HERITAGE'S ROLE IN DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES

In recent months Heritage has become increasingly involved with the downtown commercial architecture of the city. The preservation of commercial buildings often involves different problems and different strategies from those of residential structures, largely because of the vastly different scale of the situation. Whereas in the past developers of major office buildings were local figures such as Flood, Phelan, and Fitzhugh who had strong ties to the city in which they lived, today major developers are more likely to be national and international corporations more interested in a modern corporate image than in the aesthetic or cultural coherence of a city. For example, the Bank of Tokyo threatens the old Alaska Commercial Building, Saks Fifth Avenue (Gimbels) threatens the Fitzhugh Building, and Neiman-Marcus (Carter-Hawley-Hale) threatens the City of Paris. The challenge now is to find ways to appeal to these absentee investors and thus conserve the character of our city.

We are currently involved with five threatened structures in the downtown area because of the imminence of their demolition. However, a better long-range strategy would anticipate individual threats with an overall plan. To this end, we have embarked on a search for funding to do a study of the economics of retention and rehabilitation of important buildings in downtown San Francisco. Such a study, coupled with a sorely needed definitive architectural survey of the area, could lead to more efficient and comprehensive methods of protecting significant structures in business districts here and elsewhere. Some possible tools for such conservation might include changes in tax laws, facade easements, air-rights transfer, historic districts, or some combination of these. Our first application for funding this project was submitted to the National Endowment for the Arts under their City Options program. The proposal was not funded at this time, but we will continue to actively seek financing from other sources.

While the immediate focus of our concern is on the five commercial/industrial structures discussed in this Newsletter, in the end, what is important is not only buildings but the distinctive neighborhoods and districts which make up the city as a whole. Even if we were successful in saving all of these building, but were unable to halt future onslaughts against the many other significant buildings in the downtown area, we would have won the battle, but lost the war.

URBAN CONSERVATION FUND GROWS

For Heritage to be a significant force for architectural preservation, it is vital to develop sufficient capital resources in order to be able to respond promptly to the pressure of events and thus act as a realistic alternative to demolition.

To meet this need, Heritage is in the process of creating a $600,000 revolving fund for the acquisition and resale of architecturally and historically significant buildings in the downtown area, but were unable to halt future onslaughts against the many other significant buildings in the downtown area, we would have won the battle, but lost the war.

The Alaska Commercial Building was planned after the earthquake in 1906 by Henry H. Meyers and Clarence Ward and completed in 1908. The Architect and Engineer magazine of September 1907 noted the superiority of its construction at a time when that was of foremost importance. The building became a symbol of the reconstructed city, representing in both engineering and design the general determination to rebuild San Francisco soundly.

(Continued on p. 6)
Heritage is currently fighting for the survival of an important but neglected building by Willis Polk in the midst of the proposed Yerba Buena Center (YBC). According to plans for YBC, the building overlaps proposed park and shopping areas, and is slated for demolition. Built around the time of the 1906 earthquake, the structure was formerly a PG&E Substation and is unusual for an industrial building in having a monumental classical facade. The arrangement of finely wrought terra cotta elements on an expansive brick wall is highly inventive and the most notable feature of a building which also has fine, skylit interior spaces. It is located on an obscure site south of Market on a dead end leg of Jessie Street between Third and Fourth Streets.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the YBC in March. Heritage has challenged the adequacy of the draft report's assessment of "Historic Places", which had deemed the Jessie Street Substation unworthy of recognition and retention and "infeasible of rehabilitation." The draft EIS unaccountably concluded that "its general, the Project appears to have a positive impact upon places of historic interest within the area." The report had accepted St. Patrick's Church adjacent to the Substation as sufficiently historic because of its landmark status, apparently dismissing Polk's building because it was not a designated City Landmark. Efforts at landmark designation, actively supported by Heritage and others, failed in a decision marked by controversy within the Landmarks Board.

