

# CONTINUITY

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Preservation Action Council of San Jose  
Dedicated to Preserving San Jose's Architectural Heritage

Summer 2021

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## Pallesen Settled on New Site!

The historic Pallesen Apartment Building, formerly at 14 E. Reed Street has finally settled at its new home on the SW corner of S. 4<sup>th</sup> and E. Reed Streets. The exciting move took place on Sunday, March 28th, with good weather and an enthusiastic crowd watching. The old girl looked rather majestic slowly inching her way down Reed Street. The whole move was the ultimate in coordination and skill by Kelly Brothers House Movers and their partners.

After weeks of preparing the structure for its big move, it only took 30 minutes to travel the 900 feet down Reed Street, stopping in front of the prepared lot at 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The building rolled along, pulled by a large truck, supported by steel beams, hydraulic jacks, and on 40 rubber tires, five sets of eight. But then it took an hour and a half to very carefully rotate the structure 90 degrees and back it into the lot, with narrow margins on each side.

In time, the foundation will be poured and the building will be lowered onto it. Refurbishing the structure may take



*PAC\*SJ President André Luthard (R) presents Habitat for Humanity East Bay/Silicon Valley President and CEO Janice Jensen with a \$300,000 check to fund the building's relocation.*

many months. Hopefully the Pallesen will be ready for occupancy in 2022.

After being occupied for 110 years, the attractive Mission Revival building will return to life and again house four new families through the Habitat for Humanity program.

For the move to become a reality, (Cont'd p. 2)

# Pallesen Settled (Cont'd)



*The Pallesen, sitting on 40 rubber tires, slowly crawling down E. Reed Street to its new home.*

PAC\*SJ campaigned to raise the \$300,000 funds needed to bring this project to fruition. Generous donors stepped up with small and large contributions knowing they were helping to save a historic building while increasing affordable housing in San Jose.

Kudos to our partner, Habitat for Humanity East Bay/Silicon



*PAC\*SJ Board Members celebrate the Pallesen Apartments move to S. 4th and E. Reed Streets on March 28th.*

Valley, the City of San Jose—who was of great assistance during the long fight to save this structure—and Garden City Construction (Jim Salata) who performed much of the prep work weeks before the move.

One of the many onlookers watching the Pallesen move was Carol Reding Sisney, whose paternal grandparents lived in the Apartment Building for 50 years and where she fondly remembers spending time during family gatherings. She was one of our major donors toward saving the Pallesen!

Another spectator, Carl Salas, has been monitoring this campaign to save the Pallesen from the start. He and his wife, Marianne Salas, committed early on to contribute a very significant sum that enabled the project to move forward and become possible.

*(Cont'd p. 3)*

**Carl Salas  
watching  
the Pallesen  
move.**



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Please submit your letters and comments to [info@preservation.org](mailto:info@preservation.org), 408-998-8105 or to 1650 Senter Rd., San Jose, CA 95112-2599

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# Pallesen Settled (Cont'd)

Urban Catalyst was another large donor; we also received \$75,000 from an anonymous source. Kudos and many thanks to these significant contributors and to all the donors who made this move possible—preserving a special historical building and enabling four families to live in affordable housing.

Thanks also goes to Councilmember Raul Peralez who facilitated the city's help and encouraged all sides to keep talking.

PAC\*SJ is also grateful for its Board members and our Executive Director who spent many hours managing the campaign and soliciting donors. This truly was a whole village venture.

Visit our website, [www.preservation.org](http://www.preservation.org), to view the ABC, CBS and NBC reports and video of the amazing Pallesen Apartment relocation. ☘



*Carefully backing in the Pallesen Apartment on E. Reed Street.*



*View of the Pallesen rear while backing into a tight space.*

PAC\*SJ  
ANNUAL  
MEMBERSHIP  
RENEWALS  
ARE NOW  
DUE AS  
OF JUNE

# Citywide Survey and Updated Historic Context is Underway

The City of San Jose Planning Division has initiated an important project this summer to update the City's Historic Context Statement and is seeking input from the community at large.

A historic context statement tells the stories that explain how, when, and why the built environment of a city developed or looks the way it does. It is usually organized by time period, location and theme, and provides a foundation for the identification, evaluation and treatment of historic properties.

San Jose's existing historic context, *Overview and Historical Context for the City of San Jose*, was written by the late Glory Anne Laffey in 1992 and has served as the backbone for understanding the city's historic properties for almost 30 years. In addition to the 1992 citywide historic context, other focused historic contexts and historic resource surveys have been prepared to understand specific neighborhoods and areas, types of architecture, and other themes related to San Jose's historic development. Further historic resource surveys that contribute to our understanding of the historic development of San Jose were produced for specific public and private projects. One aspect of the project is to consolidate the work of these various studies into a more understandable and comprehensive narrative.

