

Save Our Heritage Organisation

Reflections

The SOHO newsletter for the preservation of architecturally and historically significant structures in San Diego County.

HISTORIC RESIDENCE AVAILABLE

The 1887 George Kimball Houyse is being made available for purchase by its owners Alana and Bruce Coons. They are restoring the interior to its original 1880's appearance. Lacking photographs of its original interior, they are using photos of George's brother Warren's house (Olivewood), and of interiors of typical 1880's San Diego County homes. Striving to achieve a true American Victorian interior, they have collected many of the original Kimball furnishings and artifacts; the Nottingham Lace curtains which hang throughout the house were recreated on the original looms; wall papers have been chosen for their exact authenticity of scale, color and design; elaborate ceiling papers contain as many as 13 design elements; the hardware is original to the house. The interior woodwork required many laborious hours to strip away layers of paint which had accumulated over the last 45 years. It is now refinished and varnished to the original high gloss finish, of which the Victorians were so very fond. Lighting fixtures are antique gasoliers (which have been converted to electric) with their original shades.

In 1887 the Kimbells were at the height of the prosperity. There are many references in newspapers of the day stating that the Kimball brothers were the richest men in the county with their 30,000 acre Rancho. It was only natural that one day George would build his family a home befitting a man of his wealth and position.

He had built his first home in 1869, when the family first arrived in National City. Close to brother Frank's home on National Avenue, it was a simple house in which the first National City post office and store were located. From this

home George and his brothers Frank and Warren handled the daily business affairs of the Rancho.

In 1876, George built his second home on a 40 acre site, bounded by Palm and 'L' Avenues, and 12th and 16th streets. Here George and his family, wife Lucy, and children Clinton, Gilbert, Laura and Augustus raised apricots, peaches, grapes, citrus and other crops. George was known as the farmer in the family, and, in the words of good friend and historian Paul Mizony, "did much to promote the agricultural possibilities of the rancho."

The third George Kimball House was built in 1887. A large two story Italianate with wrap-around veranda, second story balcony and a widow's walk that gives a panoramic view of the entire ranch. This is the house that now stands at 1515 L Avenue.

George hired architect L. Curtis to design the home. Mr. Curtis had built the elaborate Gordan house and the Methodist Church, and was, at the time, building the Temperance Hall. There are many references in the National Record of the building of the home, the first being, "George Kimball is building an elegant residence on Nob Hill." Augustus Kimball, George's youngest son, records the building and designing of the home in his diaries: "We started building our house today!" (May 24, 1887) and, "Had our first dinner in our new home." (Thanksgiving Day, 1887). The National Record reports, "Mr. Curtis informs us that Mr. George Kimball's residence is nearly completed. It is a home Mr. K should well be proud of; it being built in the style of a good, old-fashioned, comfortable, heavy, country Southern residence."

Augustus tells how Mr. Curtis, his father and he would go to his Uncle Warren Kimball's

estate, Olivewood quite often. The George Kimball House is similar to Olivewood in many ways, though George and his family opted for very fancy gingerbread trim. As George had four children, he built a larger home than Warren's, but used basically the same blueprint. The woodwork is predominantly heart redwood and sugar pine with douglas fir floors planed and milled at brother Warren's planing mill. The bricks came from brother Frank's brickyard. Considered quite a luxury of the time, the rainwater cistern collected water which was then pumped into the house. Charles Copeland, nephew of George, says that he believes his grandfather, Frederick Copeland, built the cistern for brother-in-law George. The basement was used as a cold room for the storage of butter, milk, and eggs. There was also a wood burning stove in the basement on which Augustus Kimball would make popcorn balls for the neighboring children. Huge Monterey Cypress trees lined the street in front of the home, adding beauty as well as acting as a windbreak for the many plantings and crops. To the south were fruit groves, and to the east were groves and vineyards.

Laura Kimball was the last Kimball to live at the house. She gave away many things to her friends, neighbors and family, and also donated items to the San Diego Historical Society and the National City Library.

accumulated from before the Civil War. Many of the items had been brought from New Hampshire between 1869 and 1940.

To view the extensive collection of Kimball furnishings and artifacts, and the restoration, the George Kimball House is open to the public on the last Sunday of every month from 2 to 4 pm.

YES, AL CAPONE REALLY DID SLEEP HERE!

Silver Gate Concerts, SOHO's series of four chamber music programs in historic landmarks, opens its second season on Sunday, February 7 at 3:00 with a concert at the Coronado home of SOHO members Juan and Kathleen Suros at 1156 Isabella Avenue.

The chamber music program will be presented in the beautiful wood panelled living room with its spectacular ocean view. Soprano Carol Plantamura, flutist Lynn Schubert, cellist Marcia Zeavin, and pianist Margaret Rose will perform works of Debussy, Ravel, and da Falla, composers who were all contemporaries of architect Irving Gill who built the home in 1910. A reception follows the concert.

