



Save Our Heritage  
Organisation

September 1998  
Volume 29, Issue 2

# Reflections

SOHO IS THE OLDEST  
CONTINUALLY OPERATING HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION ORGANIZATION IN CALIFORNIA.

S E R V I N G   S A N   D I E G O   C O U N T Y   S I N C E   1 9 6 9

## Summer was no vacation as SOHO attends to county preservation issues

### WHAT'S HAPPENING TO SOME OF THE MOST ENDANGERED SITES

SOHO HAS BEEN BUSY THIS SPRING AND SUMMER DRUMMING UP support to help all the sites we listed on our most endangered list. Here's what we've been up to during the past few months.

#### HOTEL DEL CORONADO

SOHO president David Swarens, Vice President Bruce Coons and board member Maureen Steiner toured the Hotel del Coronado with hotel administration and San Francisco preservation architect Bruce Judd, FAIA, and his associates. Judd's firm, Architectural Resources Group, is project architect for the proposed new remodel that will bring back some of the old charm.

The group toured everything from the ballroom ceiling (yes, it's hidden under the dropped ceiling and is scheduled to make it's return), to the power plant tunnel. After reviewing preliminary plans and the impact of those plans on the Hotel, SOHO shared collected memorabilia and postcards showing views of the original locations of the main floor rooms with their pocket doors and verandas.

This dialogue was encouraging to us, to say the least, compared to the past administration's total disregard for the gem that they owned. SOHO's recommendation: save the power plant, which is quite significant and should not be razed for more rooms. And while there is controversy among tennis players about removing the tennis courts, removal will allow greater beach access as per the original hotel design. SOHO will keep you posted about what we can expect from this new ownership.

If you want to tour the Hotel del, the hotel is starting a docent program where you can get a guided tour with a trained volunteer from the Coronado Historical Society. (Call the hotel for times and prices.)

#### SS CATALINA AT ENSENADA, MEXICO

*Reflections* last reported that this 301' ship, built in 1924 and mired in legal problems, is stuck on a sandbar in 20' of water and listing 15 degrees to port. David Swarens, Bruce Coons and boardmembers Bonnie Poppe and Maria Castillo-

Curry traveled to Mexico with a Channel 10 news crew (Jody Hammond did a great report). Also along was David Engholm, former caretaker of the SS Catalina, and his partners from "Save The Catalina." The Catalina started taking on water at the end of last year, and now the green water is coming up the grand staircases of the last and biggest "Great White Steamer," as the Catalina is known. Plans are afloat to raise and restore the ship as a maritime museum at its historic home port of Wilmington. Salvage divers said the hull appears to be in good shape and should easily be able to withstand the stress placed on it during the refloating process.

SOHO is coordinating fund collections to support the Catalina and checks can be sent to us c/o "SOHO Catalina Steamship Fund." For more details about the Catalina, you can contact David Engholm in Oregon at 541-267-0451.

#### OLD SAN DIEGO POLICE STATION

SOHO members David Swarens, Bruce Coons, Bonnie Poppe and Paul Johnson, AIA, answered the alarm and joined the San Diego Police Historical Association to rally in support of the Old Police Headquarters Building. The building was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (report written by SOHO's past president Vonn Marie May). Destroying this building to provide "green space" or additional parking for the "mega hotels" which would further block our view of the waterfront is not appropriate for this important and reusable historic resource. A lawsuit has been brought against the San Diego Port District, owners of the land, to stop the planned demolition of this fine Spanish Colonial landmark. SOHO has provided monetary support for this lawsuit. •

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

DAVID SWARENS

### "THE TROUBLE WITH ELDERS"

Preservation, to me, is about meaning and memory, and nothing embodies these qualities more than those individuals I regard as my elders. These people, their lives, and lives like those they have lived -- that's what the "stuff," the artifacts, remind us of.

These elders are the ones whose shoulders we stand on to see and reach. Both to the future and the past -- meaning and memory.

Now elders aren't necessarily old, and sometimes, if rarely, they surprise me with their youth; but "they aren't getting any younger." That's the trouble with elders.

The trouble with the rest of us is that we don't always remember how important our elders can be to us. And if we forget that, we lose the chance to grow into elderhood ourselves. And if we fail that, we face the possibility of a future without elders -- a future without meaning or memory.

We need to make sure that a portion of the "gather ye rosebuds while ye may" goes into the "give me the roses while I live" fund for the preservation of elderhood.

