



CONTINUITY

Preservation Action Council of San José

Vol. 2, No. 1 February 1991

PACCSJ Watchdog Alert Mobilizes Its Members to Save SJSU Scheller Home

PACCSJ is spearheading a drive to save the Victor Scheller home on San José State University campus, situated near the western gateway from the community to the university. The building is a particularly fine example of the California colonial revival style of architecture, and despite having received little maintenance, due to its designation as a temporary building, it is in quite good condition. It is particularly notable that it survived both the 1906 and 1989 earthquakes exceedingly well.

The building was the home of Victor Scheller, who until his death in 1938, was known as the Dean of local attorneys. A graduate of Santa Clara University and Hastings College, and one of early settlers of the Valley, he became San José's youngest District Attorney.

Members of PACCSJ and city officials who met with University officials on Friday, February 8th, and who actually toured the building, were convinced of the value of saving the building to the University.

Through mobilizing a PACCSJ alert, we have been successful in demonstrat-

ing the interest of the community in this building. As a result, the University has delayed the demolition—at least for two months—and has agreed to work with PACCSJ and City officials on a task force to find a solution to save the building.

Now it is time for all preservationists to let Gail Fullerton, President of San José State, know of their opinion about the value and significance the building has for the community. Write or call now (address and phone on page 6).

And also, let's not forget our Preservation friends in the Pasadena area where a proposed extension to the Long Beach Freeway ("710") will decimate valuable historic neighborhoods, destroy 1500 dwelling units, hundreds of which are estimated to be of historic or architectural significance, displace 5000 people, and 7000 mature trees. Let Governor Wilson, our senators and state senators and assemblymen know that we care about preservation in all parts of California, and that less destructive alternatives must be implemented to save historic neighborhoods and buildings and still have good transportation.

PACCSJ Reaps Benefits of Volunteerism

PACCSJ has been quite successful in attracting volunteers. Indeed, the entire organization is composed of volunteers – including the board of directors. The Advisory Board and numerous committees of volunteers are all working to promote historic preservation and good urban design for San José. We attracted over 60 docents to staff our Open House on November 10th, 1990.

The Retired Executive Volunteers, a volunteer organization, has been providing us with expert consultation in the

fields of Public Relations, Accounting, Fundraising and Long-range Planning. The Volunteer Exchange and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program have publicized our volunteer needs.

We continue to have very big needs for more volunteers in the following areas: office management, secretarial functions, artists, docents, committee participants in all of our committees. Please call us and say you can lend a hand. If you have helped before, thank you, but we still need you.

Committee News and Issues

Membership

-Patti Massey

Our growth has been phenomenal! Although less than one year old, PACCSJ is up to 122 members. Since October alone, 85 people have joined. Please continue to tell your friends about our organization and encourage them to join.

The Open House provided an opportunity for people to learn about historic preservation in our city. Welcome to the docents who accepted our invitation to join PACCSJ.

Community interest in the preservation and enhancement of San Jose's architecture continues to grow. Over 400 people in the South Bay are on our mailing list. PACCSJ is certainly on its way to becoming a strong positive force in our area.

In order to provide continued communication to all our members we are computerizing our membership files. Please help us correct any errors and let us know of any future changes.

Fundraising

-John Mitchell

It cannot be said that Christmas came too early in 1990, it came just in the (St.) Nick of time. Two local organizations have stepped forward with generous assistance to keep our efforts from being "Scrooged". The Community Foundation of Santa Clara County (\$500) and the Hugh Stuart Center Charitable Trust (\$900) completed our matching funds for the National Trust Grant.

Enough "Thank yous" and sincere appreciation cannot be bestowed upon

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The President's Column

-Karita Hummer

Editor's Note: This is a condensed version of the PACSJ Annual Report.

Perhaps it's fitting that in the heart of Silicon Valley a new start-up organization is blossoming—this time for historic preservation and good design.

The Preservation Action Council of San José is quite proud that in a short time we have established a presence in our community. Many people ask how we have done it.

We have not done this alone. We have had the support and encouragement of a great number of resources in both the local community and the larger preservation community. And we have been fortunate to have attracted a very strong group of community minded and preservation and urban design oriented individuals, willing to devote talents, energy and a great deal of time to promoting our goals.

