

Save Our Heritage Organisation Presents

San Diego Cultural Heritage Tours

HERITAGE COUNTY PARK

2454 Heritage Park Row, San Diego, CA 92110



Courtesy Library of Congress



Courtesy SOHO

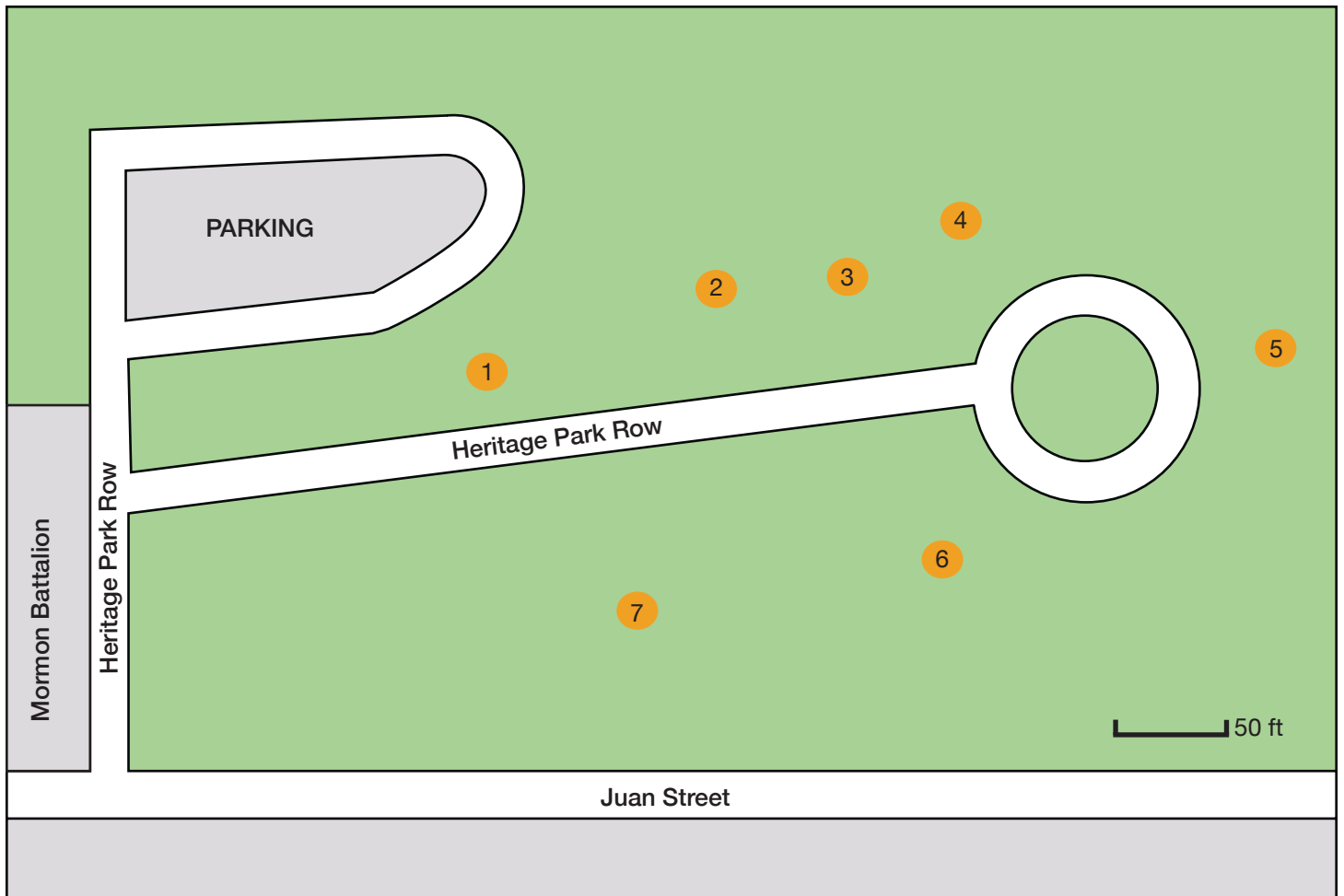
Introduction

This short, self-guided walking tour explores the seven Victorian buildings that make up San Diego's charming Heritage County Park and their storied past. Adjacent to Old Town, the County of San Diego park tells the histories of many types of people throughout San Diego, as the six homes and one temple were relocated one by one to this site during the 1970s and '80s. The homes of Heritage County Park not only show the Victorian era's diversity of architecture, but also speak of the people of varied ancestry, professions, and cultures who called them home.

