Sutter Street: Maintaining Scale and Context in Downtown Architecture

In the 1950s, large photos of San Francisco's Hallidie Building (Willis Polk, 1917) were reverently hung in Harvard's Graduate School of Design. The world's first glass curtain wall structure was hailed as prophetic, a building decades before its time. Its timeless appeal has since been recognized as remarkable for having appeared in the Beaux Arts backdrop of San Francisco. The photos did not include the Hallidie's context which, as Splendid Survivors author Michael Corbett has observed, demonstrates that the Hallidie was but one of the many diverse buildings that contribute to the fabric of Sutter Street. Willis's octagonal building is in harmony with the architectural and historically vast-mountainous backdrop of downtown San Francisco. The Hallidie itself was the last building on the block and tied together a diverse group of buildings into a superb whole, demonstrating both Polk's daring and his respect for local tradition.

Michael Corbett, describing the block, said that it "functions as a kind of capsule history of downtown types and styles of the 20th century, stepping up gradually before its time and all the more remarkable from Kearny (to Montgomery) with different colored cornices on each building employing a variety of rich facade materials, textures and colors, spaced at pleasing intervals and relating to the Hallidie building by offset of the latter's mandate to be seen as a whole.

(Continued on page 6)

City of Paris Fight Ends

As readers of the Heritage Newsletter are undoubtedly aware, the California Supreme Court late in August rejected the appeal filed by Heritage and four co-plaintiffs on the City of Paris Building case. The six-year battle over the fate of the landmark department store on Union Square has now been decided in favor of the Neiman-Marcus chain.

If a benediction is called for on this issue, it would include the following observations:

First, until the City of San Francisco has a truly comprehensive landmark ordinance, forcefully administered, landmark-quality buildings will continue to be lost and limited resources available to preservationists will need to be devoted to litigation and controversy rather than to more positive actions.

Second, the process whereby significant buildings are identified early, landmarks are certified and the economic feasibility of preservation is credibly advanced must be a continued priority for those concerned with conservation in San Francisco. Splendid Survivors, the Heritage-sponsored survey of downtown San Francisco, provides a necessary first step in this process.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue:

- New Walking Tours Book
- Fort Mason Plan
- Cable Car Campaign
- Reid Brothers, Architects
- Holiday Gifts from Heritage
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Become a Heritage Walks Guide
- Holiday Open House & Raffle
- Fire Prevention
- Invert
The Heritage Newsletter is a publication of the Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, 2007 Franklin Street, San Francisco, California 94109, (415) 441-3000.

Officers & Directors
Charles Hall Page, Chairman
Charlotte Spotts, President
James Haus, Vice-President
David Robinson, Vice-President
John Sanger, Vice-President
Harry Millar, Treasurer
Nelten Tavernetti, Secretary
Edward C. Cohn
Robert E. Quelle
David Hartley
Evetty Johnson
Mrs. Marcon Kendrick
Caryl Macay
Peter Z. Michael
Stewart Morton
Mrs. Ernst Ophuls
James Ream
Richard Raishhardt
William Shapiro
James Hall Page
Kathleen Sproul
Mrs. Lawrence Stein
John Wasse
Sue Weimstein
Jacqueline Young

Staff
Ellen R. Ramsey, Executive Director
Gray Brodhead, Architectural Historian
James Byrd, Administrative Assistant
Linda Jo Pitz, Assistant Director
Barbara & David Hartford, House Managers
Randi Hall, Tribal Administrator
Catherine Joseph, Program Coordinator
Margaret Leach, Communications Director
Bee McFarland, Membership Secretary
Jim Murrow, Secretary

Joining Heritage
Heritage is an urban conservation organization dedicated to encouraging and assisting in the preservation of San Francisco's cityscape. Please join us. Clip the coupon below and send it with your membership contribution to HERITAGE, 2007 Franklin Street, San Francisco 94109.

___ Yes, I'd like to join HERITAGE.
Enclosed is my membership contribution of $ (351 minimum).
___ Please send me more information about HERITAGE.

Name
Address
City/zip
Phone (day) (eve)

Octobre 1980

A New Guide To Great San Francisco Walks

SAN FRANCISCO: WALKS AND TOURS IN THE GOLDEN GATE CITY. By Randolph Delehanty. Preparied in cooperation with Heritage. Published by The Dial Press, $9.95 ($7.95 for Heritage members; available at the Heritage Bookshop).

September 22 marked the publication of Randolph Delehanty's new book on San Francisco, its history and its architecture. Mr. Delehanty is an urban and architectural historian, writer, teacher, and design consultant with a special knowledge and appreciation of San Francisco. From 1973 to 1978 he served as Heritage's Urban Historian.

The book, with drawings by William Halsey, guides the reader on 12 walking tours, each explaining the history and character of different parts of the city: North Beach and Telegraph Hill, the Financial District, the Castro, Haight-Ashbury, Golden Gate Park, the Castro and No Valley, Fisherman's Wharf, and great San Francisco's industrial heritage.

The text covers planning your tour, where to stay, getting around, shopping, restaurants and nightlife. Here, from the introduction and first chapter, Randolph Delehanty comments about the book and the city:

This guide to San Francisco's historical and architectural treasures includes all the places most people come here to see, plus areas usually overlooked by visitors and all too often by San Franciscans as well. It serves the needs both of the visitor with only a few hours in San Francisco and of the resident interested in thoroughly exploring the past and present of this unique, ever more fascinating city.