Early brainstorming was inspired by citizen preservation efforts of other cities such as Pasadena, and Chicago. We turned our thoughts to the interaction of preservation and new architecture; to questions of context. We became intrigued with how a citizen group could contribute to an environment that nurtures protection of architectural heritage and fosters a respectful, sensitive state of the art new design.

Though initially a committee of the Victorian Preservation Association (VPA), early members believed that we would do best to preserve the integrity of our respective purposes by forming separately. We wanted to focus on architecture in general, (commercial and residential) old and new and the interaction between the two. Many of us would retain allegiance to both organizations, and believed that together we would be a force for preservation in the city.

"We have attracted a very strong group of community minded individuals, willing to devote talents, energy and a great deal of time to promoting our goals."

Next, we announced the formation of the group and asked John Merritt, Executive Director of California Preservation Foundation, to speak to us about organizing and related issues. Many people came to hear John. Leigh Weimers helped us get out the word through his San José Mercury News column. We followed John's advice, and had a retreat to refine our goals, objectives, and structure. With John's help, we identified a first rate facilitator in Cheryl Widell, now a CPF and PACSJ board member, to lead the retreat. Her expertise, and the enthusiasm of the participants made this a first rate event.

The VPA gave us seed money, and we got excellent coverage by the media.

We organized by laws, became incorporated and applied for and received our 501(c)(3) tax exemption status in lickety-split time.

Key committees were formed, and

the results were spectacular:

- A grant of \$1900 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) for a study of the former First Church of Christ Scientist building.
- A membership drive.
- A trolley tour of historic buildings.
- A petition for the First Church of Christ Scientist building.
- A fundraising drive for programs and to match the NTHP grant funds.
- A volunteer drive that resulted in

major support from the Retired Executive Volunteers, the Volunteer Exchange of Santa Clara County, and the Retired Senior Volunteers Program.

• The publication of our first edition of our quarterly newsletter, *Continuity*.

• A joint meeting between the CPF board and the PACSJ board.

• The St. James Square Open House, an architectural tour of fifteen sites.

We're already planning our next major annual open house. We hope to celebrate Preservation Week, with a major lecture or panel discussion on restoration and adaptive reuse of movie theaters. An awards program will be established. We're considering additional structures for preservation study. We will open an office, and have a second long-range planning meeting.

Yes, we're ambitious and we're aiming high. Our philosophy is to dream big dreams, but to keep our feet grounded in reality. To be successful, we know we must use our resources wisely. We will not attempt too much, but we will do all that we can to achieve our goals.

Three New Directors Elected to Board at November Meeting

At the November open Board Meeting, Theo Van Dyne, Jim Vasconcellos, and Bill Zavlaris were elected to the Board of Directors.

Theo has vast experience in historic preservation including field materials analysis. He graduated from San José State University in 1982, and is working

in the telecommunications industry. Theo is recognized for his work in managing our operational issues.

Jim has lived in San José since 1963. He earned his bachelors in history from SJSU in 1983. Karen Brattland, also a PACSJ member, got him interested in preservation. He was nominated for his

efforts as the editor of this newsletter.

Bill Zavlaris, currently a purchasing agent for FMC, has been an urban design and planning consultant for thirteen years. His efforts researching and writing the historical and architectural notes for our open house buildings garnered him his nomination.

San José's "Doo-Wop" Architecture

-Diane Blomgren

Editor's note: Diane is from the Santa Clara County Volunteer Exchange.

I was on my way to "the orange" on Alum Rock Avenue to begin my search for "peculiar" San José architecture. The orange at 1920 Alum Rock Avenue is also known as Mark's Hot Dogs.

I'd just spent five hours at San José's Public Library researching roadside landmarks. That's because it took me that long to discover the term "vernacular architecture" which is what the orange is an example of. Vernacular architecture is the term for architecture peculiar to a specific culture. Jim Hermann's and Rip George's *California Crazy: Roadside Vernacular Architecture* shows almost everything there is—and was—to see in such architecture in southern California, with a few out-of-state structures thrown in. Another book, which was influenced by California Crazy, is *The Well-Built Elephant and Other Roadside Attractions*, by J. J. C. Andrews. It covers the United States and has hundreds of pictures—including other oranges but not "the orange."

Most of these structures were used as restaurants or just to serve a certain food or beverage. Others housed gas stations, piano schools, shoe repair shops, inns, or car washes. In these days of recession, one has to admire the optimism of those entrepreneurs that allowed them to construct real estate that was designed for one sole purpose.

