

CONTINUITY

Preservation Action Council of San Jose Newsletter

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HISTORIC DISTRICT LISTING THREATENED IF JOSE THEATRE DEMOLISHED! MONTGOMERY HOTEL LOSS WOULD FURTHER WEAKEN DOWNTOWN HISTORIC STRUCTURES INVENTORY...

AN UPDATE ON THE JOSE LAWSUIT, AND STATUS OF THESE TWO ISSUES

by Tom Simon

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NOTE: Α public hearing before the Director of Planning will be held Wednesday, May 20, at 10AM in City Hall Council Chambers, requesting a Historic Preservation Permit for the demolition of the Jose Theatre. **VERY IMPORTANT THAT** YOU ATTEND!

t has been several months since we started legal action to save four historic buildings within the Downtown Commercial Historic District. Of course the most prominent of these buildings is the Jose Theater, but actually the fate of the entire historic district could be determined by the outcome of our complaint. To date our litigation has moved along a deliberate time line according to the procedures in this type of lawsuit. Both sides have been working to assemble the "administrative record," which is used by the court to review the process that the city council used to reach the decision to demolish these buildings. We are now relying on the record that we created when we brought superior alternatives to the table and protested the city's previous commitment to approve the project.

However, two more formal decisions must take place within the city before the project approvals are totally complete: an Historic Preservation Permit (ironically to allow the demolition of a historic landmark), and a site development permit. Given the city's determination to carry out its own development plan, approval of these permits is a foregone conclusion.

Once the court hearing schedule is set, the process will start to move rapidly. Each side will be preparing motions and pleadings, and court dates will be coming

quickly. In the meantime we have been focused on fund raising and on the on-going decision process for the Fairmont Hotel Expansion Project which

threatens the historic Montgomery Hotel.

Unfortunately the demolition decision for the Montgomery is plagued by many of the same issues as the Jose Theater. In both cases the city started out with a privately negotiated agreement with a developer to raze a historic building. Naturally this prevented any serious consideration for the feasible preservation alternatives. It is striking how the city, with its overflowing coffers, is now waging war on the few remaining historic buildings left downtown. Ironically, the city is throwing away the one thing that differentiates downtown from the outlying malls, such as Valley Fair and the proposed Town and Country development; historic character.

Nevertheless, our job of showing the city's irresponsible attitude toward historic preservation is made easier by the growing list of willful demolitions, most recently including the Wier Building and Costa Hall. Redevelopment Agency Plans will be calling for many more thoughtless demolitions, such as Letchers Garage, Fire Station #1, First Church of Christ Scientist, historic buildings on the proposed city hall location, and Wards Funeral Home.

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by André Luthard

Relocating City Hall, an historic preservation issue ... and more!

Like many San Jose residents, I voted to support the effort to relocate City Hall to downtown. To me the benefits were compelling; save lease payments for city departments, co-locate offices to allow for more efficient communications, return the symbolic "center" of the city to downtown, and at the same time continue the process of redevelopment. Heck, the move might even make up for the unfortunate demolition of the historic City Hall that stood where Plaza de Cesar Chavez is now.

The current proposal that appears to be on a fast track presents a host of problems on many fronts. Foremost, the Civic Center complex would demolish at least 15 older homes, apartments and commercial buildings. Many of these structures are beautiful historic buildings in a variety of architectural styles. The proposed site includes portions of up to four city blocks, from Fourth St. to Sixth St. and between San Fernando and St. John. The proposed 13 to 15 story tower would also overshadow the Jean D'Arcy senior housing complex on San Fernando.

Equally important to the impact on the proposed project site, the new Civic Center would have a serious and long-lasting negative impact on the neighborhoods around it. The first issue is the tendency for the city and Redevelopment Agency to grab land little by little. When the San Jose Arena was first proposed, the project had woefully inadequate parking, and ultimately over 1500 spaces were built on the site and many more constructed in surrounding areas. This is likely to happen all around the proposed city hall site, causing the demolition of many more homes and businesses. Second, traffic is sure to be horrendous. Especially hard hit will be the Horace Mann neighborhood, Naglee Park, South Campus Increased levels of traffic, circulation and Northside. problems and parking will not be able to be mitigated by mass transit, traffic signals and other techniques. The Civic Center will not have the beneficial effect that is being sought. Instead, the fragile older neighborhoods in the downtown will decline further and ultimately be destroyed.

