

# Reflections



# on the Past 20 Years

Save Our Heritage Organisation

Save this House!

## In the Beginning...

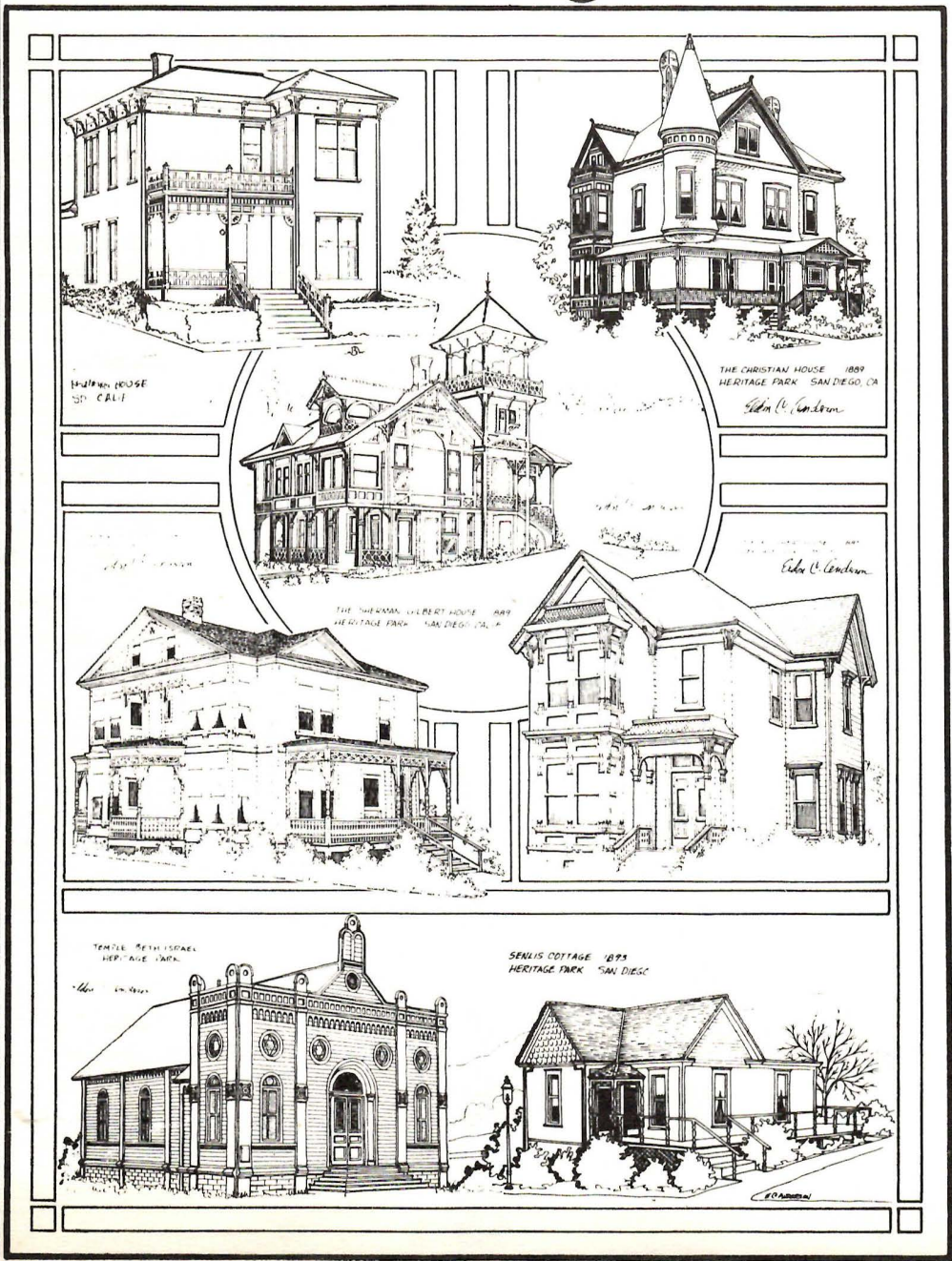
# The Founding of Heritage Park

In 1969, in an act of desperation, a young San Diego artist, Robert Miles Parker, put a sign outside a local Victorian house hoping that someone would see it and help save the house from destruction. It was scheduled for demolition to make way for another parking lot.

A group of concerned Citizens did get together, and under the direction of Miles Parker, they pooled their ideas and resources to form Save Our Heritage Organisation (SOHO).

SOHO's original goal was to save that specific house, as well as other threatened Victorian structures. They were able to do just that by moving these structures to a new location, a place where they could be enjoyed by everyone.