Like the orange. Once I ordered my chili dog and orange milk shake (to go with the architecture), I asked the carhop my burning question: Why does a place called Mark's Hot Dogs look like an orange? The answer: It used to be an Orange Julius stand. Suddenly I know a whole lot more about California's past. Contrary to my belief as a California immigrant, Orange Juliuses did not originate in shopping malls. They began as roadside stands whose architecture said, "Here I am, the symbol of California agriculture and sunshine." Today the orange just says, "Here I am, an anachronism, but also a key to California's past."

Most vernacular architecture was a product of the 50's, hence its nickname, "doo-wop," but the orange was an early bloomer, being built before 1936. A later "doo-wopper" is the "real" McDonald's—the kind with golden arches and red and white tiles on Almaden Road. It lies between Curtner and Almaden Expressway and was built in 1967.

If you'd like to see some vernacular architecture and get your car washed at the same time, try either of two Classic Car Wash locations. The Delta Queen on Bascom Avenue and Hamilton Avenue in Campbell looks more like a Mississippi steamboat than a car wash, while Robertsville Corners on Almaden Expressway and Cherry Avenue in San José is built to look like an old farmhouse. It even has chickens and doves in back of the car wash entrance! Both were built in the 70's.

On the borderline of vernacular architecture and pop art are two giant sculptures. Babe, the muffler man, stands in front of Babe's Muffler Service at 808 The Alameda. He was built in the early 50's by Scarborough Lumber Company. Back then, as Paul Bunyan, he held an axe, and Babe the Blue Ox stood at his side. He underwent a facelift when the muffler service took him over in 1957 or so. He now holds a five-foot-long muffler in his hands and has been staring at it ever since. Although designated a historical landmark by San José, he gets no respect from San José State fraternities which have been known to kidnap him.

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these two organizations. As mentioned time was of the essence and we were in a very difficult jam (we're not talking plum pudding here). The holiday season in particular is, of course, a poor time to solicit funds anyway. But (Tiny) Theo, Mrs. Cratchit (Karita) and I resolved that we must not let the First Church turn into a lump of coal (or worse).

In all seriousness, it can be said, however, that our efforts can continue and our faith in community volunteer work can be recognized due to these two very fine foundations. A very big heartfelt thank you again to Mr. Peter Hero of the Community Foundation of Santa Clara County (with special thanks to Julie), and to Mr. Arthur Lund to the Hugh Stuart Center Charitable Trust.

Operations

-Theo Van Dyne

PACCSJ has found new office space in The Ross House Enclave historical complex, located at South Second and Margaret Streets, near Interstate 280 in San José, is owned by CET Development. The newly restored complex consists of three houses—the Ross House in its original location and the Auzerais and Prevost Houses, moved by the city from their namesake streets, to make way for the San José Convention Center.

The Operations Committee is currently negotiating with Dura Enterprises, Inc., developers and managers of the complex, for a lease on a 200 sq. ft. office on the second floor of the Ross House. We are working closely together on an agreement by which PACCSJ will provide tangible, in-kind services for partial payment of monthly costs.

As stated by José Jimenez, President of Dura Enterprises, "For this restoration project, we want as a new tenant, a group that is involved with historic pres-

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A City By Design

By Bill Zavlaris

Editor's Note: Bill is on the Board of Directors, and has 13 years experience in urban planning and design.

As the above title suggests, this column is being written in the hope of developing a better understanding and appreciation of all of the aspects of the design of San José's built environment. After all, the very reason that an organization such as PACSJ exists is the belief that only through a well-informed citizenry will San José develop into its rightful position as one of the leading metropolitan areas in the United States.

Such a scope allows a variety of topics ranging from specific articles on the architectural styles that are found within the city, to columns addressing individual site situations.

The raison d'être of this column is two fold: first to educate the reader about historic and contemporary architecture, and second to inform the reader of the principles and practices of positive urban design in general by utilizing specific examples of current development in San José.

In supporting these goals, there will be references made to encourage more in-depth reading of those authors whom I feel are the most interesting and pertinent. And since so much of design is subjective, I desire dialog with the readers. As opposed to so many "experts" who discourse on architecture and urban design, I fully believe that the process of developing a workable, beautifully-designed city is dynamic in nature, requiring input from the widest variety of people within the community. Thus all letters of support, correction and/or rebuttal will be greatly appreciated and fully acknowledged in future articles.