At a time when rents are climbing out of sight, the City should be encouraging young families, couples and others to buy an older home in one of downtown's neighborhoods, for less than the rents being paid elsewhere! These new

residents would have yards, garages and the pride of ownership. This would really ensure the success of redevelopment, revitalize East Santa Clara Street, promote retail establishments and reduce crime.

As far as a relocated City Hall is concerned ... let's take a serious look at what other sites are possible. That's my opinion, what do you think?

EXAMPLES OF NEIGHBORHOOD HOMES THAT WOULD BE LOST TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE NEW CIVIC CENTER:



54 South Fifth Street

44 Fifth Street



54 South Sixth Street

More examples next issue. *****

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Please submit your comments and suggestions to Preservation Action Council of San Jose, CA 95109

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Doggies like to play ball and it looks like this may be my chance. The **Redevelopment Agency** wants to put tennis courts on *River Street*, stacking them up directly behind the house of River Street's only remaining owner occupant, Jim Bunce. They say it's only a temporary location for the courts and their parking lot since the bulldozers are scheduled later in the year. I can hardly wait to pick up all the leftover balls that fly over the fence.

I always keep an eye on the weather because when it rains, houses get demolished. In this case the **Water District** wants to remove another 88 houses along the *Guadalupe River* on MacKey and McLellan Streets. Parts of Willow Glen Way and Lincoln Avenue could also be affected by a so-called 100 year flood.

I have very mixed feelings about a recent **House Renovation Award** winner. The owners started with a *Naglee Park* Tudor style bungalow and completely renovated using vinyl siding, aluminum sash and pop-out bay window kits. Their workmanship was outstanding but the style and vintage of the house is now anyone's guess.

Bark! Bark! ... that means "where's my trees?" in dogtalk. I want an answer. Why, after **Santa Clara County** beat up local developers and forced them to save the historic trees in *Evergreen*, why does the **City of San Jose** then let developers tear them all out, including one of the largest and oldest known elderberries in the valley. So here's the last word from Da Dawg. Leave my trees alone; I need them, every one. After all ... I'd hate to have to pee on your leg because I couldn't find my tree.

The Dog

Continued from page one

Unless the city starts to follow its legal obligation to preserve historic buildings we will lose a significant part of our historic buildings. Ironically the city recently became a "certified local government" (CLG) for historic related planning activities as authorized by the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). It is hard to imagine why the city would risk this hard to obtain and highly regarded status by engaging in these projects, which threaten multiple historic districts and individual buildings. With the support of our members and dedicated volunteers, we will continue to fight for these buildings, and the "heart" of our city. Look for updates in Continuity, on our web page and in other news sources.

PACSJ Co-hosts Photography Exhibit



Teresa Hauge Giovanzana

public forum was held at WORKS gallery recently exhibiting local photographer Teresa Hauge Giovanzana's documentary essay "Gioanna Regalia and the Guadalupe River Park Project,"

the bitter sweet story of an Italian immigrant whose neighborhood was lost to flood control and redevelopment.

FIESTA PLANNED FOR ST. JAMES PARK

by Laura Diaz-Chacon

The First Unitarian Church of San Jose which was built in 1892, and which suffered a six alarm fire in 1995, has been hard at work raising funds to restore this historic landmark structure on the edge of St. James Park. As part of the reconstruction process, the church has established a separate non-profit, the Third Street Community Center, which will help to increase the building's already considerable role in serving the community. The Third Street Center, housed in the lower level of the building will host a homework club and computer learning center, among other services. On September 25-26, the Third Street Community Center will host a big fundraiser — "The Third St. Fiesta: An Urban Olympiad." Funds will be used to complete the restoration of the building. Volunteers are If you are interested in helping, please call 292-3858 x24. This is an opportunity to help save one of San Jose's signature structures.

PACSJ's vintage mannequin, (Crystal) normally attired in vintage apparel, was a hit when she entered a time warp and appeared in western gear in the lobby of Atmosphere Networks at the invitation of PACSJ member Lani Luthard.



HISTORIC RAILROAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES MOVE TOWARD REALITY SAN JOSE'S HISTORIC SP ROUNDHOUSE TO BE MOVED

by Beth Wyman

Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors has approved an ambitious plan for a Historic Railroad and County Archives facility to be constructed at the County Fairgrounds in the area which is known as Family Park. A very dedicated group of volunteers has been working hard for more than a year on the design plan for this joint California Trolley and Railroad Corporation (CTRC) and County of Santa Clara Archive Museum.

