After Years of Neglect, Beach Chalet Gets Some Well-Deserved Attention

At the westernmost end of Golden Gate Park, on the east side of the Great Highway, there is a building with columns along its front, a red-tiled roof, and a glassed-in second story with windows broken or crusted with salt and sand. This is the Beach Chalet, and it is in desperate shape.

Willis Polk was the architect. He designed the building in 1924, though he did not live to see it built in 1928. Owned by the city, the Beach Chalet has deteriorated badly due to a policy of "deferred maintenance." But it is not beyond repair. And inside, the famous Lucien Labaudt murals, the mosaics and the wood carvings are in amazingly good condition.

Heritage has long considered the Beach Chalet a candidate for City Landmark designation. In 1981, the year the building was vacated — code violations proved too costly for the tenants to remedy — it was named to the National Registry of Historic Places. In the past few months, Supervisor John Molinari has campaigned to have the necessary city funds set aside for rehabilitating the building. And in fact, the Mayor did include $800,000 in her 1985-86 budget for restoring the building and making capital improvements. To show support for the rehabilitation, Supervisor Molinari held a press conference at the Beach Chalet on May 24, and invited Joan Mondale, known for her interest and activity in the arts, to tour the architecturally significant building and see one of the city's treasures of public art.

Even in the dimness, even with the peeling paint and missing floor tiles, this is a fine building, and the frescoes, which cover 1500 square feet of space, are truly grand. It was good to hear so many people talk about preserving them.

Heritage has made it known that we are prepared to nominate the Beach Chalet to the State Parks and Recreation Commission for funding under the California Park and Recreation Facilities Bond Act of 1984, Proposition 18. The passing of this proposition by the voters on June 5 means that grant funds could be made available to match city-appropriated funds for rehabilitation.

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From the Executive Director’s Desk

Heritage Aids the Booming Rehab Business

Business is booming in the rehabilitation of historic buildings in San Francisco because rehab pays off. Reusing older buildings is generally quicker, less controversial and less expensive than new construction, especially in this city; and up to 25% of the rehab costs can often be written off as a credit from Federal taxes. More investors are now realizing that the quality and character of design and materials used in older buildings has real economic value in the marketplace. We were delighted to hear recent radio commercials from American Savings and Loan extolling the virtues of historic rehabilitation.

If the proposed Downtown Plan is approved by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, we can expect a much greater increase in the business of historic building rehabilitation. The Plan calls for preservation of 266 significant buildings, encourages preservation of 229 contributory buildings, and provides new economic incentives to rehabilitate structures through “transferable development rights” or TDR. Every rehabilitation project extends the useful life of a structure for 100 years or more.

Over the past few years, Heritage has become a significant influence in support of the rehabilitation industry. We have influenced the policies and incentives for preservation and rehabilitation in the Downtown Plan; we have extended our architectural surveys for use in plans for the downtown and surrounding areas; and we have helped exempt rehab projects from the interim zoning controls for the downtown. Rehabilitations of the old J. C. Penney Building at 5th and Market, the old Federal Reserve Bank on Sansome, Cogswell College, the Hills Bros. Coffee Building and others are able to proceed in advance of the Downtown Plan because Heritage succeeded in obtaining an amendment to the interim zoning moratorium for large rehabilitation projects.

For the Federal Reserve Bank, we helped Embarcadero Center West obtain a zoning amendment necessary to permit the transfer of unused development from the bank site to a vacant lot across Commercial Street, in return for an agreement to suitably restore the bank building for new uses.

Prior to the sale of the Cogswell College Building we informed prospective buyers of the tax benefits and TDR potential for this “A” rated structure, while pursuing a Landmark designation. The result was a purchase for the purpose of rehabilitation rather than site clearance.

Heritage’s administrative office has distributed hundreds of technical documents on the Federal tax benefits for Historic Preservation and the certification standards. Members of our board and staff have participated in numerous real estate and preservation conferences to explain these benefits to prospective investors. Our survey, Splendid Survivors, and its current extensions, are the most comprehensive sources of information on buildings that are eligible for the National Register and the federal tax credits. It is found in real estate and development offices from New York to Dallas to Seattle, as well as here in the city.