Those cities around the world that are memorable, the cities that imprint a

specific sense of place, each share certain definable qualities. These qualities range from the obvious (a strong sense of physical setting) to the inferred (people living downtown that reinforce the central city's vitality). Cities are also products of both time and social memory. They reflect the highest aspirations and the most critical problems of the culture at any given moment.

In the United States, the city as a physical entity has traditionally faced a negative cultural bias. There have been many different speculations as to why this prejudice exists. Spiritually, also, the American city has been traditionally portrayed as the birthplace of all that is

"How we deal with these problems will be the telling legacy for future generations. I believe that this is a time of incredible opportunity. Urban America is at a cross roads."

immoral and impious in society (as if the countryside and small town were somehow free of such human frailties and vices).

The reality of history, however, illustrates a far different picture of urban life since the city has always been America's true melting pot. It was to the great northeastern cities that the waves of immigrants first settled. Naturally these new and strange people were very unsettling to the established rural Americans (themselves ironically more often than not just a generation or two removed from the exact same circumstances). The conflict, both perceived and actual, between the existing rural order and the burgeoning urban population resulted in a basic societal schism.

Yet there was some truth to the perceived problems caused by these waves of immigrants. For they came in such magnitude and frequency that they virtually overwhelmed the physical plants and social capacities of the existing cities. Teaming overcrowding and inadequate services forever imprinted Americans with all the worst images of the city. Thus it would seem quite logical

that the goal in American culture has been to "escape" the city— first to the small town, then the railroad suburb; and now to the far greater reaching auto suburb and exurb.

In addition, the economic fact that land has seemed almost limitless in the new world led to forever cheaper lots with new possibilities always on the horizon. The result has been a culture where the individual home and lot are the ultimate goal for the greatest number of people. This is the antithesis of the European city which always focused inward on higher densities (for both protection and due to restrictions on ownership of outlying lands).

It is important to note those American cities which have retained the vitality and density that echoes, and sometimes even exceeds, their European cousins (such as San Francisco, New York, and Boston). All of these places have particular physical restrictions which has forced a focusing inward. The far more common model for America has been the outward reaching city with very minimal density clusters on a virtually unrestricted plain (such as Los Angeles, Houston and San José).

The problem with this 20th Century American model has become all too apparent. The sprawling city, while allowing everyone a small parcel of property, is incredibly wasteful of resources both in the under use and misuse of land and in the tremendous cost of mobility. We have at once depleted the vitality inherent to the dense city model, while we have also obliterated more and more of the valuable surrounding countryside (both as open space and as farm land). More subtle, however, is the fact that the sprawling city actually discourages the social interaction and cultural mixture that has historically made the city man's greatest achievement across all cultures.

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Design

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What we too often see in late 20th Century America are incredibly large horizontal developments that cover literally hundreds of square miles without discernable centers or recognizable boundaries. These urban forms are both confusing and frustrating to deal with.

The problems that we face in San José are thus the far more typical problems facing the majority of urban development in the United States today. How we help increase densities and encourage centralization, how we save valuable open space, and how we develop efficient transportation systems will be the telling legacy for future generations.

Rather than seem overwhelmed by this prospect, I believe that this is a time of incredible opportunity. Urban America is at a cross roads. The country is far more urban than ever in its history. The short-sightedness of the past century has finally become all too apparent. New directions must be taken and new solutions sought. How successful we are in "redeveloping" the American urban form will have an immeasurable influence on how successful we will be as a leading world culture in the future. All of the problems and potentials facing our society (from environmental to social) will be addressed by how well we develop and function in our cities.

Thus, in following that familiar bumper sticker slogan "Think Globally Act Locally", we have an unprecedented opportunity here in San José to develop the 21st Century American city model. In order to succeed, this model must address all of the great problems facing American society today, from the better utilization of dwindling natural resources to the increased social diversity that are the inherent facts of life in this last decade of the century.

If nothing else, what we face is an extremely exciting challenge with possibilities that are virtually limitless.

The canvas is blank, it is up to us to paint the picture.

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ervation such as PACSJ, and for both groups to mutually benefit from this association of a non and for-profit organization and see it work". Both organizations hope to occupy the Ross House in February, with a joint Open House shortly thereafter. Stay tuned for further details!