From a modest cottage to a large mansion converted into a hospital to a temple used by many faiths, the buildings reflect aspects of community life in Uptown and the outskirts of Old Town, and the accounts of their salvation.

All seven are painted in historic colors, with correct color placement for the eras and styles of each structure. The Sherman-Gilbert House and the temple wear their original colors. SOHO has provided historic consultation for the park to the County of San Diego for over 50 years and these beautifully polychromed buildings are colorful reminders of this long partnership.

While it is no longer considered preservation best practice to move a historic structure out of its original site and context, this mini village has become a tale of the feats carried out by early preservationists in San Diego to protect our collective history. Heritage County Park was SOHO's first major preservation project: The saving of the Sherman-Gilbert House and the creation of a county park as its new home and that of other buildings to follow were initiated and led by Save Our Heritage Organisation.






Heritage County Park

2454 Heritage Park Row, San Diego, CA 92110

Map

- ① Senlis Cottage
- ② Sherman-Gilbert House
- ③ Bushyhead House
- ④ Christian House
- ⑤ McConaughy House
- ⑥ Burton House
- ⑦ Temple Beth Israel

Key

-  Street
-  Heritage County Park
-  Site Location & Number

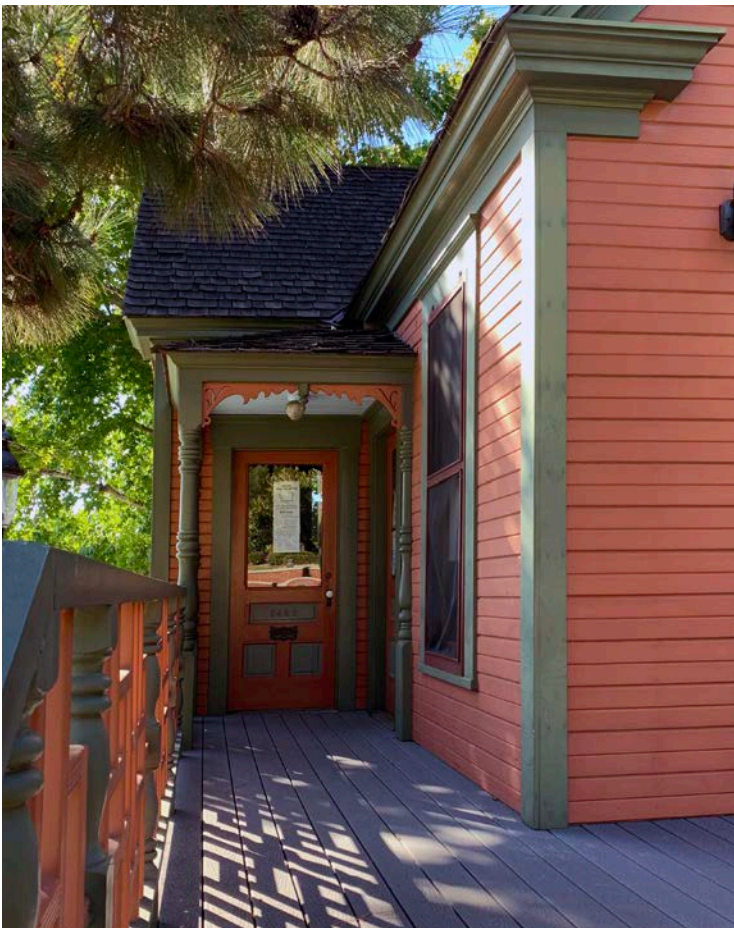
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1. Senlis Cottage

1896, moved to Heritage County Park in 1981
Queen Anne Cottage

Built in 1896, this modest four-room dwelling was home to gardener Eugene Senlis and his wife Lena. Eugene was employed by Kate Sessions, a renowned San Diego nurserywoman and horticulturalist. Originally located at 1536 Second Avenue, this cottage was one of the many smaller homes meant for working families in booming New Town San Diego, known today as downtown. The Senlis Cottage showcases the simpler end of the spectrum of diverse, Victorian residential architectural design for persons of varying socio-economic status. Humble families of the late 19th century like Senlises often lived without the many amenities we've grown accustomed to today including gas, water, indoor plumbing, and electricity. With only a kitchen, parlor, and two bedrooms, this home had everything a small family needed while still embodying a refined architectural design. Take note of the cottage's many similar architectural details found in the more elaborate mansions nearby.