Through our Rehabilitation Task Force of developers, architects, real estate attorneys, bankers, accountants and other professionals (co-sponsored by Preservation Action) we have informed the industry of pending changes in the tax code and state and local building codes affecting rehabilitation. This Task Force has also served as a voice for the local rehab business in Washington, D.C., through Mellie Longsworth, president of Preservation Action, a frequent speaker. The Task Force, together with the AIA Heritage Committee, recently sponsored a panel discussion of experts and city officials on the State Historic Building Code.

On behalf of individual sponsors of sensitive rehabilitation projects, we have often appeared before the Planning Commission, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, the Disabled Access Appeals Board, the Board of Supervisors and state and federal officials to support regulatory approvals.

Finally, Heritage’s conservation easement program, which has helped Embarcadero Center West obtain a zoning amendment necessary to permit the transfer of unused development from the bank site to a vacant lot across Commercial Street, in return for an agreement to suitably restore the bank building for new uses.

It should be clear from this track record that Heritage is not anti-development. We’re just pro-rehabilitation. For corporations and individuals involved in the burgeoning rehabilitation industry, it makes good sense to belong to Heritage and to contribute to our mutual goal of extending the unique life of San Francisco’s unique historic architecture.

Heritage Hikes Docent Training Offered Again This Summer

Heritage Hikes is winding up its first semester, with teachers booked for tours into the very last week of school. Enthusiasm for the program runs high.

Teachers have found that the Hikes integrate well into their curricula; many have built one- or two-week study units around them. Children have found new outlets for their imaginations: they have produced a Victorian vocabulary dictionary, a mural of Victorian houses, stories about the Haas-Lilienthal House, and drawings of architectural details of their schools.

There will be a hiatus during the summer, but Heritage Hikes will be resumed in September. In order to keep the program healthy and strong, and able to meet the demand, Heritage will be training more docents in late summer (August/September). Dedicated volunteers who enjoy children and are free Tuesday mornings from ten o’clock until two are needed.

For more information about the docent training, call 441-3000 and leave your name, address and phone number for Marty Gordon.
Conservation Update

Hills Bros. Building Slated for Sensitive Rehab

The large and richly detailed red brick building at the foot of Harrison by the Embarcadero is the Hills Bros. Coffee Building, roasting plant and corporate headquarters for the company, founded in San Francisco 106 years ago. Romanesque in style, it features patterned brickwork, arched windows and doorways, and elaborate bronze grillwork doors (added after the waterfront strike of 1934 as a security measure).

The building was designed by George Kelham (architect of the Russ Building, the Main Library and the Shell Building, among others) and officially completed on January 2, 1926. At the time, it was the largest and most modern coffee roasting plant in the world. Of the four coffee giants originating in San Francisco — Hills Bros., Folger's, MJB and Schilling — the only one left with plant operations here is Hills Bros. And thanks to a deal with the city it will remain here, moving its plant to new quarters on Potrero Hill and converting its old building to higher yield commercial and office uses.

Heritage’s concerns about the conversion of this City Landmark have been relieved. Following a presentation in May by Whisler & Patri, the architectural firm handling the rehab, Heritage had a couple of design suggestions but on the whole found the plans for rehabilitation sensitive and those for new building both exciting and compatible with the design of the original structure.

Heritage Seeks Preservation Alternative for Poly High

Polytechnic High School, completed in 1914, was designed by John Reid, Jr. Reid was a city architect of great talent, designer of many schools and of the Public Schools Administration Building on Van Ness, a designated City Landmark.

The boy’s gym and auditorium wing were built in 1928, designed in Art Deco style by G. Albert Lansburgh, architect of the Fox Warfield Theater on Market. The girl’s gym, finished in 1935, was a copy of the boy’s — architect Charles Sawyer followed Lansburgh’s design out of respect for its excellence.

Poly was closed in 1977 due to declining enrollment. It has been empty since then. The property is still under the ownership and administration of the San Francisco Unified School District. Both UC Medical Center and the city are interested in its use: UC for expansion of housing, recreation and parking facilities for its students and faculty; the city for development of affordable housing. Initial proposals by the University have called for the demolition of the school and new construction on the site.