The most important aspect of the project is to identify historic patterns that have not previously been examined or valued in both understanding San Jose's history and planning for its future. Land use patterns and the built environment are the expressions of community activities and reflect cultural values of both individuals and groups.

Past histories prepared for the City often overlooked important aspects of San Jose's social and economic life, particularly related to under-represented communities. The priority of the historic context update is to explicitly connect those previously unidentified and unrecognized patterns to the built environment so they may be brought to light and their importance honored. In addition, new historic resources can be identified to more fully represent the breadth and depth of San Jose's history.

The California Office of Historic Preservation awarded the City of San Jose a grant to carry out the project and the Planning Division, over the coming months, will be actively seeking input from the many diverse communities that make up San Jose.

By mid-to-late June lasting through August, a web-portal will be enabled at [www.surveysanjose.org](http://www.surveysanjose.org) that will provide a means for community members to provide input on historic themes that should be included in the historic context statement that are not currently covered. Suggestions are also welcome for potential additions to the Historic Resources Inventory that represent unidentified and unrecognized themes and patterns in the built environment. Historical consultants, Archives & Architecture, LLC, will be assisting the Planning Division in this effort and will be responsible for preparing the updated Historic Context Statement and mapping potential new additions to the Historic Resources Inventory. ☘

—Franklin Maggi  
Architectural Historian

- ⇒ Do you have knowledge of important historic patterns, people, and structures with untold stories?
- ⇒ Do you know of historic structures and districts that should be added to the Historic Resources Inventory?
- ⇒ Are you aware of under-represented communities whose cultures should be honored in planning the future city?

**If so, from late June through August, visit [www.surveysanjose.org](http://www.surveysanjose.org) and participate in San Jose's citywide survey by entering your information into the web-based questionnaire.**

# Fountain Alley Project—SEIR Scope Meeting Scheduled

San Jose must prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the Fountain Alley Mixed-Use Project (H20-037). The City requests public input regarding the scope and content of this proposed project's SEIR. A Zoom meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 14, 2021 at 6 PM. The link will be available at [www.sanjoseca.gov/activeeirs](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/activeeirs).

This project is proposed in the middle of the San Jose Downtown Commercial National Register Historic District, adjacent and near 27 contributing structures (including nine city landmarks\*). The proposed project is a huge 21-story building that will take up most of the west side of S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street between Fountain Alley and San Fernando St.

The plans describe a mammoth building on 1.25 acres with up to 194 dwelling units (on floors 2-11), approximately 31,959 square feet of ground floor retail, and approximately 405,924 square feet of office space (floors 12-21). All this with only 292 designated parking spaces below ground. The project is to be built on the present parking lot on S. 2<sup>nd</sup> St.

The most disturbing part of this proposal is how overwhelming and incompatible this project is in relation to our historic resources. The horizontally massive structure will loom over our smaller historic buildings on S. 1st and 2nd Streets, rendering them as afterthoughts that don't belong. First Street will look like it's being invaded and consumed

by a huge fungi alien spaceship. Are we ignoring the Downtown and Historic District Design Guidelines? What happened to compatibility of shape and bulk in relation to adjacent historic buildings, or ensuring that horizontal emphasis doesn't clash with vertical adjacent resources? The project is incompatible in scale, material, proportion, detail, and massing with the rest of the buildings in the historic district. Building masses should not dwarf adjacent historic buildings. Larger buildings should be broken down into smaller masses to prevent overwhelming historic structures. Maintaining vertical orientation will result in a more compatible design.

The SEIR must not only address the Fountain Alley Project's impacts to individual historical buildings, but also consider the total aesthetic impact to our historic district and Downtown San Jose. ❧

—Gayle Frank

*\*The project site is within 100 feet of the following City Landmarks: 12 South First Street (Bank of Italy); • 52-78 East Santa Clara Street (New Century Block); • 34-36 South First Street (Knox-Goodrich Building); • 27-29 Fountain Alley (Fountain Alley Building) • 40-44 South First Street (El Paseo Court); • 56-60 South First Street (Rea block) • 66-72 South First Street (Letitia Building) • 74-86 South First Street (Security Building/Ryland Block); and • 62-64 South Second Street (Jose Theater).*



*From S. 1st St., rendering of proposed Fountain Alley Mixed-Use Project for S. 2nd Street.*

*The proposed project would sit in the middle of San Jose's Downtown Commercial National Historic District.*

# Casa Vicky Restaurant a National Trust Grant Winner

The National Trust for Historic Preservation partnered with American Express to launch the “Backing Historic Small Restaurants” grant program which is being administered by the National Trust. The grant program was announced in February with applications due by March 9, 2021. American Express will fund the program with \$1 million dollars, awarding \$40,000 to each of the winning 25 historic and culturally significant restaurants in the U.S. to help them navigate the impacts of the pandemic and support their financial recovery.

