Jessie Street Grant Matched!

A Heritage-sponsored study examining the feasibility of reusing the Jessie Street PG&E Substation, located in the YBC Redevelopment Area, has begun. The study, valued at $19,500, is funded by donated services and a $7500 grant to Heritage from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The study team has been assembled by architect John Weese, who will coordinate the project. Formerly with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Mr. Weese is currently the principal in his own architecture/planning firm and is a member of Heritage’s Board of Directors.

The team is composed of architect/planner William A. Werner, recently with SOM; structural engineer Stephen Johnston, Chief Engineer at SOM; real estate economist James W. Flack II; graphic designer Sally Hilborn; and a construction engineer from Dinwiddie Construction Company. In addition, the team will use as consultants architects Harry Weese & Associates of Chicago, preservation specialists.

The study, which is to be completed by the end of the summer, will analyze the environmental, planning, structural, economic, and marketing factors relevant to the question of the feasibility of retaining, rehabilitating, and reusing the Substation, located on Jessie Street between Third and Fourth Streets in the YBC Redevelopment Area. The 1906 Willis Polk-designed Substation is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Heritage hopes that the study will provide the analytical basis for the conservation and recycling of this important San Francisco landmark, and for the creation of an exciting and unique urban space in the city.

Heritage Presents Awards

San Francisco’s Historic Preservation Week, proclaimed by Mayor George Moscone, began with our announcement of the 1976 Heritage Awards of Merit at the Haas-Lilienthal house on May 9. The Awards honor two individuals and three businesses whose exemplary efforts have helped make SF’s architectural legacy a meaningful and useful part of the present and future. Recognizing the value of architectural conservation, Mayor Moscone’s proclamation stated... "It is appropriate that we give greater attention to preserving the buildings and places in our City that have shaped our lives and are tangible evidence of our past as a people."


Design of Don E. Stover Memorial medallion shown by Charles Hall Page, Heritage president.

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Awards  continued from page 1

William Matson Roth, a great San Franciscan, in every sense heir to the City's great traditions, received both an Award of Merit and Heritage's highest honor, the Don E. Stover Memorial Award for his exceptional service to San Francisco. Mr. Roth was among the first to demonstrate that protection of our architectural heritage is a creative act in behalf of our future. Not only did he save the staunch old Ghirardelli Buildings from what seemed certain destruction, but he also put them to such vivacious new use that Ghirardelli Square today ranks as one of the most delightful urban amenities in the world.

He has shown the way towards a more intelligent policy for the waterfront, for sane limits on high-rise construction, and for the defense of other threatened structures such as the City of Paris and the Goodman Building, less imposing than Ghirardelli Square, but nevertheless important in their own right. At the same time, he has upheld the most liberal social traditions of our community, seeking actively to expand opportunities for citizens of all backgrounds.

Beyond the City, he has also been deeply concerned with the fate of the open countryside and wilderness. As a founder of California Tomorrow, he has been one of the chief proponents of wise environmental planning for our State. On the coast as in the hills, where land of exceptional beauty has been vulnerable to speculative development, he has generously helped to save precious acreage for our own and future generations.

The bestowing of the Don E. Stover Memorial Award seems particularly fitting since Don Stover, a fine architect and an original member of the San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, was one of the designers who transformed the old chocolate factories into Ghirardelli Square.

Mrs. Bland Platt, with rare understanding and dedication, has been a significant force in the protection of the City's urban fabric. In thirteen years of full-time, non-salaried work, she has become a nationally recognized expert regarding landmark ordinances and has developed an unmatched knowledge of the architectural resources in the City's neighborhoods and commercial areas.

The breadth of her knowledge of San Francisco's buildings stems from her major role in the production of the SF Junior League's Here Today, an authoritative record of our architectural heritage. She participated in the drafting of Article 10 of the City Planning Code, the ordinance creating the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, and has been a member of that Board from its inception in 1967. She assisted the Planning Department in the creation of guidelines and criteria for the City's first Historic District, Jackson Square, relating to the property owners, the Planning Department and the other board members. Her continuous verve and conviction account for many other remarkable behind-the-scenes achievements in the protection of our architectural environment.

The Ron Kaufman Companies is rare among real estate developers for its appreciation of older buildings. Headed by Ron Kaufman, the company has demonstrated that good civic sense makes good business sense. By restoring the entire block bounded by Montgomery, Francis, Kearny, and Chestnut Streets, Ron Kaufman has saved a valuable area of the northern waterfront from senseless demolition. What is more, he has proven that recycling is economically feasible when several different buildings are involved. Of particular interest is 1701 Montgomery Street, formerly the Eureka Granary, now Western Contract Furnishers. A portion of this abandoned building was removed to create an open courtyard, balancing the scale between it and the Fibreboard Corporation Building. The Ron Kaufman Companies, working with Plant Bros. Corp., took a resourceful approach to a full block of historic San Francisco buildings by treating them with kindness and enlivening them with adventure-some new activities.