**Save this house!**  
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# Reflections

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## Reflections

Celebrating 20 years  
of active preservation  
in San Diego

*Save Our Heritage  
Organisation*

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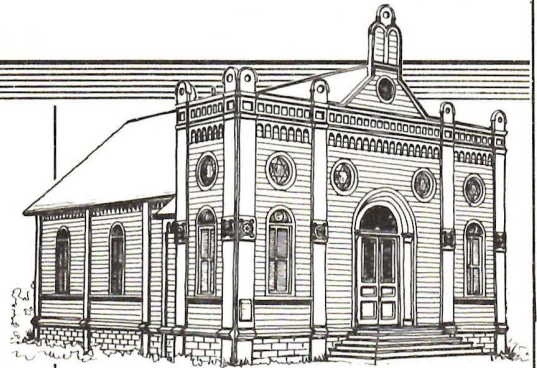
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member of:

- California Preservation Founda-  
tion
- National Trust for Historic Preser-  
vation
- San Diego Historical Society

## A message from the President

The holidays are over and a new year is upon us. *This* year is especially important to SOHO, though, in that it marks our 20th year of existence. Much has occurred in the "town" of San Diego during that time. We have seen unprecedented growth occur that has left an indelible mark on our environment. We have witnessed the passing of old friends and the emergence of new people who have major voices in the shaping of the future of San Diego. Finally, we have seen changes in the field of preservation, not only in the mechanics of preservation, but also in the theories behind preservation.

In the following months, SOHO will be reflecting on the major preservation events that took place during the past 20 years and share with you the thoughts and memories of those people who actively participated in those events. In chronicling the victories and losses, SOHO hopes to reintroduce the membership and the general public to the very special architectural and cultural heritage that remains in place



## Restoration Begins

At the end of February, 1989, Temple Beth Israel, one of the last structures to be moved to Heritage Park (and the second-oldest synagogue structure still existing in the American West) will be undergoing a long-awaited restoration.

The project, under the direction of the County of San Diego's Park and Recreation Dept., is slated to restore this charming temple to its original splendor, making it available as a community facility.

today: a heritage increasingly threatened with growth and redevelopment. Most importantly, SOHO will honor the past, personal efforts of individuals who proved that one person can make a difference.

In this year of celebration, the Board of Directors will be busy organizing special events as well as charting the future of SOHO, thus ensuring the organization's strength and commitment to preserving the architectural and cultural heritage of San Diego in the years to come.

We look forward to your participation in the celebration!



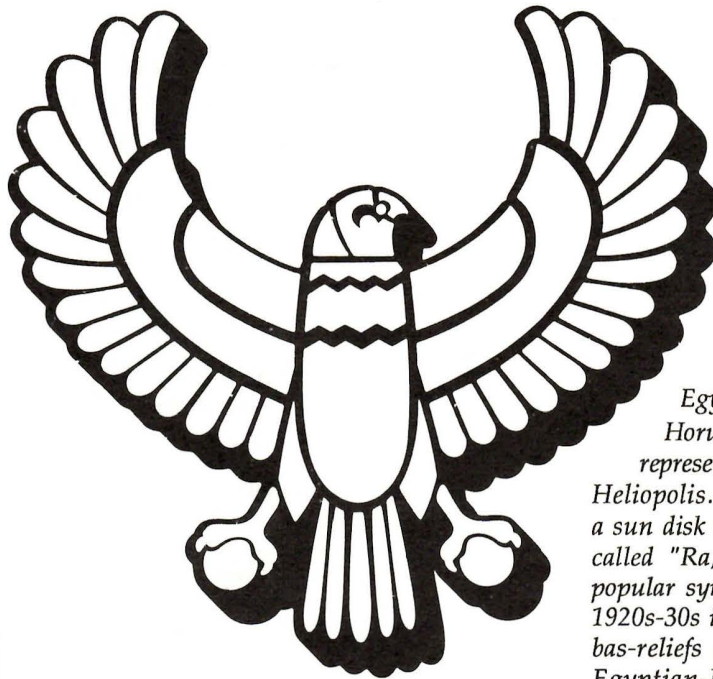
*News from the Art Deco Committee of SOHO:*

## Astonishing, Egyptian-Revival Room To be Centerpiece of Special Celebration

Hidden inside a three-story Masonic hall in North Park is an astonishing room. This large, windowless chamber was constructed and decorated in 1932 to look as if it were an ancient Egyptian throne room. It is the Lodge Room of the Silvergate Masonic Lodge (which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, during 1989).

Those who attended the Egyptian-Revival Art Deco slide show on January 9, 1989, and saw slides of the room, asked if it would be possible to use this incredible room for a future meeting. To answer that request, the Art Deco Committee of SOHO will hold a celebration for the Egyptian-Revival Historic District, on March 10, 1989, at 7:30 p.m. in this awe-inspiring room.