Charles Lummis wrote of "catching our archeology alive" when he recorded the early California folksongs of Spanish-speaking Californios at the turn of the century. As founder of the "Landmarks Club" to preserve and restore the missions, Don Carlos well understood not only the evocative power held by historic places, but the opportunity to go directly to the people! It certainly enhanced his elderhood. It will do the same for ours.

So climb up on our elders' shoulders. It's the least we owe them.

Hope I see many of you at our Annual Meeting on September 28. (If you ask me to get off your back, I'll take it as a complement.) •

## SOHO Updates/Upcoming Events

THE SOHO BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAS BEEN BUSY THE PAST SEVERAL months doing what we have to do to get ourselves prepared to go into the next year as a healthy, hearty organization. This includes not only concerning ourselves with being the voice of preservation at all kinds of meetings and hearings on a variety of issues, but it includes being fiscally responsible. To that end, there have been several changes for SOHO.

For many years now we've had our physical office location at **Senlis Cottage** in Heritage Park. (SOHO was instrumental in getting Heritage Park created and saving those wonderful Victorian buildings that are still here for all to enjoy.) While we still have a presence at Senlis Cottage, we were made an offer we couldn't refuse. SOHO now shares the office with the County Recorder/Clerk's Office, in conjunction with the County Parks, at a great reduction in rent. Senlis Cottage is now open every Saturday to issue marriage licenses and perform civil marriage ceremonies. All it takes is \$50 for the license and \$50 to have the ceremony performed by County staff (bring your valid photo ID; reservations NOT required; appear between 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.). So if Cupid's arrow stings you near Heritage Park, come to Senlis Cottage any Saturday to be married in our former office! (Don't call SOHO if you want to be married. Call 619-565-3600 for any marriage related questions.)

For the past two years we've told you that we're an all-volunteer group. As much as we wanted to keep paid staff, that just wasn't possible. And without paid staff to go after grant money to finance our efforts, to collect the mail, to return the phone calls, to organize the volunteers for events...well, you get the picture. There were not enough hours in the day for board members to go earn a regular paycheck, fulfill SOHO's mission AND take care of getting toner for the copier, let alone do the bulk mailing for the newsletter. So we've remedied this situation. We have enlisted **Beth Montes** as an assistant to the SOHO board.

Beth will probably be the one who returns your initial phone call for information on real estate agents specializing in historic homes, or when our next workshop on house colors is, or whether someone has already signed up to bring lasagna to the Annual Meeting in September. Beth's help will make the board a little less crazy, and we thank her in advance for her commitment to the organization.

Speaking of making our lives a little less crazy, the SOHO board has decided to push back some events in order to make them the best they can possibly be. In scheduling the events that we so love to do, we found numerous conflicts with other programs that our members love to attend. (For example, we couldn't have SOHO's Fall 1998 Arts & Crafts weekend on November 14 & 15 because that's when Pasadena Heritage is having their craftsman weekend. Call 626-441-6333 for Pasadena registration info.) So our **Arts & Crafts weekend** will be in Spring 1999, with home tours, lectures and vendors that you won't want to miss. This year's focus will be Mission Hills, so if you or someone you know has an appropriate home you'd like to share, please call the office.

This fall we'll have two exciting tours that you'll want to attend. The first is a walking/home tour on September 27 of the downtown **Warehouse/Arts District** (that's the area threatened by the relocation of a Padres ballpark). The second is an extensive walking tour on October 18 of **Irving Gill's works** from Hillcrest to downtown. (See related articles in this issue.) Thanks for supporting the SOHO vision. •

**Important:** SOHO has a new post office box. Please send any correspondence to SOHO at P.O. Box 3429, San Diego, CA 92163-1429. Our new larger box will now allow us to receive our voluminous mail without the post office stuffing our old box until it hurt.

**Are you moving?** Let us know your new address in order for Reflections to continue to reach you. (The post office won't automatically forward bulk mail to you.)

**What is SOHO?** SOHO is an all-volunteer, non-profit group dedicated to historic preservation San Diego County and nearby regions.

**How do you volunteer for a tour or event?** Call our office and leave a message. We always need help, whether assisting as a docent, following the progress on a preservation issue or stuffing envelopes.

