Where Does Heritage Stand on the Herbst?
Solidly Behind It, with All the Forces We Can Muster to Ensure Preservation

The Museum of Modern Art wants to demolish Herbst Theatre and expand into its space. The first report of this outrageous news was published on December 26, and it caught the public quite by surprise. Heritage stands absolutely opposed to this — or any — plan that would destroy or modify the architecturally and historically significant Herbst Theatre. There is no question that the Herbst must be preserved intact.

The Museum plan calls for gutting Herbst Theatre and replacing it with additional galleries and administrative offices, a conservation lab, library and small auditorium, and storage. The developers hadn't intended to make the proposal public until they had won the backing of the War Memorial Board of Trustees, who oversee the Veterans Building.

Since that fateful first article there has been much about Herbst in the media...and much that clouds the issue. Headlines speak euphemistically of "relocating" the Herbst, while the proposal seeks to tear the theater down. Conjectures about a new theater are followed by critical comments about Herbst, many of which are blatantly false. And let it be known that under the terms of the original agreement for constructing this building the Museum of Modern Art is not part owner of the structure and does not have primary rights over the theater. The theater is not the Museum's property and may not be dispensed with as MOMA pleases.

Almost worse than the obfuscation is the resignation, the attitude that the demise of the Herbst is a certainty. No such thing is certain. Yes, preliminary sketches have been prepared — but on speculation. Yes, the Mayor has given her endorsement. Yes, it's hard to fight city hall, and big money, and powerful builders. But the Herbst is worth fighting for, and Heritage is committed to the battle.

This is not, as some have billed it, the start of a cultural war between preservationists and proponents of modern art. Heritage has no quarrel with the fact that the Museum needs to expand. But tear down the Herbst? Demolish the only small theater available to numerous Bay Area performing arts groups — for chamber music concerts, solo recitals, children's opera, jazz concerts, dance and lecture events — a theater that is a vital force and a valuable asset to the community? There is no need for such ruthlessness. Other alternatives for Museum expansion are more appropriate and should be thoroughly evaluated.

Theater's Design First Class; Brangwyn Murals Not Movable

Herbst is the new name (since 1978) for Veteran's Auditorium, designed by one of the most important architects in San Francisco's history, Arthur Brown, Jr. Brown also designed the Veterans Building (housing the auditorium), the Opera House and City Hall. These buildings form an indispensable part of the Beaux Arts ensemble that is Civic Center, part of the National Register Historic District, recognized internationally to be among America's best examples of Beaux Arts planning and architecture.

The Veterans Building and Opera House are both city landmarks and will both be rated "A" in Heritage's extended survey. They were built as war memorials, satisfying the desire of the citizenry to commemorate World War I dead and the need of the city for a performance hall (San Francisco lost its opera house and most of its major theaters and halls in the earthquake and fire of 1906). The original idea was for a single building, but in January 1923, the War Memorial Trustees announced they would erect two: an opera house and an American Legion building that would include a museum of art (on the fourth floor) and an auditorium (to be shared equally by the veterans and the museum).
Herbert Has History Too

In April, May and June of 1945, with the world well into its sixth year of global war, the two buildings of the War Memorial served as the birthplace of the United Nations. Most of the plenary sessions of the founding conference took place in the Opera House. But it was on the modest stage of the Veterans Auditorium (this is well documented) that 148 delegates representing 50 nations signed the United Nations Charter, June 26, 1945. President Truman was on stage to witness the signing of the Charter by the United States. Before the signing each section of the Charter was drafted and approved in the working sessions of the Charter Convention, also held in the Veterans Auditorium. Later, in 1951, the International Treaty with Japan was drafted in the Veterans Auditorium, but the signing of the treaty took place in the Opera House.

As a result of these and other events the Herbert Theater is perhaps San Francisco's most historic space. No plaque or commemorative display of artifacts could take the place of the theater itself as a suitable memorial.