Also, by that date, the



*Egyptian symbol of Horus, the falcon (above) representing the sun god of Heliopolis... shown holding a sun disk in each foot. Also called "Ra," he was a very popular symbol used in the 1920s-30s in many forms as bas-reliefs on San Diego's Egyptian-Revival buildings.*

final decision of the Historic Site Board about forming an Egyptian Historic District will be known. Therefore, a discussion will be held as to what will happen next to these exotic buildings.

A display of articles with an Egyptian theme, from the 1920's, '30's and today, will be shown in an upstairs reception room of the lodge.

For those who missed the previous slide-show on Egyptian-Revival Art Deco in San Diego, Helen Hal-may will repeat her informative program following the discussion. If you have previously seen her show, she will be adding new material on several, recently-discovered Egyptian Revival buildings in San Diego.

**Egyptian -Revival**  
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# Reflections

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## Egyptian-Revival

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Since the large lodge room is more expensive to rent, admission to the event will be \$3 for SOHO members and \$4 for non-members.

At the January 9th meeting, the audience was carried back to the year 1922 (when the tomb of the Egyptian Boy-King Tutankhamen was first discovered) during a slide show and talk for the Art Deco Committee of SOHO. As an expert on Egyptian Revival Art Deco in San Diego County, Hal-may spoke to over 40 people on the local history and development of that unique architecture.

In San Diego, over a dozen Egyptian-Revival Art Deco structures were built between 1923 and 1930. The majority of these exotic buildings were apartments, stores, or other commercial structures. According to Hal-may, only three Egyptian

## Save this house...

(continued from page 1)

With the cooperation and participation of the County of San Diego, land in Old Town was set aside and dedicated. It is what we now know of as *Heritage Park*.

The organization of SOHO was the advent of an organized preservation movement here. It has grown from saving classic Queen Anne Victorians to raising the public awareness about neighborhood preservation.

buildings were single-family residences. The largest concentration of Egyptian buildings were in the 3700 block of Park Blvd., south of University Ave., where there were originally six Egyptian-Revival buildings.

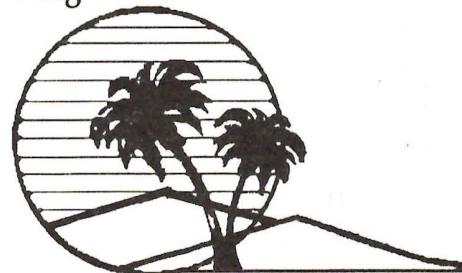
Today, all six still remain. Some of them, however, were extensively remodeled in the 1950s. One of the best remaining examples of un-altered, Egyptian-Revival architecture in San Diego County was the Egyptian Court

This year SOHO celebrates 20 years of devotion to such preservation. Throughout the next year *Reflections* will look at SOHO's heritage, its accomplishments and the people that made (and continue to make) it happen.

We've started at the beginning with the saving of the Sherman-Gilbert House and the formation of Heritage Park. We would also like to begin by thanking all those involved with Heritage Park and the formation of SOHO.

Apartment complex (3772 Park Blvd.), which was defaced by order of its owners this past November, an action which made headlines throughout the San Diego media.

Next month, *Reflections* will continue this series on the history of Egyptian-Revival Art Deco style architecture in San Diego.





## What ever happened to Comstock & Trotsche?

### The Sherman-Gilbert House designers: *the "Knights of Jigsaw and Lath"*

In upcoming issues of *Reflections*, we will review the various movements which comprise the 20 year history of SOHO. We will also be taking the time to examine the styles and periods of San Diego architecture which inspired the preservation interests of SOHO's founders 20 years ago.

If the first period of SOHO's history was the "Saving of the Victorian Ladies," then the first architectural period for review should be late 19th Century Victorian. Heading the list of designers and draftsmen in San Diego during this period were the architects... Comstock and Trotsche.

Nelson Comstock of Michigan and Carl Trotsche of Germany arrived in San Diego in August of 1886, in the midst of a housing boom. Begun in November of 1885, in Alon-

zo Horton's New Town, the boom saw more than 300 new buildings (worth \$1 million plus) built in 1886 alone. This frantic new development required diverse design skills in order to meet the needs of a growing merchant and business community and its owners.

Proponents of no single style, Comstock and Trotsche's designs included: Gingerbread Victorian, Italian Renaissance, Romanesque Revival, Baroque Revival and Eastlake Stick. With a reputation for the exuberant and colorful, the team came to be known as *the "Knights of Jigsaw and Lath."*

While not known for their integrity of style, Comstock and Trotsche's designs were noteworthy for their reflection of their client's personal style. The most famous example being the Villa Montezuma.

Villa Montezuma was built and designed for the very eccentric entertainer Jesse Shepard. Shepard -- both a spiritualist (known to give seances) and a musician of some merit -- was given \$25,000 for the home by rancher and land owner William High. All this was part of a publicity effort to promote new development. Shepard worked with Comstock and Trotsche to design a house as colorful as himself.