PAC\*SJ member and Advocacy Committee member, Lisa Ruder, alerted PAC\*SJ of the National Trust program and set out to inform eligible restaurant owners about the grant opportunity. The Casa Vicky restaurant (pictured below) appeared to meet the grant application requirements, so Lisa worked with Casa Vicky owner, Maria Aguilar, to complete the application. Roseanne Sullivan, a Casa Vicky neighbor, John Frolli, Mike Sodergren, John Mitchell, and Steve Cohen also helped Lisa. It took a village! In April, Casa Vicky learned it was one of the top finalists out of many applications from around the country.

By early May, Maria was notified that Casa Vicky was one of the final 25 winners of the National Trust/American Express restaurant grant program! Other winners in California were Sweetheart Café and Tea in Oakland and two restaurants in Los Angeles. The winners are listed online ([savingplaces.org](http://savingplaces.org)) with links to each of their websites.

PAC\*SJ congratulates Maria Aguilar for winning this grant. And thanks to Lisa Ruder for discovering the grant opportunity and her work in moving the Casa Vicky application forward.

## The Story of Casa Vicky

Casa Vicky, a popular Mexican restaurant and bakery, has been located on the corner of N. 17<sup>th</sup> and E. Julian Streets (792 E. Julian) since 1989, but other San Jose sites were founded as early as 1966. (Vicky’s Café on Post St., Casa Vicky at 35 S. Market St. and Casa Vicky #2 on Story and King). Vicky Aragon, Maria’s mother, chose the present site for its diverse neighborhood and



**Maria Aguilar**  
Owner, Casa Vicky

the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (c. 1930s) Spanish Revival architecture. The restaurant building features smooth stucco cladding, simple terracotta ornamentation and a red tile roof. Inside, the attractive archways and brightly painted walls were added by Vicky. Recently a small coffee bar was installed.

Originally there were two structures. The Spanish Revival building facing Julian Street was once a bakery, the Tiki Recording Studios from 1967 to 1985 and Kim’s grocery store with residence space to the rear. Notable recording artists who used the studio included Bill Withers and Santana. The Spanish Revival residence next door facing N. 17<sup>th</sup> Street evolved into a market and then a Western Union telegraph office. The two structures were connected before Vicky purchased the site in 1986.

Opening this restaurant by 1989, Vicky’s authentic Mexican recipes ensured customers returned often. She learned her cooking skills from her father who was an excellent cook. Vicky was thought to have been one of the first to bring soft tacos, chimichangas, and carnitas to San Jose and may have been one the few restaurants in early San Jose to produce homemade flour tortillas.

## Vicky’s History

Victoria (Vicky) Aragon arrived from Mexico to Salinas/ Monterey at 17 years old in 1927. By 1929, she married Alberto Aguilar and they moved to San Jose. *(Cont’d p. 7)*



# Casa Vicky (cont'd)



*Interior of Casa Vicki looking toward the Julian Street side.*

Vicky and Alberto worked hard in the canneries, saving money to buy older homes, fixing them up and selling them. He was the first Hispanic realtor in San Jose. Soon Alberto went into the lumber business and Vicky opened the former Crescent Market on Alum Rock Avenue in the 1940s where she was the one of the earliest to sell homemade tortillas and Mexican specialty bakery goods in a market. From the market, Vicky later branched into the restaurant business with her series of Casa Vicky establishments described earlier.

Casa Vicky has been honored with distinguished patrons over its many decades including: Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the National Farmworkers Union; Blanca Alvarado, San Jose's first Latina vice mayor; Susan Hammer, former mayor of San Jose; Ron Gonzales, former mayor of San Jose; Richard Hobbs, immigration attorney and executive director of Human Agenda; and Sam Liccardo, mayor of San Jose. In fact, Mayor Liccardo listed Casa Vicky as one of his favorite Mexican restaurants.

Vicky and her husband, Alberto Aguilar, were active in the community. They established the Spanish community organization Commiccion Honorific in the late 1930s and founded Club 13, which assisted new immigrants arriving in the area from Mexico. Vicky and Alberto often gave newcomers a place to stay and helped them find jobs. Alberto was hired by then-California Governor Earl Warren to assist migrant workers.

Vicky will be remembered for standing up for immigrants, donating meals and space for charity events, and for providing delicious Mexican food at her lively gathering place in the vibrant Northside community. She was not only known for her vivacious, warm personality and her dedication to the restaurant, but for her work as a Hispanic community organizer and activist as well as her charitable giving to the community.