There Are Alternatives

The Museum has its heart set on raising the Herbert, but Heritage is determined to raise the question: Why? MOMA needs to expand, but the Herbert is not the only space available...and they have no title to it. If the Museum has the capability of raising $40 million ($25 million for themselves and $25 million for a theater), why not the money to build a building of their own? They may even be able to do with fewer funds if they would consider the alternatives:

- An addition to the Franklyn Street end of the Veterans Building, for use by the Museum, with its own entrance from the courtyard or Franklin Street, or a street-level connection from Van Ness. If additional space were added to the western end of the building to match the massing of the Opera House, there would be sufficient total space within the building to include the expanded museum facilities, the veterans organization and Herbert Theatre. The resulting total available space should be allocated to best meet the true functional needs of the sharing organizations without undue regard to questions of precedent or prestige. Clearly, being in this splendid structure becomes prestige in extraordinary measure.

- An addition to the Franklin Street end, to be used by the relocated veterans organization whose space along the sides of the building would be converted for use by MOMA.

- Increased use of Herbert Theatre by the Museum in a form that would preserve its architectural integrity and murals. MOMA now uses the theater for lecture series. Retaining this hall within the museum would facilitate programs that move from a lecture directly to the galleries for experiencing the art described.

Isaac Stern Speaks At Herbert, March 27

Violinist Isaac Stern, one of the world's leading performers and arts advocates, will appear at Herbert Theatre on Tuesday, March 27, from 5 until 6 o'clock p.m. "A Conversation with Isaac Stern" is being presented under the joint auspices of San Francisco Performances and City Arts and Lectures, two organizations concerned with the fate of the Herbert.

Tickets are $5, available at City Box Office (131 Kearny, in Sherman-Clay), BASS, Ticketron and STBS. To charge by phone, call 393-4400. For further information call 775-5967 or 563-2463.

Other Criticisms Discounted

Did Herbert's remodeling "ruin" the theater? Investigation by Heritage staff has found that while the modifications detract somewhat from the original design, they are offset by the positive effects of the renovation, for example the restoration of the Brangwyn murals and the cleaning and repainting of the interior. No distinctive architectural features were removed and the essential form and integrity of the structure remains unimpaired.

It has been alleged that the Herbert is a seriously flawed theater. Yet data supplied by the War Memorial staff and testimony by critics and performing arts groups who use the theater conflict with the negative assertions.

Too small to be profitable? Too large to be a good small theater? The occupancy rate for this 915-seat theater over the past four seasons has ranged from 65% to 53%. Over 50% is considered excellent by most performing arts groups who use the Herbert.

Inadequate backstage and lower level dressing areas? Most users consider these satisfactory, with the exception of larger dance groups which have many props, sets and performers.

Those spearheading the Museum's expansion plans insist that a new theater could be built that would offer the best of everything. Whether this is possible is not the issue. There is no need to build a new Herbert. The present one does beautifully.

They promise not to wreck the Herbert until that new theater can be constructed. But the maddening assumption is that they have the right to wreck it in the first place. Emotionally they do not.

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Bad acoustics? They are rated "less than perfect but OK." The murals have been done on canvas and applied directly to the walls with adhesive (much like wallpaper). Removal could lead to major damage or complete loss.

The auditorium took the name Herbert six years ago. With money from the Herbert Foundation, the theater was refurbished for the performing arts, and management was delegated to the War Memorial Center for the Performing Arts, a non-profit corporation.

There are no specific technical studies available.
Heritage is fully in accord with the desire to create in San Francisco a modern art museum of the highest quality. At the same time, we stand firm in our position; we cannot consider expansion of the Museum into Herbst Theatre as an acceptable solution to the need for more space. But Heritage also stands ready to offer its technical assistance in the field of architectural rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of older buildings in pursuit of other alternatives.

The Museum's proposal highlights a public issue requiring new flexibility in thinking about how this important building can best serve the needs of the citizens of San Francisco. We believe that with good will, all concerned parties can find their way to a solution which will give the city the great modern art museum it deserves, fine quarters for the veterans associations, and save a magnificent theater for the use and enjoyment of citizens, veterans and visitors alike. Whatever solution is found must treat the Herbst Theatre with the utmost care and respect. Theaters of this rich design will not be built again.

