

CONTINUITY

Preservation Action Council of San José

Vol. 1, No. 1 October 1990

National Trust Awards PACSJ Grant for Use and Rehab Study of S.J. Church

The Preservation Action Council of San José (PACSJ) was awarded a \$1900 matching grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation of Washington D.C.

The grant funds will be used to do a preliminary study for the rehabilitation and reuse of the historic First Church of Christ, Scientist located in the Saint James Square Historical District. This study will be conducted with the permission and cooperation of the Sainte Claire Corporation, owner of the building.

"Our goals are to find viable uses for the building and to begin to ascertain what expenses would be necessary to rehabilitate and operate it," said Karita Hummer, president of PACSJ. Lawrence Bryan, a member of PACSJ's ad hoc committee for the First Church of Christ, Scientist, cites the building as "one of the city's most important historic architectural assets."

Inspired by the Ionian Temple of Ilyssus, Willis Polk, one of California's most famous architects, designed the building that was erected in 1904. It is an outstanding example of Classical Revival architecture with its four fluted Ionic columns and its floor plan in the shape of a Greek cross.

In announcing the grant, National Trust president, J. Jackson Walter said, "With these start-up dollars, San José joins the hundreds of other communities across the country actively ensuring that America's architectural and cultural heritage is preserved."

The program for dispensing small grants for local projects is administered by the National Trust's Preservation Services Fund (PSF), which hold three competitive funding rounds annually. PSF grants range from \$500 to

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Committee News and Issues

St. James Square Open House -Betsy Mathieson

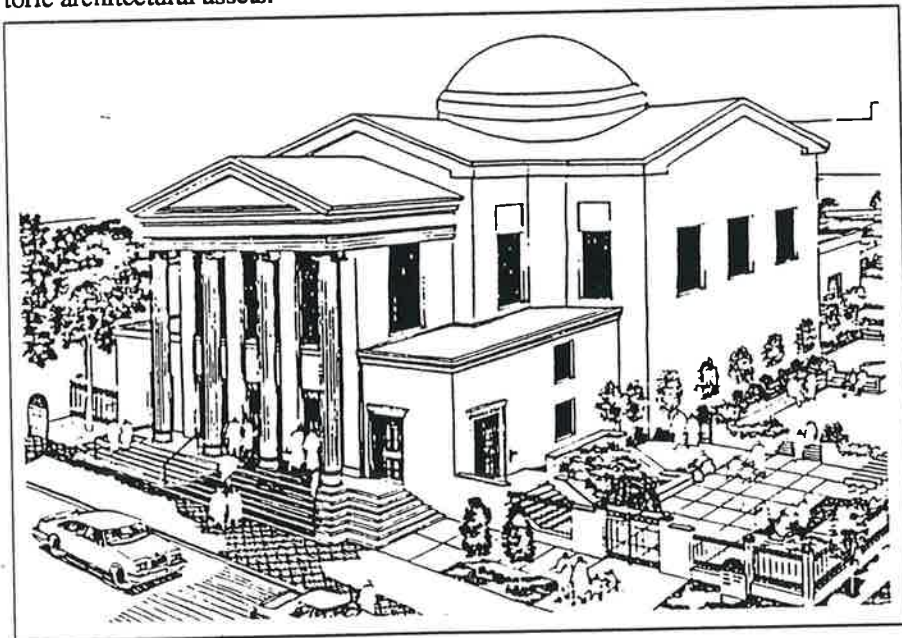
On Saturday, November 10, 1990, The Preservation Action Council of San José will host its first official public event. The St. James Square Open House is cosponsored by the business community of the St. James Square area and features interior architectural tours of ten historic buildings and one modern building, The Santa Clara County Law Library. Exterior displays are being prepared for St. James Park, the earthquake-damaged 1866 Santa Clara County Courthouse, and the 1904 former First Church of Christ, Scientist (see related article on page 1). St. James Square is a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The purposes of the open house are to showcase the architecture of the area, to raise matching funds for our feasibility study grant for the First Church of Christ Scientist, and to expand our membership.

In each building, open house guests will be greeted by a PACSJ docent and a representative of the building, or the business owner. Each guest will receive an illustrated program. Most of the interior tours will be self guided, with our docents pointing out architectural highlights and answering questions.

The San José Athletic Club will conduct guided tours of their facilities. Club Oasis has agreed to show videos of the First Church of Christ Scientist and the County Courthouse, on their numerous video monitors.

Three musical performances will add to the festive atmosphere: Trin-



First church of Christ Scientist (courtesy of Mineweaser & Associates)

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The President's Column

-Karita Hummer

Architecture is an art form that reaches a very wide public audience and helps give a community a sense of identity. Old architecture reminds us of our aesthetic past and new architecture is a public statement of current aesthetic aspirations. Architecture can inspire a community.