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# Tour the downtown Warehouse/ Arts District on September 27

LOUISE TORIO

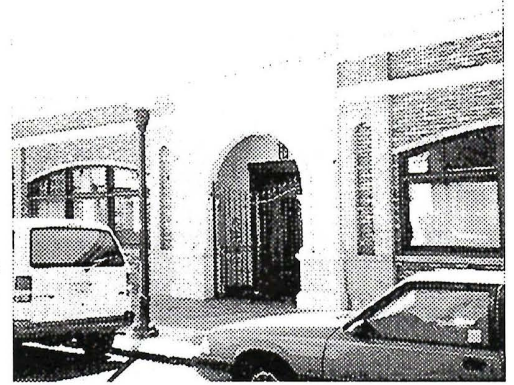
SOMETIMES IT MAKES US CRAZY WHEN WE HEAR that there is "nothing worth saving" in the area known as Center City East (or its new trendy moniker, "East Village"). While the Gaslamp District has gotten all the attention for big restorations, for many years now a group of artists, writers, photographers, web site designers and others has been investing their time and effort into rehabbing historic warehouse buildings into a significant arts district in the area east of downtown. Because this area is threatened with the building of a new ballpark, SOHO would like to give you the opportunity to visit some of downtown's most unique lofts and notable structures during a two hour walking/home tour of the Warehouse/Arts District on Sunday, September 27 at 2:00.

This tour is in conjunction with P.E.V.A. (People's East Village Association), a group of residents who are suggesting that there are other alternatives to a downtown ballpark that don't squash the good that's been done in the neighborhood. (SOHO's position, as always, is to preserve historic and cultural resources and to encourage reuse whenever possible. Area residents have been restoring and reusing these wonderful buildings for more than a decade now. Come see what's here now, because it may not be the same after the vote in November.) Join Laura Kim and SOHO and PEVA docents on a tour of the district's most interesting buildings, all of which are at risk of becoming the outfield if the ballpark proposal goes through. See how this area played an important role in the history of San Diego.

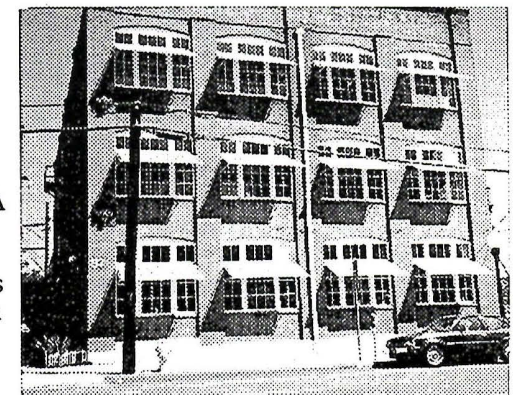
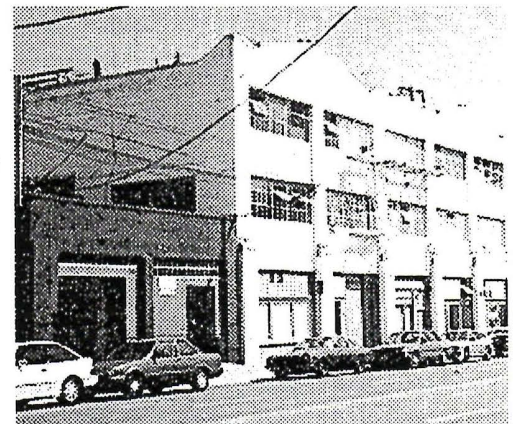
Most people don't realize that this area, before the idea of a downtown ballpark, was listed as important and worth preserving for its own attributes. This tour will let you make up your own mind about whether the district is worth preserving.

Tour cost is only \$10 for SOHO and PEVA members and \$15 for non-members, but reservations are required. Call SOHO at 619-297-9327 and leave your name, number of people attending, and whether you're a SOHO or PEVA member. You may pay at the door. The tour begins at 2:00 pm at the corner of 7th and Island Avenue (come a little early to sign in). As with all SOHO events, if you'd like to become a SOHO (or PEVA) member at the event, you'll get the member tour rate that day.

Before you sing "Take me out to the ballgame" in the Warehouse District, we look forward to showing you just what's in the district. SOHO wants to thank in advance all those residents who are generously opening their homes for this tour. •



For details about P.E.V.A., see their web site at [www.peva.org](http://www.peva.org).



These are just some of the wonderful warehouses you'll find that have been restored into homes and offices in the East Village. Come peek inside and see what's here.

# 16th Annual P.I.P. Awards go to local preservation heroes

## THE RECONSTRUCTED HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY IN BALBOA PARK SERVES AS A PERFECT BACKDROP

SOHO'S MEMBERS AND FRIENDS CELEBRATED National Historic Preservation Week in May with our traditional recognition of those people or groups who have gone beyond the call of duty in preserving and bringing to life San Diego's rich cultural and architectural history. This year's host was the distinguish actor Richard Easton, an Old Globe regular and possessor of the magnificent voice that narrated the "Above San Diego" show on KPBS, and the location was the new House of Hospitality in Balboa Park.