The Herbst is not a replaceable resource.

While Heritage is very sympathetic to the Museum's desire to expand its display facilities and to gain more visible and accessible space in the Civic Center, we cannot accept the loss of one of San Francisco's most historic and architecturally significant spaces to accommodate this rather narrow public need. Other alternatives are clearly more appropriate and feasible.

Public knowledge of the Museum's proposal came at a time when we were becoming very optimistic about the increasing sensitivity of the City's public officials toward historic and architectural values, due to our positive working relationship with the Planning Department and key Supervisors. Therefore, we were shocked to learn that in private meetings with representatives of the Museum and the War Memorial Trustees, Mayor Feinstein gave her support for the proposal before hearing the concerns of the preservation and performing arts community. Planning Commissioner Sue Bierman expressed our own sentiments when she said: "This is the kind of proposal that shocks one into awareness that nothing is sacred."

Heritage is not alone in opposing the proposal to destroy Herbst Theatre. Virtually all of the performing arts groups that enjoy the use of this splendid space are opposed to the Museum's plans to relocate them, challenging the credibility of the Museum's argument that the theater is a poorly functioning space for the performing arts.

Newspaper columnists and other media editorial speakers have been the most articulate critics of the proposal. The Museum plans have also been opposed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the California Historical Society, the United Nations Association, and numerous other groups. Fortunately, the Board of Supervisors, led by Supervisor Louise Renne, have called for public hearings on the proposal, designed to explore ways in which the Supervisors can exercise the City's legal authorities over the future of this public building.

As a first step, please fill out the following statement of support for preserving Herbst Theatre and send it to Supervisor Louise Renne. Send copies to Mayor Dianne Feinstein, Heritage, and the Museum of Modern Art, especially if you are a member of MOMA. As a second step, attend the Board of Supervisors hearing on March 27 and show your support for retaining Herbst Theatre.

Show Mayor Feinstein that Herbst Theatre is close to the heart of all San Franciscans and must be preserved.
The Ninth Annual California Preservation Conference will be held in Sacramento, April 27 to May 1. This year’s theme: “Preservation -- Long-Term Capital Gain.”

The Conference will focus on the proposed legislation of the California Heritage Task Force that will be presented at the State Capitol in March and on the economic role that preservation plays in the economy of the state and the nation. A flurry of social events set among the historical buildings of Sacramento, specialized workshops and training sessions, informative tours, and “issues” sessions will culminate in a Tuesday breakfast with legislators.

The California Preservation Foundation sponsors the annual conference jointly with the California Office of Historic Preservation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Californians for Preservation Action.

For more information or for registration materials, write to the California Preservation Conference, P.O. Box 1022, Sacramento, CA 95811.

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**Heritage Backs Campfire Girls Building for Landmark Status**

On February 1, Heritage successfully testified before the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board in favor of landmark status for Campfire Girls Headquarters at 326 Arguello. In fact, the Board voted unanimously to move the 1929 structure through the landmark process.

The Campfire Girls building, presently on the market for $950,000, is unique in San Francisco. A medieval-looking brick manor house, it was designed by architect Henry Gutterson in the Craftsman style, a tradition for which the Bay Area is world famous. (Gutterson was a student of Bernard Maybeck’s at Berkeley; he also attended the prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.)

The Planning Commission has now also recommended that the building be designated a city landmark. The next (and final) step in the process is a hearing and vote by the Board of Supervisors.

**Mission United a Landmark**

It was a happy Valentine’s Day for Heritage: the Board of Supervisors voted in favor of landmark status for Mission United (formerly Trinity) Presbyterian Church. Built in 1892, a survivor of the 1906 earthquake, it is one of the few Romanesque-style churches remaining in San Francisco.

