38 lamps, housed in nearly 200 Phoenix MG Series Above Ground Accent Light fixtures, now deliver the desired *white light* cascading behind, and fully illuminating, the two-tiered colonnades of the exterior.

Phoenix Products exceeded expectations and the design's requirements for lighting performance, fixture durability, and fast delivery. Notes contractor Boehm, "We had to achieve the desired color scheme. We wanted exterior fixtures that could be mounted on existing conduit, yet would be sturdy enough to withstand storms, heavy shocks and vibration, even seismic tremors. And we needed the fixtures delivered in just one month, in time for our grand re-opening."

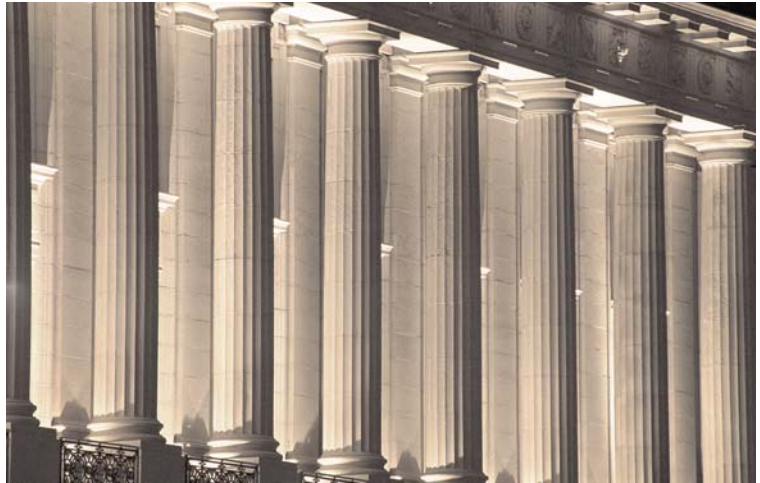
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To prove the effectiveness of the Phoenix MG Series Above Ground Accent Spotlights, regional sales manager Jaine Grant supplied samples to illuminate a section of the exterior colonnades. "It was important for us to really show just how effective these fixtures would be in providing the precise aiming of light behind the columns," says Grant. "Our demonstration fixtures gave just the desired results." Phoenix's Bay Area representatives, Paul McDowell and Juanita Cox of Sixteen Five Hundred, worked with Phoenix's Milwaukee headquarters on many other aspects of the installation.

### Visible Light from Invisible Fixtures

As an example of the special requirements of this installation, exterior fixtures had to be surface mounted on the limestone facade and concealed within window ledges and cornices to reduce glare. All the fixture bases were retrofitted with spacer kits to use existing conduit – a customized option that Phoenix Products Company delivered within the very tight schedule.

Phoenix supplied the fixtures with Aromat 277 volt electronic ballasts to support the efficient operation of the PAR 38 lamps, a choice supported by the city's electrical contractor. In these fixtures, the lamps provide a tenfold increase in operating life. "This greater efficiency in lighting reduces maintenance costs for re-lamping fixtures," says McDonald. "That translates into at least ten trips each year that a worker no longer has to make, climbing up a ladder to replace lamps." The Phoenix fixtures also can be locked into position, which makes re-lamping more efficient and secure. "And, the gasket-sealed lenses keep out water, for a longer life span of the fixtures," notes McDonald.



Photos by ©1999 Jay Graham

Almost 200 MG Series fixtures are mounted and concealed within the window ledges and cornices for glare reduction

### Fixtures Customized, Delivered In Record Time

One of McDonald's specifications was to obtain a custom filter to be installed on 20 of the accent lights. The filters, designed by Phoenix as a special option, to diffuse light between several narrowly spaced columns at the end of each facade. "This slight reduction in intensity keeps the overall lighting effect uniform," explains Tom Thomsen, Sales and Marketing Manager, Phoenix Products Company, "while enabling the City Hall maintenance department to stock just one standard style of lamp in their inventory."

*The distinctive new lighting design achieves the most difficult objective - showcasing everything but itself*

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**“The Phoenix floodlights are powerful and highly efficient and deliver the desired effect”**

- Angela McDonald  
Horton Lees Lighting Design

With these fixture customizations specified, the MG Series Above Ground Accent Lights were ordered for delivery within four weeks. "We knew that Phoenix had made a commitment to deliver the product on time," ads Boehm, "despite the very tight deadline."

The glowing brilliance of the beams of light from the Phoenix fixtures tucked within the facade's recesses provides safety for pedestrians walking at night in the Civic Plaza. However, people leaving the City Hall at night do not walk directly into glaring spotlights, an annoyance common to ground-level lighting installations. The clean cascade of light fuses with the incandescent light from turn-of-the-century street lamps – elegant wrought iron lampposts that were refurbished by Alice Carey, of Carey Historic Preservation, and Bob Stokes, an historic fixtures consultant with Taylor-Stokes Lighting of San Francisco.

#### Beacon to the City by the Bay



Photos by ©1999 Jay Graham

**Above:** MS120/1500LB Series metal halide spotlights illuminate the newly refurbished City Hall dome. **Right:** The Long Beam Spotlight is available in either vertical or horizontal lamp positions.

Like the ornate icing on a cake, the gilded decorative relief of the refurbished copper dome required a special touch. "Our goal was to make the dome sparkle at night," says McDonald, "without blazing light into neighboring residential and hotel windows."

To achieve even illumination with greater control and less light spill over, McDonald again chose Phoenix Products Company fixtures. Twelve additional Phoenix MS120/1500LB/90 Long Beam Spotlights with remote ballasts were installed along the roof and at the base of the City Hall's 307-foot tall dome. "The Phoenix floodlights are powerful and highly efficient," says McDonald, "and deliver the desired effect."

When San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown turned on the lights of City Hall earlier this year (84 years after Mayor Rolph's tribute), its spectacular architectural detail could again be seen at night. "There are small faces carved in the cornices that now pop out of the shadows," explains McDonald, "where such character and detail were once lost to passersby."



The distinctive new lighting design achieves the most difficult objective – showcasing everything but itself. It reveals its subject – the classic symmetry and soaring strength of the City Hall's architecture – as the irresistible and true *sparkling jewel* of San Francisco's Civic Plaza.

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