Senlis Cottage not yet on foundation c.1981. Courtesy Coons Collection

2. Sherman-Gilbert House

1887, moved to Heritage County Park in 1971
Stick Eastlake Style

The Sherman-Gilbert House, recognized by its central tall square tower and abundance of millwork details, was originally built and owned by John Sherman. John is deemed a master builder by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board for constructing Victorian homes, including the Sherman-Gilbert and Hall-Sherman houses, both designated local landmarks, and the Sherman-Judson House. From late 1892 to 1965, the home was occupied by arts and culture patrons and benefactors, sisters Bess and Gertrude Gilbert. They hosted social gatherings for famous international entertainers, including Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, and American-Polish classical pianist Arthur Rubinstein. Acclaimed Black opera and classical music singer Marian Anderson who broke many barriers for Black artists in the United States, was hosted as a house guest as well, after the U.S. Grant Hotel turned her away. In 1969, concerned citizens formed Save Our Heritage Organisation, raised funds, and found a location to move the house, which was threatened with demolition. Being the first historic structure saved by SOHO, the house embodies the early members focus on Victorian architecture, which was underappreciated and highly endangered at the time.

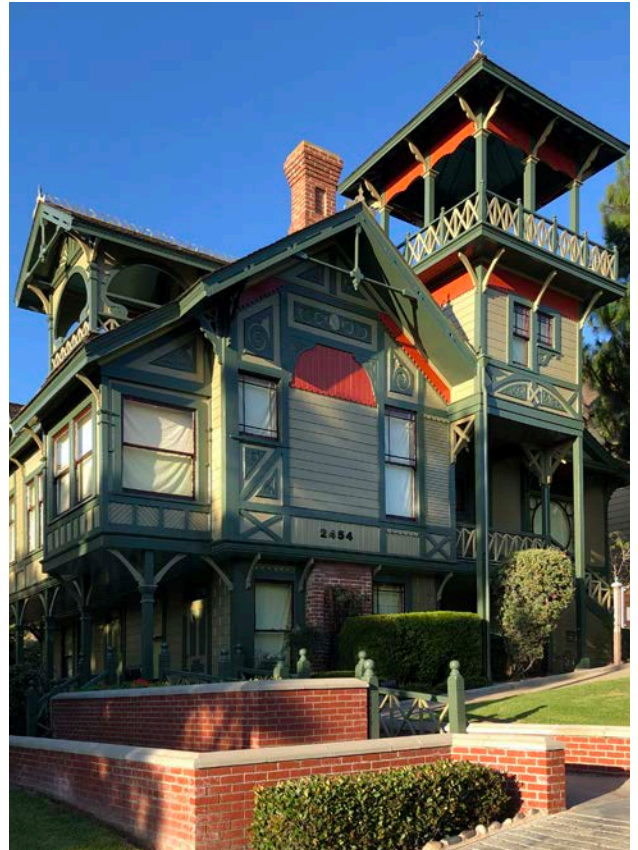
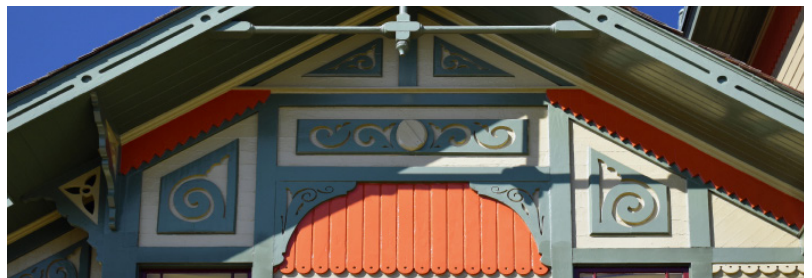


Photo by Sandé Lollis



Courtesy SOHO



c. 1880s. Courtesy Coons Collection



Courtesy Historic Archives History Center, County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation

3. Bushyhead House

1887, moved to Heritage County Park in 1976
Eastlake Style

This cheery yellow Eastlake style home, marked by a two-story projecting bay window and a richly ornamented porch, was built in 1887 by Edward Wilkerson Bushyhead. Bushyhead was of Cherokee descent and walked the Trail of Tears when he was just seven years old, leading to his relocation from Tennessee to Oklahoma. In his early 20s, he moved to San Diego and started publishing the local newspaper, the *San Diego Union*, from an office in Old Town's central plaza. With developing interests outside of the newspaper business, Bushyhead went on to serve two terms as sheriff of San Diego and rose to the level of chief of police in 1899, the only person to have held both of these positions. When Bushyhead passed away in 1907, his remains were taken back to Tahlequah, Oklahoma to rest within Cherokee lands, but his Eastlake style home reminds us of San Diego's diverse cultural past.



