



Reflections

Post Office Box 3571, San Diego, Ca. 92103

225-1033

Preservation Crisis Looms Downtown

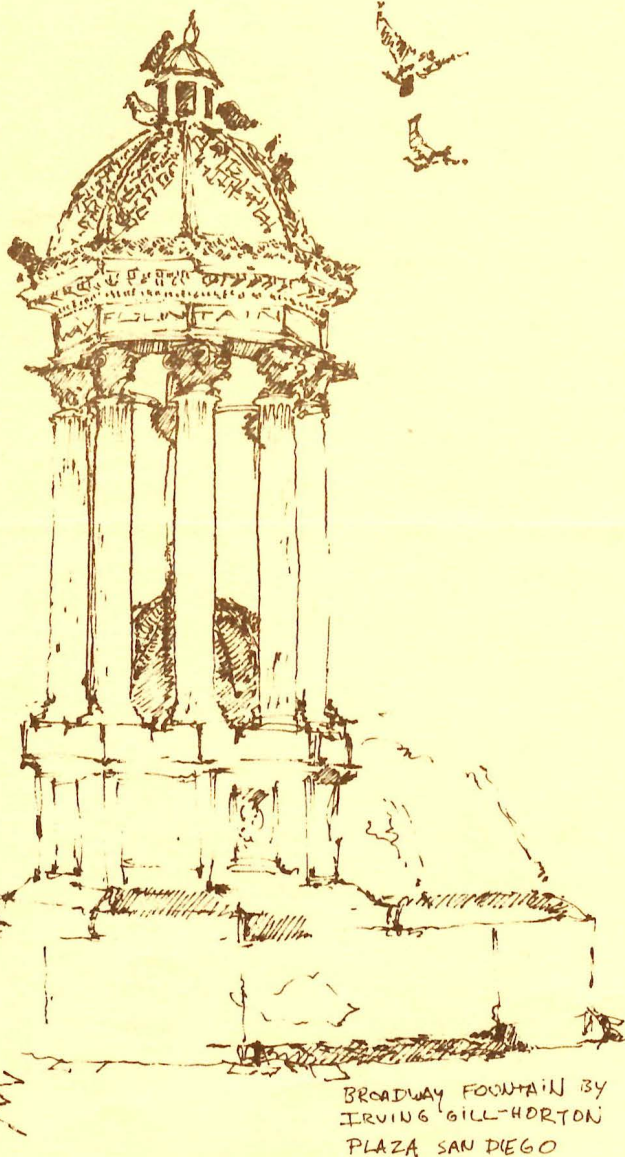
The cause of preservation Downtown was dealt a severe setback early this month when the City Council voted 6-1 to approve a controversial, publi-

cally funded plan for redevelopment of the Horton Plaza area. As conceived by Los Angeles developer Ernest Hahn and San Diego architect Frank Hope, the plan anticipates complete demolition of nine blocks in the heart of the city and replacement of existing structures by a mammoth "Park and Shop" complex. Set for destruction is a distinguished array of buildings associated with the Downtown area's unique identity and heritage, including the Horton Grand Hotel, the Balboa Theatre, and the Spreckels Building, all city historic landmarks.

Hope, whose firm designed the Federal Office Complex now under construction in the project area, recommends that the Spreckels Building be "temporarily" preserved, subject to later demolition and replacement by "hotel expansion or a major office facility". Hope's report to the Council termed the Balboa Theatre--which the Civic Light Opera is seeking to convert to a cultural center--an "encumbrance" which should be destroyed.

Despite objections by the city-sponsored Design Review Committee and by the San Diego Chapter of the American Institute of Architects that the proposal would effectively wall off the area South of Horton Plaza from the rest of Downtown and negatively influence the future development of surrounding neighborhoods, the Council endorsed the concept with only minor changes.

Demolition has been underway for over a year in the Redevelopment area; over 1.4 million dollars of public funds have already been spent purchasing Downtown acreage and removing six buildings dating from the turn of the Century. Barring unforeseen difficulties, final demolition could happen as early as the latter portion of 1976.