This year's panel was chaired by cultural resource planner and past SOHO president Vonn Marie May. The jury included Ali Le Cooper, council rep from councilmember Juan Vargas' office; Lisa Mar Gonzalez, council rep from councilmember Valerie Stallings' office; Erik Hanson, SOHO boardmember; Chuck Kaminski, AIA, architect and boardmember of Partners for Livable Places; Jeffrey Shorn, AIA, historic preservation architect/professor; and Jeffrey Tom, council rep from councilmember Christine Kehoe's office.



**Reconstruction/History is in the Details Award:** The House of Hospitality! This unbelievably detailed recreation of both a 1915 and 1935 Exposition building is the finest reconstruction project yet within the park. The completed project creates a living link between the historical architects (Bertram Goodhue, Carleton Winslow and Richard Requa) with today's architectural team of M. Wayne Donaldson, FAIA; Will Chandler, historian and curator; and David Marshall, project architect.

**Residential Restoration/Finding the Past Award:** Juan & Rosie Ulloa. This residence facade restoration is the first project in the Sherman Heights Historic District action plan that provides for city funded architectural services. The program helps homeowners restore their homes back to the period of significance for which Sherman Heights is known.

**Church Restoration/Answered Prayers Award:** St. Brigid's Catholic Church. The church leadership elected not to build a new church but chose to preserve the history of the existing one through seismic retrofit and renovation, preserving the ecclesiastical murals in the process.

**Community Revitalization/Spirit of Main Street Award:** North Park Main Street Pilot Project for the renovation of the Odd Fellows Building. This is the first project out of the newly formed group, a national model started by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This is the quintessential debut project that preserves and promotes community character.

**Research/Ed Scott Award:** Alexander D. Bevil. Alex is honored for his work in research toward designation of historic properties, for all his work in University Heights, for his research on the Bush Egyptian Theater, Mission Cliff Gardens, as well as his great assistance in helping many communities preserve their cultural past. Alex is also a frequent tour giver for SOHO.



**Neighborhood Revitalization/Cheers Award:** The Turf Club. The revitalization of the 1950s "classy" bar & grill, the Turf Club begins the reclamation of the 25th Street business district in Golden Hill. The project included the retention and restoration of the facade, the signage and much of the "horsy" interior. Go there and grill yourself a steak!



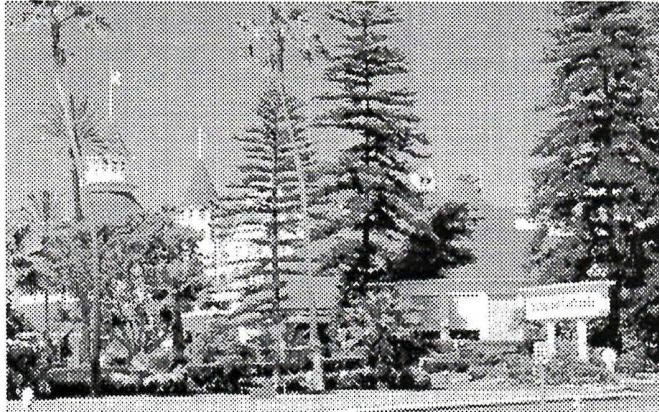
**Reconstruction/Gimme Shelter Award:** Windansea Surf Shack. El Nino storms took away the original 1947 structure, a longtime symbol of surf culture. Before you could say "you'll need a permit from the city to put that back," the surf shack was reconstructed with great dedication and stealth, and it's now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Civics/Cruising the Coast Award:** Coast Highway, Old #101. The mother route between San Diego and Los Angeles is back. Both the cities of Encinitas and Oceanside are providing interjurisdictional cooperation toward preserving and interpreting this linear historical resource of Southern California's car culture.

**Kids in Preservation/Landmarks in Cyberspace Award:** L.R. Green Elementary School. Thanks to the leadership of two enlightened elementary school teachers, the 3rd and 8th grade students created a website entitled Historic Landmarks of Escondido. Teachers Kathy Hayden and Monica Behrman submitted the children's work in the International Schools Cyberfair. Among 258 schools from 37 countries,

this web site took 2nd place, but it's clearly number one with our judges.

Civics/The Highest and Best Use Award: Daley Ranch. Just to the east of Escondido is 3,058 acres of the most pristine and beautiful property in San Diego County. When a plan was proposed to create thousands of homes on the site, Escondido's General Plan exercised great foresight by buying the Ranch for \$21,500,000 and dedicating it forever to the citizens of San Diego County. Bravo.