Mission United has been working actively toward this goal for the past several months with Wynchell Hayward, a member of the congregation, and with Mission District neighborhood groups as well as preservation groups. Heritage thanks Supervisors

**J.C. Penney Building To Be Rehabilitated**

For years developers have been at odds with the preservation community -- and other sectors as well -- over the J.C. Penney Building at Fifth and Market. Empty since 1971, there have been many designs on this building -- none of them at all respectful of the "A"-rated structure. None...until the latest one: On February 1, the Lurie Company and Gensler Associates, developer and architect, presented to Heritage a high-quality rehabilitation proposal that would retain the building’s Renaissance Baroque character. Heritage supports the proposal and has recommended minor modifications to improve the historical character of the design. After the sponsors prepare an environmental impact report, it will be presented to the Planning Commission for approval under the Interim Controls for the downtown. Heritage was successful in getting modifications to the interim control moratorium to allow projects such as the Lurie Company rehabilitation.

**Conservation Update**

Kennedy, Maher, Molinari, Weler, Renne and Silver, and the Planning Commission, for support of landmark status.

MOVING? Please let us know so we can correct your membership card.
Enthusiastic Response to Heritage Hikes

On February 17, the first group of Heritage Hikers—a class of third graders from Claire Lilienthal School—set out on an architectural walk around the historic neighborhood of the Haas-Lilienthal House...on a treasure hunt for Victorian architectural details. Clipboards and maps in hand, their teacher at the lead, the children followed their course and checked off pediments, witch's caps, finials, and fish scale shingles as they spotted them. When they got back to the Haas-Lilienthal House, they took a special tour, upstair and down, to see where the children lived and played, and what they played with and wore, and to learn how life differed then from now. Judging from the enthusiasm we saw that day, these hikes are off on the right foot.

Heritage Hikes, funded by the Junior League, the San Francisco Examiner Benefit Fund and Mrs. William Brinton, began operating on a regular basis March 20. In advance of that day, approximately 65 teachers (representing schools from all over the city) attended two preparatory workshops, required for participation in the program. The sessions covered the territory of the walk and the types of houses seen along the way, familiarized the teachers with architecture and ornament, and gave some background on life in Victorian times.

Little-known Facts from the Survey Files

The Hotel Carlton, at 1075 Sutter Street, opened on August 21, 1926. An article in the Chronicle on that day remarked that the Carlton was new, modern, elaborately furnished and "one of the few places in the city providing space for automobiles within the building, there being a spacious garage in the basement." The hotel was completed by James Welsh, a well-known local contractor, but it was not begun by him. The original plans for the building were prepared by an architect named Mel Schwartz for Dr. Albert Abrams and his College of Electronic Medicine. Albert Abrams was born in 1863 in San Francisco. He was educated at Heidelberg and had a legitimate and prominent medical career, at first. Somewhere along the way, Dr. Abrams developed a theory: that every illness produces an exact number of electronic vibrations. To determine the number of vibrations he invented a box, his "biodynamometer." Then, with the help of his "oscilloclast," Abrams reproduced this electrical current in his patients and cured (so it was reported) whatever had afflicted them. Electronic medicine became increasingly popular and Abrams' fame grew with it. (Upton Sinclair was one who believed in his theory.) Between 1918 and 1924 some 3000 doctors rented his equipment from him. Ultimately, though, he was discredited in Scientific American, and the theory collapsed under public scrutiny.

Construction had begun on the College in 1923, but before it was completed Abrams died. His will was contested, and in the course of the settlement the College was dissolved and the building converted...to the Hotel Carlton.
One of the Largest Classes Ever Goes Through Docent Training

The 1984 training course for Haas-Lilienthal House docents began on January 23rd with one of the largest enrollments ever. Twenty-seven men and women from all around the Bay Area are participating in the program, which meets twice a week through March.

Docent training is being coordinated this year by volunteer Barbara Kerrigan. Kerrigan has had an integral role in previous classes, providing instructions on the furnishings of the house. Philip Partipilo, an active house docent and the new editor of the docent newsletter Bay Window, is assisting.