While it concentrates on the architecture of the city, this book weaves into its narrative something of the history of the people of San Francisco as well. It is a colorful and dramatic history that has produced one of the world's great cities -- a richly varied, compact city of countless hills and valleys, varied microclimates, many cultures, all classes, divergent histories, a city with a distinctive "look" and living architectural tradition.

The difference between San Francisco and all other large American cities boils down to the fact that in other cities success is invariably defined as moving up and out, while in San Francisco it is success -- no matter how poor one remains -- simply staying here forever. There are other cities, and a very few are almost as beautiful as this one. But there are many who breathe a sigh of relief when they cross those long bridges spanning the majestic bay and come back to their hilly, gleaming city. These are San Franciscans. They have chosen to live here and they invest their city with their proud love. Even the most casual visitor will feel the pervasiveness of this special affection for what everyone here calls "the City."

City of Paris

(Continued from page 1)

And finally, since the disposition of the City of Paris raises the larger issue of the disposition of San Francisco - its downtown, still dense with finely-scaled urban architecture, preservation efforts must be increased and maintained in the face of this decision.

John Kenneth Galbraith writes in the latest issue of Historic Preservation that "the preservation movement has one great curiosity. There is never any retrospective controversy or regret. Preservationists are the only people in the world who are invariably confirmed in their wisdom after the fact." While we certainly recognize a degree of arrogance in Mr. Galbraith's statement, we look forward with interest to seeing whether, in the City of Paris case, it is justified.
Preservation or Adaptive Reuse?:
Fort Mason Plan Raises Issues

Beniamino Bufano's statue of "Peace" stands serenely at the pier and warehouses which were once the main port of embarkation and supply for the cargo of the Pacific theater. Now, instead of munitions, the Magic Theatre, Greenpeace, Friends of the River, a Zen restaurant, and a host of other cultural and environmental groups occupy the Fort Mason buildings, providing a rich and diverse feast of events for the people of the Bay Area. The Fort Mason Foundation administers the pier area under the aegis of the National Park Service and has recently touched off a basic controversy about the adaptive reuse of historic structures.

Late last year, the Foundation sponsored a competition for a comprehensive plan for the pier area. Use of the facilities has been impromptu and haphazard, although enormous potential exists there for innovative use.

Eight firms were invited to furnish design solutions on the site. For several days, the old infirmary became a frenzied architects' atelier as designers readied their proposals.

The local firms of Robinson, Mills and Williams and the SVA Group of Sausalito won laurels with a coordinated design featuring an area-wide circulation grid painted on the present asphalt parking lot and a set of moveable design elements intended to provide an unlimited choice of patterns and flexibility in exterior spatial use. In the proposal, the roofs of pier buildings and provide heat for theater, offices, waterfront restaurants and large public spaces, while access to the bay would be greatly improved from the piers.

The proposal drew much favorable comment, as well as reservations from National Park Service historians, who maintained that the area possesses unique significance in the history of American warfare. Undeniably, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area is a unique living museum filled with relics of human incivility, from Alcatraz and Angel Island to the fortifications and working missile silos of the Marin headlands. As much as a Ming vase, a world's fair, Sausalito, or the Emelia Gay, these sites are valid statements of human culture and progress. Therefore, wind generators and holograms were scrapped as inappropriate, and a decision was made to retain, as much as possible, the military-industrial appearance of the area, and to sensibly avoid "Ghirardellization." Rows and groves of palm, or any other, trees were likewise deemed unsuitable, since trees have never graced the lower Fort area and since the Park Service is providing a vast meadow area in the upper Fort.

At present, the plan is in limbo, with the Park Service reviewing it and no money to implement it. Should funds be provided next year, Robinson, Mills and Williams and SVA will probably be called back to provide the necessary demonstrations and proposals.

The controversy raises many uncomfortable issues for preservationists. To what extent is adaptive reuse compatible with historical functions and appearance? (For example, does anyone think of the Cannery as a cannery?) At what point in time should a site be frozen? (The lower Fort area was reclaimed from the Bay about 1910 and is itself historically inappropriate to the original extent of the Bay.) Must thorny of all, just what is "historical" and what merits preservation? In this instance, do the memories associated with World War II installations justify their mothballing, and is this compatible with public recreation? "Peace" watches over the impromptu excitement and controversy of Fort Mason. With or without a plan, experimentation continues at the Fort, creating in San Francisco one of the most vital cultural centers in the nation within the cast-off shells of a wartime nerve center.

Landmarks in Process

Important San Francisco buildings can be officially recognized in various ways. They may be designated as a San Francisco Landmark, a State landmark, or a National Historic Landmark. Also, they may become part of the National Register of Historic Places. Each kind of designation has different criteria and involves different processes. The designation of greatest honor is the National Historic Landmark, which is conferred at the sole discretion of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Below are those buildings recently designated or now in one of more of those processes:

CITY LANDMARKS

Pending Designations
Initiated by Landmarks Board; going to Planning Commission

965 Clay - Chinatown YWCA
Golden Gate Park - Sharon Building
817 Guerrero - Hotmale House

Designated City Landmarks

350 Bush - Mingling Exchange
964 Bush - Avidia House
309 at Gough - St. Paul's Church
1010 Gough - Post Office Agency
302 Greenwich - Julius Castle
Lombard at Battery - California Statehouse
2220 Sacramento - Calvary Mission
2395 Sacramento - California Museum
303 Sutter - Hammesfahr Building
17th and Howard - St. Charles Church
3535 19th Street - B'nai David Synagogue

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
No new listings.
The neoclassical Columbarium on Lorraine Court in the Richmond District is the last remnant of the old Laurel Hill cemetery. It has recently been purchased by the Neptune Society, which hopes to restore the unusual building with community support. Left: The monumental entranceway. Right: The ornate interior. (Photos courtesy of the Neptune Society.)

