



CONTINUITY

Newsletter of the Preservation Action Council of San José

Volume 5, Number 4, July/August 1994



Preservation Action Council of San José presents

The Fate of River Street

at Mother Olson's Inn

*72 North Fifth Street, San José
on Wednesday, August 31
at 7:30 p.m.*



Attend this important free educational forum

- ☛ *Slide show presentation of the buildings in the River Street District*
- ☛ *Discussion of the current status of the River Street district and future possible reuse alternatives*
- ☛ *Report recommendations summary of the US Army Corps of Engineers' report written by architect Michael Garavaglia*
- ☛ *The historical significance of the River Street neighborhood by John DeVincenzi, Italian American Heritage Foundation*
- ☛ *Strategies discussed and community input solicited about the preservation of this important historic district*
- ☛ *Announcements of upcoming events for the "Save the River Street District Project"*

Franklin Maggi, Historic Landmarks Commission Chair, Emcee



Ellen Garboske

Crazy, hazy, lazy days of summer – uhn-huhnn! The beat moves on, with some sad, some exciting happenings. The sad news is that Craig Mineweaser, AIA, has resigned as co-president of PACSJ. It has been a pleasure working with Craig; he gives so freely of his time and expertise. We will miss Craig's leadership, but his reason for resigning is a happy one – his business has grown to the point that he needs to give it his full time and attention. Now that's good news, especially in the current economic picture! We wish Craig continuing success – fortunately, he will remain with PACSJ, most likely as a member of our Advisory Board, and will continue to be available for technical advice. The board members requested that I continue as president for the remainder of the term. This is my solo flight, but with your help I promise to do my best to keep us on course.

I'm sure you're aware that the San José City Councilmembers voted *not* to move the Scheller house. The council and preservationists have been on a roller coaster ride on this one! Councilmember David Pandori gave a great deal of time and effort to finding a

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solution, and we thank him for his support. At this point, we hope a private developer will come forward to save this fine structure from demolition.

We continue to watch Costa Hall. The appeal filed against the demolition permit caused a delay in demolition. Hearings should be held in August to determine the status of this historic structure.

PACJSJ's River Street Task Force is hard at work. Be sure to see the announcement on the front page about their first event, an educational forum. Please join us in supporting this important project. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, August 31, at 7:30 and attend this free event. It's a great opportunity to learn about one of the earliest Italian neighborhoods in San José, see what preservation could do for the area, and have a good time, too! If you'd like to help on this project, call us at 408/947-8025; leave your name and number, and someone will return your call. Hope you caught Channel 11's recent coverage of the effort to preserve this neighborhood and the spots on KBAY radio. Good support from the media!

I feel like this is the end of an era. PACSJ is closing the office at 40 N. First Street. The Knights of Columbus building is in very sad shape, and the time for a move has come. We hope the building owner begins restoration as planned. We haven't found an affordable replacement office, so most work will be done from our homes. Hopefully, this will be a temporary situation. Our mailing address (P.O. Box 2287, San José 95109-2287) and telephone number (408/947-8025) will remain the

same. Advisory Board member Keith Watt has generously offered to have PACSJ return to Mother Olson's Inn for our board meetings. Thank you, Keith, for your continuing support. Some meetings will be held at other historic locations, so be sure to check our calendar (on the back page) for dates and locations of meetings and other events.

Our booth at the San José Historical Museum's Living History Days introduced our organization and the importance of preservation to attendees. It was also a great opportunity to network with other history/preservation-minded organizations. Thank you to all those who helped staff our booth.

PACJSJ's annual yard sale is set for Saturday, September 24, so start cleaning out those closets. Phone 408/947-8025 and leave a message so we can arrange to pick up your valuable donations. An added aspect of this event will be an auction of salvaged architectural objects. If you happen to have an extra clawfoot bathtub, wood frame window, door, or chandelier, for example, we'd love to hear from you. If the item in question is too large to be easily transported, we can make arrangements to have it photographed and, as appropriate, measured. Then the photograph and dimensions of the object will be on display at the sale, and the highest bidder can make arrangements to pick it up. Then these architectural treasures will only need to be transported once.

So, it may be crazy, and it may be hazy, but it's certainly not lazy days of summer for PACSJ! See you at the River Street educational forum!

