



# CONTINUITY

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## PACCSJ CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY!!

By Ellen Garboske

It is almost impossible to believe that PACSJ has been in existence for 10 years. The organization intends to celebrate in several different ways in the coming months, beginning with an old-fashioned family picnic on the grounds of New Almaden's Casa Grande. Mark your calendars for this fun event on Sunday, August 27th, and watch for a flyer in your mailbox with all the details. Also be on the lookout for a very special event announcement for the Fall season. Preliminary plans are for this event to be held in a local historic location, perhaps with a silent auction,

author's book signing, dinner and maybe even dancing and/or other entertainment!

As we look back on 10 years of successes and failures, it is amazing to see what we've accomplished, how we've grown, and how much we are still needed! Some of the original board members have submitted comments on their involvement in forming PACSJ. There is no doubt that Karita Hummer, our first president, was the catalyst in establishing our much-needed organization. We hope you will enjoy the following words from Karita and several other members of PACSJ's original board of directors.

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## FOX CALIFORNIA THEATRE PROJECT IN DESIGN REVIEW PHASE

At the July meeting of the Historic Landmarks Commission, San Jose's Redevelopment Agency (RDA) and its project partner, The Packard Humanities Institute, presented plans for the rehabilitation, modification and restoration of the Fox California Theatre as a home for Opera San José. The RDA states that adaptive reuse of the theatre for opera, and secondary use as a movie palace, is in keeping with the building's historical use as a movie theatre and performance venue. The purpose of the presentation was to obtain the Commission's recommendation for approval of a Conditional Use Permit and Historic Preservation Permit. The Commission recommended approval, and the request will now go



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*Circa 1928 Bondi Collection*



## From the President

by John Olsen

The exciting news this month is that San Jose's Planning Department has filled its long-vacant Historic Preservation Officer position with a highly experienced and qualified person, Courtney Damkroger, most recently of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's San Francisco office. This is another great step forward by the City toward building a better city. Last year was dominated by a few major headlines: saving the Montgomery Hotel and the Jose Theatre, and plans to convert the old Del Monte Cannery to housing. This year, everyone has been dedicated to a less visible, but more important goal: improving the processes for dealing with historic properties and conservation districts. Welcome, Courtney, and congratulations, San Jose!

Our last *Continuity* issue discussed parking and traffic issues, and already we can see why they concern us and the impact on historic preservation. Downtown's historic fabric is being further sacrificed at the proposed Civic Plaza simply to accommodate the car.

When the proposed City Hall got redesigned, the onsite parking went down to 300 spaces, intended for visitors. So where will the City Hall employees park? Answer: pave the neighborhood. "Revitalization" now means converting nearly an entire block covered with historic structures to a giant parking complex to accommodate 1700 cars for city employees. Most of the block bounded by Fourth, Fifth, Santa Clara and St. John will now be cleared for a surface lot and a tall garage. And this is only Phase 1; Phase 2 will sweep away the three remaining houses along St. John Street. Only the Fox Building on N. Fourth Street will remain, and its future is unclear since the Symphony Hall complex fell out of the plans.

Anyone standing in the doorway of the historic La Petit Trianon on N. Fifth Street will gaze up to a seven or eight-story parking garage directly across the street.

And how ironic that a Vietnamese restaurant, copy shop, bar, wireless dealer, Mexican restaurant, Vietnamese grocery, jeweler, gift shop, auto repair shop, barber shop, a church, several historic houses and two apartment houses will be replaced by parking lots, at the same time the City has engaged the Urban Land Institute and the Downtown

Strategy Task Force to find ways to "get retail" downtown. Our suggestion: don't take away the longtime merchants and an existing retail district. If the shops aren't attractive enough, they could be spruced up for a relative pittance. These businesses exist, without subsidy, because they do serve the neighborhood. I just can't shake my impression that many people just don't really see what we already have, or that "retail" may be a code word for large chains, not the existing small businesses. Worse, we argued in *Continuity* last month that the 1700 spaces do not nearly meet the City's own standards. We expect pressure for even more conversion to parking after City Hall opens.

And the traffic issues — how is everyone going to get around? — continue to go unresolved. Even BART would not serve the vast majority of City Hall workers.

The loss of Symphony Hall funding, along with its second theatre and daycare projects, mean that the Civic Plaza Project's intended benefits for the area are greatly diminished. Converting numerous small businesses to City Hall employee parking lots does not revitalize or do anything for the neighborhoods, except build a dead zone between them and the core. Clearly, the costs and benefits analysis becomes even poorer as the project planning progresses, compared to that originally presented in the Environmental Impact Report.

Isn't it time to reconsider?↻

### BIG OLD FASHIONED FAMILY PICNIC!

Mark your calendars and save Sunday, August 27th. Watch your mailbox for details on this PACSJ fun event at New Almaden's Casa Grande!↻

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## Watchdog Report

Here we go again! After years of dealin' with the ol' Jose and Fox Theatres, and finally decidin' they were worth keepin' ...now those two-legged varmints are messin' around with MY Studio, one of my favorite spots..er, stops. Bad enough they've torn the insides out, now they wanta strip off the tile from the outside, and that really raises my dander! Doesn't seem to be any reason for it, ceptin' some humans just can't stand to keep golden oldies. Besides, I've left my autograph more than once on that tile...us oldies get no respect!

"When Dogs Were King"...kinda poetic, huh? Well it came true in July at "Bark in the Park," when us four-legged animals took over the William Street Park and had a rollicking good time. Wasn't all fun and games, though...police dogs draggin' down the bad guys, border collies driving sheep. My cohort, Sandy Olson, tells me his master denigrated my character by suggestin' maybe The Dog could find a new job! Talk about no respect! I was there but you probably didn't see me, I was too busy chasin' Phoebe Curia around the trees! What a cutie!