The Suros home was built for Percival Thompson, a transplanted Chicagoan whose brother Tommy Thompson was mayor of that city. The Coronado Thompsons entertained many guests in their grand oceanfront home, including such illustrious Chicago visitors as Al Capone who is said to have spent the night here!

Considered a good example of transitional Gill, the Suros home shows Gill with one foot in the past and one in the present. Elements of Gill's earlier English Tudor style are blended here with Prairie School design influences reflecting Gill's architectural studies in Chicago. The experimentation with horizontal lines and poured arches that so typified Gill's later period

provides an interesting contrast with the very Victorian Livingston House (formerly located in Sherman Heights) which is next door to the Suros home on Isabella Avenue.

There will be three more concerts in the series, all on Sundays at 3:00: March 6 at San Diego Trust and Savings Bank, 530 Broadway; April 10 at the Lafayette Hotel, 2223 El Cajon Boulevard; and May 8 at the Chapel at Bishop's School, 7607 La Jolla Boulevard, La Jolla. Seating is very limited at all venues, especially at the Suros home, so you are urged to make reservations right away.

Tickets for the series cost \$45.00 for all four concerts, \$40.00 for a 3-concert package, or \$14.00 for singles. For more information or to make reservations, please call the Silver Gate Concerts telephone: 459-0621.

At the November board meeting, I reluctantly submitted my resignation as I have been hired by the City of San Diego to work in the Community Planning Division of the Planning Department.

I have benefitted greatly during my 2 1/2 year tenure with SOHO and have both witnessed and participated in a period of transition for the organization. I am proud of what SOHO is and does and it is my hope that I served the group as effectively as possible. I have also submitted an application for membership onto the Board of Directors to ensure my continued involvement in the preservation of San Diego county's precious historic built environment.

Thank you for your assistance, encouragement and support.

The Board of Directors is currently conducting a search for a new Executive Director. Interested candidates are requested to send their resume to SOHO, P.O. Box 3571, San Diego, CA 92103.

Anna L. McPherson

The following are articles from the "Cross Section" portion of PRESERVATION NEWS, November, 1987, the monthly newspaper of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

GROWTH DEBATE CLOUDS SILVER SPRING FUTURE. By Rachel Cox

Blue-and-white signs exhorting "Say No to Gridlock" have bloomed like chrysanthemums this fall in Silver Spring, Md., where preservation of the 1938 Art Deco-style Silver Theater and Silver Spring Shopping Center (PN January 1985, December 1986) has taken

a backseat to traffic issues in the biggest planning battle to hit the Washington, D.C., suburb in decades.

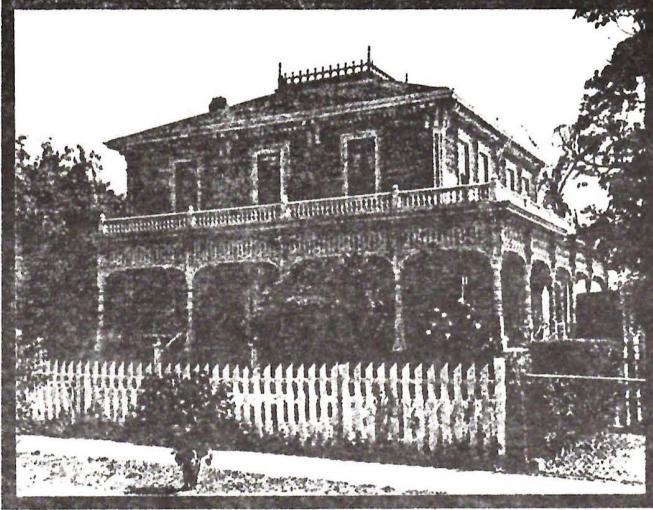
The cause of the furor is a \$200 million proposal made last December by developer Lloyd W. Moore to convert the now dowdy downtown into an eight-acre regional shopping mall complete with two major department stores to "anchor" the project, one of them on the site of the Jean Eberson-designed Deco shopping center.

Newly elected county executive Sidney Kramer, whose campaign was supported strongly by development interests, endorsed the massive project as the last, best hope for Silver Spring. He moved to lift the planning ceiling for new workers downtown by roughly 10,000, a change required by law for the project's approval, and also proposed creation of a Traffic Management District to encourage mass-transit use and ease traffic flow.

But area civic groups predict the district will do little to

alleviate traffic problems. "To really get the number of people Kramer predicts on public transportation, you'd have to pay them," says Pat Singer, president of the Silver Spring-Takoma Traffic Coalition, the umbrella group of some 20 civic associations and hundreds of individuals that is leading opposition to the proposed development. The SSTTC calculates that traffic could double, choking intersections and flooding quiet residential areas.

