

REFLECTIONS



Jan. 1977
Vol. IX, No. 1

Newsletter of the
Save Our Heritage Organisation

Welcome in the

New Year with

"High Tea in La Jolla"

GENERAL MEETING

January 23rd

SOHO will have its first general meeting of 1977 at the La Jolla Women's Club, 715 Silverado (corner Draper) on Sunday, January 23rd, at 2 PM. The program will include an update on current SOHO projects as well as a special multi media presentation dealing with the revitalization and restoration of the historic Hill District in St. Paul, Minnesota, by Dick Reed, an urban preservation consultant. This program, which has been shown to groups all over the country, shows how residents can both fight with city hall and work with city hall to protect and preserve their community.

The La Jolla Women's Club, designed by Irving Gill in 1913, is one of the most architecturally significant buildings in Southern California. It was constructed by the then unusual tilt-slab method, and a photo display will show the building during various phases of construction. Don't miss the opportunity to visit this San Diego landmark and hear about SOHO's exciting new projects, and remember, SOHO loves cookie bakers.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On Monday, December 13, I was invited by San Diegans, Inc., to accompany a group of local business and civic leaders on a field trip to the various Ernest W. Hahn development projects in the Los Angeles area. Itinerary for the day included visits to the new Santa Anita, Fox Hills and unfinished Hawthorne shopping malls, as well as a program dealing with the new Pasadena redevelopment by Gerald Trimble, Executive Director of that project. It was a very interesting and informative day, and the Pasadena program was particularly enlightening because the project is very similar to San Diego's own Horton Plaza redevelopment.

Pasadena is also faced with a deteriorating center city, and has made the decision to redevelop certain parts of the downtown area. A number of early civic and historic buildings are going to be included as part of the project, but several others are going to be lost, including the beautiful Pasadena Athletic Club, and several Deco style structures.

In discussing redevelopment in general, Mr. Trimble, former director of the Bunker Hill project in Los Angeles and a recognized expert in the field, made the statement several times that a city should not start to acquire property until after all development agreements are signed, thus avoiding the disaster we are currently experiencing in San Diego. Here, the city has purchased many pieces of property in the Horton area and demolished the buildings for parking lots. Four years (and four million dollars) later we are still no closer to seeing the redevelopment get underway.

The three malls we visited were all of the enclosed, air-conditioned variety, and after a while began to look like sets for a science fiction movie. I was surprised at the noise level which was constant and annoying. The ceilings were slightly oppressive, and those that did have skylights, had non-transparent glass, but then who would want to see the sky in L.A. ?

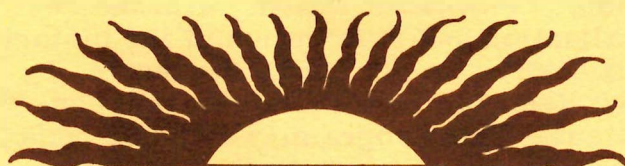
San Diego, however, is not Los Angeles, and it is not New York and it is not Chicago. It is San Diego! Are we so ashamed of that that we feel we must imitate other "big cities" so we will lose our "small town" image?

The architect for Ernest Hahn's proposed development in downtown San Diego is Frank Hope, who was also along on the field trip. Mr. Hope has already shown us his architectural capabilities in the design of the new federal complex downtown. When some tactless person on the bus (not I) made an unkind remark about its design, Frank smiled and said he realized that the building was a little "too sophisticated" for current San Diego taste--that it would be lauded in the East. Too bad he didn't build it there! Unfortunately, Mr. Hope, along with many of today's designers, practices architectural self-gratification to the exclusion of all else. He seems to have forgotten that a primary concern of architectural design is to make a structure work harmoniously with its natural environment (and this includes cities, because cities grow as naturally as trees).

San Diego has a unique and indigenous architectural tradition that evolved from the Spaniards and continued with Irving Gill and his followers. Gill once wrote, "the contour, coloring and history of a country naturally influence its architecture ... California is influenced, and rightly so, by the Spanish missions as well as by the rich coloring and the form of the low hills and wide valleys." This "look" is as much a part of our heritage (and just as worthy of preservation) as any of the individual buildings we try to save for the future.