Speakin' of trees, I sure do miss that Sentinel Tree on N. 21st Street. Trees and dogs just go together. To really get in the trees I have to travel further and further, like to Saratoga's Heritage Orchard, what a beauty! One of my undercover dogs tells me prunes used to be this Valley's king crop, and there were 50,000 acres of prune trees. What a party I could have! Now there are only 300 acres. And what's in a name? A rose is a rose, but a prune is not a prune, it's now known as a dried plum! Image is king!

My master tells me there's goin' to be a picnic for all you preservation humans on August 27, at New Almaden's Casa Grande. Another romp in the park, and I'll be there spyin' on those fun-lovin' history lovers, so enjoy, but watch your tricks or you may find your antics related in this doggerel. Understand there'll be lots of kibbles!

Kibbles? Howsabout hot dogs! I'm still waitin' patiently for that Big Orange Mark's Hot Dogs to go paradin' down the street to its new dog run area. I keep tellin' you I love a parade, and I'd like it to be in my lifetime!

Cal Pine is still campaignin' to plunk their plant down in Ye Olde Coyote Valley. Sometimes our two-legged humans don't have much sense, but I like to think San Jose's

ultimate top-dog won't let that happen. Howsabout it, Ronnie baby?

My great grandpappy on my mother's Italian side used to tell me stories about life on San Pedro Street around the turn of the century. Now that was livin', accordin' to him! There was a pasta factory and a bakery, and those Italians could cook up a storm, and there was always plenty for man's best friend. On a hot summer's day, replete from an Italian feast, a fella' could find a nice shady spot under a wagon at the Coronado Livery Stables. Cold weather meant finding a warm spot at the Crosetti Wagon Works, which later on became a blacksmith shop where you had to watch out or things could get a little TOO warm. A dog couldn't find a better life than along ol' San Pedro among those friendly Italians. Now my spies tell me the History Museums wants to expand and is thinkin' about tearin' down the Crosetti Wagon Works/Blacksmith building at 73-75 N. San Pedro, and commitin' some kind of shenanigans with the old Garden City Bakery building at 87 N. San Pedro! Now don't get all ruffled, museums are good, but not at the expense of friendly historic buildings and streetscapes!

Well that's all the poop for today! Back to my meandering, lookin' for friendly trees, and wonderin' where Phoebe disappeared to.

### The Dog

#### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR PACSJ BOOTH AT LOCAL EVENTS**

PACSJ will be participating in the following events within the next few months:

- Willow Glen Founder's Day  
Saturday & Sunday September 9th & 10th
- Alameda History Days  
Sunday October 1st
- Pumpkins in the Park  
Saturday October 14th

If you can volunteer 3-4 hours to help staff our booth at one or more of these events, call Joann Williams at 408-297-6334. Leave your name, phone and day you can help and someone will return your call. These events are a great way to meet people, and fun too, so come join us!☺

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**Karita Hummer:** As a new resident of San Jose, owner of a 1908 house and fresh from experiences in historic preservation in Chicago and Indianapolis, I was appalled by the lack of historic preservation in San Jose. San Jose's downtown Historic Commercial District was the primary impetus and inspiration in my search for like-minded people to promote and advocate for the preservation of the City's historic buildings. I was alarmed that simply beautiful buildings were in an utter state of neglect and disregard in downtown and elsewhere. I had all the outrage of any "little old lady in tennis shoes" and started wondering what could be done about it.

I discovered the Victorian Preservation Association, attended its meetings and began urging its leadership to take an activist stance on behalf of historic buildings. The VPA meetings were fun, but not enough for my activist and political nature, and my interest in historic commercial buildings and whole neighborhoods, as well as individual homes, was not a good match for VPA's primary mission. After numerous calls and inquiries to Betsy Mathieson, then president of VPA, I was finally invited to present my concerns and ideas to members at their September 1989 meeting. A sign-up sheet forming an ad hoc group to explore the ideas I presented was circulated. Fortunately, Paul Bernal was in attendance and he signed up, along with Betsy and several other members.

From that point, the idea of PACSJ as an independent organization took shape very quickly. One month later, around the time of the 1989



*Santa Clara County Courthouse*

earthquake, the concept for developing an activist, independent 501(c)3 organization was almost complete. Our first organized effort was to circulate a petition for the restoration of the Santa Clara County Courthouse, which had been badly damaged in the Loma Prieta earthquake. This project was an easy one, since our effort really was only additional support for a groundswell of support to save the courthouse. Paul Bernal and Betsy Mathieson joined me in taking on major responsibilities for organizing the new preservation organization. Paul took on promotion and communications, Betsy took on bylaws and I beat the bushes to develop the board and to gather support and resources for the organization.

We invited John Merrit, Director of the California Preservation Foundation, to advise us on forming the organization at a meeting in November of 1989. Columnist Leigh Weimers gave us a plug for this meeting, and the Mercury News published a blurb on our formation. John gave us superb advice and the meeting was a smashing success. Several new preservation enthusiasts joined us, including Greg Casella and Sharon Heinrich. We were on a roll.

Following a CPF-sponsored workshop in January 1990, Cherilyn Widell became a member, trusted advisor and mentor. Cherilyn provided us with the professionalism and know-how in preservation to put us on a very solid footing. Betsy enlisted David Pandori as an advisor on our bylaws, ensuring that we got off to a good legal start. Cherilyn Widell facilitated a retreat in the Spring of 1990, the first board was officially formed and in a very short time our 501(c)3 status was granted.

Our first preservation challenge was the First Church of Christ Scientist facing St. James Square. We applied for a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, completed and printed a very comprehensive feasibility study on the First Church, a study which is still referred to and used today. Unfortunately, the RDA continues to drag its feet, and the building is still abandoned and dilapidated. PACSJ continues to advocate the restoration of this historic treasure.

Our fledgling group organized some very successful open house tours to educate the public on the importance of historic preservation. The first was St. James Park and the surrounding historic structures, followed by the Historic Downtown Commercial District, San Pedro Square and Japantown. We learned quickly how to obtain funding, do promotion and event planning.

