



# CONTINUITY

Preservation Action Council of San José

Vol. 2, No. 2 April 1991

## PACSJ Sponsors Three Events for Preservation Week

- Greg Casella

Preservation Week (May 12-18) is sponsored nationally by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This year's theme is "Celebrate Your Heritage." PACSJ is sponsoring three local events:

**Monday, May 13, 7:30pm at La Petite Trianon, 72 North Fifth St.**

**"Lights, Camera, Action; Theaters as a Community Resource."**

Learn how historic theaters can enliven and enrich San José. Three speakers will address theater preservation projects on both the local and national level. Bob Ruff from the Redevelopment Agency of San José will provide an overview, along with a slide presentation of the exciting Fox Theater project. Dennis Skaggs, a partner in the Camera One Media Group will share the challenges and joys involved in bringing The Towne Theater back to full use. And finally Nadine Salonites, the Western Region Representative of The League of American Theaters, will provide perspective on successful projects throughout the country which have not only preserved beautiful historic theaters, but provide a rich base of entertainment for their cities.

**Wednesday, May 15, 7:30pm at La Petite Trianon, 72 North Fifth.**

**"Earthquakes, Homes and Historic Structures: The How-to's of retrofitting for a safer building."**

This event is co-hosted by the Victorian Preservation Association of Santa Clara Valley. A panel of professionals will walk you through retrofitting, moderated by Ron Hazelton, KGO-TV's "House Doctor." The distinguished panel will include Ralph Gareth Gray, Architect/Structural Engineer; Craig Mineweaser, AIA Architect; Betsy

Mathieson, Geologist/Preservationist; Martin Mieger, General Contractor; and Douglas Hanson, Property Inspector with Toltec Inspection Services.

**Friday, May 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at 52 & 54 W. Santa Clara.**

**Benefit Art Reception.**

As the conclusion to Preservation Week activities in San José, The Bingham Gallery and Vigal Coffee Roasting Company will host an art reception. Paintings of local and national artists will be on view, including new works by Ken Baxter and Graydon Foulger. Ten per cent of all sales at the viewing will go to PACSJ. Additionally featured will be Ken Baxter's untitled landscape of Pacific Grove Gardens. This 1986, oil on canvas painting has been donated by The Bingham Gallery for silent auction, with full benefit to the PACSJ Watchdog Committee and Preservation Action Line.

Admission is \$5 for each event, PACSJ and VPA members admission is \$3. Make your reservations now by calling (408) 998-5034.

The Preservation Week committee worked very hard on this event from the beginning of the year. The umbrella committee was co-chaired by Don Schallock and Greg Casella. The theater panel was chaired by Patty Massey and Bill Zavlaris with help from Jackie MacIntire. Theo Van Dyne and Tom King did a great job with the Earthquake panel (with many helpers from VPA - please call Theo for names!!). Don Schallock and Jeff George have worked with the GENEROUS support of the Bingham Gallery and Vigal Coffee Roasting Company on the Reception. Thank you all for your great efforts to pull off another successful event.

## Committee News and Issues

### 1991 Open House

- Betsy Mathieson

The 1991 Open House Committee held its initial meeting at April 24. Tentative dates are October 5th or 12th. The location will be the Historic Commercial District. The district is bounded by E. Santa Clara, 3rd/4th, E. San Fernando and 1st.

Potential sponsors are the San José Downtown Association, Redevelopment Agency, and the Santa Clara County Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

We need volunteers to coordinate all activities for the event. Call Betsy Mathieson at (408) 293-5852 if you would like to help.

### Government Affairs

- Betsy Mathieson

City Councilman David Pandori has offered to meet with members of the PACSJ to discuss issues of concern with which our City government may be able to help. The Government Affairs Committee met on April 10 to list high-priority issues to discuss with David. Betsy Mathieson, Karita Hummer, Paul Bernal, Keith Watt, and Sharon Heinrichs were present. We plan to ask the City to:

- Expedite update of the San José Inventory of Historic Resources.
- Specify that a structure's landmark status or inventory listing be part of the property title.
- Arrange meetings with Planning and Building Departments to

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## A City by Design

- Bill Zavlaris

As most of you are aware by now, a controversy has arisen over the last five months concerning the fate of the large Colonial Revival residence on the San José State campus, known as the home of Victor Scheller, a prominent early 20th century district attorney. In characteristic fashion for San José State, the building, considered a non-contributing structure is slated for demolition (or removal if a buyer can be found) to make way for yet another massive high-rise.