The eight-week training begins by examining the context in which people view the Haas-Lilienthal House. Lectures by Gray Brechin, Michael Crowe and Judith Lynch describe San Francisco history and Bay Area architectural styles. The core of the curriculum focuses on the house itself: the architecture, the family who lived here, their furnishings. There is also a presentation by Muriel Watkin of her fascinating collection of Victorian clothing and accessories.

In addition, docents receive a thorough grounding in procedures and presentation techniques to assure that tours are conducted professionally and are informative and enjoyable for the public.

A new dimension to this year's education program is the joint participation of docent/guides for Heritage's new school program, Heritage Hikes. Under the direction of Marty Gordon and Rosalind Kenning, these people are trained to conduct the combination Pacific Heights walk and Haas-Lilienthal House tour for elementary school children.

The Haas-Lilienthal House is open for public tours on Wednesday and Sunday each week and by special arrangement for groups. The tours are provided by a roster of more than 80 active volunteer docents.

Marin Heritage Spring Tour

On Sunday, May 20, Marin Heritage will sponsor "Walking the West End," a tour of Victorian vintage homes in one of San Rafael's oldest, most picturesque neighborhoods. The route begins at historic Foster Hall, Hall, Marin Academy, Mission Street at Cottage in San Rafael. Tours will leave every half hour, from noon until 3 p.m., and last about one and a half hours. Admission is $3.00. Call 457-9280 or 543-3846 for more information.

Joining Heritage

The pace of change and development in San Francisco has convinced many of us that action must be taken -- and be taken quickly -- if our unique and beautiful city is to maintain its special character. Many of San Francisco's finest buildings have already been lost to future generations because of mistaken notions of progress and redevelopment.

The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage (Heritage) is a publically supported, non-profit membership organization. Its preservation efforts include wide range of programs in conservation, rehabilitation and education to assist in the intelligent reuse of the most important elements of the city's urban and architectural heritage.

Heritage depends on membership dues and contributions to support our diverse activities. Members receive the quarterly Heritage Newsletter, reduced rates for lectures and tours, bookshop discounts and special event invitations. Gift memberships are available. All memberships and donations are tax deductible.

Thank You

Marie Winton for a new lawnower for the Haas-Lilienthal House
June S. Haseltine for the donation of a lace-bordered tablecloth and napkins
Phoebe Brown for 400 photographic postcards of the First house at Baker Beach
Bert Faucher and the ACP Computer Center at 542 West Tribble Road, San Jose, for the help and favorable prices for our computer system
Ken Archipley for technical assistance

Memorial Fund Established

We at Heritage have been saddened by the recent death of Laurence Stein, husband of Frances Stein, who was raised in the Haas-Lilienthal House and whose family donated the house to Heritage.

In his memory, the Laurence Stein Memorial Fund has been established to provide a continuing endowment for house maintenance.

Contributions to this fund should be sent care of Heritage, 2007 Franklin Street, San Francisco, CA 94109.
Welcome New Members

November, December, January

Zoe Adorno
American Scientific Products
Michael P. Arbunich
Ann Bennett
Ann Elizabeth Bennett
Stephen C. Bieneman
Virginia S. Campau
Candlelight Cuisine
Yvonne Cappeller
Lawrence S. Comegys
Valerie D. Comegys
James Corcoran
Robert J. Couly
Judy & Stewart Cross
Michael D’Ambrosio
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas J. Davis IV
Judith Endelin
Mary E. Gallagher
Mr. & Mrs. R. H. Halistein
Augustus V. M. Higginson
Paul & Marie Highby
Mary Hilton
Jacqueline G. Jarrett
Morten Jensen
James M. Jones
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Kelly
Madalyn Kinsey
Denise Kivien
Sarah Landau
Carol LeNieux
David & Elisha Levinger
Judy Liljenwall
Blair Warren Longyear
M. M. Lovell
Thomas J. Lowry
Vincent Marah
Sandra Mattos
Margaret McGehee
Alex H. Meconi
Arthur Mejia
Linda Murphy
Jeff Nicklas
Michael C. Oeter
Mr. & Mrs. James E. Palmer
Julie & Will Parish
David E. Pinkham
Claire Pilcher & Dick Carabates
Barbara Potts
Joanne Prien
Harvey Rosé
Mr. & Mrs. Michael P. Sachar
Rebekah Sachs
Peter F. Sanservero
Mr. & Mrs. Robert A. Scavullo