Our next challenge was to save the Scheller House on the San Jose State campus. An early civic leader's home, the university planned to demolish this beautiful house. This complicated issue between PACSJ, the City, the State and the university drug on for years, culminating in PACSJ filing its first legal action against the university. We were successful and the university is under court order to save and restore the Scheller House.

We continued to build constituency, public support and gain the respect of the community and local government officials, except the Director of the RDA and then Mayor. We waged an all-out battle to save the Weir Building, designed by Aaron Green, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright. That project was on a fast track, with the Council, Mayor

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and RDA in full opposition of preservation. We lost, and San Jose lost a unique, architecturally important building. We lost on the Weir issue, but watch out, the Preservation Community became organized and mobilized!!! And watch us from here on out!!! The line in the sand is drawn and utterly defined.



*Weir Building, demolished in early 1990s*

The next challenge was to save the River Street houses. Same-o, same-o, but the tide begins to turn; there is a crack in Frank Taylor's power; and we have become savvy in using every leverage available, including getting ourselves at the table as a party to the Memorandum of Agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers (we have to be reckoned with now...we begin to find the sources and nature of our power). We gain the ear of Cherilyn Widell, who by now is the State Historic Preservation Officer, and is doing her job with care, comprehension and conscientiousness. Our group worked for and received adequate attention from the media. We developed an alternative use plan, developed the vision and got big players to buy in. We met with and convinced each councilmember and eventually the mayor. We brought in Alrie Middlebrook with a highly creative landscape design for the group of historic houses, and fired the imagination of city officials. Developers soon joined the parade and the City Council approved the River Street Project.

While all this was going on, we continued to provide educational opportunities such as our Seismic Retrofit Education Project for building owners and structural engineering firms. This, in turn, helped us to build our membership and board. We established and printed a highly respected newsletter. We began a program of planning retreats, held a Preservation Ball, established a Preservation Award program, and participated in local events such as Tapestry 'n Talent and Living History Days. We continued to support neighborhood groups and other organizations in their preservation efforts, such as Hoover School, the Bernal Ranch and Quicksilver Park. PACSJ waged a successful battle to save the Jose Theatre and the Montgomery Hotel, and the war rages on!

**Betsy Mathieson:** Karita has written a good account of PACSJ's birth and early struggles, so I'll limit my comments to expanding on several points. First of all I'd like to emphasize Karita's determination and perseverance in establishing a preservation organization in San Jose. She prodded me for months during a time when VPA was concentrating on organizing a house tour and following our mission of providing information and a social atmosphere among owners of Victorian houses. We eventually invited her to make a presentation on historic preservation before our members caught her enthusiasm and agreed there was a need for a separate organization to advocate preservation of San Jose's historic structures before they all disappeared. Preservation Action Council of San Jose was on its way.

Our first high-profile activity was the start of our ongoing attempts to find a new use of the First Church of Christ Scientist, on St. James Square. To be eligible for a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to fund a feasibility study, we needed to incorporate. With help from Advisory Board member, attorney, and former San Jose City Council member David Pandori, I coordinated the preparation of articles of incorporation, bylaws, tax forms and completed the incorporation within an amazing couple of months. PACSJ's grant writers worked concurrently with the incorporation process, and we were awarded the grant. The feasibility study, prepared by architect Jerome King, is still used in studies related to preservation and reuse of the church building.

In November of 1990 we presented the first of PACSJ's four annual historic district "open houses." I chaired the St. James Square Open House committee, and we used the opportunity to showcase the First Church of Christ Scientist



*First Church of Christ Scientist  
Photo by Ellen Garboske*

and ten other buildings in and around San Jose's St. James Square Historic District. The event was cosponsored by the business community of St. James Square. We kicked off our open house theme, "Preservation is Good for Business." That theme has remained relevant throughout PAC's continuing efforts to preserve San Jose's historic fabric. Through the efforts of many, an effective organization was born and today is a recognized, respected force in the preservation of San Jose's history.

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# SAN JOSE'S "GRAND" LETITIA RESTORED TO BEAUTY

by Ellen Garboske

With restoration complete, a tenant moved in, and the official "grand opening" to take place on August 17th (after this issue goes to press), it seems appropriate to revisit one of San Jose's most elegant historic buildings. I last wrote about the Letitia's history in 1994, thus the following information will be new to some and a review for others.

When Peter Hardeman Burnett was elected first American governor of California, and San Jose was the capitol, Burnett lived in San Jose and had three lovely daughters. It has been said that Burnett was elected governor solely on the basis that the many bachelor members of that first legislative session wanted Burnett's daughters to remain in San Jose. Whether true or not, at least one of those daughters did remain in San Jose and her name graces one of the City's most interesting and historic buildings.

Caius Tacitus Ryland came to California from Missouri in 1845 and was quickly appointed clerk of Court of the First Instance in San Francisco. By 1849 he had moved to San Jose and opened his law practice. When Peter Burnett was elected governor Ryland accepted the position of Private Secretary which he held until Burnett resigned. In 1851 he married Letitia Burnett, one of the boss's lovely daughters. C.T., as he was called, and Letitia began their large family of six boys and three girls. C.T. continued to practice law, but also went on to become an early San Jose banker, businessman and civic leader. The Rylands were prominent in San Jose social circles.

C.T. Ryland built the Letitia Building in 1890 at 66-72 South First Street. This imposing four-story brick building was designed in the Romanesque style by Jacob Lenzen, one of early San Jose's most prolific architects. C. T. Ryland named the building in honor of his beautiful wife, Letitia.

Originally built as a deluxe rooming house with retail on the street level, the Letitia was one of the most substantial buildings of that period. Its excellent construction has been credited with acting as a fire wall and saving much of the business district during what is considered San Jose's most devastating fire. On July 4, 1892, an unknown prankster threw a lighted cigarette into a Chinese fireworks factory. The resulting conflagration destroyed more than forty buildings in the area bounded by First, San Fernando, Third and Santa Clara Streets. Among the buildings burned were the California Theatre, Methodist Church, Lick House, Krumb's Brewery and the Empire Firehouse. The sturdy brick walls of the Letitia Building helped stop the fire on First Street.