Neptune Society Saves the Columbarium

Shivering in the joy while waiting to see The Shining at the Coronet, filmgoers had the chance to ponder one of San Francisco's most mysterious relics. The green dome and the white walls of the Odd Fellows Columbarium, evocatively derelict and inaccessible, looms behind the theatre at Geary and Arguello. Nearly destroyed during the Depression, the Columbarium has moldered down to the present. But it has recently been saved from collapse by the Neptune Society.

When built in 1898, the building stood in a vast tomb-studded necropolis which covered the northern flanks of Lone Mountain, the Laurel Hill cemetery complex. It was designed by British architect B.J.S. Cahill in the neoclassical style and was the second of an intended six-building ensemble which was never completed. The first building was a crematorium, designed also by Cahill, and the Columbarium was designed to house the ashes it produced. An Odd Fellows publication declared it to be "without exception the most beautiful and elaborate building in the world used exclusively for the ashes of the dead." Early views of the interior show that it was furnished with comfortable chairs, oriental carpets, and potted plants, "diverting the mind of the unpleasant feeling that so often goes hand in hand with anything associated with the burial of the dead." The stated intent was to give the rotunda "a delicate and refined atmosphere" like "an ordinary living room."

The purpose of this building meant for the ages was seriously compromised in only 12 years. In 1910, cremation was outlawed in the city limits and four years later, the Board of Supervisors ordered the removal of all human remains within the city in order to provide land for the living.

So began the fight over the Laurel Hill cemeteries. It lasted until the mid-1930s, when all remains were finally removed. The tombstones were used for seawalls and other useful construction, and the land was covered with houses, apartments and streets. Only the Columbarium remained, on an apron of lawn which had been hosedsted under the Homestead Act to prevent the State from taking control.

Although it contains the ashes of 40,000 people, the Columbarium has become a white elephant and proceeded to decay without maintenance. During the winter more than a inch of water might stand on the marble mosaic floors while brilliant molds grew on the dappled walls.

Yet the building remained surprisingly un vandalized and continues to impress visitors with its sumptuous detail, its monumental rotunda illuminated with stained glass, and, most of all, its original 1890s polychromy, which has survived intact.

Undeniably a building of outstanding merit, the Columbarium presented unusual problems to preservationists who might consider adaptive reuse. Fortunately, the Neptune Society offered a solution by buying the building and returning it to its original function.

Richard Jonjourdon, director of the Society, says, "As the Neptune Society Columbarium, we intend to preserve the physical and cultural integrity of the building and make it accessible to the community as an alternative memorial site - the only repository for cremains remaining in the city of San Francisco. Through tours and visits, we plan to be instrumental in keeping alive an important cultural resource for San Francisco. The grounds, gardens and building will be a public sanctuary for meditation."

The society plans to restore the building over a projected 5-year period with the help of the community. At present, it is open to the public on Saturday afternoon and is well worth a visit.

Heritage Notes...

- Focus on the Tenderloin will be required as a result of the City's application for a $15 million Urban Development Action Grant to finance the acquisition of approximately 1,200 rehabilitated and newly built housing units.
- A thorough analysis of zoning in downtown San Francisco may be forthcoming. Groups representing the spectrum of views on downtown development, including Heritage, are supporting a process that would result in an SIS address the environmental impacts of Proposition O, the Sewdway/Goode and Bollas studies and various other initiatives for downtown zoning.
- San Francisco, along with Boston and Chicago, hosted Congressional hearings on extension of Section 1924 of the Tax Reform Act which provides tax incentives for rehabilitating income-producing property. The hearings, conducted by the House Committee on Ways and Means, were held on Thursday and Friday, October 16 and 17.
- Mary Beth Rock, dedicated Heritage volunteer and Board Chair, soon leaves the Bay Area for New York and London. Her enthusiasm, skills and contributions will be sorely missed. Laura Pilis takes over as Board Chair until the next election of officers.

Campaign To Save Cable Cars Begins

A campaign to save America's only moving National Historic Landmark - San Francisco's cable cars - will be launched on October 29 with a luncheon at the St. Francis Hotel. Heritage members are very welcome to attend.

Key guests will be RichardMoon, President of the National Trust for Historical Preservation; Senator S.I. Hayakawa; and Mayor Dianne Feinstein. Also participating will be singer Tony Bennett and Carl Popp, 1980 cable car bell-ringing champion.

The kickoff event is sponsored by the Committee to Save the Cable Cars, a nonprofit public benefit corporation founded by Virgil P. Caselli of Ghirardelli Square. Mayor Parnell is the group's honorary chairperson. Campaign chairperson is E.T. Derr, President of Chevron USA, whose company has contributed $1 million to the campaign.

The luncheon will serve as a springboard to appeal for funds. "We are officially launching our campaign, and we want to let San Franciscans know what we plan to do and how they can help," says campaign coordinator Linda-Marie West.

The cable cars require an estimated $58.6 million for complete restoration. Eighty percent of that sum can be raised locally to qualify.