BROADWAY FOUNTAIN BY
IRVING GILL-HORTON
PLAZA, SAN DIEGO

HERITAGE PARK

THREAT CONTINES

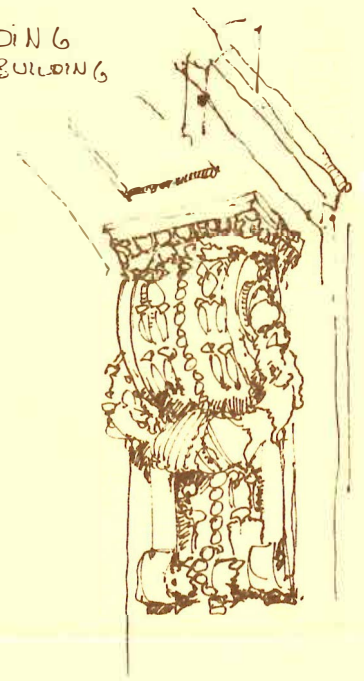
With the Nation's 200th Birthday drawing near, County Supervisors apparently have decided to single out Heritage Park, the County's only official Bicentennial project, to bear the brunt of spending cuts. Despite expectations the Park will begin generating enough revenue to pay for itself within little over a decade, Supervisors seem ready to abandon the County's previous commitment to move the Bushyhead and Christian houses. A final decision is expected sometime after Reflections goes to press. Full coverage will be included in next month's issue. Meanwhile, Members are urged to express their sentiments to the Supervisors.

Architects Honor Soho

The San Diego Chapter of the American Institute of Architects has honored SOHO for "continued success in preservation." The award is the third special plaudit SOHO has received this year. Earlier recognition came from the City Historic Site Board and the San Diego Press Club. President Bill Cartwright in accepting the honor on behalf of the entire membership, pointed to progress both organizations have made in the cause of preservation and predicted continued co-operation. Ceremonies were held on the ornate first floor of the Francis Family Antique Warehouse on lower Fifth Avenue.

Letters: In keeping with our policy of spotlighting preservation issues in San Diego, Reflections invites the thoughts and comments of our readers. A continuing discussion of the objectives, priorities and problems of preservation can help keep these issues before all of those involved in the contemporary development and progress of San Diego. Address all letters to Reflections, P.O. Box 3571, San Diego, California 92103.

CORNER HOLDING
SPRECKLES BUILDING



Announcement

Bicentennial Special: Noted Historian Clare Crane will mark the beginning of 1976 with two one-day credit-optional tours of historic San Diego for UCSD Extension. Entitled San Diego: From Mission to Metropolis, the tours will focus on the Victorian heritage of Boomtown San Diego and the rustic back country. Featuring a trip through the Villa Montezuma and a walking tour of Julian, the courses will be held on Saturday, January 31st and March 13. Pre-registration is required. For further information call 452-3400.

Also in January: Assistance League lunches at the Villa Montezuma. Every Thursday a gourmet luncheon served by Assistance League Volunteers. Wine to be served in the drawing room followed by a tour of the Villa and lunch highlight the event. All for \$4 a person. January 8, 15, 22 and 29. Advance reservation and payment is requested. Call Mrs. Ruth Padgett for further information at 454-4623.

Correction: Last month's Thumbnail Tour incorrectly called the Frost House, built in 1897, Irving Gill's first San Diego design project. That distinction actually belongs to the Garrettson House, a block away on E Street, which was constructed two years before.

At Issue

Redevelopment: Civic Improvement or Demolition Derby?

When the State Legislature passed redevelopment enabling legislation in the 1950s, gleaming office towers and bustling commercial centers from the pages of Buck Rogers were supposed to replace funky Victorian buildings and turn of the Century commercial frontage in neglected city centers. Instead the old buildings vanished only to be replaced by vacant lots and miles of asphalt-covered parking lots. Today the Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles is threatened with a court battle expected to last a decade. Meanwhile, the city's Bunker Hill, once the site of Angel's Flight Railway and magnificent Victorian homes stands barren but for a forlorn gopher colony. Similar scenes are found in San Pedro, San Bernardino, and many other unfortunate California cities.



HORTON-GRAND
HOTEL

Can it happen to San Diego?

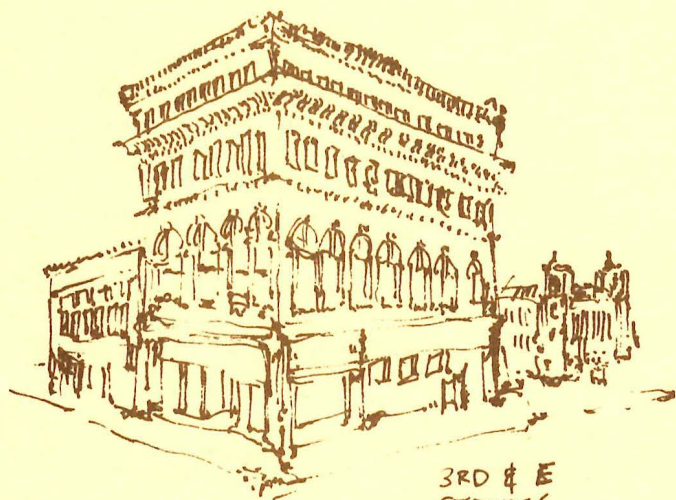
Under the law, a city council is entitled to establish the boundaries of a redevelopment area and set itself up as a so-called "Redevelopment Agency". Then, without putting the issue up for a vote, the agency may issue bonds to finance the purchase of property within the redevelopment area on the expectation that increased land values later on will provide higher taxes with which to repay bondholders. As in the case of San Diego, redevelopment plans usually call for enormous "superblocks" of new development to draw suburbanites back Downtown.