## Casa Vicky Today

Maria Aguilar is the younger daughter of Victoria (Vicky) Aragon and assumed the ownership and management of Casa Vicky after her mother Vicky passed away in 1994. She took pride in following in her mother's footsteps. Maria attended local schools and completed an A.A. degree in early childhood education. In addition to operating the restaurant, Maria rescues local dogs and cats and continues

*(Cont'd p. 8)*



*View of Casa Vicky from N. 17th St. looking toward Julian St.*



*The tortilla press that sits next to Casa Vicky's NE corner windows.*

## Casa Vicky (cont'd)

the charitable activities of her late mother.

The tortillas are still made the old-fashioned way in a hand press manufactured in Mexico. Visitors can watch them being made since the press sits in the front corner of the restaurant. Some of the dishes on the menu, chimichangas, fajitas and nachos are American origin dishes tailored to American tastes.

During the pandemic, Casa Vicky's business sales dropped more than 50%. The event catering disappeared and much of the time, only take-out and outdoor seating was allowed. The menu and additional information can be viewed at the website, [casavicky.com](http://casavicky.com).

The National Trust grant funds will be used for improvements to the restaurant building such as increasing and enhancing outdoor lighting, expanding and enhancing the outdoor seating, repairing and expanding the wrought iron fencing, and purchasing additional outdoor furniture and foliage. Congratulations to Casa Vicky!

— Gayle Frank

*Right, staff at Casa Vicky from left: Linda Snooks, José Gonzalez, Maria Aguilar (Owner), Antonia Yañez, Imelda Alonso.*



*Left, interior of Casa Vicky looking toward N. 17th Street.*

*(Photos: Gayle Frank)*





# ON THE RADAR



## Schiele/Garden Alameda Proposed Historic District

The designation of this proposed historic district has been stalled after opponents questioned if there are any exclusionary practices regarding historic districts. Councilmember Dev Davis's office will convene public meetings, inviting the public's input for further discussion. When a neighborhood becomes a historic district, there are no exclusionary practices. The purpose of becoming such a district is to preserve the historic houses, which enhances our city. Preserving our older homes is good for the economy, good for the environment, and good for affordable housing, especially in this case, since some of these homes rent rooms while some are transformed into duplexes.

## San Jose Flea Market

The certification of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Flea Market goes to the San Jose City Council on June 8. Proposals to reconfigure the Flea Market within the Urban Village plan appears to be inadequate, reducing its size to 3-5 acres. The EIR identifies the Flea Market as a candidate city landmark, existing for 60 years with 46 acres of parking and 15 acres of sales booths. It is an important cultural and economic parcel in San Jose.

## Downtown West (Google Project)

The Downtown West Project by Google was approved by the San Jose City Council on May 25<sup>th</sup>. Some wins for historic preservation include four older homes from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to be moved to S. Autumn Street near the Los Gatos Creek. Google will also retain the hopper portion of the Kearney Iron Works. PAC\*SJ is concerned that the Sunlite Bakery façade will not be preserved (only a few pieces are planned to be salvaged and used in another location). The mid-century Democracy Hall at 580 Lorraine Avenue will be demolished. Democracy Hall is an interesting geometric architectural design built with unique concrete blocks. It has a history with unions and working men and women. The building was designed by master architects and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and state and city landmark designations.

## Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP)

The DSAP has been amended from its 2014 creation and was also approved by the City Council on May 25<sup>th</sup>. PAC\*SJ is concerned over its omission of important historic preservation issues. It lacks any reference as to how the historic Diridon Station will "fit" into the overall plans. The Diridon Station site is a National Register-listed Historic Landmark District but we see no statement supporting its future existence. Since there are no references about saving the Diridon Station in the amended DSAP, PAC\*SJ requests that projects within DSAP are required by the City of San Jose to comply with CEQA and other ordinances relative to historic preservation.

Concerning other historic buildings within the DSAP boundaries and nearby, there is no clear position for protecting and preserving these resources that could be demolished or impacted by development.

In the amended DSAP EIR (Environmental Impact Report), there is no relevant analysis of project alternatives or mitigation measures for developers, agencies, or the public to consider. All those involved need a full analysis of proposed projects within this 262-acre area called the Diridon Station Area.

PAC\*SJ sees little to no connection between the mitigation measures or the alternatives from the 2014 DSAP EIR and the present amended DSAP. PAC\*SJ believes that a robust mitigation strategy and alternative analysis should be commensurate with the significance of the area slated for development. ☹

## PAC\*SJ is Still Keeping An Eye On—



- McCabe Hall
- Graves House
- Burbank Theater
- Montgomery Hotel
- Alum Rock Log Cabin
- Hotel De Anza
- Valley Title (former Hale's)