As a final note, Mr. Hope shared another of his sophisticated ideas with us on the bus--his plans for the Balboa Theater at 4th & E. According to Mr. Hope, he would like to saw off the tiled dome of the theater, and incorporate that into a new fountain for Horton Plaza. How's that for class?

Bruce Kamerling



MY CORNER

Claire Kaplan



It's January... the glitters on the rug and the fruit cakes in the freezer. Pick it up, pack it down, stow it away! This is the great month when you think about the things you planned to do in December... and didn't! And the things you did... and wonder why! Let's forget all that... let's start over. It's a New Year... a whole new ball game!

We're reminded of the fun of getting together at our Christmas Party; the planning, the preparing AND the cleaning up. And all those goodies you weren't going to eat, and the egg-nog you promised not to taste... trying to put temptation behind you... and that's exactly where it went!

BUT... it's another year... and a new beginning! It's our chance to say THANKS to Ruth and Joe Sherman for hosting our board meeting at The Olde Cracker Factory... to the San Diego Rowing Club for providing all that space for our general meetings and Sunday Brunches. To Judy and Fred Newcomer for the board meeting room plus the Christmas Party in your beautiful Victorian Home. To Mary and Mifflin Ward for hosting a board meeting in their charming Mission Hills home. (Mary is SOHO's new Historian and perfect for the job... and job it is).

Also a most sincere thank you to Alice Crittenden for the hours she spends typing the SOHO Reflections... she pulls the newsletter together. And to Katherine Moore for volunteering to do the clipping service for SOHO and arranging the pick-up and delivery for us. You are an inspiration to other members, who want to do something to help...

AND a special THANK YOU to a working team beyond compare: Cia Barron, Pat Minnich, Donna Regan, Pat Schaelchlin, and Bruce Kamerling. It's been a pleasure doing business with you! You may not believe this... but most of the time... I enjoy it! It's the old "Spirit of '76" and the new "Spirit of '77".



A SEARCH FOR COMMUNITY: CENTRE CITY REDEVELOPMENT

What are the effects of redevelopment on the community?

Who pays for redevelopment?

What are the political forces behind redevelopment?

These questions will be the focus of the conference A SEARCH FOR COMMUNITY: CENTRE CITY REDEVELOPMENT being presented by San Diego's League of Women Voters on January 14 and 15, 1977, at the Copper Room, Community Concourse. Featuring such outstanding speakers as Dr. Roy Lubove, and Dr. Donna Shalala, the conference will include panel discussions, small discussion groups for all attending the conference and walking tours of the city.

Speakers

Dr. Roy Lubove Dr. Clare Crane

Dr. Donna Shalala Don Reeves

Dr. Daniel Weinberg

Panel Members

Arnold Sternberg Gerald Warren

Catherine Burke Wayne Wedin

Dr. Larry Ford Dr. James Clapp

Arnold Peterson Dr. Paul Bohannon

Dr. Anthony Corso

The League of Women Voters is requesting SOHO's assistance in providing guides for the conference's Saturday morning walking tours of San Diego Centre City. The tours will run from 9:30 to 11:30. Those of you who are willing and able to help guide these tours, please call Cathy Grigsby at either 236-4296 or 295-0204 by January 9th.

Here is an opportunity to learn, participate and let your views be heard.

Registration is \$1.00 per day and may be mailed to:

League of Women Voters

2454 Fourth Ave.

San Diego, CA 92101

Registration will also be accepted at the door as space permits.

Cathy Grigsby

Around the Town:

