



River Street Historic District Closer to Reality

by Karita Hummer

Like the little engine that could, we're huffing and puffing and almost there! Almost every possible hurdle has been overcome, and the end is in reach. Breathless and nearly exhausted, we think we'll make it. Our vision of a little village enhancing the River park is almost realized.

PAC-SJ attends City Council Meeting

On May 23, the City Council seemed to be inching nearer to the big decision to save seven to eleven of the buildings in the National Register of Historic Places eligible district.

We came up with enough owners and tenants for all the buildings in question, and together they, along with the Preservation Action Council and the Victorian Preservation Association, formed a River Street Development

Group to submit a proposal to City Council for the development of the buildings.

Andre Luthard summed up the action recommendations by the Preservation Action Council, which included a request to the city to apply for permanent National Register of Historic Places status and to make the River Street District a local historic district, with guidelines for architecture and aesthetic components.

River Street Project Proposed in Sacramento

As a party to a Memorandum of Agreement, the Preservation Action Council also attended a meeting in Sacramento on May 19, along with the Army Corps of Engineers, State Office of Historic Preservation and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The River Street Development Group proposal was submitted, and Lieutenant Colonel

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Stuhr, who presided, reiterated in no uncertain terms that the money for relocation of the buildings would be forthcoming, a point that was strongly relayed by Karita Hummer at City Council on May 23.

The design for the project was prepared by one of the owner-investors, Alrie Middlebrook, and it was quite a hit at the May 23 meeting. The inclusion of lovely Italian gardens by Alrie adds the essential component to returning the district to its Italian origins.

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Annual Preservation Awards Presented

by Betsy Mathlieson

The May 18 gathering at the San Jose Historical Museum was the setting for the annual Preservation Action Council's annual preservation awards ceremony.

San Jose Historical Museum Archivist Leslie Masunaga graciously arranged for the room in the Empire Firehouse free of charge. Our own Greg Casella, through his business **Catered Too**, generously donated artistic arrangements of exquisite confections, and strawberries with chocolate for dipping, as well as coffee and lemonade.

Preservation Action Council board member Betsy Mathlieson presented this year's six awards, consisting of our traditional gold-embossed plaques created by Nancy Newlin. Each award was introduced with several color slides and a brief narration on the winning project or person. We thank the award recipients for providing material used in the presentation and in this article. The award categories and winners are:

Clean-up, Paint-up, Fix-up Project of the Year: Roger Williams House, Grace Baptist Church

The Queen Anne/Shingle Style house at 146 South Tenth Street was purchased by Grace Baptist Church in 1964 from its original owner, Julius Thorne. The house is operated by the Grace Baptist Community Center and its director, Jim Githens, and houses programs for abused women and for school children with behavior problems.

The Reverend Janey Smith was in England, so Grace Baptist Church moderator Lloyd Burns accepted the award on her behalf.

Special Award for Perseverance: Henry's Hi-Life

Henry Puckett founded Henry's Hi-Life at 301 West Saint John St. in 1960. His daughter, Lois Reynolds, now operates the Hi-Life, serving barbecued ribs to downtown business people, and drinks to Sharks fans.

The building, the former Torino Hotel, is the cornerstone of the River Street historic district. Lois has preserved her business and the building through freeway construction, and the Guadalupe River flood of March 10, 1995. Miraculously, the Hi-Life reopened only 16 days after the flood, which inundated the ground-floor bar and restaurant with several feet of water. In presenting the award to Lois, we expressed our thanks to her for demonstrating that "Preservation is Good for Business."

Interior Restoration of the Year: Santa Clara County Courthouse

Ours is the third award this San Jose showpiece has received. The Preservation Action Council specifically recognized the interior design aspect of this monumental seismic retrofit and restoration project. The 1866 courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Saint James Square Historic District.

The goals of the restoration project were to bring the building up to code, to perform a major structural upgrade, and to maintain the building's historic character and integrity. To restore dignity to the interior spaces, research was conducted to determine the correct finishes and colors of the building's period.

The County's project director was Patrick Love. The County's Project Design Coordinator, Leonard Pacheco, accepted the award, accompanied by Chuck Toeniskoetter, Goodwin Steinberg, and Mr. Love. Our award plaque will be displayed in the Heritage Room at the courthouse.

Building of the Year: San Jose Diridon Station

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) spent two years restoring the 1933 Italian Renaissance Revival Southern Pacific Railroad depot on Cahill Street. The well-proportioned and gracefully detailed brick building, one of six large-scale passenger rail terminals still existing in California, was the last depot constructed in the grand scale in northern California. The restoration involved strengthening the building for earthquake resistance and restoring the historic structure to keep its original beauty. Project architects were The Architectural Resources Group and Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. The contractor was S.J. Amoroso Construction Company.