Preservation Action Council of San José's

**Third Annual Yard Sale and
First Annual Salvage Auction
Saturday, September 24
1567 Shasta Avenue, San José**

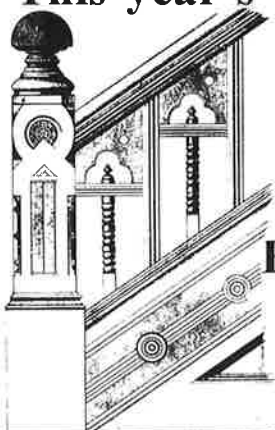


Now's the chance to clean closets, basements, garages, and attics and make a tax deductible donation to PACSJ. Call 408/947-8025 to arrange for pickup.

This year's added attraction is salvaged and restoration items (doors, tubs, lights, ornamentation).

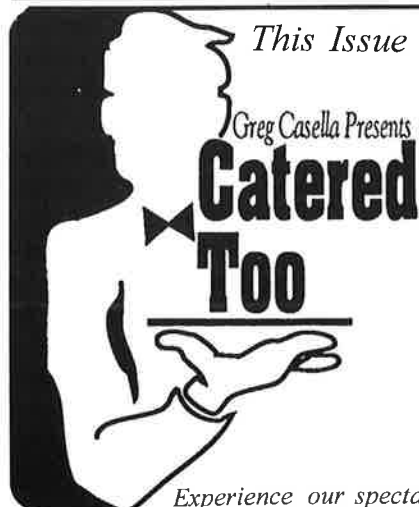
If you have stuff that you can't use, but think someone else may treasure, call John Frolli at 408/258-6675.

He can have large items photographed to be displayed at the sale or arrange pick up services



And don't forget if you need stuff or just love browsing, come to the sale and bring home your new-found treasures!

This Issue of Continuity Sponsored By



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Historic Downtown Walking Tours Offered

Walking tours of historic San José are available each Thursday during the lunch hour through October. The tours are led by specially trained San José Historical Museum docents who specialize in historic downtown San José. History, architecture, and a bit of nostalgia influence these tours. Each tour begins at 12:10 and lasts about 45 minutes. No reservations are required; simply join the tour guide at the starting point as indicated below.

1st Thurs. St. James Park
Starts at Santa Clara County Courthouse, First and St. James

2nd Thurs. Early Pueblo Town
Starts at Santa Clara County Courthouse, First and St. James

3rd Thurs., Old Business District
Starts at St. Joseph Cathedral, Market and San Fernando

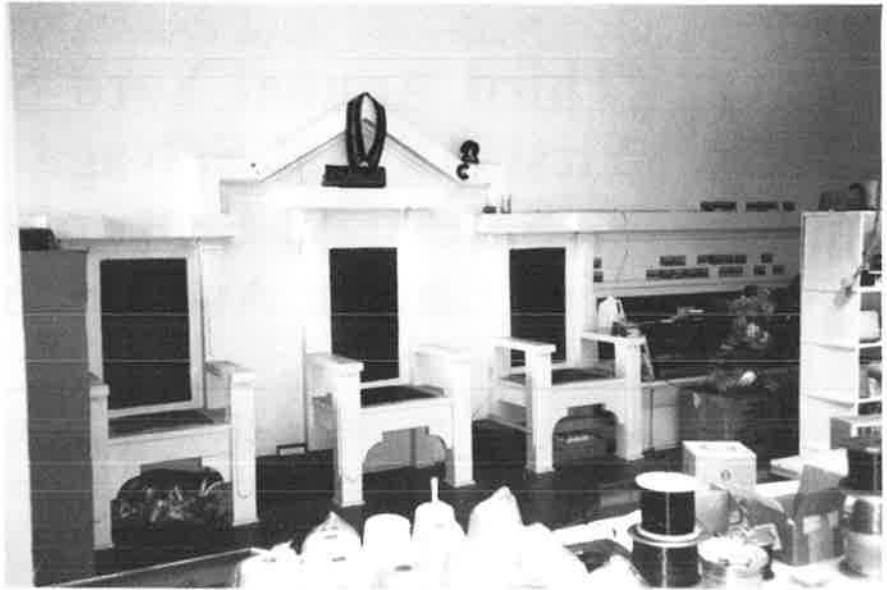
4th Thurs., Old City Plaza
Starts at St. Joseph Cathedral, Market and San Fernando

For additional information or to arrange pre-scheduled group tours, call the San José Historical Museum at 408/287-2290.