Heritage has suggested to the University and the neighborhood that the buildings, particularly the three main structures on Frederick, should be preserved and adaptively reused. They not only have architectural merit, but also represent an aesthetic resource of significance to the neighborhood and the city.

Heritage staff are working with community leaders of a new neighborhood coalition, 1840A-POLY (Inner Sunset-Haight Ashbury), studying future alternatives for the Poly site to assure that the preservation alternative is fully considered. It is our belief that the tax benefits for the rehabilitation of historic structures can be utilized to make the housing to be provided on the site more affordable.

Revised Plans for Oriental Warehouse Approved

The Oriental Warehouse was built in 1867 or early in 1868 to house bonded and free merchandise from the Orient, including tea and silk. The warehouse was constructed by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, a New York City shipping line that had been operating paddle steamers between Panama and San Francisco carrying mail, treasure, cargo, passengers and prospectors. In 1865, Pacific Mail won a government subsidy to operate a mail service to China. On the runs to and from the Orient, enormous ocean-going paddle steamers also carried cargo and passengers. Thousands of Orientals, mostly Chinese, came to America this way. Their cheap labor built the railroads and helped develop the agricultural business of California.

Very close to the main entrance of the Oriental Warehouse were large sheds in which Orientals were held in detention by immigration authorities. The sheds were demolished along with the old Mail dock about 1910. Besides the name China Basin, the Oriental Warehouse is all that remains of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, all that is left to mark the place the dockies have in the social history of the west coast.

Late last summer, a plan was submitted by Campeau Corporation to the Redevelopment Agency, to develop the Oriental Warehouse into offices and the land around it into housing units. Heritage opposed this plan, and questioned whether the extensive modifications and new rooftop additions were consistent with the Redevelopment Plan for the Rincon Point-South Beach project area adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 5, 1981. This plan states that the Oriental Warehouse “shall be retained and historically restored for adaptive reuse.”

Late in March of this year, Campeau presented a revised plan to Heritage, which scaled down the rooftop additions. Heritage staff, working with the SFRA, succeeded in negotiating further reductions in the size of rooftop additions to the warehouse and in the design of new openings. These changes, coupled with an increase in the size of a new office structure proposed to the north of the warehouse, were agreed to by Campeau and approved by the SFRA Commission on June 5.
Farr, Maybeck and Meusdorffer Houses on ROUND-O Tour

There are streets in San Francisco where one house after the next offers interest and delight. Most of us have to be content to view the outsides only -- in a slow drive by or on a leisurely stroll. What the interiors are like is left to surmise and sweet conjecture. We don't expect we'll ever be given an invitation to go inside.

Well, last year and this, ROUND-O extended just such an invitation to Heritage members and friends; a chance to tour the interiors of four very special San Francisco homes (and have a scrumptious brunch, hear Baroque music played on authentic 18th century instruments, and benefit Heritage and Philharmonia Orchestra of the West). Three of the homes this year were quite old lovelies: one built in 1908 by C. A. Meusdorffer; one by Albert Farr, built 1902; and one built in 1909 by Bernard Maybeck.

3320 Jackson was the first stop. Meusdorffer designed this house, and several others on the block, for the Levy family. It is an intriguing combination of interesting materials and architectural features. The handsome exterior brings together clinker brick and half-timbering with elegant French sash windows. This same window treatment can be found inside, in glass pocket doors which divide the dining room and breakfast room. There is a wood-paneled entry that is really part reception hall, part den and alcove. And there are five very distinct fireplaces, utilizing such diverse materials as Roman tile, clinker brick, copper and brass.

The past 76 years have seen four owners, including the Norwegian Consulate.

3333 Pacific Avenue, the oldest home on the tour, was built 82 years ago, the first of three shingle cottages designed by Albert Farr along the Presidio Wall. The Bullard family commissioned the house, which was lived in by their daughter, Marjorie Towne, until 1976. An orchard stood east of the house originally, part of the property.