Urban Mass Transit Administration, a federal agency, if the remaining 20 percent can be raised locally to qualify.

The cable cars were invented by Andrew Hallidie and provided an ingenious solution to the problem of public transportation in hills too arduous for horse cars to climb. The first line began running on Clay Street in August, 1873. The cars once criss-crossed the city, but 10 miles of track on three lines are all that remains.

Tickets for the luncheon are $30; tables of 10 may be reserved in advance. If you'd like to attend, send your name and address and your check, made out to "Save the Cable Cars," to the Cable Cars Committee, P.O. Box 2688, San Francisco 94126. For further information, call 392-4511.
Fire Prevention
In Buildings Under Restoration

A Supplement to the Heritage Newsletter, October 1980

Fire obviously works against the preservation of irreplaceable buildings of architectural and historic merit. Many cities have lost landmarks as the result of accidental and -- all too often -- intentionally set fires. But fire threatens not just landmarks. It imperils structures of all types, including your home.

In keeping with the spirit of Heritage's You and Your Old House: A Practical Guide to Rehabilitation, we have compiled this special Heritage Newsletter supplement on fire prevention in buildings under restoration. Whether or not you're redoing an older home, we hope it will make you think twice and help you make your living space a little bit safer.

Preventing Fires When You Restore Your Home

When you begin restoring an old building, you face innumerable pitfalls. Workers will fail to show; the price of materials will soar the day after escrow closes; and building inspectors will, of course, be building inspectors. These, however, are all temporary problems. The effects of fire are permanent. By its very nature, the costly and irreplaceable asset you have purchased is vulnerable to fire. Its wood frame, brittle and dry with age, ignites at a very low temperature. Much of the necessary work creates sparks and flammable debris. Electrical wiring is likely to be antiquated and hazardous.

In addition, your house may not be totally secure during the restoration process. Its broken windows, easily forced doors, or debris-filled basement make it an attractive nuisance, an open invitation to those who will set fires either accidentally or on purpose. If you are not living in it while restoring, your risk doubles.

Fire can easily sweep through your building, damaging those mantels and cornices that made you fall in love with it. Fire, if not quickly checked, can level your home to the ground before your restoration has even begun. Worst of all, it can kill. In 1977, 7,800 people lost their lives in residential fires. Property loss amounted to $2,849 billion.

The problems a homeowner faces in protecting his property while it is under renovation are complex. Fires are either accidental or incendiary in origin, with a wide variety of causes for either type. While accidents are easier to prevent than arson, without careful adherence to safety standards, many things can go wrong at once.

The following stories may sound like scenarios for disaster movies, but they are all possible—they have happened to others:

• An inexperienced plumber is soldering copper pipe with an acetylene torch. He is not aware that the wood floor joists the pipe runs through have a low kindling temperature. He takes a break and by the time he returns, the wood is smoldering beneath the floor of the entire room. Not knowing where the fire extinguisher is, he pours water on the smoke. The fire is advanced, so this has very little effect. By the time the fire department arrives, the back of the house is engulfed in flame.

• You are having the paint burned off the facade of your house. A permit is required for this, so the fire department will be alerted to possible danger, but you were in a hurry and didn’t take it out. The burner throws sparks onto the wooden roof of your house, and a healthy blaze is going inside to call the fire department, but since the house is not occupied, he finds no telephone. He then runs to a neighbor’s home and calls from there. But by the time the hook-and-ladder arrives, the entire roof is engulfed.

These examples don’t take into account the damage people living in the house can cause: fires from frayed extension cords that have been under rugs; blazes that begin in dirty chimneys or in fireplaces that were never built to burn wood; over-loading of already substandard electrical systems with innumerable high-powered appliances.

All these situations can be predicted.

(Continued on page 2)
and controlled. Arson, on the other hand, is more difficult to foresee, because of the different motives from which it may arise. The San Francisco Arson Task Force has many stories of deliberately set fires. The stories are frightening because they could happen again.

Arson can be directed against the homeowner personally. Workmen who have been fired, tenants who have been displaced and neighbors upset at the disturbance caused by renovation have all been known to set fires in retaliation.

Arson has also been directed at homeowners whom the arsonist perceives to be part of a group he feels threatened by. If you live in a neighborhood that is undergoing "gentrification"—a former lower income area where middle-class people are moving into old homes and forcing the indigenous residents out—you may be especially vulnerable. Deliberate firesetting by organized groups or torching as a consequence of riot can be a particular problem in these changing neighborhoods.

Finally there is random arson. It can strike anywhere. The debris-filled basements of old houses have enticed teenagers looking for a place to smoke marijuana. When they left, they set fires. Overloaded debris boxes have proved irresistible to passersby with a psychological disturbance and a cigarette.

Houses that are dark night after night while under renovation have become targets for moving gangs of delinquents looking for thrills.

Now, then, with fire danger from so many sources, can the homeowner protect his property? The answer lies in the concepts of safety precautions, security, and cleanliness of premise. The following checklists illustrate how these apply to specific situations.

Basic Precautions

Smoke alarms are inexpensive and easy to install. In addition to alarms in permanent positions, they can be placed near where work is going on and removed to another area as the work progresses.

Fire extinguishers should be easily accessible, and workmen and residents should know where they are located and how to operate them. Extinguishers should be checked periodically to make sure they are in working order; your local fire department will be glad to perform this check-up.

Fire department phone numbers should be prominently displayed near your telephones. Even if you are not living in the building during restoration, a telephone (the Lifeline Service Plan is relatively inexpensive) should be installed for emergencies.