The Chartered Bank of London is honored for its efforts in restoring the Merchants Exchange Trading Hall at 4th and California. A representative in San Francisco of a world capital blessed with an incomparable architectural heritage of its own, The Chartered Bank of London has earned the gratitude of its city. This splendid neo-classical space, which could have been ruined by insensitive modernization, instead has been restored to its full former glory -- virtually to mint condition -- thanks to a wonderfully tactful and elegant respect for the original design of Julia Morgan. The uncovering of beautiful murals was an unexpected dividend in this tribute to Morgan's architecture. Saving the banking room itself also complemented
the larger Merchants Exchange, one of architect Willis Polk's excellent commercial buildings.

The Chartered Bank, its Chairman Norman C. Eckersley and the Merchants Exchange Building Manager, Otto Haaske, who personally directed the project, were gratefully recognized.

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development has taken its place as one of the most deeply creative and socially innovative examples of urban conservation in the country. The long-neglected loft building at 1855 Folsom offered many opportunities for new commercial use. It was a profound recognition of real urban needs to transform empty warehouse space into a radically new educational resource which strengthens a SF sector most in need of spiritual and physical renewal: the teaching and care of young children. Brilliantly planned, exquisitely designed, gracially furnished, and operated in a mood of joy, Far West Lab is a beacon of optimism for those who rightly see education of the young and even the very young as the chief hope for a civilized future. Its Director, Dr. John Hemp-hill; its architects, Esherick Homsey Dodge and Davis; the architect associated, Fred Linn Osmom; and all who made this project a handsome reality are commended.

Award recipients were selected by Heritage's Board of Directors upon the recommendation of a distinguished panel: Allan Jacobs, professor of city and regional planning at UC Berkeley and former Director of SP's City Planning Department; Toby Levine, Mission Planning Council president, Janet Nairn, Architectural Record editor; Allen Tenko, architectural critic; and architect Francis L. Whisler of Whisler-Patri.

Parapet Ordinance Revised

Changes which somewhat mitigate the adverse economic and environmental effects of the Parapet Ordinance have resulted from efforts of the Parapet Task Force.

SF's Parapet Ordinance, adopted in 1969, is concerned with building elements which might be hazardous during a major earthquake. It establishes safety requirements which potentially hazardous portions of buildings must meet; cited building elements must be reinforced, restored, replaced or removed.

NEW PROCEDURES

Revised safety standards and inspection procedures were adopted for the Bureau of Building Inspection (BBI) by the Board of Examiners in May, 1976, on the recommendation of a technical advisory committee. That committee resulted largely from pressure exerted by the Task Force, which contends that the Ordinance will have drastic aesthetic and financial costs.

The major changes in the enforcement of the Ordinance relate to strength requirements and to the location of building elements being cited. In general, the degree of strengthening needed for compliance has been reduced. Future citations will be generally limited to building elements at or near the roofline -- parapets, cornices, freestanding statuary, rooftanks, roof mechanical equipment and similar features which pose significant hazards. Citations are no longer mandatory for lower projections such as balconies or for belt courses, canopies, wall decorations, stacks, tanks, and tile roof- ing. Features which pose negligible hazards, due to their locations, such as parapets adjacent to another building of equal height, are exempted as long as that condition exists.

For the 700 already cited buildings, amended citations reflecting the revisions are being issued.

CONTINUING CONCERNS

Even with the revised procedures, the burden of compliance still remains with the owner, who must determine the safety of the cited elements and correct hazards. This process can be extremely expensive, involving scaffolding, hiring engineers and architects, and submitting detailed plans for correcting deficiencies. The staggering costs of the Parapet Ordinance for both the City (for enforcement action and to correct deficiencies on City-owned buildings) and for private owners continue to raise questions about the extent to which San Franciscans can or should try to indemnify against the dangers of a major earthquake.

Heritage is actively involved on the Task Force, which is discussing the possibility of a moratorium on enforcement until the economic and environmental effects of the Ordinance have been adequately analyzed. Also during the summer, Paul Newman, an Intern funded by Heritage and The National Trust for Historic Preservation, will analyze and record six major downtown buildings already cited, working toward the design of easily reproducable building ornamentation which could be used by owners choosing to restore hazardous but aesthetically important elements.