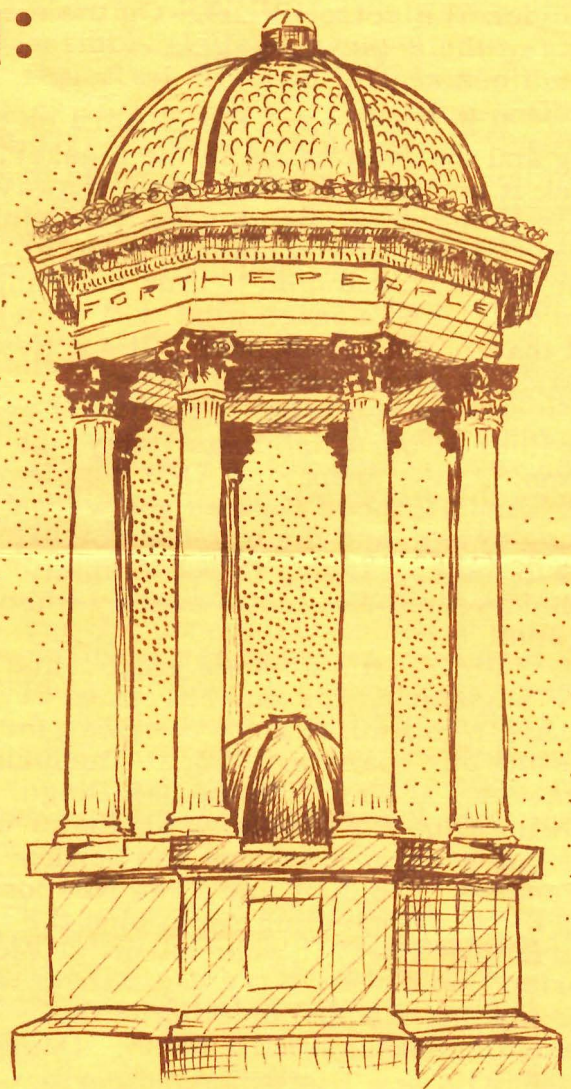
THE ELECTRIC FOUNTAIN by Bruce Kamerling

At exactly 8:15 P.M. on the evening of Saturday, October 15, 1910, Mrs. Louis J. Wilde pulled the cord and the Plaza fountain was unveiled to the public for the first time. Both Louis Wilde, the donor, and Irving Gill, the architect, were cheered by the thousands who had crowded the Plaza for the unveiling. The city was already in a delirium of excitement, because this was also the day that the U.S. Grant first opened its doors. Louis R. Kirby, who delivered the formal presentation address on behalf of the donor said, "And now, San Diego, this peerless fountain is yours. Care for it as its merit deserves." And peerless it was, for San Diego was now the proud owner of the first successful electric fountain in the world!

It all started just two years before when George Marston of the Park Commission, had approached Irving Gill, one of San Diego's most prominent architects, to make a plan for the Plaza that would be appropriate for the setting of a central monument or fountain. The plan included the layout for the sidewalks as well as sixteen bases on which were placed urns full of plants. These beautifully complimented the twenty-eight Cocos Plumosa palms planted by Kate Sessions in 1897. Louis Wilde donated the funds for the fountain and commissioned Gill to draw up the plans.

The design of the fountain was styled after the Coragic Monument of Lysicrates which Wilde had probably seen in a book. Gill found it difficult to work with so strong willed a client (Wilde once told Gill, "You build it and then I'll tell you where I want the doors and windows."), but found release for his creative energies in the design of the actual mechanics of the fountain. Wilde was pleased enough with his choice of design that he even had the conical tower of his home changed to reflect the appearance of the fountain (the Quartermass/Wilde house, 24th and Broadway).

Originally, the fountain must have been an amazing spectacle. Water was pumped up through the hollow columns of white Vermont marble, on to the dome of bronze and prismatic glass that was illuminated by fifteen hundred colored lights.



"FOR THE PEOPLE"

It then cascaded off the dome and fell in sheets bisected by the eight jets from the outer pool, each of which had fifteen additional colored lights, which painted the water iridescent colors as it fell. Previous fountains had failed in that they had tried to shine the light through the water. It was Gill's ingenious idea to shine the lights at the water as it fell, producing an "effect ... of bewildering loveliness." The lighting was worked into cycles of fifteen color effects, each lasting thirty seconds.

Before the fountain was unveiled, a scandal arose over the safety of combining water and electricity. This was at a time when electricity was still a relative novelty, and the papers were continually printing grisly stories of

accidental electrocutions. On the morning of the dedication, however, the headlines read, "Fountain is Tested; No One is Killed; It's Gill's Turn to Laugh." Gill calmly reported, "There was no fatality when we turned on the electric current, and I don't believe any 'killings' will occur." The plans had been examined and approved by some of the foremost electrical engineers in the U. S.