Last year the San Jose Station was renamed the San Jose Diridon Station to honor former Santa Clara County Supervisor Rod Diridon. The Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board is in the process of assuming ownership and will operate the facility as a multi-modal transit terminal. Nancy Knofler, Chief of the Office of Public Transportation, accepted the award on behalf of Caltrans.

Preservation Journalist of the Year: Barbara Vroman

This special award was customized to honor Barbara Vroman, San Jose Mercury News Associate Editor of the

(continued on page 3)



From the President

By Ellen Garboske

Hard to believe I'm having a hard time getting started on this column, there is so much going on! Must be the long winter—think it's ever going to end? I'm asking myself "Why write a president's column?" The best reason is that it gives me a chance to thank all of our members for their support for preservation in our community. If you are actively working on a project, **THANK YOU!** If you aren't active, you should know how much we appreciate your membership. Your dues help us meet expenses, so **THANK YOU,** too! Of course, we could use your help. Don't hesitate to give us a call so we can discuss where your interests lie.

There is one area where we really need help. I'm sure out there among our members there is someone with computer skills who would like to manage our membership list. This task doesn't take a lot of time once it's set up, but is very important to our organization. This is a great project for someone who would like to work at home. **Do I hear a volunteer?**

Last issue I told you that PAC-SJ has agreed to be the local sponsor for the **California Preservation Foundation's 1996 conference.** It is now confirmed, and is quite an honor. Seems like a long way off, but San Jose has become an important convention city, and we've found that we need to have hotel rooms and event spaces spoken for very early. Would you believe that the site we requested for the Saturday night ball

was already reserved? We are in the initial planning stages, and look forward to involving all our members as the date draws closer. Mark your calendars for May 30-June 2, 1996!

The **River Street** Task Force has been working so hard! They've come up with a wonderful drawing of the houses as they would be situated in a permanent location. As I write this, they are preparing to appear before

the City Council to demonstrate how the houses can be saved. They will be presenting a packet of letters from people interested in restoring the

houses and using them for business and public activities. A very exciting concept. Let's hope the Council agrees! (See page 1.)

We recently toured the San Jose Medical Group property on 16th and 17th Streets between Santa Clara and San Fernando Streets. Plans are to sell the property for either housing or a school. There are about eight very nice houses on the property, which we hope can be saved.

Another project to watch.

Check the back page of this newsletter for our calendar. We encourage members to attend our **open board meetings.** That would give me a chance to meet you, and we welcome comments and input on all our projects. Come on out!

Ah, the sun is peaking through the clouds! Gotta run, catch the sun while I can. Hope to hear from potential volunteers soon! ☺



AWARDS

CONTINUED FROM COVER

Editorial Pages, who for years has written editorials supporting local preservation efforts. Recently, the Preservation Action Council's efforts have been boosted by her eloquent editorials urging preservation of the Scheller House on the San Jose State Campus and encouraging incorporation of the River Street historic district into the Guadalupe River Park. Lively news stories covering these and other preservation issues have documented community support for preservation and highlighted threats to local resources. Barbara accepted her award in person, thanking us for our hard work in local historic preservation.

Seismic Retrofit of the Year: Greenlee's Bakery

Greenlee's Bakery occupies a 1924 brick building at 1081 The Alameda, near Race Street. Since 1981, bakery owners Norbert and Rosalinda Geldner have carried on the tradition established by Frank Greenlee 70 years ago.

Throughout a seismic retrofit last year, the bakery remained in operation and open for retail sales through its back door. The work of structural engineers Biggs Cardoza and contractor Mark DeMattei was sweetened with interior design ideas developed by Rosalinda herself.

The cost of the seismic retrofit was partially subsidized by a grant from the Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Jose. The finished product is a shining example of simultaneous seismic retrofit and historic renovation, which brightens the streetscape and enlivens the neighborhood.

Norbert Geldner was on hand to accept the award. The awards process introduced the Geldners to the Preservation Action Council of San Jose, and Greenlee's Bakery immediately became a "small business member."

Keep your eyes open for candidate projects for next year's preservation awards! ☺



Watchdog Report

The Dog has been doing a lot of watching lately. The thing about the **Preservation Constituency** is that it's pervasive in places you would never think of, and when you think things are hopeless, some new volunteers show up to keep the fires going.

The *River Street Historic District*, as you all know, continues its relentless evolution. **Alrie Middlebrook** has done an incredible amount of work lately to show that the District is not just a pipe dream. When **Mayor Susan Hammer** challenged PACSJ to put money on the table, most political insiders saw this as the straw that would break the camel's back. But on Tuesday, May 23, Middlebrook stepped up to the plate and countered with an envelope containing the money! Boy, did that send shock waves through City Hall.