# PAC\*SJ 2020-2021 Calendar

- Jun 19** PAC\*SJ sales booth at Holy Cross Church Garage Sale in parking lot; 8 AM—3 PM; 580 Jackson St. San Jose.
- Jun 21** Monday, PAC\*SJ Board Meeting, 6:30—8:30 PM. On Zoom. Call 998-8105 for link.
- June 26** Sat. 10 AM. PAC\*SJ **Walking Tour** of Alviso Historic District. Reserve spot at [www.preservation.org](http://www.preservation.org). Limited space. \$10 members, \$15 non-members. Details pg. 13.
- Jul 19** Monday, PAC\*SJ Board Meeting, 6:30—8:30 PM. On Zoom. Call 998-8105 for link.
- Aug 16** Monday, PAC\*SJ Board Meeting, 6:30—8:30 PM. On Zoom. Call 998-8105 for link.
- Sept 20** Monday, PAC\*SJ Board Meeting, 6:30—8:30 PM. History Park, 2nd Floor Firehouse.\*
- Oct 18** Monday, PAC\*SJ Board Meeting, 6:30—8:30 PM. History Park, 2nd Floor Firehouse.\*
- Nov 15** Monday, PAC\*SJ **Annual Board Meeting & Election**, 6:30—8:30 PM. Location TBD\*
- Dec TBD** Monday, PAC\*SJ Board Meeting, 6:30—8:30 PM. History Park, 2nd Floor Firehouse.\*

*\* Board meeting may take place online or meet at a different location. Call to confirm.*

## PAC\*SJ Board of Directors Open Position

The members of the Board of Directors are the core of PAC\*SJ. They formulate the overall strategy, secure PAC\*SJ's financial stability, and contribute their ideas, expertise and resources to make San Jose a better place.

If you are interested in serving on a committee, attending monthly Board meetings and events, and promoting historic preservation to the general public and city officials, please go to [www.preservation.org/volunteer](http://www.preservation.org/volunteer) to review the Board member expectations and application. If this sounds like a good fit, email your application to [info@preservation.org](mailto:info@preservation.org). We will contact you to discuss the next steps.

## Next PAC\*SJ Yard/ Salvage Sale

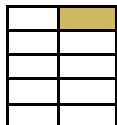
**Coming at the end of  
summer**

**Winter Holiday Sale  
in November**

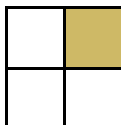
**Stay Tuned for Dates!**

## ADVERTISE IN CONTINUITY!

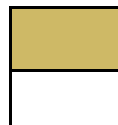
*Continuity* is distributed to over 500 San Jose preservationists, homeowners and decision-makers. It's a great way to get your message out to your best potential customers! For ads larger than the business card, you must supply camera-ready artwork, or PAC\*SJ can provide it at an additional charge.



**Business Card**  
Single issue \$50  
3 issues \$120



**1/4 Page**  
Single issue  
\$100



**1/2 Page**  
Single issue  
\$200



**Full Page**  
Single issue  
\$375

# New Neon Sign Pins Here

New enamel pins (pictured right) are here from Preservation Action Council of San Jose! They are offered on our website at [www.preservation.org](http://www.preservation.org). Just click on "Shop." A single pin is \$15; a set of all four pins cost \$45. The booklet, "The San Jose Signs Project," with maps and details about San Jose's neon signs, is \$14. All prices include shipping charges.

You'll probably recognize some or all of these new designs from San Jose. The Andy's Pet Shop, long gone from The Alameda, is moving from 51 Notre Dame Avenue to 429 S. Bascom Avenue so we hope we'll see the actual 1950s sign up again.

The Westside Billiards sign, c. 1947, is at 1050 W. San Carlos Street. We hear it has excellent burgers and the place has a friendly 1950s atmosphere.

The Winchester Shopping Center Sign, at the corner of Stevens Creek & Winchester Boulevards, is from c. 1952.

The Time Deli clock sign, c. 1950, stands at 349 S. Bascom Avenue but has not told time for a few years now. Apparently the clock was already there when the Carlinos moved in to start their Time Deli market—so that was how it got its name. Shoe Palace now occupies the building.

Our talented Executive Director, Ben Leech, created both the first series of four and this second series of pin designs.



Our PAC\* SJ Shop online carries many other preservation items such as books, posters, t-shirts, pillows and even playing cards. And don't forget about "The San Jose Signs Project" booklet which makes a nice companion with a set of pins for a gift. Check it out at [www.preservation.org](http://www.preservation.org). ☘