1975 Annual Report

Heritage's first Annual Report for the period from January 1 to December 31, 1975, is now available by writing or calling the Heritage office. The 1975 Annual Report highlights the year's activities and includes financial statements.
North Waterfront

The new Planning Commission has requested that the landmark board study the North Waterfront for possible designation as an Historic District. Many of the early warehouses are obvious candidates for landmark status. This has happened none too soon. One indisputable architectural treasure, the old Italian Swiss Colony warehouse, has been let fall into unconscionable neglect.

"The story of San Francisco is largely the story of the waterfront," said the 1940 WPA Guide. SF's steep hills forced the Gold Rush city to grow out into the Bay, first on wharves and then on landfill. The space occupied by the warehouses and piers became inadequate by the end of WW II, and shipping moved to more spacious ports around the Bay. Today, some of the brick warehouses remain, inheritances of SF's rich maritime past. Many architects and designers' offices are in the mellow old warehouses under the shadow of the quarried face of Telegraph Hill.

Land for this warehouse district was created by quarrying the east face of Telegraph Hill and filling out to the line of East Street (renamed The Embarcadero in 1909). On this expensive land, sturdy timber and brick -- and later reinforced concrete -- warehouses were built.

Some of the early warehouses were exceedingly well built. They were major capital investments and were built to the highest standards. The Pelican Paper Co. warehouse, on the northwest corner of Vallejo and Front, had its foundations laid in 1854. Piles were driven through 30 to 40 feet of fill and sand down to bedrock. On top of then, a first-class edifice of imported red brick was built. Originally the Vallejo Street Bonded Warehouse, it contained an opium vault. (Before 1883, opium was legal in San Francisco.) The building was leveled in 1906, but immediately rebuilt along the same lines as the original. Across Vallejo is the companion, and delightfully named, Trinidad Bean & Elevator Co.

The old Fuller Paint Co. building at 50 Green Street, now the S. Christian showrooms, was built in 1907 right after the quake. It is said that Mr. Fuller instructed his architects to design a building that would withstand a quake twice as strong as that of 1906! The reinforcement work in the basement attests to his wish. Generous and beautifully proportioned arches march around all four sides of this free-standing building.

Some of the new buildings in the area are in perfect harmony with the history of this part of the city. The new low-rise office complex along The Embarcadero at Montgomery and Francisco, a frankly modern building, shows due attention to the place's architectural history.

Between the old parts of the district and the new are several endangered survivals of the past. The most important is the old Italian Swiss Colony warehouse on the southwest corner of Battery and Green, now owned by Travelers Insurance. After years of neglecting it, Travelers claims that it is a hazard. Plywood fences have been built around the sidewalk in front of it to protect the public from falling pieces of the state's heritage. A splendid, even elegant, warehouse, it was built to keep the wines produced at the Italian Swiss Colony vineyards at Asti. Its forms mimic those of Imperial Roman arches. Row on row, the arches march around the building's public faces. It is an evocative bit of imperial triumph applied to a warehouse in 1898, an imperial year in US history. The warehouse was built with a well inside it. Water from this well was used to douse the roof in the fire of 1906.

The most extraordinary vista in the area today is up Commerce Street, an alley between Union and Green at Front, looking toward the Icehouse, the hill and the buildings clustered around. Next to the Icehouse is a plain reinforced concrete building with a fool-the-eye paint scheme that first convinces and then amuses.

The continuous Neo-Classical wall of pier fronts along San Francisco’s Embarcadero was designed by state architects and developed into one of the handsomest ports in the world. At the head of each pier was a generous arch. Visible from down so many streets, they create a distinctly San Franciscan vista. Neglect, fire and ugly new port buildings have disrupted, and threaten to destroy, what was once a continuous ribbon of harmonious design. The pier facades and arches deserve to be preserved. By replacing the two-story buildings between the arches with low walls, and by opening up the arches and inserting, perhaps, iron grillework, future developments on the piers could both preserve a city edge of great architectural power while opening up views of the Bay. New development over the pier spaces would thus have both magnificent entrances and a harmonious link with The Embarcadero's past.

What is needed in the North Waterfront is (1) the preservation of the best buildings; (2) the creative re-use of the great arches along The Embarcadero, and (3) good judgment in the design of the modern structures (which should be frankly modern) that will be built on the many empty blocks and piers in the area. The "in fill" buildings will be as important to the character of the place as the landmarks.

Randolph Delehanty (with thanks to David Marcus)
Landmarks Board Appointed in April

Contemporary concern for landmark preservation in San Francisco is shown in Mayor Moscone's recent appointments to the San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board.