The Dog thinks that River Street has a ways to go yet, and the **Knock 'um Downers** aren't about to give up. But you wait. With the **Hummer/Luthard/Middlebrook** leadership, PAC-SJ will keep this preservation effort alive for as long as it takes.

Another leader out there, **Karen Viera** has been driving a relentless effort to save *Old Hoover School*. I remember when she thought of herself as just a neighborhood parent concerned about the quality of her schools. Now she has **Ex-Mayor Janey Grey Hayes** in her coalition, as well as a number of movers and shakers who live in the *Rose Garden* area. I remember when Janet Grey was just a neighborhood parent concerned about crossing guards. Just shows you that if you want to really change the government, sometimes its best to just become the government.

Now that the **Redevelopment Agency** got the Pentium Chip replaced in its budget computer, the reduced projections for Tax Increment will hit historic preservation projects hard. The situation with the *Jose Theater* looks grim, and other downtown landmarks such as the *Fox California*, *Twohy Building* and *Montgomery Hotel* look like they will sit for a long time (if not demolished).

The dog was at a City Council meeting when there was a lot of moaning and complaining about the high rental rates paid by the City for downtown office space. With the Redevelopment Agency lease up at the *Fairmont Plaza*, wouldn't it be great if our Redevelopment staff moved over to the Twohy Building instead of turning all that tax money into rental payments? They could fix the Twohy for less than what they pay for rent, and get their money back when they sell the building later on. Sounds like a good idea moneywise to me. But then I'm just a dog.

I heard that the Historic Landmarks Commission would like to designate the *Winchester Mystery House* a local landmark (its already a state landmark). The **Winchester People** are not looking favorably on this, as they think it would "limit their options." Every time I hear the words "limit our options," my ears perk up. Now I know it's not even conceivable that someone would want to tear this landmark down to build a high-rise. However, I suggest you read the previous line again, think about it, and then keep your ears and eyes open. Stranger things have happened.

The Dog



Go Back in Time

*Hands-on History, June 25 & 26
San Jose Historical Museum*

Get ready to churn butter, grind acorns, load a covered wagon and march in a parade at "Hands-on History," June 24 and 25, 10 AM to 5 PM at the San Jose Historical Museum, located at Phelan and Senter, south end of Kelley Park.

"Hands-on History" is part of the museum's Living History Days, which re-enacts the good old days of Santa Clara County. Interactive entertainment will offer something

- for every member of the family.
- From action packed melodramas and dance lessons to cooking and crafts, everyone is guaranteed to step back in time and enjoy the simple pleasures of yesteryear:
- ❖ Wash clothes with a washboard;
- ❖ Grind your own coffee;
- ❖ Print on an antique press;
- ❖ Make a paper-hat;
- ❖ Try origami;
- ❖ Play an Indian drum;

- ❖ March in women's temperance protest;
- ❖ Visit a country fair;
- ❖ Watch a home-town parade;
- ❖ And much, much, more! 🐾

Admission:
Adults-\$6; Seniors (65+)- \$5;
Youths (4-17)- \$4;
Children under 4 are Free.
For more information,
call 408-287-2290



The Preservation Action Council of San Jose is a non-profit membership organization providing information to property owners and education to the public, and promoting programs and policies for historic preservation and compatible new architectural design.

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Luther Burbank Jubilee Rescheduled

The fun-filled Luther Burbank Jubilee, rained out in May, has been rescheduled to Saturday, July 15, 10 AM to 4 PM. Historic tours scheduled noon to 3 PM.



Historic tours, antique book sales, food and children's activities are all part of the festivities to be held at the Luther Burbank School on West San Carlos Street, between Bascom and Leigh Avenues.

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CALENDAR

JUNE

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 10 (SAT) | THE ALAMEDA HISTORY DAYS
The Alameda near Shasta, 11 AM to 3 PM |
| 19 (MON) | PAC-SJ Open Board of Directors meeting
Mother Olson's Inn, 72 N. Fifth St., 7 PM |
| 24-25 (SAT-SUN) | HANDS-ON HISTORY, Life in early San Jose,
San Jose Historical Museum, 1600 Senter Road
(see article on page 4) |

JULY

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 15 (SAT) | Luther Burbank Jubilee, 10 AM to 4 PM, Luther Burbank School,
between Bascom & Leigh Avenues on W. San Carlos Street |
| 17 (MON) | PAC-SJ Open Board of Directors meeting
Mother Olson's Inn, 72 N. Fifth St., 7 PM |

CONTINUITY

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