*Letitia Building*

Over the years the upper three stories were converted to use as offices and small business locations. In 1922 the Ryland family sold the Letitia Building. Several years ago a tour of the vacant building revealed remnants of some of the occupants of the upper floors. Faded signs and lettering on glass doors were for Webbs Photo Studio; Bishoff's Hospital Supplies; Scaglione Tailor; Ebert School of Music; Stanley Innes Chiropractor; W.J. Shaw & Co.; and Garden City Band, "Best in Town." The fourth floor had been altered, most likely after the 1906 earthquake, resulting in an arcade effect. Denninger's Photo Service had occupied this area at one time and notations of business dealings were posted or written on the walls. Appointments were listed as early as 1892, and what was evidently a chemical code for a de-

veloping solution. Faded photos were stuck to the plaster walls with instructions for number and sizes of pictures to be developed, again dated in the 1890s.

The granite and sandstone facade give the Letitia a majestic appearance. There is a carved cornice band with dentils which forms a sill for the attic windows. A wide frieze with raised lettering bears the name Letitia. The windows on the second and third floors are separated by eight, two-story polished stone pilasters with Corinthian capitals.

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Rock-faced sandstone blocks form spandrels between the windows. Street level windows have multi-paned transoms.

This unique building has a center atrium and skylights to bring in natural light. The lower half of the walls on the second and third floor were covered with "lincrusta," a linoleum wallpaper popular in that period. Gas fixtures that had been converted to electricity are still intact. Wide hallways, graceful stairs and galleries surround the atrium. Fireplaces, hand-carved finials and posts, pilasters, wrought iron railings and other accoutrements of a luxurious building still exist.

The Letitia suffered many years of neglect, with pigeons the sole residents of the upper floors. But in spite of the "droppings" and the obvious need for strengthening of support beams, the elegant lines and features of the building were still evident. Foresight on the part of preservationists, community activists, city officials and a local development firm has brought about the rebirth of this jewel, with Swenson Builders accomplishing a careful restoration of the Letitia Building. A large law firm will soon occupy the rooms which housed many of San Jose's early small businesses. The original carved ornaments are still there and the lincrusta wainscoting has been replicated. Offices boast tall ceilings and views from 14-foot tall windows. Some offices are graced with fireplaces. And above all, nature floods the atrium with light from the skylight. The Letitia is alive and well.

As an added note of interest, in 1992 the Letitia Building was designated City of San Jose Historic Landmark #65. Somehow I believe C.T. and Letitia would approve. The Rylands lived out their lives in San Jose. C.T. died in 1897, and Letitia died in 1917. Both were buried in Santa Clara Mission Cemetery. Visitors can find their markers in Old Block #4, along with many other family members, including Peter H. Burnett and his wife Harriet.☞



*Letitia Interior Detail*

## **PRESERVATION ACTION COUNCIL OF SAN JOSE, MAYOR GONZALES, SJ HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION TO RECEIVE GOVERNOR'S AWARD!**

*by Beth Wyman*

Three parties involved in the memorable move of the Montgomery Hotel on January 29, 2000 are pleased to have been notified by the State Office of Historic Preservation that they are recipients of the California Governor's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation for the year 2000. The parties include Preservation Action Council of San Jose, San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales and the City of San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission. The prestigious award is the only official preservation award presented by the State of California in recognition of outstanding achievements in the field of historic preservation. The award is for the relocation and preservation of the historic Montgomery Hotel. Recipients will attend a ceremony to be held in the Governor's office in Sacramento later this year.

PACJSJ was chosen for its many years of continuing support and active efforts to preserve the historically important Montgomery Hotel. This is the second award for the project for Mayor Gonzales. He received the California Preservation Foundation's prestigious Senator Milton Marks Award in April which recognizes an elected official in California for their significant contribution to historic preservation. Gonzales was noted for his courage, leadership and vision with the project. Peggy Flynn compiled the application for the Governor's Award which was submitted by the San Jose Redevelopment Agency. You will recall that the 4816-ton building was moved 186 feet south from its original South First Street location on 736 computer-driven rubber tires to allow for expansion of the Fairmont Hotel. The Montgomery Hotel was the world's heaviest structure ever moved on rubber tires.

The RDA also sponsored a 22 minute video of the historic occasion. The documentary film traces the history of the building and the history of the project. Principal narrators include Mayor Gonzales, Nancy Lytle of the RDA, John Olson, PACJSJ President, Jack Douglas, Historian and PACJSJ Board Member, Marti Wachtel of the SJ Landmarks Commission and Charlene Duval, Historian. Saving the Montgomery was produced by Pacific Media and can be viewed in the RDA outreach office located at 118 East Santa Clara Street in San Jose.☞

*Continued from page 1*

to the Planning Commission and then before the City Council for final approval.

Under the plans presented, the First Street historic facade of the building is to be restored to the 1927-35 period of significance, consistent with the Secretary of Interior's Standards. The original 1927 marquee and the CALIFORNIA vertical blade sign will be replicated. Tile added in later years at the lower side entry pilasters will be replaced with marble similar to the original. Original poster cases and plaster ornamentation will be restored or replicated.

On the empty lot north of the Fox, plans are to construct a new building, courtyard and entry loggia. RDA expects to create this addition with respect, and not to compete with the historic Fox entry facade and the historic Dohrmann building. The entry loggia is designed as a foyer to the courtyard, similar to the foyers leading to the Fox auditorium, with stone and metal grillwork. The courtyard will be paved with stone and a stone north wall will have a water feature. The courtyard will serve as an outdoor room for theatre functions and public use. The new building behind the courtyard will include space for a cafe at ground level and upper level conference rooms.