People in the Trenches/Some Like It Hot Award: Bruce Coons. Bruce is a former SOHO Preservationist of the Year. This time he's honored for his efforts in the highly successful community-based campaign to defend the Hotel del Coronado against destructive expansion plans. While Bruce doesn't take credit for running the then-owners out of town, nothing scares him off when it comes to protecting grand historical sites.

People in the Trenches/What If Preservationists Wore Guns Award: San Diego Police Historical Association. The grand old Police Headquarters has the great misfortune of being on land within the jurisdiction of the San Diego Unified Port District. The Police Historical Association was successful in getting the building on the National Register of Historic Places, but the site is scheduled to be cleared so that more mega hotels can be built; the land under the old Police Headquarters would serve as the necessary "open space" to allow the new skyscrapers to be built. SOHO is supporting the Police Historical Association in their lawsuit to stop destruction of this beautiful and elegant building that has many potential reuses.

Residential Restoration/Preservationist of the Year Roger Mohling. The 1910 Jane Easton house by architect Emmor Brooke Weaver was allowed to be summarily ripped from its site atop a bluff on Torrey Pines Road overlooking the Pacific and put on wheels to be brought to its final resting place in the foothills of Poway. SOHO has a strong commitment supporting the retention of structures "in situ" or "on its site" and lamented the loss of historic integrity of this very important Arts & Crafts structure. However, the heart and soul dedication in documenting the as-built conditions of the site, including landscape elements and the craftsmanship that Roger Mohling put into relocating and restoring the house, is so exemplary that the house and Roger deserve this recognition for this model work.

Congratulations to all the winners. We in the community are the lucky ones for having these preservationists in our community.●



## Meet the other members at SOHO's Annual Meeting on September 28

I N G R I D H E L T O N

SOHO IS MAKING ITS ANNUAL CALL TO MEMBERS AND TO THE COMMUNITY at large to come to the Annual Meeting. In keeping with our tradition of having the meeting somewhere fun and historic, voting in the new board, sharing a potluck supper and drinking a toast to the year ahead, this year our Annual Meeting will be on Monday, September 28, at 5:00 P.M. at the home of Lori Peoples. Lori lives in the historic 1895 David K. Horton House, designed by Irving Gill. It's located at 1504 East 22nd Street in National City. (Easy directions: take Interstate 5 to the 24th Street exit. Go East to N Avenue -- about 20 blocks-- turn left and to North to 22nd Street. Turn right onto 22nd and you can't miss it. RSVP to SOHO at 619-297-9327 so we know you're coming and let us know what food item you're bringing to share.)

The annual meeting is also the time that the SOHO Lady is awarded. (The SOHO Lady, for those that don't know, is a very old, very special lamp that has been around forever. The Lady is given at the discretion of the last recipient to honor a SOHO member. Bill Lawrence and David Swarins passed The Lady onto Louise Torio last September. Let's see who Louise will pass it on to this year.)

Sometimes we're asked just what SOHO directors do and if it's a lot of work to be on the board of SOHO. For those who have been thinking of further involvement on the SOHO board, we say JOIN US! Yes, it's dedicated work, but it's rewarding and very often lots of fun. SOHO directors formulate the short and long range goals of the organization and plan and implement projects that support SOHO's mission. Directors are expected to take an active leadership role in SOHO's committees, programs and events. It helps to be a self-starter who can help propose and develop programs. This leadership role also includes participating at events, recruiting new members, and developing additional funding sources. (Any grant writers out there?) A SOHO director promotes volunteerism by example, expands SOHO's assets, and works as an ambassador for SOHO to the community. In the important role of director, a SOHO boardmember is responsible to promoting historic preservation to the organization, to the membership of SOHO, and to the general public.

If you love history and preservation, and you want to make a difference in what happens within San Diego County, you should be part of a future SOHO board. NO PRIOR EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY; just your willingness to pitch in and help create the San Diego we want to see in the next century. This is rewarding work that takes about ten hours per month (divided between one monthly board meeting, one committee meeting, and incidental efforts associated with the committee or an upcoming event).