Just the opposite has proved to be the case in city after city, as so-called wholesale redevelopment projects have languished while less expensive adaptive re-use and sensitive architectural additions to existing neighborhoods have proved to be far more attractive.

Such is the case in Seattle, where citizens were so incensed by proposals to tear down an old market district to make way for high rise redevelopment that they passed a Ballot Initiative calling for preservation of the area. Now the market lives on, fulfilling some of its old functions while providing an array of new services and creating an exciting and prosperous downtown atmosphere.

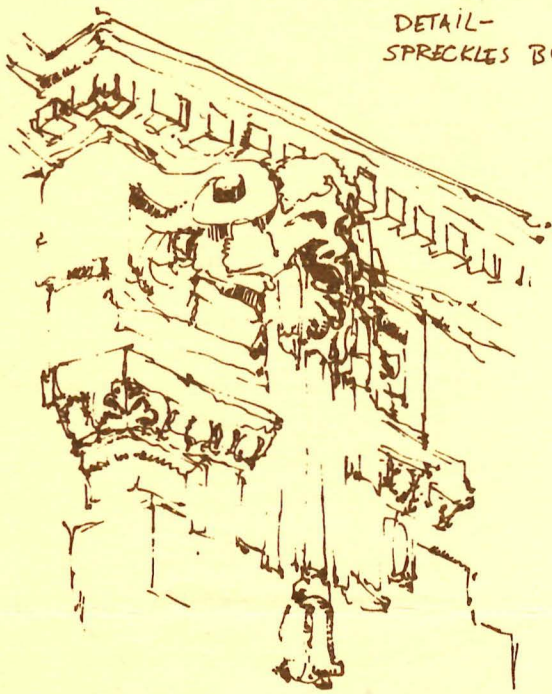
San Diego's Old Town is another example of redevelopment sympathetic to neighborhood architectural traditions. Old Town thrives because it offers character and identity which can't be duplicated by the giant shopping malls found alongside the freeways of every Los Angeles bedroom community.

Although San Diego still has time to consider the advantages of preservation Downtown, recent action by the City Council seems to indicate the demolition option will prevail.



3RD & E
STREETS

DETAIL-
SPRECKELS BUILDING



Similar conclusions are reached about the Spreckels Building and the Golden West Hotel. Of Spreckels the study says "Refurbishing the building would provide a needed and useful facility for housing the entertainment arts in San Diego." The proposal envisions conversion to hotel, coffee house, night club, as well as theatre use. The La Jolla Sinfonia already makes use of the building.

REPORT:

Horton Buildings

Report Says Horton Buildings Could Have New Lives

In making up its mind to approve the demolition of Downtown historic structures, the City Council apparently overlooked a report that says adaptive re-use of the buildings would be a good idea. Prepared by Architects Monroe and Reeves, A.I.A., the comprehensive survey says at least three of the four buildings studied could be successfully incorporated into redevelopment. According to the city-sponsored study, the Balboa Theatre could become "a viable economic part of San Diego's revitalized Centre City" and "a major focal point in the Horton Redevelopment Project." The report proposes the Balboa be transformed into a live theatre, hotel and restaurant complex. Although certain structural deficiencies would have to be remedied, the study says total renovation would run in the neighborhood of two million dollars, considerably more modest than other proposals for the site and small when compared to the redevelopment project's \$200 million dollar price tag.