Pueblo San José de Guadalupe Public Art Project Seeks Input

Linda Larson Boston

Thursday, August 18, is the date set for the final public meeting in a series of three meetings designed to solicit input from the community regarding how the original pueblo



Currently used for artists' studio/work space, the upper floor of Costa Hall retains well-preserved elements of its former use as a meeting hall.

should be commemorated. This meeting will focus on the direction of the final design proposal.

East Los Streetscapers of Los Angeles have been selected at the artists for this particular project. They have actively participated in two prior meetings to seek community input about how the concept of commemoration of the pueblo should be implemented into a cohesive work of art.

The parameters within which David Botello and Wayne Healy of East Los Streetscapers must create this work of art include the fact that Gore Park has already been selected as the site. Gore Park is the triangular piece of land formed where Market and First streets join south of San Carlos Street.

The Commemoration of the Pueblo San José de Guadalupe public art project is part of San José's Public Art Program. The program also includes three other works of art that the city has now commissioned. One project will address

the Ohlone Indian way of life, and it will be created by Jean Lamarr of Susanville and L. Frank Manriques of Santa Rosa. San José State University professor Tony May will tackle the theme of the agricultural heritage of the valley. Dr. Ernesto Galarza, a California farm worker organizer and longtime San José resident, is the subject of the final art project that Kim Yasuda and Torgen Johnson of Santa Barbara have been commissioned to design. Another round of public meetings will be held as these artwork projects develop.

The final public meeting for the Commemoration of the Pueblo San José de Guadalupe public art project will be Thursday, August 18, from 6 to 8 p.m. in Room 204 of San José City Hall. The meeting is free and open to the public.

For additional information contact project manager Mary Rubin at the San José Public Art Program at 408/277-2808.

River Street Historic District Alternatives Analysis Underway

In downtown San José, the old residential area called the River Street Historic Neighborhood that will soon be the subject of intense public discussion regarding its future place within the rebirth of our urban core. Located at River and St. John Streets just east of the San José Arena, this old residential area dates back to the 1860s and was built to house Italian immigrants near the turn of the century.

As a part of the environmental analysis of the Guadalupe River Flood Control Project, consultants for the US Army Corps of Engineers identified this district of 43 buildings as being qualified for the National Register of Historic Places. In 1992/93, Preservation Action Council of San José signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Army Corps to study mitigation procedures to the impacts of the flood control project on the buildings in this district. Additional parties to the MOA include the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation and the California State Historic Preservation Officer. This process comes under the Federal Section 106 of the National Environmental Protection Act. It occurs to ensure that when Federal dollars are spent on projects that impact historic resources, a full and open alternatives assessment takes place. Section 106 provides policy makers with information to make reasonable decisions that take into account National and State policies regarding the preservation of our national heritage.

The district is remarkably unchanged since its historic Italian immigrant period of significance. With the Holy Family Church (razed to make way for Route 87) as its anchor, and the Torino Hotel (Henry's Hi Life) as its current focal point, the neighborhood consists of small vernacular houses, many built by the Italian craftsman who provided the foundation for the large Italian American community that grew here during the early 20th century. Through the 1920s, Santa Clara Valley was a major destination point for Italian immigrants, and by 1920, the Italian-born population was the largest single immigrant group in the county. The Italian American neighborhoods of old San José grew from the River Street area to include Goosetown (near Willow Street) and the Northside area (around North 10th Street). Historian Stephen Mikesell, who has done an extensive study of this district, cites that the area offers tangible, physical evidence of how the thousands of Italian immigrants in San José made the adjustment from one economy and culture to another.

A report by Michael Garavaglia AIA, hired by the Army Corps, is being finalized (as of late July) that studies alternatives to demolition of these 43 buildings. The draft report indicates that all the buildings can be saved, and the report provides a market plan that utilizes a multitude of funding sources to stabilize the district. The most feasible and exciting alternative is to regenerate the area into a privately owned commercial district of shops, offices, and restaurants that would bring a sense of human scale and relief to our downtown, while offering a

place for services along the Guadalupe River Park Walk.