On the Market Street side of the project, the current St. Claire Hotel garage will be demolished. Plans call for a new building which will complement the historic Hyatt St. Claire Hotel and the First Street facade of the Fox, but will not attempt to copy or mimic their styles. Tall vertical windows in groupings of three and a horizontal canopy will grace the new Market Street lobby entrance which will be set at an angle to the Fox building rather than parallel to Market Street. A contemporary two story colonnade will front this new building, with glass at the lower level for the stage entry and display/poster cases for announcing theatre activities. The upper portion of the colonnade will have grillwork with reference to the St. Claire arches hinted in the metalwork. There will be a separate decorative grill over the truck dock rolldown door. The

third level will sport three stone colors, with different finishes and course sizes, similar in concept to the St. Claire. Stone belt courses will align with the terracotta bands on the St. Claire.

A new stage house will be built at the rear of the Fox to replace the existing stage house, which doesn't meet the requirements of Opera San Jose. The existing stage house is a plain concrete block building. The new stage house will be concrete with a stone band near the top to relate to the stone on the other new buildings.



*Opening day 1927 Grand Entry  
Bondi Collection*

In the front and interior of the historic Fox, the 1927-35 period of significance will be restored throughout the entry vestibule, foyer, entrance foyer, orchestra foyer and mezzanine foyer. The finishes in this series of historic spaces are in very good condition, requiring only minor modifications and restoration. In the exterior, covered entry vestibule this includes restoring or replicating side walls where alterations have occurred, replicating original 1927 poster cases, repairing and repainting wall plaster and the decorative plaster ceiling and side wall balconies. The double bay wood and glass entry wall will be replicated to its original design, including glazed doors, metalwork and 28' high fanlight windows. The only obvious modification will be a north wall window into a

new ticket booth which will be part of a new addition to the building described later in this article.

The foyer requires removal of existing aluminum and the solid upper wall on the west side as it was originally. A second set of wood and glass doors and fanlight will be replicated and installed. The plaster is to be repaired and the decorative painted ceiling cleaned. A new pair of doors on the north wall will lead to a new gallery in the building addition.

In the entrance foyer, or Grand Lobby, the marble base, stairs, and clay floor tile surrounds are to be repaired and restored. New carpet will be installed, in the historic pattern if possible. The side wall plaster and eight plaster niche surrounds will undergo repair, restoration and painting. The two central north side niches will house pipes for a new lobby organ. The existing decorative stenciled beamed ceiling is to be cleaned and touched up and the historic lighting fixtures restored.

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New historic pattern carpet will extend into the orchestra and mezzanine foyers. Plaster walls and ceilings are to be repaired and repainted and historic lighting fixtures restored. There will be a new bar/concession opening into the mezzanine lobby on the north side where the bathrooms currently exist.

The auditorium would contain the most modifications. The RDA and the architect state that there will be “Restoration to 1927-35 period of significance where possible while incorporating technical and audience requirements of Opera San Jose and other performing art groups. Generally consistent with Secretary of Interior’s Standards, except some new additions and modifications will not be reversible and will be designed to blend with the existing historic interior rather than be designed to be distinguished from the original.” They further state that the existing decorative plaster ornamentation will be retained at the proscenium area, side walls and ceiling. New theatrical lighting positions would be integrated into the historic fabric at the false proscenium and Juillette balconies. Some



*Fox Theatre circa 1990s*



*Grand Opening 1927  
San Jose Mercury Herald photo*

plaster work is to be removed and reshaped to accommodate fixtures and new catwalks above the ceiling, and two ceiling decorative plaster beams would be dropped approximately 30” to accommodate lighting catwalks. Lighting fixtures are to be restored, and a larger orchestra pit built. The organ chambers will be restored and a new Wurlitzer theatre organ installed. The last six rows at orchestra level will be replaced with a new technical control suite.

Although the restoration, modifications and additions outlined above are generally acceptable, and PACSJ is supportive of this magnificent theatre finally in the process of being restored and reused, PACSJ is compelled to add the following caveat...of the approximately \$65 million dollar price tag for the “restoration” of the theatre, only about \$15 million dollars will actually be spent for restoration, including seismic upgrade and ADA access, according to knowledgeable sources. In addition, seating will be reduced to 1,150 from its original 1,825 capacity. Most of the RDA cost will be in building NEW adjacent space to accommodate live performance requirements. ↻

# RIVER STREET PROJECT SIGNS

## FIRST TENANT

by André Luthard

The River Street Development Group has announced the signing of their first tenant for the mixed-use project in the River Street Historic District. A small law firm, with offices in Alameda and San Jose has agreed to lease two historic buildings in the River Street Gardens enclave.

Preservation Action Council of San Jose is a partner in the Development Group, a private partnership that is rehabilitating a portion of the River Street Historic District. Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, River Street is all that remains of a modest, but significant neighborhood adjacent to the Guadalupe River. Around the turn of the last century, the area became a hub of Italian culture. The Torino Hotel (now Henry's World Famous Hi-Life restaurant) became a destination for Italian immigrants who came to the United States to work in the "Valley of the Heart's Delight." Many stayed in the neighborhood, built homes and sent back to the homeland for their wives and families.

PACSJ has worked for years to save this important reminder of San Jose's history. Our vision of the Historic District has it serving as a new destination for visitors to the Guadalupe River Park and environs. In a couple of years, the public will walk, bike and blade along the many paths of the park. We hope they will stop to enjoy a coffee or light meal, shop and visit museum exhibits in the restored Historic District right next to the river. With its prime location between the San Jose Arena and San Pedro Square, we feel that River Street will be a popular attraction on event nights as well.

The Development Group will continue to emphasize a healthy mix of retail, park support uses and small offices. Renovation is continuing steadily and is expected to be completed this fall. PACSJ is excited to be an investor in this project. This is an opportunity to put our preservation money where our preservation mouths are! For volunteer opportunities, call 408-947-8025. For leasing information, call Alrie Middlebrook at 408-292-9993.