Heritage answered the draft EIS by suggesting that (1) the Jessie Street Substation is not "infeasible of rehabilitation," (2) that it might be retained and adapted to the distinct benefit of the project, and (3) that it is at least as important as St. Patrick's Church on both aesthetic and historic grounds. To the first point, our review of the working drawings and a field inspection of the Substation suggest inaccuracies in the draft EIS and indicates that the building is in reasonably sound condition. To the second, drawings are in preparation to suggest how the building might be incorporated in the overall scheme of the project which would make use of the large, skylit interior as a pedestrian concourse, retail shopping area and restaurant in an "indoor park" which would be the focal point at human scale, for the entire YBC project.

As for the alleged aesthetic and historic insignificance of the Jessie Street Substation, it displays a dignified and imaginative handling of classical elements not often found in buildings of the period. The design and execution of the individual details inside the building is infe(3) that the Jessie Street Substation is not "infeasible of rehabilitation." The draft EIS unaccountably concluded that "its general, the Project appears to have a positive impact upon places of historic interest within the area." The report had accepted St. Patrick's Church adjacent to the Substation as sufficiently historic because of its landmark status, apparently dismissing Polk's building because it was not a designated City Landmark. Efforts at landmark designation, actively supported by Heritage and others, failed in a decision marked by controversy within the Landmarks Board.

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THE ORPHEUM THEATRE

Heritage has long looked at the Orpheum Theatre and thought that it should be given a new life as part of the Civic Center - Market Street complex. Its immediate proximity to the BART station and the new United Nations Plaza, its facade on a rejuvenated Market Street, and its original design as part of the Civic Center (the unfinished cement wall of the back of the Theatre was to be clad with stone facing to match the Federal Building across the street) all combine to state a convincing argument for its retention and rehabilitation.

Earlier this spring Heritage suggested the possibility of incorporating the Orpheum into the contemplated Performing Arts Center (by scheduling the Symphony and Opera only in the Opera House, and allowing the Ballet, Spring Opera, Western Opera Theatre, and travelling events the use of a refurbished Orpheum) and immediately found itself in the middle of that current controversy. There may well be reasons why the Orpheum cannot be made to function as part of the center but on the surface it appears worthy of considerable thought. Heritage is now making a professional study of the Orpheum to clarify the problems and opportunities in the retention and re-use of the theater.

HERITAGE REVIEWS PARAPET ORDINANCE

The City Planning Department has drafted sections of the Community Safety Element of the City's General Plan, including a section dealing with the parapets on buildings. Heritage has transmitted its comments on the draft to the Department and the matter is now being studied by the Planning Commission. The adoption and enforcement of a strict parapet ordinance in San Francisco will result in the disfiguring of our finest buildings unless some requirements and/or incentives are included which will encourage owners of architecturally distinguished structures to retain and strengthen the existing parapets.

RECOMMENDED READING (PART 2)

There are many books on San Francisco, but only a few stand out. The best guide to the city was written over thirty years ago and has yet to be equaled. San Francisco: The Bay and Its Cities (Hastings House: 1940) was written collectively by the Workers of the Writers' Program of the W.P.A. The guide covers the entire city, section by section, and gives the history and lore of all the major areas and structures in the city.

The contemporary guide to the city is David Gehbard, et. al., A Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California (Peregrine-Smith: 1973). It is an indispensable tool and includes a fifteen page essay on the architectural/environmental evolution of Northern California cities.

Another recent book, the Bay Guardian's The Ultimate Highrise: San Francisco's Mad Rush Toward the Sky (1971), is an analysis of the causes and effects of large-scale development in the city.


THE CITY OF PARIS

The City of Paris building was designed by Clinton Day in 1896 for the Spring Valley Water Company which leased the main floors to City of Paris. After the fire, rebuilding began in 1907 with the retention of the original Geary and Stockton Street walls. Architects Bakewell & Brown were involved in the designing of the interior lightwell and dome which was modeled after Parisian department stores at the turn of the century. The dome was completed by the United Art Glass Company.

City of Paris reopened in 1909 and continued to occupy the property until 1972 when Amfac leased it for its Liberty House store. After Liberty House moves at the end of 1974, Carter-Hawley-Hale, Inc., owners of the property, expect to begin demolition for their new Neiman-Marcus store.