For those of us who treasure the heritage of our city, the River Street District offers an opportunity to integrate the preservation of some of old San José into our new downtown. PACSJ has been working closely with the Army Corps of Engineers and their consultant to insure that alternatives to demolition are clearly identified. The PACSJ Board has taken this project on as its number one priority, and the resources of the whole board are being dedicated to a campaign to save this historic neighborhood. Preservationists valley-wide are asked to join us in this effort to save these 43 buildings. The Preservation Action Council sees this project as a turning point in the regeneration of a diverse downtown that retains a sense of human scale, and that reflects the historical values of our community at large.

Volunteers are needed to help on the River Street Task Force. If you'd like to assist in this effort, leave your name and number at 408/947-8025.

Beautification Awards Program Initiated

Last December Jeanne Lazzarini requested that the city initiate an awards program to honor individuals who improve the physical appearance of their homes or neighborhoods. Designed to foster community pride, reduce blight and deter graffiti, the Beautification Awards Program will be administered by San José Beautiful. If you are interested in this program, contact the Office of San José Beautiful at 408/277-5208.

Scheller House a Misnomer?

Ellen Garboske

The once graceful home standing on San José State University property at San Carlos and Fifth streets, known as the Scheller house, might more appropriately be called the Martin house. It was built by a member of the Martin family, but the Martin and Scheller families are interwoven throughout the history of San José and the Santa Clara Valley.

James Beaumont Martin and Margaret Craven both immigrated from Ireland to America in 1860, most likely because of the devastating potato famine. They married in Connecticut, sailed to San Francisco, and ended up in San José in 1863. James worked at a lumber mill, and he and Margaret also operated a grocery store at the corner of St. John and Autumn streets. The couple had six children, the second being Henry Beaumont Martin, born in 1863. Henry attended San José schools and began work for a wholesaler, G. Peirano. In 1892, he established his own wholesale house, HB Martin & Co., on S. Market Street.

The first Scheller to come to America was Louis, who immigrated from Bavaria in 1848 at the age of 18. Louis Scheller settled in the Santa Clara Valley in 1852. He was employed as foreman and later manager of Charles Weber's ranch near Madrone. In 1864 Louis Scheller purchased Weber's ranch and began investing in property in San José. Louis had married in 1861, and he and his wife, Anna Maria Gantz, had five children. Their

third child was Victor A. Scheller, born in 1865. The youngest was Louise Marie, born in 1875.

Louis Scheller owned a large tract of land in San José, known as Scheller's addition, near Virginia Street and the Guadalupe River. He also purchased property on S. Fifth Street and built what would become the Louis Scheller family home. He continued to ranch for a few years, but eventually he became a capitalist, spending his time managing his many properties in San José.

Louis' son, Victor A. Scheller, attended school in San José, graduated from Santa Clara College, and earned his law degree from Hastings College in San Francisco, graduating with honors. In 1890, at the age of 25, Victor was elected district attorney, the youngest district attorney in California history.

Victor's younger sister Louise married Henry Beaumont Martin in 1899 at St. Mary's Church, thus joining these two prominent San José families. Henry and Louise Martin lived with Louise's widowed mother in the S. Fifth Street Scheller house until their new house was completed in 1905 at 301 S. Fifth Street, at the corner of San Carlos Street. This house is what we now know as the Scheller House, but it was built by Henry Beaumont Miller for his wife, Louise Marie Scheller Martin.

After his years as district attorney, Victor Scheller helped organize the San José Chamber of Commerce and was president from 1901 to 1911. He also served as president on the Santa Clara County Bar Association and was socially prominent. Victor lived with his

sister and brother-in-law in their lovely S. Fifth Street home for about ten years. The Martins also moved in prominent social circles, and members of the two families continued to occupy the house until 1940.

Should it be remembered as the Scheller house? The Martin house? The Martin-Scheller house? It's reader's choice. At this time it is only important that the house occupies an interesting and important place in San José's history and should not be demolished. This historic house, by any name, deserves to be preserved.

Thanks to Glory Ann Laffey for sharing information on the Martin/Scheller families.