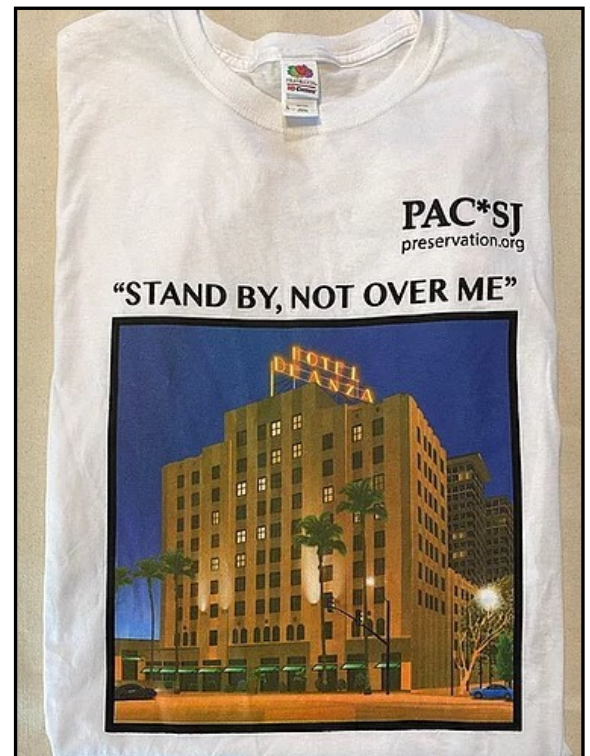


*Shop Online  
at  
Preservation.org*

*Pallesen  
T-shirt: \$25*

*Hotel DeAnza  
T-shirt: \$15*

*Prices include  
shipping.*



# PAC\*SJ Celebrates and Thanks Pallesen Donors

On a cool Thursday evening, May 20<sup>th</sup>, PAC\*SJ held a Members/Donors event to celebrate the successful move of the Pallesen Apartment Building and thank the many donors who contributed to the relocation (see page 18 for list). The gathering was held at the home of Carl and Marianne Salas in Naglee Park. The Salas couple was the first to step up with a very substantial donation toward the Pallesen move that started the PAC\*SJ and Habitat for Humanity campaign to raise the required \$300,000. Thank you Marianne and Carl for your generous donation and the use of your lovely home and gardens for our party!

Over 100 guests enjoyed empanadas, veggie, savory and fruit skewers, deviled eggs and a great variety of cookies and desserts. A planter's punch was served at the bar along with wine and non-alcoholic drinks. Welcoming and thanking speeches were delivered from the upstairs balcony including one from District 3 Councilmember Raul Peralez. All the key partners in this project were recognized.

Each guest was given an enamel Pallesen pin, designed by our talented Executive Director, Ben Leech.

Many of the guests commented that it was a pleasure to attend a PAC\*SJ social event, finally, after the long pandemic quarantine. ☘

*Below, speeches from the balcony. From left, Carl and Marianne Salas, Patt Curia, Mike Sodergren, Councilmember Raul Peralez and Rob Simonds from Habitat for Humanity (Director of Housing Development).*



*Bonnie and Marv Bamburg made the winning bid for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Intl. Exposition photo donated by the estate of John Pendleton.*



*Above, Sal Pizzaro talks with party guests.*

*(Photos: Matthew Massey)*

*Below, the new Pallesen Apartments pin.*



# May Daze—Preservation Month Rummage Sale Success!

It takes a village to donate, organize and staff a huge charity sale such as the PAC\*SJ weekend event held May 20-22. Many thanks to the Wangsness-Liesenfelt, Curia, Salas, and Mason households for allowing PAC\*SJ to trespass for four days. AND of course, thanks to Naglee Park residents and PAC\*SJ members for donating the most ever to any sale in the last 25 years. Revenue during the month of May exceeded \$9,600 including the historic photo that sold at the Members' Only silent auction event for \$500.

And how about those friendly volunteers? Rebecca Smith, Rebecca Evans-Acton, Rosie Gallipeau, Leslie Masunaga, Gayle Frank, Efrat Shahar, Kathy Bunce Flood, Joyce Weissman, Sylvia Carroll, Sandy Swirsky and Lyle Merithew, Bonnie Montgomery, Lucille Boone, Deborah Mills, Heinz Boedecker, Lisa Wangsness, Peter Liesenfelt, Clarice Grant- Coles, Indu Chakravarthy, Ron Hagen, Ben Leech, Catherine Pelizzari, Sue Burnham, Dev Rendler, Linda Chase, Denise Olenak, Shawn McCarson, Larry, Mary Lou Mason, Carl and Marianne Salas, Clarke Burgess, and our Day Labor Center helpers, Rodney and

Julio, and especially our truckers: Gabby Solleder, Lynne Stevenson, Paul Wedel, Tim McAuliff, Steve Cohen, and Robert Carter. We had a guest appearance by John Mitchell who is recovering from a long illness.

Thursday lunch was provided and prepared by Ron Hagen, Tim McAuliff and Efrat Shahar. Friday lunch was provided and prepared by Cafe April (Halberstadt).

Thanks to the many shoppers who stopped shopping when asked to help move something. Many, many nice visitors to the sale asked when is the next one? (Probably the end of summer.) PAC\*SJ will also hold a Winter Holiday sale in November.

Unsold items went to Savers, the Unicorn thrift shop, Three Below Theatre, various pet rescue groups, Saratoga and Milpitas Libraries, Sunday Friends, and others.