Another interesting aspect of the fountain is the group of bronze relief panels around the sides. These, along with a bronze eagle that sat under the dome preening its feathers (Wilde's idea), are the work of Felix Peano (1863-1949), an Italian sculptor, who had studied all over Europe before coming to California around the turn of the century. A likeness of Juan Cabrillo faces west, toward the ocean by which he arrived. Junipero Serra faces east, toward the mountains where the Indians dwelled. Alonzo Horton faces south, toward the "New Town" he had founded.



Relief of Juan Cabrillo from the fountain base.

Today, when we look upon the fountain, we see but a shadow of its former beauty. Most of the jets no longer function, and those that do splash in the faces of our illustrious forebears. The water no longer sparkles with the glow of a thousand lights, and even the eagle has disappeared to some vandal's lair. The motto reads, "THE BROADWAY FOUNTAIN FOR THE PEOPLE," but Wilde once complained, "I gave the city the fountain, and it isn't even kept clean." The monument may look a little lonely and run-down amid the slick high-rise development of center city, but ask some early San Diegan if they ever saw the fountain lit up at night, and watch their eyes twinkle with delight at the memory.



SPRECKELS THEATRE NIGHT

Thank you to those who have given their time and imaginations in laying groundwork for Spreckels Theatre Night. At a time when the beautiful Spreckels Theatre building was in relative unuse, SOHO planned to draw public attention to the historic and community value of the building by staging a grand "theatre night". That production would have consisted of a lavish, premiere entrance and excellent vintage films. Such an effort is now inessential to the present reputation of the Spreckels.

If you have followed the deluge of publicity surrounding the first two productions of the Spreckels subscription theatre series--"Equus" and "A Matter of Gravity"--you would agree that the Spreckels Theatre is generating an abundance of its own advertisement. Thus, SOHO will not be putting on a Spreckels Theatre Night. Do not feel that a lot of effort has been wasted; the research involved in this venture has yielded information and references valuable to future SOHO projects.

Cathy Grigsby
Spreckels Theatre Night
Chairwoman

Classes

Newcomers and oldtimers both will be interested in a special course devoted to an exploration of San Diego's history and development being offered through Miramar College by local historian Dr. Clare Crane.

The three-unit class will meet weekly, on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 pm, starting February 2, 1977. The first class sessions, and several others, will be held on the Miramar College campus; but the city itself will be the "three-dimensional textbook" for most meetings, which will be held at various locations including Mission San Diego, Old Town State Park, Villa Montezuma, Heritage Park, and the Gas Lamp Quarter. The main emphasis will be on the urban development of San Diego since 1850, including the big land booms of the 1880's and 1920's.

Registration will take place at Miramar College during the first two weeks in January. For additional information, please call 271-7300.

The University of California Extension will offer a survey of nineteenth century styles in furniture and the decorative arts, with a concentration on the last third of the century and its emphasis on the technological, craft, and Beaux Arts movements.

The class is designed for collectors, potential collectors, students, antique dealers, and others interested in art history and the history of the decorative arts. ROBERT BARTLETT HASS, Director, Department of the Arts, UCLA, will be the instructor.

There will be four meetings: Friday, 7-10 p. m. and Saturday, 9 a. m. - 4 p. m., January 21-22 and February 4-5. Two units of credit may be obtained. For registration information call 452-3400.

Art: Course No. X441.1, EDP No. A6073 (2 units). Fee: \$39. Meetings: Room 1438, Humanities Library Bldg., Revelle Campus, UCSD.

Spring registration for History 180, at Grossmont College, Oral History: Techniques and Methods will take place January 25, 26 and 27. The class will meet every Tuesday evening from 7 to 10 p. m. in room 585.

Oral History: Techniques and Methods is a course dealing with the philosophy of interviewing for historical preservation. The course also emphasizes use of equipment, evaluation of interviews, actual indepth interviews of local subjects, and transcription. It is intended to provide the skills and knowledge necessary for the interviewing and recording of those in the community whose personal reminiscences can aid in preserving our history.

In answer to repeated requests Grossmont College is again next semester offering the popular San Diego History on the Road series of Saturday study tours. More than just a class, each trip is virtually a journey into past time and place as well as a taking part in the San Diego experience of today. The tours are rich and varied as students, guided by Grossmont College staff members, meet and talk with Indians, rangers, miners, people in the city and back country.