During the past months Heritage has attempted to discuss with the owners ways that the building could be retained. Our offer was not accepted. According to Neiman-Marcus board chairman Stanley Marcus, he and his architects originally intended to use the existing building, but subsequently concluded that it would be unsafe and inadequate.

Complementing Heritage's efforts, petitions and pickets by other groups protested the demolition plans and information regarding future protest activities, call Victorian Alliance president Earl Moss at 824-6834 or Gerda Fulder at 681-5352.

The forum for the most recent protest was the June 5 Landmarks Board meeting. Although the charge of the board is to decide on the architectural, historic and/or aesthetic merits of a building, the public commented primarily on the threat of demolition. After weighing the architectural and historical evidence, the board voted 4 to 2 in favor of landmark designation.

The City of Paris will be a landmark if the designation is approved by the Planning Commission, the Planning, Housing and Development Committee of the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor.

Public support at each stage of the landmarks process is crucial. The next hearing is scheduled for July 11 at the Planning Commission. For confirmation call 558-5056 after July 8.
THE FITZHUGH BUILDING

Heritage has been actively involved in the past several months in an effort to save the Fitzhugh Building on the northeast corner of Post and Powell Streets from complete destruction.

It was built during the 1920's by William and Mary Fitzhugh on a lot left vacant by the 1906 earthquake and fire. Designed as a medical building, it had approximately 200 offices and also shops on the ground floor. The structure is of steel frame construction with a terra cotta facing.

Though the Fitzhugh Building is a twentieth century office building, its architects treated it as a Renaissance palazzo. The foursquare facade with its noble entrance and its ornamental balconies gives the building the general proportions and appearance of a Renaissance city palace. The shallow relief ornament is also derived from Renaissance designs. The facade is a pleasing combination of rich ornament and plain walls. Though there are several buildings in San Francisco that echo the simple, powerful, delicately ornamented Renaissance palazzi, particularly the city's private clubs, the Fitzhugh Building ranks as one of the very best. This is due to the happy combination of both the building's architectural treatment and its prominent location facing onto Union Square.

The Reid Brothers, James and Merritt, designed the Fitzhugh. They were prolific designers and did a wide variety of commercial, monumental, ecclesiastical, hotel and residential work all over the West Coast. Some of their well-known works include the Oregonian Building in Portland, the Hotel del Coronado in San Diego, and the Fairmont Hotel in S.F. Some of their well-known works include the Oregonian Building in Portland, the Hotel del Coronado in San Diego, and the Fairmont Hotel in S.F.

While Union Square has suffered many unfortunate changes on its eastern and southern sides, the western and northern sides have held their own, architecturally speaking. The St. Francis Hotel on the west, the renovated United Airlines Building at the northwest corner, and the Fitzhugh and Bullock & Jones Buildings to the north have become the Square's architectural center of gravity. These few buildings uphold the character and integrity of the entire Square.

Saks Fifth Avenue (Gimbels) is now the owner of the Fitzhugh Building. It is their intention to demolish the building. Though there are several possibilities such as converting it into a hotel, these plans are unlikely to be implemented. Heritage is continuing its efforts to locate sympathetic buyers and secure easements which will ensure the continued protection of these structural and important properties. Mr. James Flack, Heritage's real estate consultant, and members of Heritage's Board, have been working for many months to find preservation-minded buyers for these threatened properties. Although we cannot report complete success, there are still hopes that this important and highly visible corner will be spared.

Three of the houses and their unusually large grounds, 1735 Franklin St., 1701 Franklin St., and 1818-20 California St., were all once held by the Bransten (Dub Coffee) family interests. A contiguous and historically contemporary house, the Sussman-Coleman house at 1834 California St., is not a part of the Bransten holdings, but it adjoins the Bransten houses and carries the architectural unity of the corner up California St.

Here Today called this cluster of four houses and their grounds "one of San Francisco's most valuable and architecturally distinguished districts." The cluster is especially important because it presents a microcosm of the changes in San Francisco upper class housing from the 1870's to the 1900's. There is one pure Italianate (1818-20 California), one Italianate with Queen Anne additions (1834 California), one pure Queen Anne (1701 Franklin), and one Georgian or Colonial Revival house (1735 Franklin). To lose one building, or garden, would be to lose the effect and importance of the group as a whole.