*River Street Gardens Concept*

*Editor's note:* The sale of high-quality salvaged windows, French doors, statuary, and yes, even toilets, has helped PACSJ raise funds to support our River Street investment. See the ad on page 14 for windows for sale. You can help by your purchase! We expect to have additional salvaged items available soon. Ask André about them when you call!

### ANNUAL SALVAGE AND GARAGE SALE

**Donations and Sellers Needed!**

PACSJ's annual sale takes place Saturday only, August 26th, from 8am to 4pm at Secretary Pat Curia's home, 260 South 13th Street in downtown San Jose. Architectural salvage and general donations are needed. Call Pat at 408-294-3599 to volunteer to price or sell and to arrange for pickup of large items. Donations may be left on Pat's porch now! Donor receipts will be given to those requesting them. Last year PAC made over \$600 dollars, and this sale promises to be more successful. Items most in demand are household goods, toys, antiques, vintage clothing, children's sporting equipment, small pieces of furniture, art books and vintage hardware. Please, no LP records, clothing, broken items or computer components. Start cleaning out your garage, attic and closets now! Your unneeded items will help over River Street Gardens.

*Check your mailing label, if it doesn't say '00 please use the form on page 15 and renew NOW!*

# NEW ALMADEN'S CASA GRANDE SLATED FOR RESTORATION RESIDENTS ASK THAT "OPRY HOUSE" ADDITION BE RETAINED

Santa Clara County's Department of Parks and Recreation has completed an extensive and comprehensive study on the restoration of the historic Casa Grande in New Almaden. Planning Manager Mark Frederick has done an outstanding job in researching and creating preliminary plans for this project. Recent presentations of these plans before the Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission for comments and recommendations have helped the plans to evolve into a project which is exciting and should bring the Casa Grande back to the elegance of its period of historical significance.

Casa Grande was built in 1854 and became the New Almaden Mine manager's residence and the mining company headquarters. The Quicksilver Mining Company declared bankruptcy in 1912 and sold the mine and the Casa Grande to the New Almaden Corporation. New Almaden Corporation continued mining operations until 1925, then sold the mine holdings and Casa Grande in 1927.

Over the years Casa Grande housed a number of different activities. An outdoor raised oak dance floor was added off the north veranda in 1931. Outdoor swimming pools were added, a swim club established and the venerable building became known as "Club Almaden." An elegant restaurant operated for some years in the old dining room on the main floor.

In 1956 the open exterior dance floor was enclosed to create an elegant ballroom. It was not until the 1960s that the ballroom was renovated to hold the Opry House. It is this addition, the enclosed dance floor area, that has caused the most debate in this project. Should the Opry House addition be retained? From a pure preservation standpoint, probably not...Casa Grande should be restored to its period of significance ending in 1925.

However, the Opry House has become an important part of the New Almaden community over the years, as testified to by some 20 residents and members of the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association at a recent County Heritage Commission meeting. After listening to this testimony, and carefully studying the project plans, a majority of the commissioners recommended that the Opry House be retained, determining that the Opry House addition did not detract from the main building and in itself was an important part of New Almaden's history.☞



*Casa Grande Circa 1890s*

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## CITY APPOINTS HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

James R. Derryberry, Director of San Jose's Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department, has announced the appointment of Courtney Damkroger to the position of Historic Preservation Officer for the City of San Jose. This important position has been vacant for several years, contributing to the lack of communication, cooperation and understanding between the Planning Department, Historic Landmarks Commission and the preservation community.

Ms Damkroger has an impressive background in preservation issues. Most recently, Courtney has served as the Assistant Regional Director, National Trust for Historic Preservation in the Western Office in San Francisco. Through that office, PACSJ has had the pleasure of working with her on several preservation issues. With degrees in Art History and Business, and a Masters Degree in History of Art and City and Regional Planning, Courtney has worked on major preservation projects in San Diego, Long Beach, Honolulu and the San Francisco Presidio.

Filling this position, and with a person of Courtney's experience, is a large step toward better preservation policies in San Jose. PACSJ welcomes Courtney, and we look forward to working closely with her.☞

# WILLIS POLK: FLAMBOYANT ARCHITECTURAL GENIUS

by Jack Douglas

San Francisco architect Willis Polk (1867-1924) was a major influence in that City's building renaissance after the earthquake and fire in 1906. Fine examples of his work are city landmarks today: the Halliday Building, the Mills Tower, the Hobart Building, Pacific Union Club, and the Crocker Bank Building. We must also include the grand estates on the Peninsula, such as Carolands, Filoli and Crocker's The Uplands. In the light of these monuments one tends to overlook some of his less well-known projects in Santa Clara County. At least four Polk-designed structures remain here as tributes to their unique creator. Two are public buildings and the others are still in private hands.

Polk gained early experience as a draftsman while working for his father's construction firm in Kansas City. Hoping to learn more he signed on as a draftsman to the prestigious Boston firm of Van Brunt and Howe. Here he became acquainted with the rising academic architectural movement which emphasized the classical element of style. Moving on to New York he worked for A. Page Brown who had close connections with the firm of McKim, Meade and White, the leading purveyors of academic classicism. Here he fell into a circle of artists and intellectuals such as Frank Millet, John LaFarge, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, William Chase and John Singer Sargent. The young Polk accompanied Brown when he set up an office in San Francisco in 1889.

Polk's professional life was very erratic during his early years in San Francisco. He was a fine designer but a poor businessman who had a revolving door of partners, and his contributions to publications critical of the current trends of architecture made him unpopular with his peers. He quickly earned a reputation as a man about town who was known for his dandyism, pranks and party going. In a city that valued its characters Polk was in his element.

In 1902 he briefly joined the firm of the Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, the genius who created Chicago's Colombian Exposition of 1893. (Polk would do similar

service for San Francisco for the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915.) Polk returned to San Francisco in 1903, and three years later agreed to take on a partnership with Burnham after the City was leveled in the 1906 disaster.