The reappointment of Mrs. Bland Platt, Elizabeth de Losada, James Ream and Dr. Albert Shumate is a departure from the Mayor's policy of naming only new members to city commissions. We are pleased to see this recognition given for such valuable past service.

Mrs. Bland Platt, an invaluable member of the Board since its inception in 1967, became president in 1973. Her full-time commitment to this non-salaried position helps make the Landmarks Board a vital part of the city's planning process.

Elizabeth de Losada has been on the Board since 1972. Consistently supporting landmark designations, she recognizes the need for conserving both our residential and commercial architectural heritage.

In his two years of service, architect James Ream has consulted widely and taught architecture, applied his skills to many projects, including the Architectural Review Committee. His sensitivity to historic architecture is balanced with concern for owners' needs.

The Board's first president, Dr. Albert Shumate, has provided the continual benefit of his knowledge of San Francisco history, especially in his review of the Board's extensive case reports.

New appointees were also named: Sally Faminar, Jean Kortum, Stewart Morton and Margo Warnecke.

Sally Faminar, who runs a SF real estate firm, has been extremely active fostering Filipino culture and heritage in the community. Recent service on the Mayor's Committee on Boards and Commissions led to her interest in the Landmarks Board.

Jean Kortum, associated with the Maritime Museum since its 1950 beginnings, has been a leader in efforts to conserve the historic North Waterfront.

The experiences she gained from fighting for waterfront height limits and from researching historic buildings are excellent background for her added role as chairperson of the Board's North Waterfront Historic District Committee.

Stewart Morton is a founding Director of Heritage. His retail and real estate experience, of great value in Heritage's conservation efforts, will be applied to the Landmarks Board's Architectural Review Committee.

Margo Warnecke, a recent graduate of Stanford in art and architectural history, has been involved in efforts to save the City of Paris. Currently working for Charles Hall Page and Associates assisting with architectural surveys and research, she is the Landmarks Board's liaison for Yerba Buena Center.

One remaining vacancy would best be filled by an architect with rehabilitation experience.

Current Landmarks Board concerns include the revision of the Landmarks Ordinance and consideration of individual building designations, as well as individual building designations. It participates in the Parapet Task Force, and monitors the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. Meetings are at 2:00 on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 100 Larkin Street.

Volunteers

We welcome thirty new docents! Suzanne Bartels, Nancy Caleshu, Dona Candela, Irene Deitsch, Dave Donahue, Linda Diamond, Jo Dryya, Mary Elsea, Stephen Farneth, Mary Frain, Joyce Frankenberg, Mary Hilmo, Kathy Hume, Honor Kinch, Julia King, Doris Klauser, Arlene Lucchesi, Donna Luke, Bonnie MacVv, Judy Rosenberg, Lucy Small, Anna-Margaret Sietsma, Jackie Snell, Dale Thompson, Therese Tracy, Geraldine Troy, Kenneth Vais, Shaw Waltz, Sally Wilder, Jean Zimmerle. New office assistants are Anne Courtright, Mary Kay Donahoe, Lisa Reindorf, and Nancy Goldenberg.

Continued thanks must go to the many volunteers who make possible activities like Preservation Week, Monthly Programs, Tours, and Lecture Series, particularly chairpersons, Catherine Myers, Mary Cole, Connie Hammerman, and Gay Kunz. The honorary memberships listed below recognize volunteers who are giving long-term service. Judy Patt, one of our three walking tour guides, has started a small walking tour business called Footloose. For tour information call her at 843-3741.

Bank Redlining Study

A monograph published by Alan E. Rothenberg, a Heritage Director and a Bank of America Vice President, provides useful evidence on the current "redlining" controversy. The result of a study funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, The Impact of Real Estate Lending Biases on the Purchase and Rehabilitation of Older Urban Residences, can be obtained by calling Mr. Rothenberg's office at 622-8598.

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2/1/76 - 4/30/76

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Update: Fitzhugh Building

Preparation of a design and programming statement (DPS) is under way to determine the best use of the Fitzhugh building and other vacant properties in the Fitzhugh neighborhood. The Planning Department's Environmental Review Section is responsible for ensuring that all relevant information on the environmental effects of the proposed project is collected and that agencies and the public are notified.

Information on the Fitzhugh building will be available within the next week. A public hearing on the Fitzhugh building will take place at a public hearing on the Fitzhugh Commission.

Urban Conservation Fund Loan Approved

At its August meeting, the Urban Conservation Fund approved a loan to the Fitzhugh building. The loan will be used to renovate the Fitzhugh building into a new structure within the next year. The Fitzhugh building will be made for a term of 10 months to pay back taxes, insurance, and interest on the construction.