One of the preliminary concepts of the project was to construct the facility with frontage on Monterey Highway. This required purchasing two privately owned parcels of land at the corner of old Tully Road and Monterey Highway immediately adjacent to the Family Park area. In late spring of 1997, after several months of negotiations and delays with CTRC and Santa Clara County, the landowner sold the identified parcels to another party for commercial purposes. With this development, the Archives/Museum Project team began to focus on the design and construction of the complex completely within the boundaries of the Family Park area of the fairgrounds. The new design required a realignment of the railroad connection across Old Tully Road and a reorientation of the archives building.

The archives building, which is intended to be a replica of the arcade style depot originally located at Market and Bassett Streets in downtown San Jose, is oriented toward Old Tully Road. The railroad tracks will cross Old Tully on an easterly curve to enter the arcade portion of the archives building. The curve will allow the use of a variety of railroad equipment, including steam locomotive 2479 which is currently being restored at the fairgrounds. One result of this orientation will be two additional display tracks for the railroad museum parallel to Healy Avenue.

The largest gain from the redesign will be a redefined use of the \$1 million federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA) grant which was received because of the historic nature of the Southern Pacific roundhouse facility. The roundhouse is scheduled to be moved by SP (now Union Pacific RR) from Lenzen Avenue in San Jose. A large portion of the prolonged discussions with the state and county focused on spending the grant money on the purchase of the private property along Monterey Highway, most of which was intended to be used as a parking lot. Now the funds can be used toward development of Family Park and reconstructing the roundhouse. Separate funding for the

construction of the archives building has been secured through a long term partnership between the Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission and California Trolley and Railroad Corporation.

As of this date, much remains to be done. The relocation of the roundhouse has begun but is proceeding slowly. The county representatives on the Archives Committee have pledged to educate more than 30 department heads about the historic nature and preservation of various records and artifacts. In addition many of the county processes for archiving records need to be reviewed and updated. And after the facility is built it will have to be furnished, set up, maintained and operated by as yet undetermined volunteers. Committee members are pleased to have completed work on the architectural plans and feel confident they can handle whatever the future brings.

NEW ALMADEN HISTORIC SITES TO BE DEDICATED

by Kitty Monohan



The beautiful Casa
Grande has
been purchased
by the Santa
Clara County
Parks Department. The
Mercury Mining Museum
will occupy the
entire first

floor where the two children are standing. The top floor will be used for meetings and offices. The museum should be open by June of 1998 and a dedication ceremony will be held on October 10, 1998.

The furnace plant (right) was torn down in the 1960s by

the owners looking for cinnabar or mercury. The mine office in the foreground will be an image to be duplicated for the large outdoor art-ifacts that will be on



display at the entrance to the Quick-silver County Park. The area now has been cleaned and planted with native grasses as a nice park entrance setting.

CITY FORECLOSES ON HISTORIC MEDICO-DENTAL BUILDING

by Ellen Garboske

The circa-1928 Medico-Dental Building reverted to City of San Jose ownership in March when the owners, The Aspen Group of San Francisco, failed to make past-due mortgage payments. The city held a \$2.7 million second mortgage on the building, part of a finance package which helped Aspen develop the building from a medical/dental office tower to an apartment complex in 1988. Renamed the Aspen Vintage Tower when it was renovated, the owners struggled for 10 years before the building's 59 units were fully occupied.

Originally a Redevelopment Agency project, the actual funding was through the city housing department, which was created in 1988 to administer RDA housing programs. The foreclosure returns ownership to the City of San Jose Housing Department. Supposedly a new on-site manage-ment firm has been hired to administer the city's newest asset.

This latest development in the history of the Medico-Dental Building, a designated City Landmark structure, raises many concerns, considering the city's checkered past relative to the care and maintenance of city-owned historic structures. Will the city powers-that-be allow the building to deteriorate? Will

this architecturally significant building suddenly be considered expendable to clear additional space for plans to move the civic center back to the downtown area? It's obvious that the preservation community will need to keep close tabs (Again!) on city plans for an historic structure.

NOTE: The following is condensed from an article written by Jack Douglas in 1993, after the Medico-Dental Building was converted to apartments, and is a good picture of the history and architectural importance of this structure.