When Mrs. Bransten died the three corner houses went into her estate. Despite Bransten family objections, 1818-20 California and 1701 Franklin were officially designated as city landmarks, but this can only stay demolition for a maximum of one year. The Torner properties were recently downzoned from R-5 to R-3. A 40 foot height limit also applies to the property. But these measures by themselves are not enough to save the buildings; only preservation-minded owners can do that.

Heritage first tried to seek some arrangement whereby certain tax benefits could compensate the Bransten heirs for preserving the properties. Heritage then attempted to secure an option to purchase the properties. However, after several discussions with both the family and their attorneys, no satisfactory arrangement seemed possible. Since then Heritage has been actively involved in trying to find appreciative buyers for the individual houses.

1735 Franklin (the red brick house) has been purchased by Mr. Richard Conroy. Mr. Malcolm Watts is purchasing 1818-20 California. Both Messrs. Conroy and Watts intend to keep their buildings. Heritage's Jim Flack is seeking to have facade easements placed on these houses. That leaves the fate of 1701 Franklin, the key corner house, still undecided. The big "For Sale" sign posted on the corner is a graphic reminder of the precarious existence of this fine old Queen Anne. To date no buyer has been found who is willing to pay $250,000 for the corner house and its garden. Heritage is continuing its efforts to locate sympathetic buyers and secure easements which will ensure the continued protection of these structures.

Like a fly in amber the cluster of fine Victorian houses on the northwest corner of California and Franklin Streets has survived into our own day nearly unchanged.

These houses and their exceptional grounds have been the object of continuing efforts by Heritage to insure their preservation. Mr. James Flack, Heritage's real estate consultant, and members of Heritage's Board, have been working for many months to try to find preservation-minded buyers for these threatened properties. Although we cannot report complete success, there are still hopes that this important and highly visible corner will be spared.

The moral of the story is all too clear; to be effective Heritage needs a strong Urban Conservation Fund that can translate conviction into action. The prices for real estate in San Francisco make a community-wide fund the only alternative to the "redevelopment" of our architectural heritage into building lots.
HERITAGE received the following memberships between January 15, 1974 and April 15, 1974:

CONTRIBUTING
Arthur R. Albrecht  
Mrs. Charles A. Mann  
Robert C. and Leon Perlsweig

SUSTAINING
Mr. and Mrs. Alfred D. Bell, Jr.  
Miss Marion Crocker  
and Mrs. Alfred H. Bell, Jr.
Peter Burgess, M.D.
Mary Jane Bressler
Mrs. Eleanor Sloss
Mr. and Mrs. William Quirk
Mrs. Carlos T. Maas
Mr. and Mrs. Stone H. Coxhead
Mr. and Mrs. Dimitri H. Barton
Anstedt/Glas
Mrs. Charles Kendrick

ACTIVE
Joel T. Abraham  
James B. Alexander  
Mr. and Mrs. O. E. E. Anderson  
Dr. Michael J. Antonini  
Vicki Hendel  
Valerie S. Banks  
K. Richard Brehb  
William Roger Beckman  
Mrs. E. C. Barber  
Mary Jane Bressler  
Ray and Ann Brown  
Peter Burgess, M.O.  
Marnite B. Calder