The Preservation Action Council of San José believes this to be a most exciting time in San José. As building and development progress, there is a great opportunity to establish San José as a city deeply committed to excellence in architecture, and preserving architectural heritage. Much has already been accomplished. In this month alone, two major preservation projects will be completed: St. Joseph's Cathedral and the De Anza Hotel will be open at the end of October. The Courthouse has just received final approval for funding at \$16,000,000. The Children's Discovery Museum will be a standard bearer for excellence in modern architectural design. We are quite thrilled by these efforts and applaud them.

We want to preserve our architectural heritage and advance good design, in the context of our topography and culture. There are many resources currently in the city that are making outstanding preservation and design achievements possible. Council member Judy Stabile has spearheaded many

historic preservation efforts. The Historic Landmarks Commission has been very dedicated to safeguarding our city's architectural treasures. The Redevelopment Agency has shown leadership in promoting good design and historic preservation for downtown. The County Board of Supervisors has made an invaluable decision in agreeing to the restoration of the Courthouse. A number of developers and builders are engaged in beautiful restorations and well designed projects. The AIA, with its Preservation Committee and beautiful headquarters

"We have a vision of the potential of San José as a city dedicated to masterpiece architecture and preservation."

in the Knox-Goodrich Building, is a rich resource for the city.

Within our own citizens' group, are considerable resources. Though small, we are serious, knowledgeable, dedicated, and enthusiastic – and have a vision of the potential of our city as one dedicated to masterpiece architecture and preservation. Some of us are professionals in architecture and preservation and many have worked extensively on these issues over some time. Others have been quite involved in community affairs. All of us care deeply about our purposes of promoting and nurturing preservation and architecture.

As a whole, San José is a vital cultural center with excellent architects, a strong arts and design community, educational resources, and a strong and active business community. Such tal-

ents need to be combined to achieve the rich architectural and historical mix a vital city needs. There is so much more we can do if we work together.

PACSJ has just begun. We're proud of what we have done thus far: organizing so quickly, obtaining a National Trust for Historic Preservation grant (see page 1), petitioning to save the Courthouse, conducting a Trolley Tour of downtown historic sites, recruiting volunteers on all levels, hosting the California Preservation Foundation Board meeting, publishing this newsletter, and developing an architectural Open House Tour (see page 1).

There is much that we plan to do. We hope to have ongoing educational programs and to develop programs that will be of direct assistance to owners, like tax information, a library on restoration, finance planning, and an inventory of historic and old buildings.

A more ambitious effort is to establish an endowment for architecture. We will have a Watchdog Committee alert to danger in old buildings. We will look for ways to influence design of new buildings. By examining other cities' preservation and design ordinances we can find elements that might apply to San José. We will encourage candidates to put preservation and good design in their platforms.

By our activities we hope to contribute to San José's consciousness about preservation and design, and help nurture an important sense of place in our city. We encourage all like-minded individuals to help us in these efforts.

Mills Act Property Contracts Proposed for San José Owners

Property tax relief could be in store for owners of landmark buildings in San José if an amendment to the Historic preservation ordinance is passed. The proposed ordinance establishes a procedure for owners of such buildings to enter into contracts with the City which would result in tax relief for them, providing they meet certain con-

ditions.

The proposed ordinance is for the purpose of implementing the provisions of the California Mills Act, which established guidelines for property tax relief when owners of historic properties entered into a contract with the city pertaining to the building's maintenance. The proposed ordinance will go before

City Council toward the end of October for approval. In the provisions of this proposed ordinance only owners of landmark buildings would be eligible to apply for such property contracts. Owners would agree to expend a minimum of 10% of the resultant property tax sav-

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Editor's Corner

-Jim Vasconcellos

Continuity n. 1: the condition of being continuous 2: something that continues without a break.

That is the dictionary version. And that is the essence of the Preservation Action Council of San José. Our efforts seek to insure that the many beautiful and historically significant structures in our city continue to exist. We also encourage quality design for new structures, in an effort to continue the caliber of the city's buildings.

Of course, the pivotal consideration is context. Social, architectural and historical. How we build defines how we live.

The purpose of *Continuity* is two-fold. We want to inform the members about PACSJ activities and important issues. Also as important, is to spread the word to the general public about the importance of preservation and excellence in architecture.

I did this column only for a kick-off piece. So, I won't be boring you each issue. But some of the regular features we are working on are quite exciting. Most of what you see here will continue. The Watch Dog Committee may get its own separate column to highlight properties in danger. I am also looking for someone interested in writing an legislative review column. Preservation and restoration tips in each issue would also be of great interest to our readers. Of course, any articles you wish to submit will help.