The plight of this building was brought to the attention of PACSJ by member

April Halberstadt and immediately the board decided to take some action.

This action first took the form of Tom King's emergency mailing. Likewise, a committee was organized to develop a strategy on how to save this structure. The goals were defined as follows:

1. Save the building on site for use by the University.
2. Save the building on a related site eastward on San Carlos Street for use by the University
3. Encourage public agencies to view the site for use in future projects
4. Encourage private interest for relocation elsewhere in the center city.

Meetings were arranged with the University's planning and facilities de-

velopment office in order to ascertain their position and flexibility, and to make our positions known.

After the initial meetings affirmed the worst case scenario as being San José State's position, the decision was made to attack the problem using outside community influence.

Chris Panopolos arranged for meetings with prominent local persons on the University's advisory committee.

Paul Bernal began a petition drive and sought the influence of those members of the local legal community who are interested in historical matters.

David Pandori and Judy Henderson, representing City Council member Judy Stabile, added important city backing to our cause. Karita Hummer and April, co-chairs, tried to hold the various members of the committee together, while continuing dialogue with the university through its president, Gail Fullerton.

The positive news is that all of the above activity put enough pressure on the University so that the original demolition date was extended for two months. Also, most recently, the City of San José has shown interest, through action by the city council, in exploring possible uses of the building within the Guadalupe Gardens project.

The battle is far from over, but in one sense PACSJ has already won; for we have shown how we can use the many resources of the organization to present the preservation position as a viable ingredient in San José's future development. Those of you interested in the project, with ties to San José State; or with definite ideas on how to save and/or use the Scheller House are greatly encouraged to contact members of this committee.

My part in the above activity was to try to raise community awareness of the site through local media. The newspaper that has been most supportive of the Scheller house has been the San José Mercury News first through an editorial from Barbara Vroman and then by publishing my article on the project. Both actions have been very important in making the community aware of not

## The President's Column

- Karita Hummer

We have a very full agenda this year with many programs and projects underway or planned. Our newsletter goes in to some detail on a number of these projects. They're all quite exciting, and we hope the community will feel enriched by them. We're having a lot of fun putting them together.

To start with, we are opening our office and resource center very soon. We feel this is a major step forward in becoming a professional organization. We plan to celebrate with an Open House, and would welcome everyone to attend. Stay tuned for more details.

To celebrate Preservation Week, May 12-18, we are sponsoring a historic theater panel on May 13th, co-sponsoring with the Victorian Preservation Association an earthquake retrofit panel on May 15 at Mother Olson's Inn, and holding an ARTS-Preservation reception at Bingham Art Gallery and Vigal Coffee Roasting Company on Friday Evening, May 17th. These events will be educational and a lot of fun. We look forward to a good community and membership response to these events.

As the results of the former First Church of Christ, Scientist building preliminary study by Jerry King, AIA, are released, we will be actively pro-

moting the recommendations of the study. We've been doing all that we can to ensure the Preservation of the Victor Scheller House on San José State University campus, and we already take pride that the building has not been demolished. We'll be forming an ongoing Watchdog Committee and hotline for endangered buildings.

We will sponsor our annual architectural open house tour in the Fall, in the downtown historic commercial district. As we did last year, this event will be conducted in co-operation with businesses downtown, and should be the highlight of our year. We aim to publish a new brochure in the fall as well.

These program goals can only be met, though, with two chief ingredients: 1) Active participation of members and volunteers and 2) Funds. These program goals cannot be realized without substantial teamwork and financial resources. Commit today to make Preservation and Good Design happen in San José. Become an active member by working on one or more of these events. Come to a meeting and find out how. Complete the membership form on the back and send it in. Get a friend to join as well. Send a contribution today. To reach our goals, we need your help!

only this building, but of historic preservation in general.