— Patt Curia, PAC\*SJ Donations Chair



## **PAC\*SJ** **Historic Walking Tour** **Alviso Historic District**

**Saturday, June 26,**  
**10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

**\$10 members**

**\$15 non-members**

**Reservations at [www.preservation.org](http://www.preservation.org)**

Reserve soon • Space is limited • Audio headphones

For more information email [info@preservation.org](mailto:info@preservation.org)

Highlights include: Alviso County Marina (meeting location), Bay Side Cannery, China Camp, Union Warehouse, Tilden/Laine Residence, SPRR Depot, Late 19<sup>th</sup> century residences, Former City Hall/Fire Station, Alviso Grammar School, Wade Warehouse & Residence, Former Constable's Office/Jail, and South Bay Yacht Club.

# Walking Through Historic San Jose

## St. James Historic District

Our PAC\*SJ Historic Walking Tour took us through the St. James Historic District on Saturday, March 27th. This was the first walking tour where we used our successful, new audio/headphone equipment.

We ended our tour at the historic Moir Building next to the new Federal Courthouse, a good example of new development blending in and being compatible with the historic gems of San Jose. The Courthouse does not overwhelm the Moir Building, is set back a respectable distance, and modern features (such as the columns) relate to the historic courthouse across the street.

Highlights of the walking tour included St. James Park & memorials, County Courthouse, Post Office, Trinity Cathedral, First Unitarian Church, Former Scottish Rite Temple, St. Claire Club, First Church of Christ, Scientist, Armory, Moir Building, Beatrice Building, and Former Ward Mortuary. ☚



Walking Tour guests view the Moir Building next to the newer Federal Courthouse; its design respects the historic buildings in St. James Historic District. (Photo Ben Leech)

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## Market St./W. San Carlos St.

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The PAC\*SJ historic walking tour around the Plaza de Cesar Chavez and Market Street area was popular, so two tours were scheduled, April 24th and May 29th. Tours are limited to 30 guests since that is the total number of receivers and headphones available.

We visited the historic structures and the public art along Market, City View Plaza, Almaden, W. San Carlos Street and the Montgomery Hotel landmark on S. First St.

Other San Jose City landmarks included in the tour were: St. Joseph's Cathedral, the Alcantara Building, the Civic Auditorium, and the St. Claire Hotel. In addition, we passed by the buildings in City View Plaza, including the Pelli Building (San Jose Sphinx), that are all destined to be demolished. Guests were amazed and puzzled to learn that all eight acres are planned to be demolished, replaced by three glass towers. ☚



Walking tour visits the Circle of Palms/California Seal on Market Street, where San Jose's first State Capitol was located in 1849-1851. (Photo: Matthew Massey)

# Christopher Midler Cook: Poor Choices, Rich Architecture

By Krista Van Laan

C.M. Cook was an architect and builder of exceptional artistry. Between 1924 and 1926, he was responsible for a whirlwind of activity in San José and the Bay Area, designing and building over two hundred residences ranging from small bungalows to large mansions and apartment buildings. He was a one-stop shop—designer, contractor, and sole owner of the Cook Lumber Company, which supplied the materials. He was also someone who made some very bad decisions, which derailed his career more than once during his lifetime.

Christopher Midler Cook, born in 1874 in Sacramento, was the son of Maria Midler Cook and A.A. (Allen Aaron) Cook. A.A. Cook was a renowned Sacramento architect, responsible for many important structures, several today on the National Register of Historic Places. Christopher was the only one of his siblings and half-siblings who followed in his father's footsteps.

In 1898, Christopher Cook married Louise Hill La Motte and the couple moved to Oakland, where Cook opened an architectural office. For the next decade, he enjoyed immediate and enormous success as a prolific architect, designing and sometimes acting as the contractor on mostly residential work in San Francisco and the East Bay. Here he got his start with styles that he later repeated in the 1920s, such as the two-story Greek Revival, Tudor Revival, and Mission Revival.

In May of 1910, apparently in financial trouble, Cook was arrested for forgery and filing a fraudulent deed. He and an accomplice had conducted a fairly complicated act in which they forged a deed, broke into a lawyer's office and stole his seal to use on the forged document, then filed the deed and offered the property for sale. They began negotiations with a purchaser, who coincidentally ran into the true property owner, and the crime was uncovered. Cook was sentenced to five years in San Quentin, but was paroled in 1912. The Cooks moved to San Francisco, where Christopher continued to try to find work as an architect, but the newspapers show little evidence of his work for the next twelve years.