Questions? Come to the Annual Meeting and ask us. We love to talk!●

# Balboa Theatre Update

SOMETIMES IT'S A WONDER HOW AN ORGANIZATION can win so many awards for their foresight in saving/restoring Gaslamp buildings, yet have so little regard for one of the gems of downtown. Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) once again sought to send out a Request For Proposals for the Balboa Theatre, the shuttered vaudeville palace with unique 28' waterfalls on either side of the stage, located by the side of Horton Plaza at 4th and E. You may have heard last that Horton Plaza signed a six month exclusive deal with CCDC to review the possibility of the shopping center restoring and running the Balboa. David Malmouth, formerly of the Disney Corporation and the one who restored the New Amsterdam Theatre on Broadway in New York for the production of The Lion King, was the great hope. But TrizecHahn, the owners of Horton Plaza, was sold this spring and there are new owners of Horton Plaza as of August 1. So the beautiful Balboa is without a white knight once again.

The problem with the proposed RFP as drafted is that it's language is so positive in its orientation toward retail use, and so utterly negative in its wording toward a non-profit group or groups restoring the theatre for what it was designed for, that Councilmem-

ber Byron Wear asked for a continuance so this flawed RFP would not be distributed. Do we really want to see the Balboa turned into another Loma Theater, where the books are sold where patrons should be enjoying great music? Do we really believe that it's possible to do a reversible retail adaptation to the Balboa? (Ask the Aztec Theater on 5th and E how it feels, gutted, shorn of its fabulous marquee, with a new crazed glass front exposing overpriced clothing to passing tourists. Don't worry. This too will probably win some "preservation" award.)

The big news that goes unreported is that several long-time San Diego performing arts organizations have expressed interest in restoring the Balboa for it's intended use as a theatre. These groups would make the Balboa available to other non-profit organization who would want to use the space. Byron Wear, a strong supporter of having the Balboa be a downtown contributor, is exploring all options to allow these arts organizations time to put together a proposal and funding, before an RFP goes out and you're able to buy a nice pair of shoes from the lovely Balboa's stage.

SOHO will keep you posted as events happen. For more info, contact the Balboa Theatre Foundation at 619-466-2542.●

## MORE HISTORIC DISTRICTS PROPOSED FOR SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO'S PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICTS ARE moving toward reality. The San Diego Historical Site Board has adopted a plan for implementation through a process of community input, information and education. Community committees will be formed consisting of community members and Site Board members to discuss concerns and put forward suggestions for the proposed districts. In many of the districts there are additional registration forms (known as "DPR" forms) which must be filled out for all contributing structures. (These forms are used by the State for recording historical and archaeological resources.) Since SOHO recently paid about \$8,000 to the City as costs as a result of losing the lawsuit which was brought to preserve the T.M.Cobb Building (soon to be the site of another mega hotel), SOHO requested that the funds be directed to a historic preservation related project. The Site Board voted to recommend that the SOHO money be used to complete the DPR forms for the mid-city survey, and this request is working its way through the city approval process. This funding source will cover finishing the forms for all of the proposed historic districts. Proposed new Historic Districts: the Dryden District, South Park, and the Hillcrest/Park Boulevard Districts. We'll let you know the outcome.●

**Want your friends to get reduced admission to upcoming SOHO events?** Get them to join SOHO or give a gift membership in time to participate in SOHO's Irving Gill walking tour on October 18. Better yet, join SOHO and get active with us! Love of preservation is never having to say you're sorry you didn't join SOHO. For info, call us at 619-297-9327.

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

- \$1000 LIFETIME
- 500 BENEFACTOR
- 250 CORPORATE
- 100 EXECUTIVE
- 50 PROFESSIONAL
- 25 INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY
- 10 STUDENT

## SOHO MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete this form and send it with your check to SOHO, P.O. Box 3429, San Diego, CA 92163.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

**SPECIAL INTERESTS** (architectural styles, periods, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

**DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE** that other SOHO members would benefit from your sharing with us (in a workshop or seminar)? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in helping at SOHO events (like tours, membership drives, etc.)?

**I WOULD LIKE TO HELP WITH:**  Tours  Newsletter  Office  
 Membership  Workshops  Other events.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.**

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**B R A D Y**  
*architectural  
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# This tour was made for walkin' -- join the Irving Gill Walking Tour: from Hillcrest to Cortez Hill, on October 18

L O U I S E T O R I O



*Irving Gill, circa 1911. (Photo courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society.)*

IF IRVING GILL DIDN'T WANT YOU to go on this walking tour, he wouldn't have created so many buildings from Hillcrest to Cortez Hill.

On Sunday, October 18 at 1:00 is your chance to see about 40 of Gill's works, from the late Victorian period of about 1894 through his evolution as a Modernist/Cubist of about 1911. SOHO invites you to view some fine examples of Irving Gill and Hebbard & Gill works (some newly restored) and some not-so-fine and totally remuddled. If you went on the Gill tour last year

that covered La Jolla, you only saw a little bit of what Irving accomplished in San Diego. Round out your Gill education and see what's new to you on this Gill adventure.