Discussion procedures in case of fire should be established and residents and workmen made aware of them: where the best exit is, what alternative exits are available, and how to operate the fire escapes.

Precautions Against Accidental Fires

Debris and other flammable items should be removed from the basement and other storage areas immediately when you take possession of the building. When renovation begins, these items should be cleared on a daily basis.

Electricity and gas to parts of the house under renovation should be shut off before work begins. Many old homes have gas pipes leading to light fixtures which have been improperly capped off. These should be investigated to make sure there is no seepage.

Debris boxes should be positioned at outside, never against the house, in case a fire starts in the box.

Flammable items, such as empty paint thinner cans, should be thrown in the debris box last, immediately before pickup. In the interim such containers should be stored in a secure place. If you have outdoor space, it is best to keep them outside the building.

A debris chute or tube can serve as a conduit for fire from the box to your building. The chute should be capable of easy detachment in case of a fire in the box.

Special permits from the fire department may be required for certain types of hazardous work. For example, when you are burning paint from the facade, you must take out a permit to your local fire station will be alert to the danger. Paint burning is a prime cause of fires on old wooden roofs. Whether a permit is required or not, it is wise to notify your fire department whenever you are undertaking hazardous work.

Hiring qualified workmen will lower the incidence of fires caused by worker carelessness or ignorance. You may decide to hire someone of the street solely because he will work for three dollars less per hour than a more skilled person. In this case, ask for...
Chimneys should be inspected and cleaned. Their terra cotta linings may have shifted in an earthquake, leaving bricks exposed which cannot take the heat. Chimney screens should be in place, especially on buildings with wood roofs. Similarly, vents for hot water heaters, furnaces, and stoves should be inspected.

Smoke, however slight, from roofs or between floors indicates that a fire has already gotten a good start. Fires in these places spread rapidly; they may have been building a long time before you notice smoke. Water or a fire extinguisher are of little help; call your fire department.

Precautions Against Incendiary Fires

Secure premises will discourage arsonists. If the rear of your building opens onto an alley providing easy access, this should be doubly secure. Repair all broken windows and locks, and make sure there is no access to the basement.

Good lighting, both within and without the building, will prevent arsonists from breaking in.

Debris boxes are an easy target for a person walking by with a lighted cigarette in his hand and mischief on his mind. They should be positioned at the curb, not back on the street, and should not be thrown in until pickup. Prompt removal of full boxes will cut down the risk of arson.

Empty buildings are an open invitation to the arsonist. If yours is to be vacant during renovation, inform your local police precinct.

Neighborhood cooperation in watching empty houses can supplement police surveillance.

Suspicious-looking strangers who loiter near your building or ask strange questions of you and your workmen should be reported to the police.

Threats from disgruntled workmen, tenants or neighbors should be reported to the police.

Suspicious incidents of fire, however minor, should be reported to your local Arson Task Force.

Fire in San Francisco

Even before San Francisco was engulfed in flames following the 1906 earthquake, fire was a catastrophic part of our history. It was almost a daily fact of life in the Gold Rush city. Six times between Christmas Eve, 1849, and June 1851, vast sections of the wood and canvas town were devastated by fire. At least three of the blazes were the work of arsonists; intentionally set fires are not a new problem.

(Continued on page 4)
San Francisco officials passed a number of laws aimed at preventing the havoc from recurring; an early one required all householders to keep six buckets of water on their premises at all times. But the laws were not enough to prevent serious losses of irreplaceable buildings. One example is Adolph Sutro’s Cliff House, which burned to the ground on Christmas Day, 1894. Quickly rebuilt, the gingerbread palace on the bluff overlooking Seal Rock played host to San Francisco citizens (and several U.S. Presidents), but not for long. Though it escaped destruction from the earthquake, it burned once again in 1907. The present structure, while less distinguished, has fared better.

The earthquake made San Franciscans painfully aware of our city’s vulnerability to fire. Blazes caused by tipping lamps and damaged chimneys quickly spread, and broken mains couldn’t supply the water to control them. In a final drastic measure, the Army Corps of Engineers dynamited the mansions along Van Ness Avenue, stopping the flames but destroying many of the city’s fine homes. Evidence of the lessons learned from the quake are the circular brick patterns indicating cisterns under many of our streets. Should the disaster repeat itself, the water will be there.

Present-day San Franciscans are fire-conscious for good reason. Our old frame homes, huddled close together on the hills above the bay, are constructed primarily of redwood. Its moisture content of water, rather than resin, dries with age, leaving it with a very low kindling point. Add to that the density of our buildings, generally on lots only 25 feet wide, and you have a dangerous potential for fire’s rapid spread.

Accidental fire can be deadly unless quickly controlled. More insidious yet is the work of the arsonist.

Various forces lead to arson for profit: changing land-use patterns, and economic difficulties, felt by many property owners in times, like now, of recession. Rundown buildings housing marginal businesses or residential units may yield little or no return, may even be a drain on the owner’s resources. The owner, faced with what he feels is a useless and expensive asset, may turn to a professional “torch” or “doctor,” in arson squad language, in order to collect insurance settlements. Arson for profit, according to the San Francisco Arson Task Force, accounts for 58.7% of all dollar losses from fire.