Other Comstock and Trotsche projects included: the Sherman-Gilbert House, now found in Heritage Park; the Horton Grand Hotel on Island Ave. in the Gaslamp; the Timken House on 6th Ave. and the William Green Dickenson House in National City.

**Comstock  
& Trotsche**  
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## Comstock & Trosche

(Continued from page 5)

In 1889 a great fire destroyed the center of Seattle and created an opportunity for its rebuilding. Comstock was drawn by this chance for new commissions and moved to Seattle where he opened a second office for the firm. There is little record of the work done by the team during this period. The short history of the firm ended in 1889 with a commission for a new courthouse in Santa Cruz.

During its construction, Comstock was found embezzling funds, ruining the reputation of the young firm. The partnership was dissolved in 1991 and the record of both architects ends with their move to San Francisco to pursue independent careers. Their contributions to San Diego's early development were characteristic of many movements which would follow.

The local careers of

# Datebook

(events and meetings to put on your calendar)

## February 5 -- SOHO Board of Directors

Monthly meeting, 6 p.m.  
Senlis Cottage  
Heritage Park

## 22 -- Historic Sites Board

Monthly meeting, 202 C St.  
1 p.m. Re: Egyptian-Revival  
Historic District

## March 10 -- Art Deco Committee of SOHO

7:30 p.m., Silvergate Masonic  
Temple, North Park.  
Slide show & Celebration of the  
Egyptian-Revival Historic Dist.

**A special thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Juan Suros, who graciously opened their Irving-Gill-designed home in Coronado to SOHO in December. Over 50 members attended the annual Xmas Party & joined in the ornament exchange.**

these two pioneers were only the beginning of a succession of booms, styles and personalities . . . which would later bring us such movements as:

Craftsman, Art Deco and Moderne.

We look forward to covering each of these movements in upcoming issues of *Reflections*.



## SOHO Makes History!

As part of our 20th Anniversary Celebration, SOHO will be publishing a history of the organization.

This book will highlight 20 years of active preservation efforts in San Diego County. It will also pay tribute to many of the people that made it happen (some of whom are still out today slaying dragons for SOHO).

*We congratulate every member of SOHO throughout the past two decades. We also invite each of you (past or present members) to participate in the making of SOHO's book by sharing old photos or anecdotes.*

**Call or mail to:**  
SOHO, PO Box 3571, San Diego, 92103 (297-9327)

Classified ads are accepted at the SOHO offices or over the phone.

.....

Classifieds of 30 words, or less, are \$15.



## Silver Gate Concerts... sign-off for the 1988 season

After two very successful seasons of spring chamber music concerts, SOHO's "Silver Gate Concerts" will be suspending operations for the spring of 1989.

Organizers Lynn Schubert and Betty McManus have simply run out of time. Both say they need some time to move on to other commitments.

Lynn now has a new

baby (Paul) and Betty is expanding her career opportunities. Both want to thank everyone involved these past two years for their enthusiasm and support.

Of equal importance, SOHO would like to thank them for shouldering so much of the responsibility for these terrific concert series. They and their concerts will be missed!

## Heritage Park

Booklet  
Available at  
Senlis Cottage  
\$2 - call,  
write or stop  
by the office



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## Centennial Celebration in Heritage Park

Three of the structures in Heritage Park will be celebrating their Centennial Anniversary (100 Years) in 1989: the Sherman-Gilbert House, the

Christian House and the Temple Beth Israel. These buildings were all saved from demolition and originally moved to Heritage Park from an area referred to as *Horton's Addition*.

It was here that Alonzo Horton sold small parcels of land to persons interested in developing "New Town." The result was San Diego's first sub-division *Banker's Hill*.

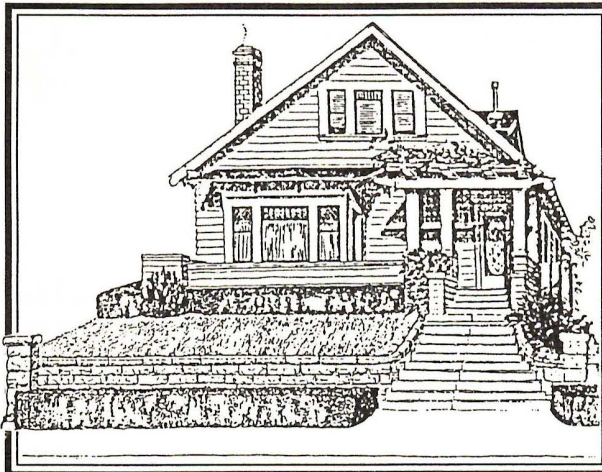
SOHO salutes all of those involved in the saving of these three structures and all other buildings in Heritage Park.

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