Watchdog Committee Chair April Halberstadt is out of state this summer working on a book with her husband Hans. We have asked San José Historical Landmarks Commission Chair Franklin Maggi to give us an update on local preservation issues.

Costa Hall

Demolition of this historic meeting hall of the Native Sons of the Golden West at 19 South Third Street was delayed in June due to higher than anticipated bids. Councilman David Pandori obtained deferral of the hearing on the (demolition) Use Permit to August 17. He has asked City staff to review the alternative parking plan and cost analysis provided by
(Continued on page 7)

Watchdog

(Continued from page 6)

PACCSJ. This major component of the Century Center Historic District is still at serious risk. We thank Consuelo Underwood for filing a protest on the demolition permit to allow time for further discussion on saving this building.

First Church of Christ Scientist

We are encouraged that building owner James Baccardo has recently shown interest in ideas for resurrecting this monument building on St. James Square. A large group of citizens and public officials brought together by PACCSJ were allowed to enter the building earlier this summer to assess the possibilities for reuse. Of immediate concern is that security of the building is still inadequate; the building envelope needs protection from both rain, pigeons, and uninvited guests.

401 Club

Destruction by fire still remains a primary threat to the city's oldest buildings. Loss of this rare 19th century commercial building at 401 South First Street in the SOFA District this last June due to fire is detrimental to the development of this commercial district as well as the historic community.

Odd Fellows Hall

Commonly known as Coca's Furniture at the southwest corner of Santa Clara and South Third streets, this 1885 three-story Victorian commercial building is the grand-daddy of early downtown San José. Upstairs, three large halls once served as meeting centers for various fraternal

organizations, and one once provided space for a free public library. The Redevelopment Agency is currently discussing with the owners the possibility of reworking the interior to create 20 studio residences. The seismic upgrade and reuse of this important structure is necessary to insure its long-term survival, but we hope the magnificent interior spaces are not irreversibly lost as a part of this project.

Fox California Theatre

The recently adopted Redevelopment Agency budget included \$1.5 million to keep this project on-track. This is in large part due to the persistent efforts of Councilwoman Margie Fernandes who wouldn't let this issue slide out of the five-year capital improvement program as originally proposed by the Redevelopment Agency. The Fox Ad-Hoc Coalition, consisting of SOFA business owners, Arts and Landmarks Commissioners, performing arts groups, and



The Preservation Action Council of San José 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.

PACCSJ, lobbied hard to convey the need to fast-track this project and reduce the scope of the renovation more in line with its original design. During the next few months, a technical committee chaired by Councilmember Fernandes will be developing a strategy to move this project forward utilizing a public/private partnership.

Montgomery Hotel

Once considered mothballed, this project has re-appeared on the horizon of the Redevelopment Agency's five-year budget. Still four to five years away, it is good to see its renovation appear again as a City goal. PACCSJ communicated to Mayor Hammer during the budget process our idea of opening this project to developers in the private sector as a means of finding alternative private sector financing. With some private investment, perhaps this project can take place even sooner.

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Calendar

August

Reminder

There is NO open board of directors meeting scheduled for August.

8 (Monday)

Heritage Council of Santa Clara County, Santa Clara Railroad Depot, 1005 Railroad Avenue, Santa Clara. Speaker: Cheryl Widell, State Historic Preservation Officer. 11:30 a.m. (Bring a bag lunch.)

28 (Sunday)

Board Retreat. Club Almaden (Casa Grande). Send check to arrive by August 20.

31 (Wednesday)

River Street Event. Mother Olson's Inn, 72 N. Fifth Street, 7 p.m.

September

3-5 (Sat.-Mon)

Tapestry 'n' Talent. Downtown San José.

6 (Tuesday)

Executive Committee meeting at Mother Olson's Inn, 72 N. Fifth Street, 7 p.m.

18 (Sunday)

SOFA, South First Street Area Street Faire.

19 (Monday)

PACSJ Open board of directors meeting at Mother Olson's Inn, 72 N. Fifth St., 7 p.m.

24 (Saturday)

PACSJ's annual yard sale and salvage auction (see article on page 3). 1567 Shasta Avenue, San José. Phone 408/947-8025 and leave a message to arrange donations.

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