Prior to this disaster Polk was able to take on domestic architectural projects. One of his earliest, perhaps the beginning of his reputation for splendid country houses, was the Charles Baldwin estate Beaulieu in Cupertino. It is a modest sized, one story structure of classical lines. It looked out upon a terrace of sunken gardens and a large reflecting pool. Later owners renamed it the Petite Trianon for its resemblance to Versailles. The estate was purchased by DeAnza College, and the house, less the landscaping, is now the headquarters for the California History Center.



*Le Petit Trianon De Anza College, 1902  
Photo courtesy of Jack Douglas*

The Frank McCullagh estate, which overlooks Los Gatos, is an extensive Polk renovation of an existing house. It is a fine example of the Mission Style of design — a style of which Polk was an early proponent. The main house is surrounded by a cluster of smaller similar buildings. The home, La Estancia, and its lovely garden was the first western home to be featured in House and Garden Magazine in 1902.

Not far away in Saratoga is the extraordinary Polk designed Italian villa Bella Vista. Built for Carlos D. Blaney, it is a sturdy structure with a renaissance tower and arched walkways, and so well suited is it to its setting that it might well have been brought here from Tuscany. The house was completed in 1916 and remained in the family for several generations.

*Continued on page 13*



*Continued from page 12*

Willis Polk's only public building in our County is San Jose's Church of Christ Scientist which was built in 1904. Facing St. James Park it is one of a number of architectural gems which make up the St. James Park National Register District. Polk stated that the design was inspired by the famed Ionian Temple of Ulysses with modifications similar to those by Palladio, the 16th century Venetian architect. The dome and sturdy fluted columns set this structure off as a stunning example of the classical style. Abandoned when the church moved to new quarters on the Alameda it has been on the brink of extinction for almost fifty years. The City recently purchased it, but its use when restored is still undetermined. Plans are proceeding to surround this landmark building with high rise living units. When this happens the former church may be integrated into these plans and could serve as a community center for the tenants and perhaps public uses.



*First Church of Christ Scientist  
Postcard courtesy of Jack Douglas*

This little “temple” (how much longer can we refer to it as the Church of Christ Scientist?) is our monument to the memory of one of the giants of Bay Area architecture.☞

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*Continued from page 5*

**Greg Casella:** Growing up in Oak Park, Illinois and spending much time in Chicago, I had a love for architecture and historic buildings. In 1984 I moved to San Jose and gravitated to Downtown San Jose because it had a hint of the urban feel that I grew up with. I was amazed that most people here didn't appreciate the old buildings that were left. After witnessing so many torn down within just a few years I felt like somebody had to do something. Finally, in the Mercury News, I read an article about a small group of people who felt the same way, and they were beginning to do something about it! Karita Hummer was given as a contact for the group and I called and came to PACSJ's second meeting.

It was one of my first experiences with a non profit group and I quickly found that all you had to do was say yes, and you were in! I started out being the Marketing and Public Relations Chair and quickly became Treasurer, and held that position for many years. I was responsible for starting

the newsletter, creating the logo, printing letterhead and envelopes, paying the bills, keeping the books, filing tax statements and also helped open our first office.

The First Church of Christ Scientist seemed to be the catalyst for the group. I can't tell you how many times I drove by that building with friends and we all agreed that something had to be done to preserve the building. In my many years with PACSJ, we would again drive by and I kept everyone updated on the status of the building. Unfortunately, we still drive by and my friends ask the status and I don't really know what is going on with it.

Even though the First Church sits quietly by, so much good has happened in San Jose thanks to the efforts of all the people I worked so hard with. The most important thing has to be that there is finally the appreciation for historic buildings, that they can actually create a “there” there. PACSJ has changed local attitudes...now it seems like it happened so fast, but the reality is it took years of battles to get to this point. Some we won and some we lost, but in the process we educated and made so much progress.☞

# FINIALS AND FRETWORK

by April Halberstadt

The good news...First, we want to welcome Courtney Damkroger as the new Historic Preservation Officer for the City of San Jose. After having the position open for more than a year, the City has finally found someone with the credentials to fill the job. Members of the Preservation Action Council are especially pleased about her arrival since we have worked with Courtney on many projects. She comes to us after years of experience as a field officer the San Francisco Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. We are excited about having a Historic Preservation Officer with this high level of experience and understanding of preservation issues.

Another watershed event for local preservation will be the official opening of the landmark Letitia Building on August 17th. Boarded up for years, the beautiful Letitia Building, named for the daughter of California's first governor, Peter Burnett, is located in the middle of the Downtown Historic District on South First Street. Rehabilitated as an office for Hopkins & Carley, a law corporation, the new tenants are reportedly thrilled to be following in the footsteps of such historic legal luminaries as Governor Peter Burnett and Caius Tacitus Ryland.

We also hear that the long awaited inventory of historic structures in the downtown is nearing completion. We are extremely interested in this document which will provide references on the historic buildings still remaining in the downtown. This report should provide the San Jose Planning Department and the Redevelopment Agency with the essential information needed to guide development. We are hoping that it will prove to be of great use and interest to preservationists and the general public, too.

In other respects, preservation appears to move slowly. While the Fairmont Hotel is now proceeding with their expansion, the Redevelopment Agency has apparently forgotten that the Chinatown artifacts discovered from the construction of their Fairmont building, are still awaiting the attention of a curator. In addition to the Chinese artifacts from the Fairmont Hotel, boxes of artifacts from the Woolen Mill Chinatown project also await a curator. The last word on this was that there was \$50,000 to perform the work but letting the contract was forgotten when the Redevelopment Agency cut their staff a few months ago.

We hear that the Scheller House on the San Jose State campus is due for some restoration activity at any moment. But we have been hearing this for months. The Uni-

versity has still not sent any project notices forward to the State Office of Historic Preservation despite many assurances that it would comply with the state regulations regarding the matter. In addition, the University seems to be uninterested in returning phone calls. At last report, the University was trying to get the Associated Students to take over the project and use it for some sort of student center.