Photo by Sandé Lollis



Photo by Marlena Krcelich/Sandé Lollis

4. Christian House

1889, moved to Heritage County Park in 1976
Queen Anne style

Boasting an extensive wrap-around porch, tall corner tower, and scalloped siding cladding the second floor, the Christian House is a vibrant example of a Queen Anne Victorian home, a style known for its decorative layers and variations. This home was owned by Harfield Timberlake Christian and his wife Myrtle. Harfield was a native Californian and prominent San Diego citizen. His many feats include founding and serving as president of the San Diego Title Insurance Guarantee and Trust Company, working as a United States marshal of his judicial district, and acting as a commissioner of the 1915 San Diego Panama-California Exposition. The home's elegant design reveals the family's social and financial stature. In 1974, SOHO hosted a Victorian Fete to commemorate the 155th anniversary of Queen Victoria's birth and to raise funds to move the Christian House to Heritage County Park. This lavish tour included walking, cycling, and double-decker bus rides to various Victorian homes throughout the Uptown area.



c.1890s. Courtesy Coons Collection



Christian House being moved to the park in 1976. Courtesy SOHO



5. McConaughy House

1887, moved to Heritage County Park in 1981
Italianate Style

The McConaughy House is in the Italianate style, a form derived from medieval Italian villas and farmhouses that was nearing the end of its popularity by 1887, when this dwelling was built. The home's original owner and builder, John McConaughy, was renowned in San Diego for founding the area's first cargo and passenger service, which operated between the city and the backcountry town of Julian. This service included various stagecoaches and wagons, a very important early form of public transportation that operated on a consistent schedule. In 1888, the Keating family acquired the house and it was occupied by Fanny Keating and her husband George, a wealthy, educated man and a philanthropist who wanted to help improve his city, primarily by establishing a new hospital. The mayor continually refused a public land grant for the facility, so following George's untimely death, Fanny opened the home to serve as the new "Hospital of the Good Samaritans."



c.1880s. Courtesy Coons Collection



6. Burton House

1893, moved to Heritage County Park in 1976
Classic Revival Style

The Burton House's Classical Revival characteristics include a dentil cornice, pediment, and an emphasis on symmetry and balance throughout the facades. Henry Guild Burton, the home's original owner, was a retired Army physician who served in the Second Seminole War, Mexican-American War, and the American Civil War. At the end of the Mexican-American War, when it was determined Baja California would remain a Mexican state, Burton aided residents of the area in becoming United States citizens. Henry married María Amparo Ruiz y Arango, a political refugee of that war. María was the first female Mexican American writer to publish two novels in English. Both feature romances between Mexicans and Americans, while her narratives denounce U.S. colonialism and Anglo-American racism. She became an influential author throughout the United States. Her 1885 novel *The Squatter and the Don* touches on the marginalization and discrimination faced by the conquered Mexican population despite receiving full American citizenship.



7. Temple Beth Israel

1889, moved to Heritage County Park in 1978
Synagogue architecture

Constructed as San Diego's first synagogue and the second oldest extant in the Western United States, Temple Beth Israel originally stood at the corner of Second Avenue and Beech Street downtown. The redwood structure, measures 56 by 30 feet, with one room for prayer and two small anterooms and a choir loft above the main floor. It was distinguished by a wooden replica of the Tablets of the Law (Ten Commandments) raised above the gable and seven stained glass windows designed with Stars of David. In 1926, the congregation moved to a larger temple to accommodate the area's growing Jewish population. Over time, the temple was used by other faiths, including the Biblical Institute of Spiritualism, the Volunteers of America Mission, and the Fraternal Spiritualist Church. In the 1970s, the building was threatened with demolition as the neighborhood saw a boom in high-rise development. Rabbi Joel Goor of the new Temple Beth Israel successfully nominated the temple for historic landmark status, which the City of San Diego approved in 1973. In 1978, the temple received further recognition by being placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Photo by Sandé Lollis



Courtesy Library of Congress



Courtesy SOHO



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