The amateur arsonist, on the other hand, is usually acting out hostility to cultural changes in a neighborhood, especially in ones that are upgrading. Renovated buildings command higher rents than current residents can pay, and the tenants who can afford them attract more expensive types of businesses. Buildings that are vacant during renovation are natural targets for the displaced resident who feels he is being forced out of a neighborhood. New property owners — middle class, usually white, often gay — are seen as oppressors. The oppressed turn to the gasoline-soaked rag to vent their frustrations. These arsons can be isolated incidents or well-coordinated efforts like the work of a gang called the Flames, who terrorized the Fillmore during the mid-1970s. In a theatrical touch, they left behind signed notes, taunting the Fire Department and claiming credit for some 35 blazes before they were apprehended.

Fortunately, San Francisco’s active and efficient Arson Task Force does apprehend many of our arsonists. During the past decade, the number of investigations of fires in which people have been injured or killed, or for which the fire chief could not determine a cause, has risen steadily. So has the number of arrests.

While in many cities today, arson is a rapidly growing problem, the Task Force feels it has put a cap on arson here, proving that San Francisco, at least in relation to fire, is a city that learns from the past.

The Arson Task Force

San Francisco’s special Arson Task Force, a unit of the Fire Department, investigates incendiary fires and encourages citizens to report information that could lead to the arrest and conviction of an arsonist.

The expense of arson is borne by the entire community. Property and business owners pay in the form of higher insurance premiums and property taxes. Others pay through increased rentals reflecting the owners’ costs.

Reporting suspicious persons, circumstances, or even rumors can help stop arson. The Arson Squad Hot Line — 441-7362 — operates 24 hours and accepts tips, anonymous or otherwise, from concerned citizens.
Montgomery, Brothers' classical Call Building at 74 New Bottom left: The ing at 3rd and Market looked like this before it was modernized. Bottom right: The Reid Brothers' classical Call Building at 74 New Montgomery.

Creators of Our Cityscape:

The Reid Brothers: Shapers of the Downtown

Around the turn of the century, the architectural firm of the Reid Brothers must have been the envy of many of their lesser colleagues. Prominent, respected and no doubt rich, they were the architects of choice for many of San Francisco's most successful developers of commercial properties and helped to create the look of the city, especially its downtown.

James W. and Merritt Reid were born in New Brunswick, Canada. James received his training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. But the brothers responded to the lure of the West and began their professional association in California.

One of their first commissions was the Hotel Del Coronado in San Diego. Completed in 1886, it is the last existing Victorian seaside resort on the West Coast.

Moving easily from stick-style extravaganzas to steel-frame office buildings, the brothers designed the Claus Spreckels building, here at 3rd and Market in 1898. The prominent critic B.J. Cahill called it the "handsomest Call office building in the world." At 19 stories, it was, for many years, the tallest building in the city.

It dominated Market Street with its flamboyant dome, in which architect George Applegarth, creator of the Palace of the Legion of Honor, had his office.

Though the building went up like a mammoth torso in 1906, it was well designed that it was virtually unscathed by the quake itself. The tower still stands, though in 1938 its dome was removed and it was resurfaced as a setback Moderns tower.

The brothers seem never to have been at a loss for wealthy and powerful patrons. In 1905 they created the Fairmont Hotel for the Fair sisters, who wanted to create a monument to their father, silver king "Bonanza John" Fair, on the site of his never-completed Nob Hill mansion. The hotel's great white mass for many years dominated the skyline of San Francisco at the crest of the hill.

For the Pale Brothers, the Reid Brothers designed several department store buildings, the largest of which, better known as the old Pendel's store, still stands at 5th and Market. Long vacant, it awaits a sensitive restorer.

Greatest of all their patrons was the Spreckels family, for whom the firm designed numerous office buildings and mansions after their initial success with the Claus Spreckels tower. For Spreckels' son, John, they projected one of the world's tallest skyscrapers at 4th and Market, but it was never built. Claus Spreckels also had the brothers design the sandstone Music Pavilion on the concourse in Golden Gate Park.

Because of their prodigious output of high-calibre buildings, the local journal Architect and Engineer declared in 1910 that "none in their profession have done more to attract the attention of the outside world to the city by marvellous examples of architecture and engineering." The statement testifies to the provincial insecurity with which San Francisco has always been afflicted, as well as to the pride the city felt when the London Council requested that the Reid Brothers design a 400-foot tower building for the British capital.

Buildings by the Reid Brothers are dotted throughout downtown San Francisco. But in many cases their creations have been "improved upon" by later owners, so that the original design has been lost. In some instances the entire building has been lost. A sad example is the late Pittsburgh Building on Union Square.

The firm lasted nearly 45 years before it was dissolved in 1932. It did its greatest work in the decades before and after the 1906 disaster. With the onset of modernism, the firm's output dwindled.

The brothers favored a monumental classicism with heavily rusticated bases and giant orders, best seen in the Fairmont Hotel, the Pale Brothers store and the extremely handsome Call Building at 74 New Montgomery. Like gleaming white palaces these buildings continue to lend grace and dignity to the streets of San Francisco.

As Architect and Engineer remarked, "The influence of the Italian school is apparent in most of their work, and this is perhaps the logical outcome of those influences... that, common to the two countries, gave trend to the Renaissance in Italy and its adaptability here."
Sutter Street
(Continued from page 1)

and structural expression. The former is predominately green and grey, while the latter is a pleasing red and buff. The French Bank's unusually large window area and skeletal appearance, recalling the new skyscrapers of Chicago, play off against the California Pacific's New York-style masonry walls. Both are supported by the Romanesque-style Hunter-Dulin skyscraper across Sutter, and they support, in turn, the Hallidie building itself.