The course is History 125 (History of San Diego County) and consists of eight Saturday trips covering nearly 1,000 miles of San Diego County and City. There are three units of credit being offered and the course does meet the American Institution requirement. The total study tour cost is \$49.00 and includes all admissions and transportation by chartered bus (which is completely equipped with reclining seats, on-board toilet, heating and air conditioning systems).

Enrollment is limited and on a first-come, first-served basis. Those interested should, as soon as possible, write: Don Shannon, History Department, Grossmont College, 8800 Grossmont College Drive, El Cajon, CA 92020. The \$49.00 tour cost must be paid before or during registration, January 25-27, 1977, at the Grossmont College Bookstore Service Counter.

For further information, call Grossmont College at 465-1700 and ask for tape A6 or Don Shannon at Ext. 219.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

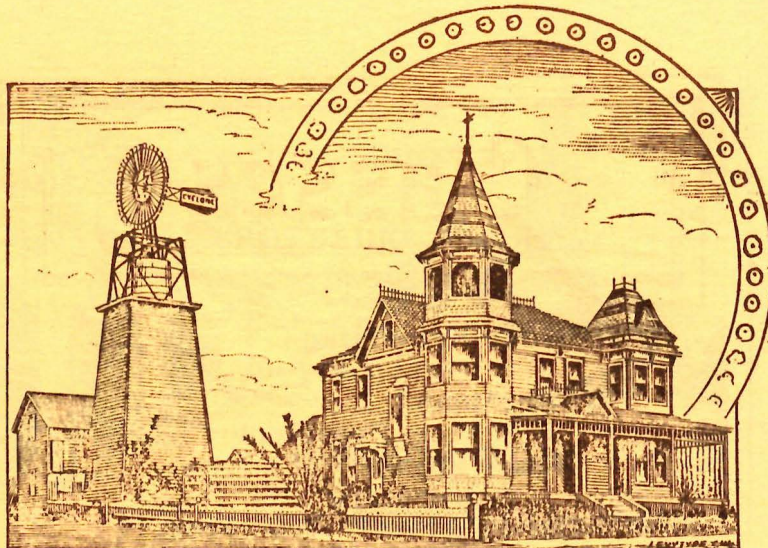
On Saturday, Dec. 11, from six to nine P. M., "The Pleasure of Your Company" was requested at a SOHO GATHERING at one of the most elegant Victorian houses in San Diego--the home of Judy and Fred Newcomer.

This old mansion is the kind of place that attracts attention, wonder, admiration and SOHO people. More than a hundred of SOHO's finest turned out for the gala event--many attired in Victorian costumes of the era when the house was constructed.

Built during the great boom of 1887 for Mrs. C. Morris Livingston, the house was saved from demolition in 1970 by Reverend Robert L. Stevens. It stands proudly on a hill with a sweeping view of the city.

We appreciated this opportunity to visit this lovely home and tour it with our gracious Host and Hostess. WE WERE DELIGHTED TO BE INVITED! HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU! WARM WISHES FROM SOHO! HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EVERYONE!

C. L. K.



Livingston House

Golden Era December, 1889



Dues Due!

Due to the ever-increasing costs of printing and postage, we will soon be forced to limit circulation of the newsletter to those members whose dues are currently paid up. In the next few months we will be reviewing the status of your membership, and removing the names of those who have not paid their dues during the past year. Please continue your support with a membership renewal. Don't miss out on the excitement of the coming SOHO year.

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

Original Congregational Church in Lemon Grove built in 1897. Building moved to S. E. corner of Olive and Church Street (Lemon Grove) in 1912, and later converted into a 4 bedroom house. Call 299-4000 for details.

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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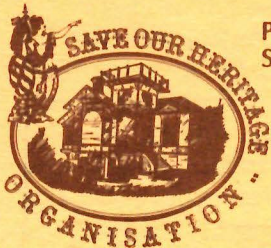
La Jolla Sub-committee
Tony Ciani

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DEADLINE

Items to be included in the February, 1977, "Reflections" should be turned in by January 15th.



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