NEW LIFE FOR THE MEDICO-DENTAL BUILDING

by Jack Douglas

The 1920s highrise Medico-Dental Building at the corner of West Santa Clara and Sixth Streets has been renovated and put to new use as highrise condominiums by the Aspen West Corporation. The building has had an important place in the recent history of our city, and with its many outstanding architectural features is a prime candidate for placement on the National Register of Historic Places. It is a registered city landmark.

Opened on April 7, 1928, the building was the result of the vision of a group of doctors and dentists to provide a one-stop medical facility for the city's growing population. These professionals recognized that medical services were subject to the same merchandising concepts as other products and that patients could be influenced in their choice of a doctor by the convenience of a concentrated collective medical operation. This new phenomenon also reflected the growing importance of the automobile, for the adjacent parking facility was a major feature of such a structure.

Designed by the distinguished California architect William Weeks, the Medico-Dental Building was the most up-to-date facility of its kind when it opened in 1928. Built during the affluent 1920s, the reinforced concrete structure has expensive detailing. Such features as the lavish terra cotta keystone entryway with its hand stenciled ceilings and marble walls would grace any cathedral (as reported in the Mercury Herald). The building rises to a full ten stories, with an eleventh floor set back to allow access to roof gardens on the east and west. This floor, which houses a large public room, is crowned with terra cotta shields and torches. A giant winged figure stands in the center. Presumably the angel of mercy, it clasps the medical caduceus to its breast. The toga-clad figure wears a curious warlike Spartan helmet, the origins of which are unknown.

Prior to the opening of the Medico-Dental Building, San

Joseans visited their doctors and dentists in the second and third offices floor buildings along First and Second Streets. An old photo of the Bank of Italy shows a large sign above the bank advertising the services of "Painless Parker," dentist. The Twohy Building at First and San Antonio was the home of many of the medical professionals who banded together to form t h e Medico-Dental company which sold shares to the public and the to professionals who were to have offices in the new building.



Photos by Romney Maupin

Each dentist or doctor who had stock was allowed to design the plan of his own office which made for a variety of layouts and decor. A photo in the Mercury Herald of a young woman sitting in one of the new waiting rooms exclaims: Luxurious furniture makes waiting a pleasure.

Practically the whole issue of the Saturday morning edition of the April 7th Mercury Herald was



Angel of Mercy atop the Medico-Dental Building

taken up with news and congratulatory advertising of the opening of San Jose's new one-stop medical service. The first two floors housed medical services and a first-floor pharmacy with a lunch counter. The San Jose Clinical Laboratory and Bischoff's Surgical Supply occupied the second floor. This floor also included Winton and Palmer's Beauty Parlor and a barber shop. Tutt and Puterbough operated a prosthetic service on the eighth floor. The garage in the back provided parking and a full service filling station. Patients who previously had to walk or take a streetcar to downtown, and in many cases climb several flights of stairs, could now drive to the rear entrance where in a few short steps, they could be wafted by elevator to the upper floors.

My own personal memories of the building were as a patient of Dr. Gerald B. Myers who had an office on the tenth floor. (Dentists got most of the north and east exposures so as to have more even natural light.) On a clear day, between drillings and spittings, I could see north as far as the Bay Bridge. Dr. Myers, one of the original tenants, was the last professional in the building when he retired in the mid-1970s.

One of the extra features of the building was the eleventh floor ballroom. This large room had a generous fireplace and high ceilings with hand-stenciled crossbeams. French doors led out to the roof garden from which one could have an unobstructed view in all directions. The Mercury Herald reporter Eric Johnston waxed poetical as he described the scene in 1928: From this point of vantage (the roof garden) one has a superb view of the entire valley. Below lie the city streets spreading away to the fields and orchards. These melt into the hills, rising at this season of the year green and rose and purple. Standing in the Roof Garden, one reflects that the spot is well named "Valley of the Heart's Delight."

According to Dr. Myers, the ballroom never became the popular public room that the builders had in mind. Perhaps the depression or the competition from the soon to be built De Anza eclipsed this attractive feature. Or did the locals find it hard to imagine having fun in a building that was sometimes associated with pain?

The Medico-Dental Building functioned as the city's central medical office building up until the 1950s when the exodus from downtown to the suburbs took place. In the early 1970s the building was renovated for conventional offices and the name was changed to "Vintage Towers."