Also, thanks to the efforts of Jim Vasconcellos we were given a scanner by Design Services for use with our yet to be donated computer system. Jim sent letters of requests for an Apple Computer system to 23 different computer stores. We also are getting office furniture: a desk, three 4-drawer file cabinets, four chairs, a lamp, and a table through the efforts of Bill Zavlaris. In the works are: setting up library/information resources, student interns and obtaining Director's and Officers liability insurance. Any ideas and volunteers for the Operations Committee are welcome.

Legal Affairs

-Cherilyn Widell

The first regional meeting of lawyers and historic preservationists took place in Oakland on 17 Nov 1990. The second meeting was on 19 Jan 1991.

Our purpose is to organize professional services (lawyers, architects, engineers, etc.) on regional basis for coordination of advocacy for specific projects. Chartered not to conflict or usurp CPF's role as a state-wide umbrella, but be a better clearinghouse of resources available to important projects within the Bay Area region.

Issues discussed centered around where lawyers are most needed in the preservation community. The greatest need is in general assistance and advice to organizations. There is a big need for assistance in preparing administrative challenges and appearances at administrative hearings.

We also discussed the need for

strengthening local ordinances through legislation and lobbying efforts. A goal is to assist private preservation efforts of homeowners through a pro bono panel and a state certified referral board.

The name ASAP (ASsociates for Advocacy in Preservation) was chosen. Our efforts for 1991 will focus on three areas: identifying administrative and legal avenues for advocacy, locate and recruit preservation advocates, and train advocates on issues and techniques.

Treasury

-Greg Casella

For 1990, total revenues were \$7998.83. Ninety-six percent of these were from donations. Total Expenses for the year were \$4238.70. Subtracting the \$2800.00 payable architects fees leaves total assets of \$960.13.

Doo-Wop

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Leading a less exciting life is "Dollar Dan" a sway-backed cowboy on the north-east corner of South First Street and Margaret Street. He watches over his corral full of used cars while thousands of drivers pass him by on nearby 280. He used to be "Dollar-Savin' Dan" when he was built in the 60's as the used-car lot sign. But when he got repainted, his name was shortened. However, he's still as tall as ever, at an estimated 16 to 20 feet high.

On the way home from my search, I passed the "_urger Bar" (or was it "_urger Pit"?) and compared its architecture to the orange. It was square. Now I can't even remember what color it was. But the orange is memorable. It stands out.

Today there are several oranges standing in the sun along Highway 99, but they are long past ripe. They're rotting. The Alum Rock orange is one of the few oranges, if not the only one, still in good condition—thanks to Mark Yoram of Mark's Hot Dogs, who believed if life gives you an orange, make a hot dog stand out of it.



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Calendar

Feb 16-Mar 15 – Architecture in Perspective, a free competitive exhibit of architectural illustration Park Center Plaza Gallery, 185 Park Ave., San José. Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat noon to 4 p.m., Thur noon to 8 p.m. Phone (408) 971-4676 during exhibit hours for info.

Feb 25 – Awards Committee meeting, 7 p.m., 3560 Andrea Ct., S.J. Lilyann Brannon (408) 241-5769.

Mar 6 – Fundraising Committee meets, 7:30 p.m. 209 S 14th, S.J. John Mitchell (408) 288-6459.

Mar 8 – Scheller Home Task Force.

8:15 a.m., at Mother Olsen's Inn 72 North 5th Street, San José. Call (408) 971-0940 for information.

Mar 11 – Executive Meeting, 7p.m.

Mar 13 – ASAP, legal advocates meet 7p.m., at 144 2nd St., Suite 300, S.F. Call Fred Hertz (415) 451-4114 or Cherilyn Widell (415) 326-4016 for info.

Mar 18 – PACSJ Open Board Meeting, 7 p.m., at Mother Olsen's. For info, call (408) 971-0940.

Apr 7 – Deadline for next issue of *Continuity*. All committee chairs provide

inputs covering February and March, and scheduled meetings through July.

Apr 18 – Committee meetings on tours, events, and advisory matters. Call Karita (408) 971-0940.

Apr 22 – Board Meeting. See Mar 18.

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

May 12-18 – National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Week. Call (408) 971-0940 to volunteer.

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. PACSJ provides assistance to owners, education to the public and promotes programs and policies for historic preservation and compatible new design. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of PACSJ. **Editor:** Jim Vasconcellos. **Editorial Staff:** Karen Bratland and Greg Casella. *Continuity* is free to members and other interested parties. Send any submissions, questions or suggestions to the editor at above address. Entire contents copyright, PACSJ.