Karen S. Schrock
Mr. & Mrs. N. Schweitzer
Mr. & Mrs. Theodore R. Seton
Toby Sherwood
George O. Kiekkinen Jr.
Laura Smith
Wayne Smithson & Frank Walter
Eva-Lynne Socher
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas E. Stanton
Dolores Staudenraus
Michael Steingraber
Zeb Stewart
Susanne Sweeney
Sharyl Thode
Sharon Thorp
Linda G. Turner
Vintners Club
Beverly Weber
Rolf Wheeler
Dr. & Mrs. Jerome M. Weiss

1983 Awards of Merit
To the volunteers who have given an extraordinary amount of service:
Lorinda Clemens
Marciea Evans
Alan Fay
Betty Feinstein
Gary Goss
Barbara Kerrigan
Diana Plotrow
Didier Repellin
Richard Rothman
Josh Stagg
Mimi Stein
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Heritage Calendar: Tours and Talks

Sally Woodbridge, Architectural Historian, to Give Spring Program

Heritage announces a special spring program: five Tuesday evening lectures and four Saturday morning walks given by Sally B. Woodbridge on "The Architectural History of San Francisco Neighborhoods." The lectures will offer broad coverage of the city's architectural history while the tours will concentrate on four diverse neighborhoods:

- Chinatown/North Beach, where two cultures with well-established roots in San Francisco history live in an interesting social and architectural juxtaposition.
- Nob Hill, the "toney" residential area which Andrew Hallidie's cable cars opened up in the late 1870s. Swept clean by the 1906 fire, it still retains its aura of wealth and style.
- Russian Hill, the alleged site of a Russian sailors' cemetery, an area full of architectural and historic treasures.
- Haight-Ashbury, known for the flower children, now gone, and earlier for dairy farms and ranches -- but much late 19th century architecture remains.

The lectures will be held in the ballroom of the Haas-Lilienthal House, 2007 Franklin Street, at 7:30 on the following Tuesday nights:
- April 24
- May 1
- May 8
- May 15
- May 22

The walks are scheduled for Saturday mornings at 9:30:
- April 28 (Chinatown/North Beach)
- May 5 (Nob Hill)
- May 12 (Russian Hill)
- May 19 (Haight-Ashbury)

The Chinatown Telephone Exchange, on Washington Street: one of the first of Chinatown's orientalized buildings and the most elaborate expression of Chinese design in the neighborhood. It is now owned by the Bank of Canton.

Every Wednesday & Sunday

- 12 noon-4 p.m., Wednesdays
- 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Sundays
- $3 general public
- $1 children under 12, seniors
- Free to Heritage members

Every Sunday

Heritage Walks in Pacific Heights led by Heritage Walks Guides
- Meet at the Haas-Lilienthal House, 2007 Franklin Street.
- 12:30 p.m.
- $3 general public
- $2 Heritage members
- Call 441-3046 for recorded information.

Every Thursday

Heritage's Brown Bag Walking Tours of the Financial District
- Three 45-minute lunchtime walking tours in Jackson Square and the Financial District, led by Heritage Walks Guides
- Jackson Square Historic District: meet at the corner of Montgomery and Washington Streets, by the Transamerica Pyramid.
- Banking Temples: meet at the corner of Clay and Montgomery Streets, by the Transamerica Pyramid.
- Splendid Survivors: meet in front of the Hallidie Building, 130 Sutter Street.
- 12 noon, $1

Rehab Talk

Heritage, along with the AIA Heritage and Codes Committees, and Preservation Action's Rehabilitation Task Force, is sponsoring a panel discussion: "Code Requirements for the Rehabilitation of Historic Structures." It will address state and local building and fire codes, and their effect on rehab projects.

The date: April 16, 3 to 5:30 p.m. At AIA Headquarters, 790 Market St., Third Floor.