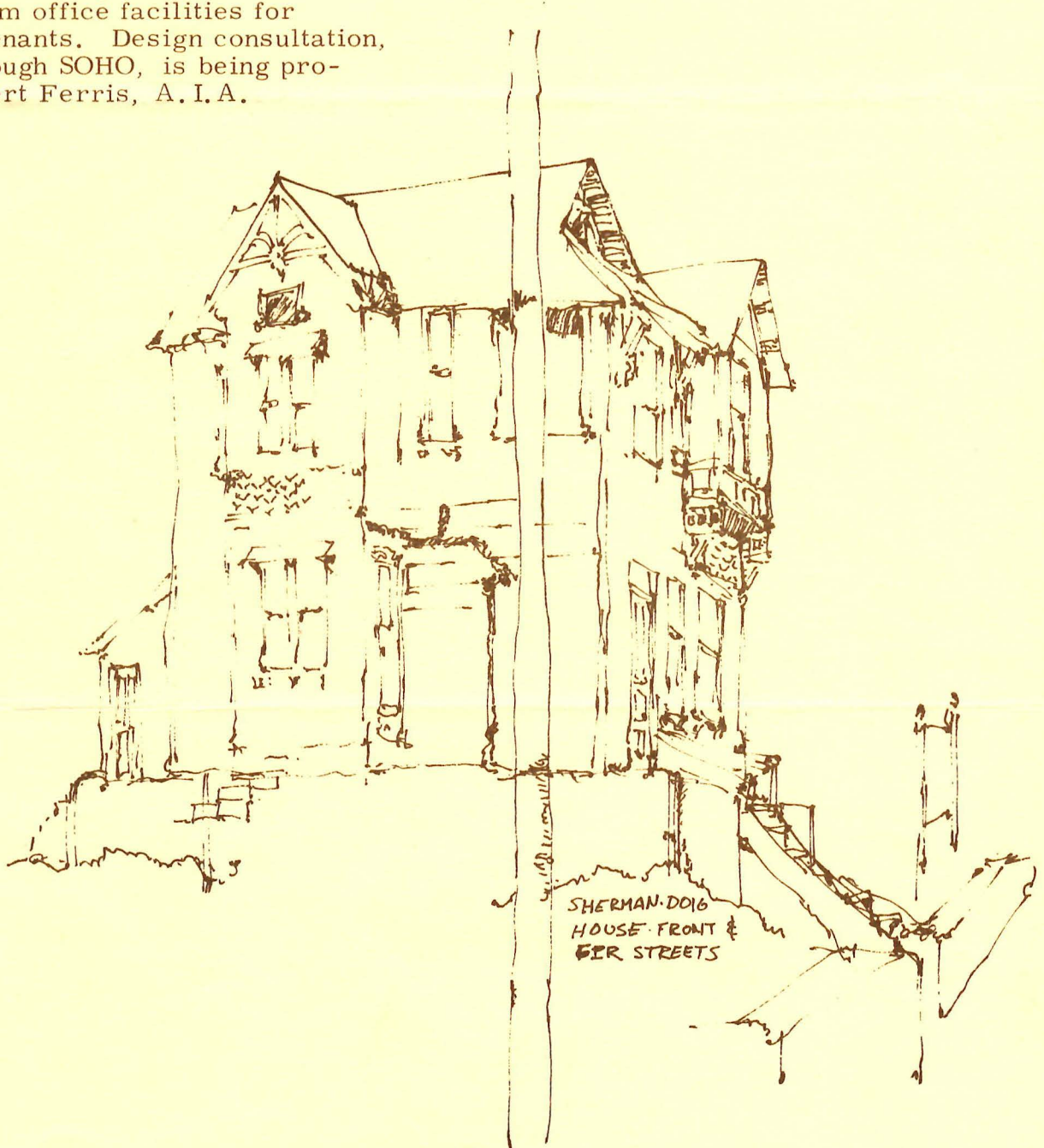
Civic Light Opera Proposes Balboa Cultural Center

Indications are the City Council isn't convinced preservation can work Downtown, but at least one local group is ready and willing to try. Civic Light Opera President Bruce Farley has written the City to request that the Balboa Theatre be preserved and converted into a Downtown Cultural Center for the benefit of all citizens. "By unanimous vote, our Board has determined that the Civic Light Opera would be a natural entity to control the Balboa Theatre," Farley said in his letter to the Redevelopment Agency. So far only forboding silence from City Hall.

Sherman-Doig Progress Report

The Sherman-Doig House at Fir and Grape Streets is back on solid footing following delicate foundation work. Owned by SOHO Board Member Ted Krauss, the stick-style Victorian structure was raised from its original foundation so a basement could be excavated and concrete footings installed. Work involved an intricate process of earth-removal carefully planned around the house's temporary supports.

Despite the project's complicated nature, little difficulty was encountered, and Krauss, a CPA, continued to work in his makeshift office throughout construction. Ultimately the house will provide custom office facilities for Krauss and tenants. Design consultation, arranged through SOHO, is being provided by Robert Ferris, A. I. A.



New Members

SOHO extends a Happy Holliday Welcome to those new members who have jointed us during this busy and festive month:

Shirley Curry
Rudi W. DeNooy
Mr. & Mrs. Oliver B. Lyons
Janet Partridge
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Pollack

Helen Redlinger
Robert & Nancy Vail
Thomas A. Weber
Mr. & Mrs. David Weinstein
And last, but certainly not least,
little Jonna Ann Cartwright!

In order to become a real part of our SOHO family, become involved, and busy working with us. Just call 225-1033, and leave your name, phone number and interest, and we'll have you crackin' in no time!!

Membership

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip Code _____ Phone _____

I am interested in joining an action group. Please contact me !

Tax Exempt Status

SOHO is exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and has been classified by the I.R.S. as a charitable, educational organization.

SOHO

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