This tour answers the question, "should I exercise or should I enjoy myself on a Gill walking tour?" No need to choose here. Do both on this ambitious four hour walking tour that gives you two Gill-designed areas to rest and get refreshed (SOHO member Paul Johnson, AIA, will open his business for the event and our good friends at First Church of Christ Scientist will open their almost-finished, magnificently restored church for us). Other than the rest stops, this tour will discuss the exterior of Gill's work and will not go inside homes.



*The David K. Horton house, National City, circa 1895. It's not on the walking tour, but it is the site of SOHO's Annual Meeting on September 28. Come to the meeting and get your fill of Gill. (Photo courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society.)*

Refreshments are included with admission. Cost is \$10 for SOHO members; \$15 for non-members. Send your check to SOHO by October 11, or call SOHO at 619-297-9327 to RSVP. At press time, the starting point is expected to be the Marston House. Groups are encouraged to take two vehicles to park one at the route start and one at the end. (SOHO volunteers will help get you back to your car.)

What a great way to spend a fall day! Call now to RSVP or to be a volunteer for this event.●

## MORE SAN DIEGO SITES NAMED TO NATIONAL REGISTER

Our favorite historian (and recent People in Preservation Award winner) Alex Bevil has researched and written the reports that have gotten several structures onto the National Register in the past two months. The Pueblo Revival style Torrey Pines Lodge and the Torrey Pines Park Road (part of Torrey Pines State Reserve) recently made the list. Also placed on the Register were the Guy L. and Margaret Fleming House and the San Diego State Normal School Teacher Training Building in University Heights. Keep up the good work, Alex!●



# Does your home qualify for the Mills Act tax credit?

ALEXANDER D. BEVIL

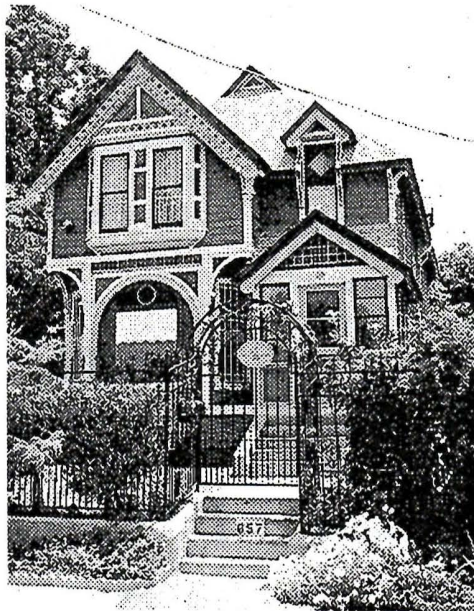
WHILE THERE ARE MANY INCENTIVES FOR OWNING A HISTORIC PROPERTY (conditional use permit eligibility, use of the State Historic Building Code, special assistance, Rehab Investment Tax Credits and Facade Easements), a Mills Act Agreement is arguably the most meaningful local incentive for purchasing and maintaining a historic property.

Named after its author, State Senator James Mill (D., San Diego), through the Mills Act local governments like San Diego, La Mesa and Escondido can enter into voluntary contracts with the owners of historic properties. Known as a Mills Act Agreement, it seeks to provide monetary incentives through property tax reductions to encourage the preservation, maintenance, rehabilitation and restoration of designated historic properties. Since 1995, San Diego, the largest city in California to initiate Mills Act Agreements, has filed over 300 Mills Act Agreements.

While the Mills Act Agreement would hold little incentive for properties purchased prior to Proposition 13 [pre 1975], it would be appealing to those who have recently purchased older homes or are planning to sell their homes to new buyers (Mills Acts Agreements are transferable). Typically, homeowners have reportedly received property tax reductions amounting to between 30 and 70% of what they would normally pay. (The County Assessor's Office is the final arbiter of the exact percentage.) This allows the owner to use monies normally spent on a portion of the property taxes on the building's upkeep, rehabilitation and the restoration -- a recognized trigger for neighborhood revitalization and an increase in property values.

In order for a property to qualify for a Mills Act Agreement, it must have been designated as a historic site or included in part of a historic district. Properties located within a redevelopment project are required to meet additional qualifying criteria.