I wish to thank Karen Bratland for the title of our newsletter. The board agreed that it describes us eloquently. She has chosen well.

Greg Casella, the PACSJ public relations honcho, was instrumental in guiding, planning and coordinating *Continuity*. Many thanks to him.

And most important, are those who contributed articles or information. Keep it coming, and let me know how we can do this better.

I think it's a great start.

Trust Grant

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\$5,000. They are awarded to nonprofit groups and public agencies who are members of the National Trust's Preservation Forum network, and must be matched at least dollar for dollar with public or private funds.

PACSJ solicited use study proposals from local architects. Two were received and reviewed. On August 20th, the board of directors endorsed the selection of the Office of Jerome King, AIA. Mr. King brings 27 years of architectural design experience to the study, with 9 years in historic preservation design.

A major effort is now underway within PACSJ to raise the needed matching money to go forward with the study.

Committee News

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ity Episcopal Cathedral will present a carillon concert by PACSJ member Julie Pifer, an organ recital by Minister of Music, James Dawson, and PACSJ member Larry Bryan will perform in a baroque ensemble.

Light refreshments will be donated by, and served at Abigail's Pub and Flowers, Hochburg von Germania Restaurant, and Teske's Germania Restaurant. Guests will be treated to a reception in the Discus Lounge at the San José Athletic Club.

Tax deductible (federal only) ticket prices are \$8.00 until November 1 and \$10.00 at the door. For an additional \$2, guests can become members of the PACSJ. Current members will be admitted to the open house free of charge. For information and a ticket brochure, call (408) 293-5852.

Membership

- Patti Massey

The occasion of our first newsletter is an exciting time for us all. This

Mills Act

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ings on maintenance and preservation of the landmark building.

In other cities with Mills Act ordinances, eligible buildings are not always limited only to those with official landmark status. However, this proposed ordinance is seen as encouraging the designation of landmark status to more buildings, and would be one of the few tax incentives that apply to occupant owners, as well as other types of owners.

Buildings approved under this ordinance will be subject to exterior and interior examination to ensure compliance with the intentions of the Mills Act. PACSJ encourages all San José preservationists to tell City Council members of the importance of this measure.

is my first opportunity to share with many of you information about the steady growth of PACSJ. As of October 1st, we have 35 paid members.

Among the many goals we have for our first year is to develop a strong membership base. Those who were among the first to join have helped that effort. In order to reach our goal, we need your continued, enthusiastic support for our charter membership drive, which runs through the end of 1990. Please spread the word among your neighbors, friends and business contacts.

We have already discovered and utilized the diverse talents of our members. In order to better serve your concerns and interests, a Resource and Interest Survey is enclosed in this newsletter. Please take the time to fill it out. Any comments or suggestions you can make will be greatly appreciated. Mail the survey to me, Patti Massey, 1281 Fremont Street, San José, CA 95126. Results of the survey will be published in an upcoming issue.

I need some enthusiastic members to join me on the membership committee. If you are interested in volunteering, or need membership information, call me: (408) 297-9478.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Oct 27 – Victorian Preservation Association House Tour. Call Becky Smith. Telephone: (408) 947-9568.

Nov 3 – PACSJ hosts California Preservation Foundation board meeting. Join us for meetings at Mother Olson's Inn, followed by a reception at the home of Manuel Lima and Rose Lee. PACSJ members are encouraged to attend and bring goodies. Let's show them San Jose believes in preservation. Call (408) 971-0940.

Nov 10 – St. James Square Open House. Please see Committee News, page 1.

Nov 17 – Preservation Law Consortium for the Bay Area meets in Oakland. Legal topics in preservation will be discussed. Call Cherilyn Widell, (415) 325-4016.

Nov 19 – PACSJ open board meeting, at 7 pm, La Petite Trianon, 72 North 5th Street, San José. Call (408) 971-0940 for info.

December – Happy Holidays! No regular meeting scheduled.

Jan 7 – Deadline for next issue of *Continuity*.

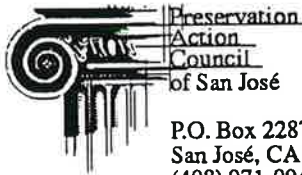
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Continuity is published quarterly by the Preservation Action Council of San José, a non-profit citizens' group dedicated to the preservation and restoration of San José's historic architecture and encouraging quality new design. The PACSJ provides assistance to owners, education to the public and promotes programs and policies for historic preservation and compatible new design. Editor: Jim Vasconcellos. Editorial Staff: Karen Brattland and Greg Casella. *Continuity* is free to members and other interested parties. If you have submissions, questions or suggestions for this newsletter, please contact Jim Vasconcellos, Preservation Action Council of San José, P.O. Box 2287, San José, CA 95109-2287. For membership information, write to Patti Massey at the same address.



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