What follows is the unedited version of my article for the Mercury, next quarter I will resume with my original plans for this column by discussing local historic architectural styles.

Saving San José State's Victor Scheller House: Teaching Pride of Place.

San José State University is many things to many people. It is, for example, a fine place to receive a college education to thousands of undergraduates, a cultural resource to hundreds of thousands of Santa Clara Valley residents, and (for this year at least) a home to an exciting football team for millions of people from throughout the Bay Area and Northern California.

But unfortunately like its namesake city, San José State has never engendered a strong sense of place to any of the myriad of users who benefit from its riches. This lack of identification is part historic, part circumstantial and part subconscious.

The parallels between the city of San José and San José State are not in the least bit forced. Both are extremely historic: one being the oldest civil settlement in California, while the other is the state's oldest public institution of higher learning. Both were well established with important architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries; and both experienced an explosion of growth between 1950 and 1975 that all but obliterated any sense of their past importance.

Whereas the city of San José abandoned its downtown in favor of sprawling in all directions throughout the valley, San José State was limited by the

physical boundaries of the existing city and could only grow upward. The results were the same, however. As the city allowed so many of its architectural treasures to be demolished through neglect, San José State also allowed almost all of its significant and site specific historic buildings to be leveled and replaced by standardized, impersonal structures. Gone were most, but importantly not all, of the landmarks that provided each entity with its sense of

both physically and spiritually.

San José State, on the other hand, seems stuck in the mindset of the 1950's. It refuses to acknowledge the unique qualities of its city setting and plans as if it were constructed on some vacant open field.

The element that makes the physical campus unique is the very fact that it has always been defined by its tremendous mixture of structures. San José State utilizes at once educational building designs reflecting the last 75

years of architectural change, as well as those residential and commercial buildings of the surrounding city that it has overtaken during its growth from a population in the hundreds to the over 20,000 students of today. It never received a grand plan such as Frederick Law Olmstead Jr.'s Stanford or John Gallen Howard's Berkeley. But this lack of formal design comprises its very charm. It mixes campus with community; high-rises with single-story residences; open plazas with narrow, tree-lined paths; and Mediterranean-influenced designs with minimalist boxes. In short, it is a city campus

and more specifically the city of San José's campus.

Without question San José State is the community's major educational institution. By virtue of its very size, it educates the majority of local four year graduates providing (among others) the teachers, engineers, artists, musicians, business persons; and just regular folk who make up this dynamic region. The Santa Clara Valley contains thousands of proud alumni who have never been given a specific site on campus in which to identify and to revel in the qualities of

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Victor Scheller House, illustration by Jeffry Michael George

unique place.

Today, however, the city of San José and its citizens have begun to realize the importance of retaining those significant pieces of its past as being a major component in achieving a truly distinctive and livable urban environment. One only has to hail the triumphs of a restored St. Joseph's Cathedral, marvel at the quality and variety of buildings comprising a saved St. James Park historic district; or see the many private residential restorations throughout the downtown neighborhoods to witness what an important factor this renewal has been in improving the city's image

# Historic Round House in San José to be Demolished by Southern Pacific

-Drew DeAmicis

*Editor's Note: Drew is an Environmental Science senior at SJSU. She originally wrote this piece for the Historic Preservation class taught by Beth Wyman.*

The sun sets slowly behind the distant buildings, an orange hue cast on cracks, chipped brick and broken windows revealing a charisma not everyone may sense. Suddenly, a clamor of bells, railroad bars come down. As a train horn sounds and the steel beast rages by, the engineer waves like a friend. The rusted sign on the building makes me wonder what this place was like in its heyday. What were the people like that worked here and what life was like then? The old sign reads, "ROUNDHOUSE."

Used for repair and maintenance, the Round House was built in 1893 when San José was mainly prune and apricot orchards. It is located at 575 Lenzen Street. Southern Pacific is the original and present owner.