This complex dialogue may soon become even more so if plans for the 100 block of Montgomery Street are realized. Five small parcels, including the California Pacific, have been assembled by the Cahill firm, which plans to erect a highrise slab on the site. Aside from the profound environmental impact of yet another high-density structure in this already congested area, the project will require the demolition of the California Pacific Building.

Rated "B" in Splendid Survivors, this Reid Brothers skyscraper is of major importance because of contextual contribution to an outstanding collection of buildings. It's a structure of radically different scale, material and structure were imposed on this block, it would appear as an alien invasion that would greatly impair the ensemble. Heritage has therefore resolved that any development on the 100 block of Montgomery Street must be designed to complement the entire Sutter Street block. In particular, any new building must continue the anchoring function of the California Pacific Building, with color, materials and texture consistent with the present harmony of the buildings on the block.

Holiday Gifts from the Heritage Bookshop

Baffled, beleaguered and bewildered as you begin your holiday shopping? A visit to the Haas-Lilienthal House Bookshop can furnish ideas and treats for many people on your gift-giving list. The Bookshop is open during public tour hours: Wednesdays, 12-4 and Sundays, 11-4:30. Heritage members receive a 20% discount on purchases totaling $10 or more.

If you prefer to obtain your item by mail, give the Heritage office a call (441-3000) and we will send you an order form. A sample of the treasures to be found:

BOOKS

- Splendid Survivors ($19.95 softcover, $32.50 hardcover). The widely praised Heritage-sponsored survey of San Francisco's historic downtown. Contains an inventory and critical evaluations of the architectural, historical, cultural and environmental significance of 900 downtown buildings. Also includes a vivid description of the development of the areas from Gold Rush to today's metropolis, 500 photographs and 40 maps.


- The Haas-Lilienthal House/San Francisco. ($8.95). A photographic look at life in the Haas-Lilienthal House and the Brausten mansion further down Franklin Street, written by Frances Brausten Rothman, daughter of Florence Haas. Luminously illustrated with old family photographs.

- A Gift to the Street ($12.95). A popular photographic essay of the intricate architectural details that adorn Victorian houses and delight the eye and heart. Photos by Carol Glavich; text by Judith Lynch Waldhorn.


- Victorian Traveler's Companion (4.95). This handy pocket guide lists where to go, eat, sleep, and tour in places of special interest to Victorians buffs. Alphabetized by state.

- San Francisco: Walks and Tours in the Golden Gate City (9.95). Randolph Dale's animated text and William Walter's striking drawings lead walkers on 12 tours of our fair city. The next best thing to a personally guided tour. Ideal for visitors and natives alike.

AND OTHER DELIGHTS


- 1981 Above San Francisco Calendar ($9.95). Stunning aerial photographs accompanying a calendar with generous space for writing.

- Gift Boxes (8.75). Offer a bottle of holiday cheer or two dozen of your best home-baked cookies encased in a charming replica of the Haas-Lilienthal House.

- Victorian House Poster ($5.25). A crisp, colorful display of 36 photos of Victorian and Edwardian houses in San Francisco. Includes an address key.

- Greeting Cards (varying prices). A fine assortment of Christmas cards with Victorian themes, including the Haas-Lilienthal House.

- Pen and Ink Drawings ($5.00 each). Seven different, intriguing illustrations of old San Francisco landmarks, including the Nob Hill Crocker mansion and the original Palace Hotel. Matted and ready for framing.

For Youngsters: A variety of Victorian coloring books, paper dolls and cut-and-assembly houses in HO scale ($1.50-$3.00).
Helping Heritage: Opportunities for Volunteers

Heritage values and needs the assistance of volunteers in many areas. Most of our programs depend upon volunteer support. If you'd like to help, please call Catharine Joseph at 441-3000. Listed below are some of the areas in which we'd especially welcome your assistance right now:

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE
Bring food, great guests, sell drink and raffle tickets, pour wine, serve food at Heritage's annual Holiday Open House, December 6.

GUIDES TO GIVE ARCHITECTURAL WALKING TOURS
A training class for Heritage Walks Guides will start in January 1981, meeting evenings and some Saturdays. The development of San Francisco, its history and architecture, and tour techniques are covered in the ten-week course. A one-year commitment for each Wednesday or Sunday, monthly is required.

RECEPTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP MAILINGS
Help give Heritage information to callers and provide us general office and clerical help during weekday office hours (9-5). Overall typists are needed, too.

LECTURES
Can you be on call to help with receptions and lectures? Heritage occasionally needs food (cookies, coffee...), greeters, ticket sellers and punchers, persons to staff Heritage information and membership tables.

Classes To Start for Heritage Walks Guides

Who are those people standing on San Francisco street corners, waxing eloquent on architecture, history and the early city's colorful characters? They are Heritage Walks guides — individuals who share their knowledge and special love for our city with curious Sunday strollers by leading Heritage's architectural walking tours. Would you like to be one of them? A new guide training class, meeting weekday evenings and some Sundays, will begin in January. The comprehensive 10-week course will train volunteer guides to give informative tours of Pacific Heights, North Beach-Telegraph Hill and the Financial District. The classes will cover the history of San Francisco, general information on architecture, and tour techniques. If you are interested in this city's fascinating architecture and environment, invite you to be a Heritage Walks guide. For an application or more information, call the Heritage office at 441-3000.