Opponents of the Moore project scored their first victory last June, when the Montgomery County Council, which governs Silver Spring, ignored Kramer's pleas for haste and postponed a decision on Kramer's proposals until public hearings could be held this September. Following a week of lively discussion, highlighted by one hearing packed with 900 mostly hostile observers, Kramer's initiatives suffered another setback September 22, when Council president Rose Crenca further postponed a decision, a move some observers attribute to Kramer's concern that he lacked the votes to approve his plan.

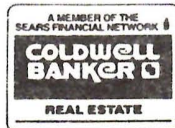


George Kimball House c. 1880

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Just a year ago, it appeared that revitalization of downtown Silver Spring might follow the course of compromise. A 1986 feasibility study sponsored by the county planning board and the Maryland Historical Trust concluded that preservation and development could be combined and recommended incentives, such as transfer of development rights, to encourage preservation of the shopping center and the theater. But a third proposal to the City Council from Kramer, who

contends with Moore that any reduction of scale would doom a retail project to failure, would eliminate any such incentives and downgrade the priority of preservation.

Last June the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission unanimously endorsed nomination of the shopping complex to the National Register, and the state preservation office is expected

to approve the nomination in January. Listing on the Register could make rehab of the complex more attractive by making it eligible for tax credits.

Whether or not the shopping complex survives that long hinges on the County Council, now expected to make a decision by November. Crenca, seen as the key to the final outcome, has been notably silent about her position.

Meanwhile, another player has quietly entered the fray. McLean, Va.-based developer Walter H. Petrie submitted plans in July to build approximately 300,000 square feet of retail space on the site of the recently closed Hecht's department store, adjacent to the shopping center. The proposal would preserve the 1947 building and add a tower for either hotel or office space while incorporating Art Deco motifs.

(Editor's note: Our own SOHO Boardmember, Ann MacCullough participated in this preservation battle, 3,000 miles away and reported on her experiences in the January, 1987 REFLECTIONS.)

PROPOSITION 6 PASSES

On Tuesday, November 2, the voters of San Diego overwhelmingly passed Proposition 6, the prohibition of certain uses at Mission Beach Park, by 66%.

Since the passage of Proposition 6, the Planning Department has been directed to change the land use related to Mission Beach Park. The issue will be heard before the Rules Committee of the City Council to decide how the City should proceed.

It is clear that the public objects to the City Councils cavalier treatment of both historic structures and public parkland and is willing to remind the City of its obligations as a caretaker of public property.

Good news for preservationists! The San Diego City Council voted to fund a cultural resource survey for the mid-city area with a portion of Community Development Block Grant monies.

Surveying is the cornerstone of all historic preservation programs. Upon completion of the survey, the Planning Department will have the information necessary to commence the nomination procedure for either individual sites of architectural and/or historical significance on the mid-city area, or the entire district.

Congratulations to mid-city residents and all San Diegans. This is yet another victory in the battle to preserve San Diego's architectural heritage.





Neighborhoods

by
Helen Marquardt

Please use an architect! No matter how clever you are ... no matter how creative ... if you are planning an addition or major remodel ... please use the services of an architect!

Architects come in all sizes and price-packages. You can often benefit from just a consultation. Architects are sensitive to style and space planning. They are knowledgeable about permits and zoning.

I love them, because they nearly always greatly improve the value of the house and the neighborhood.



FIRST MISSION
PROPERTIES

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about the fate of this National Historic Landmark, should STCC be unable to locate a qualified and willing operator. It should be noted that Belmont Park Associates, the developers who demolished the Plunge and Roller Rink buildings, have first refusal on the lease.

We promise to continue to monitor this situation. The Giant Dipper is the sole remnant of the historic Mission Beach Park.

PAINTED LADIES SUCCESSFUL

On Monday, November 9, SOHO and the Heritage Park Bed & Breakfast hosted a thoroughly enjoyable lecture on the "PAINTED LADIES" found throughout the United States. Authors Michael Larsen and Elizabeth Pomada treated the audience to a visual potpourri of enthusiastically painted Victorian houses from all corners of this nation. Audience members then enjoyed a veritable "spread" of breads, cheeses, light hors d'ouvres and wines beautifully presented by Lori Chandler of the Heritage Park Bed & Breakfast.

As the evening concluded, Elizabeth and Michael graciously chatted with audience members and signed copies of the book, DAUGHTERS OF PAINTED LADIES.

SOHO currently has a few signed copies of the book available for purchase. The price, including tax, is \$17.00. Please call the office, 297-9327, for details.

COASTER LEASE EXTENDED

In November, the San Diego City Council voted to extend the lease for the Coaster at the request of the Save The Coaster Committee (STCC). STCC requested the extension to enable the committee to find a qualified operator to operate the Coaster as a functioning ride.

SOHO expressed its support of the continued maintenance and preservation of the Coaster and its hope that the Coaster will, one day, become operable. We do have concerns, however,



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