The Round House is formed around the turntable, an eighty-foot, air operated structure used for rotating trains. Trains of this bygone era were not made

to go backwards. Modern technology has made it obsolete, creating the historic significance of the round house. The building, made of old brick with an aluminium roof, is open on the side of the turntable. Originally, it sported fifteen stalls, but since the 1906 earthquake, only four remain. Within the train yard there are other buildings and structures such as small equipment sheds, an employee building, water towers, and, of course, train tracks.

The Round House served the South Pacific Coast narrow gauge railroad between San José and Santa Cruz. It is one of four remaining round houses in the state. This one has the last operating turntable and is the only one to bear the sign "Round House." The others are located in Oakland, Bayshore, and Los Angeles.

The research on this building was difficult. The information found was

vival architectural style.

The exterior exhibits a large, raised front porch with neo-classical balustrade, wooden columns, rounded bay window; and dormer windows punctuating the dominant roofline.

The interiors contain, among other features, inlaid wooden floors, a fine palladian doorway, and a unique tile fireplace. Without question there are no other interior spaces on campus of equal intimacy and elegance. As a major participant in the City of San José's historic sites survey of the late 1970's, I can unequivocally state that the residence would have been considered architecturally significant to the city had it not been constructed on University property and thus outside of the survey's area of review.

Yet the University wants to tear the building down following a two month grace period if it cannot find someone to

scattered in bits and pieces. Unfortunately, I learned that the Round House Historian had passed away two years ago. There is no book on the Round House but, a few San José railroad books had photographs.

The owner is a national company with many other historical round houses and train stations. Through the years technology in transportation has decreased the use of trains. As a result, trains, and everything else catering to trains, began to deteriorate while Southern Pacific placed its focus elsewhere. As people began to recognize the historical significance of this building, the move to save it began. However, Southern Pacific had no interest in the building being recognized, mainly because the rules and regulations placed on their buildings and land according to preservation law. It is sad to know that an important part of history is deteriorating and may be destroyed. I find this is a depressing and frustrating notion.

My involvement will continue with the filling of papers and further research to move the Round House onto the National Register. The Round House and its history must not fade into a forgotten part of our heritage.

move it to a private residential lot. Once again the campus will lose a piece of its past. Once again the human scale of this building will be replaced by an impersonal high rise. Both San José State and the city itself will be diminished by this action.

But what the University clearly sees as a liability can in fact become a major asset. Here is an existing space that could become that focal point for State's alumni, for special collections; or for future fundraising.

In this era of major educational cutbacks at the state level, San José State is going to be forced into acknowledging what the University of California system already has: that the state government will only provide the bare bones for facilities and that the local private sector (including alumni and friends) must be encouraged to support those qualities that raise the campus above the

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the university's past and present glories. This need not be so.

On the southwest corner of the campus on San Carlos Street there exists a very handsome, though noticeably neglected, early 20th century residence that was once the home of a prominent local citizen, Mr. Victor Scheller (noted in his obituary as both Santa Clara County's and California's youngest district attorney).

The structure itself is a significant piece of local residential design. Even with the obvious rear additions and the partially filled-in front porch, the Scheller house reflects the qualities of a major, 5,000 square foot home built during the first decade of the Twentieth Century and designed in California's unique adaptation of the Colonial Re-

mediocre. What better space to entertain future donors, to fill with campus art from a nationally recognized department; or to highlight campus academic and/or athletic honors than the Scheller House. The interior spaces could even be configured to support more than one function (all with the combined purpose of raising the visibility of the University's value to the community). This space could provide that much needed bridge between the University, its alumni; and the surrounding metropolitan region.

Even the building's present location acts in its favor. A handsomely restored structure would become a prominent feature for anyone entering the campus through the proposed main gates at Fourth and San Carlos Streets.

Most importantly, however, San José State would be demonstrating its commitment and respect to the surrounding community and the fact that it too can become as enlightened as the City in being able to grow at the same time that it preserves its existing distinctive heritage.

As a first step, then, the University should suspend its scheduled demolition, re-classify the structure's current status from "temporary" to "permanent;" and allow the friends, alumni and concerned citizens of the region to begin studies as to how to utilize the building so as to achieve a result most beneficial to all.