When the Aspen Corporation rehabilitated the building for condominiums, it once again became a vital part of the downtown scene. For many old timers like myself, it will always be associated with trips to the dentist, or the place where we lost our appendix, or the many malts and grilled cheese sandwiches consumed at the pharmacy lunch counter. It will go down in the history books, however, as a symbol of a revolutionary new concept of doctor-patient care brought about by such technological innovations as the highrise elevator and the automobile.

LIVING HISTORY DAY ON THE ALAMEDA

by Michelle McGurk

Planning is underway for this year's Living History Day on The Alameda on Sunday, October 4 from 10AM to 5PM. Now is the time for your history and preservation groups to start planning your booth and how you can use this event to raise some funds.

The 1998 Living History Festival will feature and expanded children's activity area, with many popular activities provided by the Peralta's Adobe Days. A new added program will be a "Your Old House" section in the living history area with an ask-the-experts booth. This will hopefully guide owners of old homes and help them avoid making major preservation goofs. The demand for walking tours exceeded capacity last year, so we're already recruiting volunteers for this year. We'd like to add a Victorian route and will be testing our new Arts & Crafts/Hanchett Park route in May with a special preview for members of AAUW.

The Rose Garden Neighborhood Preservation Association and the History Museums of San Jose are joining The Alameda Business Association and Shasta-Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association as coordinating organizations.

Your group can play a vital role and help us expand our reach. Last year, in its third year, more than 5,000 people attended Living History Day. For more information, please call Laurie Abate at 293-8856, Kathy Sutherland at 998-2168 or Michelle McGurk at 277-2522.



PACSJ's Tom Simon, Karita Hummer and André Luthard (center) Accept Commendation from County Board of Supervisors

COUNTY ADOPTS RESOLUTION HONORING PACSJ FOR PRESERVATION EFFORTS

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors recently passed a resolution recognizing PACSJ for working to save the Jose Theatre and support of other preservation projects. A framed resolution was presented to Karita Hummer, Tom Simon and PACSJ President André Luthard. The resolution was signed by Board of Supervisors Chairperson Blanca Alvarado and Supervisors Donald F. Gage, James T. Beall, Jr., Pete McHugh and S. Joseph Simitian, and reads as follows:

WHEREAS, the Preservation Action Council of San Jose acts as an advocacy group whose sole purpose is to

contact building owners, public and private agencies, and lobby elected officials who can influence the preservation of historically significant buildings; and

WHEREAS, the Preservation Action Council has paved the way for the emerging local movement of "preservation political" in order to protect endangered buildings and preserve historical sites; and

WHEREAS, the Preservation Action Council has led efforts to save such historical sites as the old county courthouse, the 86-year old First Church of Christ Scientist building, and the old Joice-Bernal house, barns and blacksmith shop; and

WHEREAS, the Preservation Action Council most recently served as a role model for civic participation by and advocacy demonstrating its commitment and dedication to the preservation of the Jose Theatre.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Clara does hereby honor and commend THE PRESERVATION ACTION COUNCIL OF SAN JOSE.

MAYORAL CANDIDATES SPEAK TO PAC-SJ BOARD ON PRESERVATION ISSUES

All candidates indicate need to strengthen City of San Jose ordinances to support preservation of historic structures.







Ron Ganzales

P.O. Box 2287, San Jose, CA 95109



Patricia Dando

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CALENDAR

May

18 (Mon) PACSJ Open Board of Directors Meeting, 7pm Mother Olson's Inn, 72 North Fifth Street

20 (Wed) 10AM—Planning Department hearing on the Jose Theatre, City Hall Council Chamber

23 & 24 10AM—5PM Civil War Memorial Weekend at the Historical Museum Kelley Park

25 (Mon) 10AM—4PM Civil War Memorial Continued

JUNE

15 (Mon) PACSJ Open Board of Directors Meeting, 7pm Mother Olson's Inn, 72 North Fifth Street

JULY

20 (MON) PACSJ Open Board of Directors Meeting, 7pm Mother Olson's Inn, 72 North Fifth Street

UPCOMING — SAVE THE DATE

September 4-7 — Tapestry 'n Talent Festival

September 25-26 — Fiesta in St. James Park

September 26 — Dedication of One-Room School house San Jose Historical Museum Music, Food & Entertainment

October 4 — Living History Day on The Alameda

he 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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