Heritage Holiday Open House

While most of us are trying to figure out what to wear to a Halloween costume party, some merry Heritage volunteers are Planning the holiday Open House and Raffle. This year, the Open House and Raffle Drawing will be on Saturday, December 6, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. Decked with ribbons, wreaths and garlands, the Haas-Lilienthal House will be the scene of our annual afternoon of celebration and cheer as Heritage members and friends gather to enjoy carols, tasty tidbits and the excitement of the Holiday Raffle. With more than twice as many prizes as last year, this year's Raffle has something to appeal to everyone. Raffle tickets and an invitation to the Open House will be sent to all members. Keep an eye out for them and plan to join the festivities on December 6.

Contributors: June-July 1980

NEW MEMBERS
Philip Adams Judith Adler Carin Anderson Lee Anton Christian & Phyllis A. Baldenhofer Lorraine Barner Marilyn Lee Boyce Charles Brown Mr. and Mrs. Douglas M. Brown Mrs. Mary Carberry Gerald F. Cauthen Mr. and Mrs. A.B. Clubboni

Ina Robert Gysanet Kathleen Nagan Lise & Linda Nayarath Mrs. Parry M. Harzen Alice R. Holloway Caroles House Bob Laplaceo Chris Jensen Thomas W. Johnston Mrs. Helen B. Kappal Selden LaDue Elisabeth de Leonas Mr. and Mrs. Wendell G. Louis Neil C. Ludel

Ritter Marks Lita Marks Barry McKay Larry L. McDonald Ann McElhinna Fiona McKay Sharon Minsky Vikki Murray Andrew T. Nadell R.D. Ben Navico D. Richard Norris John C. Opperman Laura Parke Rita Plagari Carol Self Mary Judith Robinson Debra Rowland

Molly Weathers Leslie Wrigley

NEW MEMBERS—MAJOR DONORS
Mr. and Mrs. Bay Dollay

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS
Bank of America Gerald P. Cauthen Catherine M. Davis Trust Donald E. and Barbara Hartford Janice M. Holloway Darrin Marks Charles E. Merrill Trust Mrs. Emmet Oubal Fred E. Smith Wells Fargo Foundation
Heritage Calendar:

What's Happening This Fall and Winter

Every Sunday

Heritage Walks guides give walking tours of Pacific Heights, the Financial District and North Beach—Telegraph Hill. 12:30 p.m. $3 members. No reservation required. Call 441-3046 for information.

November 5


November 13

Randolph Delaney on "Heritage Walks Guides Training Class begins."

November 14


Every Wednesday and Sunday

Haas—Lilienthal House Guided Tours. 2007 Franklin Street, San Francisco. 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. $2 general public, $1 students and senior citizens; free to Heritage members. No reservation required. Call 441-3000 for information.

October 22

Randolph Delaney on "Victorian Enthusiasm: The Bay Window City." Second of five Heritage lectures on "San Francisco: People, Places and Architecture." Pirman's Fund Forum, 3333 California Street, San Francisco. 8:00 p.m. $4.75 members, $5.75 members. Series tickets: $20 members, $25.25 members.

WHEN PAINTINGS GO SNAP, CRACKLE, POP

Art conservator Robin Tichane will talk about restoring and caring for paintings at our Monthly Program on November 8.

November 8


November 15

The Heritage "Hoilday," a glittering benefit evening featuring dinner, dancing and gazing tables. At Maryvale (the former PG&E substation, San Francisco City Landmark No. 58), 3640 Buchanan at North Point, San Francisco. Cocktails 7:00 p.m., dinner 8:30 p.m. $75 per person. Call 441-3000 for information.

November 17

Heritage Program Committee Meeting. See October 27.

November 27-28

Thanksgiving Holiday. Heritage office closed.

December 1

Holiday Open House and Raffle Drawing. Heritage's annual celebration for members. Haas—Lilienthal House, 2007 Franklin Street, San Francisco. 3-6 p.m.

December 2

"Showup of "On the Waterfront" (1954), winner of 8 Academy Awards. Shown in connection with the Port of San Francisco Walking Tour (see December 13). Building E, Room 215, Fort Mason. 7 p.m. $4 (movie only). Call 441-5970 for information.

December 6

Holiday Reception at a Tudor-Style House, fine late 19th-century residence in Pacific Heights, aglow with the spirit of the holiday season. For a $20 donation to Heritage you will receive an invitation admitting two people.

December 10

Port of San Francisco Walking Tour, sponsored by the Oceanographic Society. An all-day behind-the-scenes tour with local waterfront experts. Meet at Fisherman's Wharf, at the Oceanographic Society. Call 441-5970 for information.

December 24


December 25-26

Christmas Holiday. Heritage office closed.


New Year's Day. Heritage office closed.

Insider's Info: A Walking Tour of Downtown San Francisco, a free Heritage Walks program, will be offered in conjunction with the opening of the new California First Bank branch in the Hallidie Building, 130-150 Sutter Street, the world's first glass curtain walled building. The lunchtime tour will last about 45 minutes. Call 441-3000 for information.

Heritage Walks Guide Training Class begins.

January 8

Heritage Walks Guides Training Class begins.

January 13

Heritage Monthly Program. Speaker to be announced. Haas—Lilienthal House Ballroom, 2007 Franklin Street, San Francisco. 7:45 p.m. $1 nonmembers, members free.

January 19

Heritage Program Committee Meeting. See October 27.