Shih-Tso Chen  
Marie J. Clump & Associates  
Mrs. Walter Coulson  
Mr. Clare Crane  
James E. Dawson  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Delaney  
Mr. and Mrs. G. Dirkes  
Jerome Dodson  
Jeanne E. Eaton  
Peyton E. Engle  
Michael W. Erwin  
Wilder Fisher  
Mr. and Mrs. James Flack  
Gordon Foster  
Mr. and Mrs. Prentiss French  
Mr. and Mrs. Alexander N. Gansa  
Mr. V. J. Gianelloni  
Mr. and Mrs. Howard Goodman  
 Addiction Green  
Paul F. Hardman  
Michael S. Hebel  
Robert Hann  
Eileen Henriquez  
John J. Hodges  
Hood/Piller  
Duncan L. Howard  
Julie Howard  
Mr. Walter Huber  
John Johnson  
Jane Carol Kelley  
Joseph F. Klimmer  
Mr. and Mrs. Melyn Korhonen  
Ms. Donald Kropp  
Rutkof, Homan & Mullin  
Beatrice LaCotte  
Kathy Ladd  
R. P. LaVerne  
James P. Lovegren  
Mrs. James Mailliard  
Marian Marquardt  
Mr. and Mrs. Paul J. Meyer  
Joan Marie Miller  
Anne Moller  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Morris  
Barbara Morrison  
Donna Morrison  
Ms. Margo Morrison  
Mary Morrow  
Ronald K. Mortimore  
Mr. and Mrs. Fred S. Nagle, III  
Julie Nelsar  
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Nugent  
Mr. and Mrs. Craig Oerturf  
Paul Patton  
Dr. C. R. Peters  
Mr. and Mrs. Glen A. Phillips  
Paul Pleasants  

Mary Louise Posthuma  
Linda Pupos  
Richard D. Reutlinger  
Carolyn Robinzon  
Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Schafer  
Dr. and Mrs. Harley Scheer  
Joan A. Schisler  
Sharon L. Schott  
Mrs. Peter Schrager  
Mr. and Mrs. Nylle Sheldon  
Thomas L. Shelton  
Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey W. Shoffop  
Carolyn Smith  
Reginald Smith  
Jason Soifer  
Raymond A. Sprounce, II  
Mr. and Mrs. Emmett F. Stewart  
James L. Tanner  
Mr. and Mrs. John Temple-Rastin  
Mindy Tinkler  
Mr. and Peter Tremell  
Elise Tuininga  
Mr. and Mrs. William Turnbull, Jr.  
Laura Vasco  
Stephan H. Van Pelt  
Michael J. Weller  
Gwen Wedell  
Marjorie Wilkinson  
Mr. Sumner R. Wheeler  
Mr. and Mrs. Marty Winter  
Mr. and Mrs. John H. Woodford  
Edward G. Zelinsky  
Alanna D. Zuppan

SENIOR/STUDENT
Mary T. Breen  
Mrs. Paul B. Fay  
John Johnson  
Robert N. Kane  
Mr. and Mrs. Georgea Lauffer  
Nina J. Listen  
Rita L. Manzke  
Mrs. David C. Mosby  
Tammy Van Upp

HONORARY
Hermione Barton  
Sal Colombo  
Joelinn Lippett  
Neil Michael  
Gabriel Sheridan  
Tom Smith  
Lindy Wood

MEMBERSHIP
Brochure: We have just printed a new Heritage brochure which includes information on membership. It is being sent to all Heritage members. We plan to use the brochures to recruit new members and supporters. If you know anyone who you think might be interested in receiving a brochure, please let us know.

Renewals: Requests for renewals of membership have just gone out to members who joined between May and July 1973. Renewal requests sent in January and February have yielded a 70% return with 11% increasing their membership donation. We will be contacting those who have not yet renewed in the hope that they will continue to support Heritage's efforts.

Membership meetings: A new benefit of membership has been added — monthly programs for Heritage members and guests at the Haas-Lilienthal house on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:45 p.m. Telephone reservations will be needed due to the limited space available. See calendar for the details.

NEW VOLUNTEERS
Joining the office volunteers are Sal Colombo, Judi Finch, Theda Fox, Susan Levitt, Miriam Lowenberg, and Elise Tuininga.

A Special Events Committee has been formed to arrange monthly programs for Heritage members and guests and for other social and fund-raising activities such as a Christmas party and new members committee include: Janie Bostwick, David Corsi, Paula Kurth, Rosanne Talcott, Barbara Winter and Carol Wolfe. Anyone interested in joining this or the newly-formed house committee, please call Heritage.