And finally, the City seems determined to erase whatever progress it has made in preservation. Sixth and San Fernando Street is ground zero for several projects of epic proportions, construction that will go on for years. First, the City still plans to remove about 70 houses of our oldest downtown houses, and a number of small businesses, give or take a few. Then the Mayor wants his new City Hall, new parking garages, a new school, a light rail stop and the latest embellishment, a BART station located at Sixth Street, all within one block. The first phase of this project is already underway, a new joint City/University library and two subsidized housing projects. The traffic plans reveal that it will be nearly impossible to function with all those competing uses. We seem to take one step forward and two back.

## FOR SALE!! GREAT PRICES!!

**W**ood frames, double paned, high-quality Pozzi windows. Salvaged from large Saratoga home, 8 years old.

Type	Size	Special Features
4 Windows	48w x 60h	arched 2 panes, both swing open
1 Window	90w x 62h	arched 3 panes, 2 swing open
1 Window	90w x 64h	arched
2 Windows	36w x 60h	arched

We had a large number of these windows. They've sold well...we've raised over \$4K from salvage sales toward the needed funds for the River Street Project. For further information or to view the windows, call André Luthard at 408-287-2823. Leave your name and number; he'll call you back!





*Saratoga Heritage Orchard  
photo courtesy of Beth Wyman*

## SARATOGA'S HERITAGE ORCHARD

### PRESERVED

by Beth Wyman

Saratoga's Central Park Heritage Orchard is the remaining vestige of Saratoga's agricultural past. Today it occupies almost the geographic center of a burgeoning suburb and could be considered the "heart" of the city. It sits on the same land as the busy main library, is across the street from two major churches, two elementary schools, and is adjacent to a middle school, West Valley Community College, the Civic Center and the Post Office. It is also near the only freeway exit in town as well as the Union Pacific Railroad line. It lies at the beginning of Heritage Lane and is the "entry" to Saratoga Village. Therefore, a recent suggestion that some of the 13.9 acres of the

orchard be used for playfields was met with strong resistance on the part of Saratoga citizens.

Led by longtime Saratoga residents Mac and Jean Barrick, a group of orchard preservationists organized and gathered more than 100 letters which were presented to the City Council. Mac Barrick eloquently expressed the sentiments of the group in a letter to the Saratoga News. He said that he and his wife chose Saratoga as their hometown in 1976 after 33 years of moving around in a service career in their search for "...a sense of tranquility, friendliness and community. Now, 24 years later, only one orchard is left to beautify and welcome visitors at the entrance to our village. It is a precious piece of open space — a lovely reminder of the city's heritage — a touch of the past with a hold in the present." He begged the City Council to keep the orchard intact and to take bold action to preserve the orchard as a historical site in perpetuity.

The group acknowledged the serious lack of space for playfields in the city but felt that there were options without using orchard property. At the same time, the City distributed an informal survey regarding the various alternatives for the orchard in the City newsletter. Of the 1069 surveys returned, an overwhelming majority supported keeping the orchard and a majority favored an active educational use of the property. As a result the City pledged to look elsewhere for playfields and asked the City's Historical Heritage Commission to develop some appropriate educational materials. An application for State Point of Interest for the orchard property is also under consideration.




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#### P R E S E R V A T I O N   A C T I O N   C O U N C I L   O F   S A N   J O S E   M E M B E R S H I P   F O R M

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_

WORK PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP STATUS:    NEW             RENEWAL

**MEMBERSHIP TYPE:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL \$20       | <input type="checkbox"/> SCHOOL/NON-PROFIT \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY \$30           | <input type="checkbox"/> BENEFACTOR \$1,000     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR (OVER 65) \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> SMALL BUSINESS \$100   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CONTRIBUTOR \$100     | <input type="checkbox"/> CORPORATION \$250      |

**I COULD ASSIST WITH THE FOLLOWING:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> NEWSLETTER       | <input type="checkbox"/> GRAPHIC ARTS       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GRANT WRITING    | <input type="checkbox"/> PHOTOGRAPHY        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC RELATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> DESKTOP PUBLISHING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION        | <input type="checkbox"/> PRESERVATION LAW   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FINANCE          | <input type="checkbox"/> SPECIAL EVENTS     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: _____     |   |

ENCLOSED IS MY TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM, ENCLOSE IT WITH YOUR CHECK, AND MAIL TO:**

**PRESERVATION ACTION COUNCIL OF SAN JOSE  
P.O. Box 2287, SAN JOSE, CA 95109**

# CALENDAR



The Preservation Action Council of San Jose is a nonprofit 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.

## AUGUST

- 21 (MON) PACSJ OPEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
7PM MOTHER OLSON'S INN,  
72 N. FIFTH STREET
- 26 (SAT) PACSJ ANNUAL GARAGE SALE - 8AM TO 4PM  
260 SOUTH 13TH STREET, SJ  
(SEE ARTICLE PAGE 10)
- 27 (SUN) PACSJ FAMILY PICNIC AT NEW ALAMEDA'S  
CASA GRANDE  
WATCH FOR FLYER IN YOUR MAILBOX.

## SEPTEMBER

- 9-10 (SAT-SUN) WILLOW GLEN FOUNDER'S DAY  
VOLUNTEER STAFFERS NEEDED...  
PHONE 408-947-8025 IF YOU CAN HELP.
- 18 (MON) PACSJ OPEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
7PM MOTHER OLSON'S INN,  
72 N. FIFTH STREET

## OCTOBER

- 1 (SUN) ALAMEDA HISTORY DAYS  
VOLUNTEER STAFFERS NEEDED...  
PHONE 408-947-8025 IF YOU CAN HELP.
- 14 (SAT) PUMPKINS IN THE PARK  
VOLUNTEER STAFFERS NEEDED...  
PHONE 408-947-8025 IF YOU CAN HELP.
- 16 (MON) PACSJ OPEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
7PM MOTHER OLSON'S INN,  
72 N. FIFTH STREET

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