In 1924, Christopher Cook appeared in San José, as sole owner of the Cook Lumber Company at 315 W. Julian Street. He worked in conjunction with the real estate firms Barnett & Phelps and B.L. Sawtelle, partnering with them to develop subdivisions in which he designed and built the homes and supplied materials. He



*Curtiss Avenue—signature features of Christopher Cook: decorative tiles, arches, and the tapered wing wall.*

also purchased empty lots in developing neighborhoods and built spec houses, acting as his own real estate agent to sell them. His aspirations were ambitious—in 1925, Cook designed and built about sixty houses, with plans in place for two hundred more in 1926.

Through Cook Lumber, a buyer could purchase a house ranging from small to large, relatively inexpensive to costly, all with Cook's signature details. As his advertising claimed, a buyer could save money and get a better home because of the fact that architect, contractor, and lumber yard were all combined. The Cook Lumber Company advertised "Better Built Homes," guaranteeing satisfaction, with heavy foundations and the "best construction throughout."

Cook's houses were heavily ornamented, incorporating decorative details such as high curving Mission Revival parapets, rows of vented tiles, wing walls and graceful curves, sculptural plasterwork, and elaborate arches.

*(Cont'd p. 16)*



*This grand building with its many domes and arches was the home of Albert and Laura Leisure of the Albert Leisure Motor Company.*

## C. M. Cook (Cont'd)



*Schiele Avenue — Cook's details such as the dome and sculptural plasterwork incorporated into a smaller house.*

He developed several homes in the Greek Revival and Tudor Revival styles with which he had had success twenty years earlier in the East Bay, but he now added the popular Spanish Revival style. In at least two buildings still standing in San Jose, he employed Moorish Revival stylistic elements, featuring high towers topped by hemispherical domes. Even his more modest homes incorporated fine craftsmanship and architectural detailing.

In 1924, Cook announced two subdivisions off The Alameda: Alameda Manor, with its pricy two-story homes in popular Period Revival styles, and the Alameda Court, with small

but elegant Spanish Revival bungalows. A portion of Alameda Court featuring a row of six homes on O'Brien Court became the subject of a 1980 report for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), a project run by the National Park Service division of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Buildings surveyed by HABS are selected because of their intrinsic merit and their interest to architects, historians, and preservationists.



**The Tudor Revival style was a favorite of Cook's, who produced many variations during his career.**

What remains of Alameda Manor, today known as Alameda Way, is a development of mostly two-story homes in various Revival styles, nearly all designed by Christopher Cook. Advertised as "distinctive and different," it today is a collection of Cook's signature styles, with singular examples of his Greek, Tudor, and Spanish Revival. One of the featured homes, today somewhat modified at 2055 Alameda Way, was called the "Modern Home Electrical," and came with state-of-the-art lighting and electrical appliances.

In 1926, Cook designed and built houses in the Schiele Subdivision, Alameda Park, Willow Glen, and in Palo Alto. In March, he decided to exchange his equity in Alameda Manor for sixty empty lots in the Devonshire Estates of San Carlos, where he planned to create his own large subdivision.

It was said that the methods of financing this development were the cause of the severe financial problems that rapidly occurred next. Within six months, there were fifty-two claims against him by employees and creditors who had gone

*(Cont'd p. 17)*



*Alameda Manor: a variation of Cook's 1904 Berkeley design.*



# C. M. Cook (Cont'd)

unpaid, and a series of arrests in connection with his attempts to cover his losses. The Cook Lumber Company was forced to declare bankruptcy in September and its assets were sold to repay some of the debts. There was no denying the body of his work, though. As the *San Jose Mercury Herald* put it, "The spectacular four-year career of Christopher Cook...was halted this week when he was adjudicated bankrupt."

The Cooks returned to San Francisco but their financial difficulties followed them for years as Cook's properties were foreclosed on for default of payments. He appeared in the newspapers only infrequently in connection with architectural or contractor work. Christopher Cook died in 1942.

## A few examples of Christopher Cook's extant work:

**Berkeley:** 2740 Telegraph Avenue, built 1905. J.A. Marshall House today known as the Rose Garden Inn, a City of Berkeley Landmark.

**Palo Alto:** The Southgate neighborhood. Cook was responsible for all the houses on the block surrounded by Portola, Miramonte, Madrono, and Sequoia Avenues, with the exception of 1633 Portola.

**San José:** Alameda Way—Cook was responsible for all of the houses on Alameda Way except for 2056.



*This distinctive Alameda Manor house was the home of O. Edwin and Ida Linquist of the Linquist Grain Company.*

*(Photos: Krista Van Laan)*

2124-2148 The Alameda.

Alameda Court—Cook's work can be seen in O'Brien Court and the surrounding streets.

1358-1376 Curtiss Avenue.

Schiele Subdivision/Alameda Park—733, 738, 745 Schiele Avenue and 549 and 551 Stockton Avenue. ☼



*Today a commercial property, this Tudor Revival house was originally built on spec in the Alameda Park residential subdivision.*

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