Guided tours of the Haas-Lilienthal house are now given on Wednesdays from 1:00 to 3:00 and on Saturdays and Sundays from 12:30 - 4:30. The docents now number forty-two including the following newly trained volunteers: Susan Cook, Joan Farwell, Carol Fishe, Giselle Lauffer, Sally McMillen, Carol Ann Rogers, Mindy Tinkler, Madeline Romero, John Uhlir, Ken Wood and John Woodford.

10,000 visitors have enjoyed the Haas-Lilienthal house since its opening in November 1973. Over 3,500 of the people came between March and May 1974, about 500 attended special tours for groups such as the Stanford Urban Studies Program, SPUR, the Oakland Museum docents, and the work of the Urban Studies Program, SPUR, the Oakland Museum docents, and the work of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

In addition, Heritage has used the house for activities such as the docent program, committee and Board meetings, and the reception for Mr. James Riddle, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The extra sparkle at the Haas-Lilienthal house is due to the work of the new house committee, which includes the following members: Paul Holmes, Douglas Schols, Christina Nihill, Andy and Lois Skaff, Marnite Calder, Marty Winter, Elise Tuininga, Sal Colombo, and Marie and Richard Oku.

Special thanks to Lindy Wood, H-I tour cashier; Peggy Little, typist; Michael Crow, graphic designer; Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Baron, donors of coffee from the American Cofer Fee Service; Mrs. Ambrose Lampen, hack garden chairman; Lynn Woodford and Michael Corbett, contributors to the Heritage Newsletter; and Gabriel Sheridan, generous donor of the fine period glass globes gracing the H-I house entry hall and dining room.

HAAS-LILIENTHAL HOUSE NOW OPEN SATURDAYS, TOO

Guided tours of the Haas-Lilienthal house are now given on Wednesdays from 1:00 to 3:00 and on Saturdays and Sundays from 12:30 - 4:30. The docents now number forty-two including the following newly trained volunteers: Susan Cook, Joan Farwell, Carol Fishe, Giselle Lauffer, Sally McMillen, Carol Ann Rogers, Mindy Tinkler, Madeline Romero, John Uhlir, Ken Wood and John Woodford.

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municipalities as well as grants and low interest loans to be put
work in the Urban Conservation Fund. In addition, we
are considering selling bonds to individuals in the com
munity to help reach our goal of $600,000.

The Urban Conservation Fund functions as a revolving fund
providing the equity investment needed to buy and hold
property until a suitable owner is found. The Fund is re
plenished by the subsequent resale so that other threat-
cened properties may be purchased. Upon resale, protec
tive covenants in the form of facade easements, are re
tained by Heritage to protect against future demolition
or inharmonious change to the original design.

The Urban Conservation Fund, as it is called, was officially established in December 1973 with the receipt of a $10,000 grant from the Mary A. Crocker Trust. To introduce Heritage members and friends the benefit was a sell-out. Proceeds netted almost $4,000 and Heritage gained over 50 new members. Since then, the Fund has received an anonymous contribution of $22,000 to be matched on a two-to-one basis, and a $45,000 long term, low interest loan from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Heritage continues to actively seek further contributions from local foundations, interested individuals and corpora
tions as well as grants and low interest loans to be put
to work in the Urban Conservation Fund. In addition, we
are considering selling bonds to individuals in the com
munity to help reach our goal of $600,000.

Heritage has proposed a plan that would maintain the char-
ter of this very important corner of Union Square and
yet allow for a modern store. Heritage proposed that the
new addition be constructed behind the existing ten story
section. Since Saks needs only about six floors, Heri
tage's plan proposed that every other floor of the present
building be removed and a penthouse for offices be con
structed above the new addition at the rear. Heritage
presented an analysis of its proposal which shows that up
to $8 per square foot could be saved over the costs of
constructing a new building by retaining the historic
tshell and building a new store inside it. Our proposal
has been sent to Gimbels in New York and, while we have
not been given a definite answer, the local representa
atives of Saks have indicated that they prefer to build a
new store. Heritage views this sentiment as rather
ironic. Of all the commercial buildings in San Francisco,
the Fitzhugh Building comes closest to the image and style
of Fifth Avenue in New York. To our way of thinking, it
would be the appropriate home for "Saks Fifth Avenue".