The optimal goal for the Scheller House is as a beautifully restored structure on its present site that would add distinction to the University's setting, that would instill pride among the alumni and friends of San José State (that in turn could become the genesis for future fundraising), that would strengthen the sense of shared commitment between the University and the City of San José; and that would show the community how much the University values its unique heritage and relationship with the region.

San José State could once again do what it does best: teach. In this case the lesson would be pride of place.

## Committee News

*from page 1*

- improve their preservation awareness.
- Improve fire prevention .
- Devise methods to stop neglect.
- Facilitate house moving when on-site preservation is impossible.
- Promote and develop financial incentives for preservation.
- Apply rehabilitation standards to city-funded projects and encourage their use in private projects.
- Develop design guidelines for rehabilitation and for new construction in historic areas.
- Provide a preservation consultant to assist project applicants.
- Facilitate improvements to historic districts.

The Government Affairs Committee needs a chairman. Call Betsy, (408) 293-5852 if you would like to help.

## Membership

-Patti Massey

April marked the beginning of our 1991 membership drive. We now have 120 members. Our goal is to double that this year. We are grateful to those of you who have supported us in our exciting first year, and we are looking forward to sharing the satisfaction of meeting this year's goals together.

The long awaited member rosters are now available at the monthly board meetings.

On the back of *Continuity* you will find a membership form. If you are a current member, please renew as soon as possible. The work of identifying endangered structures and supporting quality architecture takes time and money. If you are reading this newsletter and are not a member, you know about the broad range of opportunities to learn about San José's architectural character, and to participate in its protection and formation. Please join us, we need your help.

## Calendar

**April 18-May 19** – American Cancer Society. Designer Showcase held at the 1911 Fleishacker Estate, designed by Greene and Greene. 10-4 daily, and 6-8 Wed. Tickets \$15, (415) 578-1706.

**May 9-12** – California Preservation Foundation annual Preservation Conference in Santa Barbara. Call (415) 763-0972 for info.

**May 12-18** – National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Week.

**May 20** – PACSJ Open Board Meeting. 7 p.m., Mother Olson's Inn.

**Oct 16-20** – 45th National Preservation Conference. San Francisco. Call (800) YES-NTHP.

## Note Cards Drawn by PACSJ Member

- Betsy Mathieson

The architectural illustration note cards you may have seen with the PACSJ logo at several downtown businesses were created by member Jeffrey Michael George. Jeff generously donated the cards to us at cost to sell as a fundraiser. We obtained a resale license and gave PACSJ Treasurer Greg Casella the responsibility of remitting quarterly sales tax receipts to the State.

Each pack of five note cards costs \$6.95 and contains one illustration of each of the following landmarks: San José Museum of Art (1892 Post Office), Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, Japanese Friendship Garden, Tower at San José State, and Downtown Pavilion and Fairmont Hotel. The following downtown San José businesses are generously selling the cards at no cost to us: Mosher's Ltd., Schurra's Candy Factory, Two Virgins, Machu Picchu Folk Art and Gallery of the Americas, Abigail's Pub & Flowers, and the American Institute of Architects. Please patronize these businesses that support historic preservation!

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Circle appropriate category and enclose check

<b>New or Renewal</b>	Senior (over 65)	\$10	Lifetime Benefactor	\$1000
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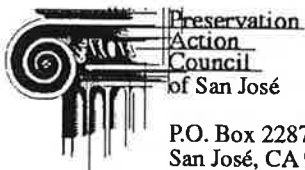
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Other \_\_\_\_\_

Cut out this application, enclose check, and mail to address below.

*Continuity* is published quarterly by the Preservation Action Council of San José, a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the preservation and restoration of San José's historic architecture and encouraging quality new design. PACSJ provides assistance to owners, education to the public and promotes programs and policies for historic preservation and compatible new design. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of PACSJ. **Editor:** Jim Vasconcellos. **Editorial Staff:** Karen Bratland and Greg Casella. Send correspondence to the address below. Entire contents copyright, PACSJ.



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