A recent example of a designated property would be the home of Sheila Moss. The San Diego Historical Site Board designated Ms. Moss' 69 year old house in University Heights as a local landmark. Located on Harvey Road, off Adams Avenue overlooking Mission Valley, it was built by local building contractor Edward Dwyer. The two story Spanish Colonial Revival house is typical of hundreds of houses of that type built in San Diego between 1920 and 1940. However, what makes the house historic is its association with two individuals who have made a significant contribution to San Diego's history. Between 1929 and 1939 it was the home of noted artist and art professor Everett Gee Jackson and his wife, society columnist Eileen Lois Jackson.



In the house's enclosed 2nd story rear balcony studio, Everett developed his award-winning artistic technique while teaching at San Diego State. Examples of his work can be seen in the house; he painted a fresco and murals of prehistoric animals on the walls of the dining room and bathroom.

In addition to wanting to preserve the house, Sheila Moss sought historic designation specifically to take advantage of the Mill Act Agreement's potential reduction in her property taxes. After an initial one time fee of \$100 per \$100,000 assessed property value, the Agreement will consist of a contract between Ms. Moss and the City of San Diego. The homeowner must then maintain the house's historical characteristics in accordance with the rules and regulations published by the Secretary of the Interior, known as the "Standards for Rehabilitation." (This is available from the Historical Site Board.) The Standards define "historic integrity" as the authenticity of the property's historic identity, "evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during its historic period of significance." For example, if the homeowner covered the house's original stucco walls with aluminum siding, the house's historical integrity would be compromised.

The homeowner must allow reasonable visibility of the home's exterior from the public right of way. Yet under no circumstances is the home turned into a museum; it's still private property. However, if requested by the County Assessor's office, State Department of Parks & Recreation, or the State Board of Equalization, the homeowner must allow them reasonable access to the property, by appointment, to guarantee that it has kept its historical integrity. Also, City staff will conduct periodic drive by inspections to verify that the building is being maintained in a weather-tight condition.

If you're interested in finding out if your home or commercial building qualifies as a historic property, the various municipal Historical Site Boards or Planning Departments maintain lists of designated buildings (check your local phone book for numbers.) If your property isn't on the list, then you can do some research to see if it would qualify for designation. (The City of San Diego maintains a list of qualified historians who would do the entire project, from research, report preparation and appearance before the Site Board hearing. Depending on the difficulty of the research, a historian's fee would be about \$1,500. This cost could be recouped in tax savings after the Mills Act Agreement goes through.)

The deadline for submitting Mills Act Agreements for 1998 is October. The County Assessor's Office usually reevaluates property taxes the following March. If everything is in order, a property owner should see the reduction in property taxes in December 1999. For more information on the requirements for qualification for historic designation of Mills Act Agreement property tax reductions, please contact the Planning Department of the city where you live. (Besides San Diego, both La Mesa and Escondido have active Mills Act programs. SOHO board members David Swarens, Bonnie Poppe and Louise Torio have participated in the San Diego program.)

## SOHO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September/October SOHO Board meetings:  
3rd Tues.  
Preservation Action: 1st Wed.  
Events Committee: 2nd Tues.  
Call SOHO for other meetings.

September 27 SOHO and PEVA Walking/  
Home Tour of the  
Warehouse/Arts District  
Begins 2:00 at the corner of  
Island and 7th. \$10 SOHO or  
PEVA members; \$15 non-mem-  
bers. Please RSVP to SOHO.

September 28 Annual Meeting and Potluck  
Supper at the Home of Lori  
Peoples (in a 1895 Irving Gill  
house!) 1504 E. 22nd St.,  
National City. Bring a dish to  
share. Potluck from 5-7 pm;  
elections 7 pm. Call SOHO to  
RSVP.

Contact SOHO at 619-297-9327.

## AND EVEN MORE SOHO EVENTS

October 18 Irving Gill Walking Tour from  
Hillcrest to Cortex Hill. 1 pm.  
\$10 SOHO members; \$15 non-  
members. See over 40 Gill  
designs! Mail check by October  
11 to SOHO or call to RSVP.

October 31 Halloween Cemetery Tour  
11:00 AM at Mt. Hope  
Cemetery. \$8.00 SOHO mem-  
bers; \$10 non-members. Mail  
check by October 24 to SOHO  
or call to RSVP.

December 13 SOHO Holiday Party  
Be on the lookout for another  
wonderful location to celebrate  
the season!

March 6 & 7, 1999 SOHO's Arts & Crafts Weekend  
More lectures, home tours,  
antiques and hands-on demon-  
strations for the Arts & Crafts  
lover. Mark your calendars  
now!

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