Walking through the front door brings you into an entry hall. There is a fireplace there with a raised hearth and a cozy inglenook. To the right is a box room, once used as a receiving room for deliveries. The dining room and kitchen facilities complete the first floor. A redwood-paneled staircase leads to a spacious second floor landing. The English theme of the house is evident in the Tudor living room with its floral motifs in the ceiling and Elizabethan figures on the fireplace. Opposite the fireplace is a windowseat with a majestic view over the cypress trees of the Presidio toward the Golden Gate.

3500 Jackson is the address of the Roos house, a City Landmark house designed by Bernard Maybeck for Leon L. Roos and his nineteen-year-old bride while they were on their honeymoon in Europe. (Eventually, Roos became a partner in the clothing firm Roos Brothers, Inc., founded by his father and uncle. He was also a philanthropist, and his interest in the blind led him to bring the first Seeing Eye dogs to California from Germany.) The Roos house is considered Maybeck's most lavish city residence. He designed all the interior appointments, including furniture. Though there are many Tudor-style villas in the neighborhood, they are more formal and conventional than this whimsical interpretation of the old English half-timbered style with built-in flowerboxes and freely-adapted Gothic detailing. The design reflects Maybeck's architectural training at L'École des Beaux Arts in Paris, his talent for enlivening historical forms, and his mastery of manipulation of scale.

While the outside might suggest a pushed-together version of a Bavarian village, inside there are...
dramatic spaces and lighting. Low ceilings (relatively speaking, of course) give the dining room an intimate feel and set up a surprise: a 30-foot, cathedral-vaulted living room, more medieval than medieval ever was. There is a massive, walk-in, cast stone fireplace. Medieval and antique furnishings, wrought-iron sconces, suspended lighting fixtures and gargoyles appoint the redwood-paneled walls or hang from the beamed ceiling. The room ends in an enormous picture window which frames the Golden Gate.

The fourth house on the tour was much newer than these three: a rare example of a residence by the office of Hertzka and Knowles, a firm known best for its commercial work. The house, at 3555 Pacific, is an example of the Bay Region Style using vernacular construction.

Heritage would like to extend special thanks to all those who helped to make this benefit the success that it was:

Jane Stuppin, ROUND-O Chairman
Maryanna Gerbode Shaw, Honorary Chair
Dr. Marcello Armando Chrystos Barciani, ROUND-O Underwriter
Mr. and Mrs. George Ballou, hosts
Mrs. Louis Honig, host
Mrs. Leslie Roos, host
Duncan Ellkinson, San Francisco Party Rental Service
Sweet Things, pastries
Bouquet Garni, catering
and the many volunteers who gave so generously of their time and talents

C.A. Meusdorffer, Architect

C. A. Meusdorffer. His name isn't bandied about the way Bernard Maybeck's is, or Willis Polk's, or Arthur Brown, Jr.'s. Though he was at one time one of the city's leading architects, not much is known about the man.

He was born in San Francisco on October 25, 1871, to German pioneer parents -- they had crossed the plains to come here in 1853. The Meusdorffers became prominent in the city's German colony, and as San Francisco grew and prospered, so did they.

At eight years old, Conrad Alfred (as an architect he never used his given names, only his initials) displayed a decided aptitude for drawing. His father placed him under the tutelage of Professor C. Wilder, one of the best teachers in the area, who directed his training for the next ten years.

At 24, C. A. began to practice his profession, and was still young when success came his way. As an employer he was reputedly a tyrant to work for and a stickler for detail. There are stories of him spying on cement mixers and crawling into attics to inspect insulation.

He was a quiet man otherwise, according to all reports, though he did have his outlets: he manufactured sirens, owned a lot of property, and liked to dabble in speculation.

Just a few of the elegant buildings C. A. Meusdorffer contributed to the cityscape: the Perine House, 535 Powell; the Holluschickie Club, corner of Bush and Mason; the Riverside Apartments, 50 Golden Gate; 1 United Nations Plaza; 24 California; and many apartment buildings in the Pacific Heights area.
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 publicly supported, non-profit membership organization. It's preservation efforts include a 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.

A copy of the book Lauriston, which features work by George Schastey, the architect of Mrs. Young's home, was given to everyone attending. Heritage volunteers who weren't able to come to the party can obtain their copy of Lauriston by calling the office.

Heritage Hires a Development Director

Peggy Mitchell, newly-hired Director of Development, received her BA from the State University of New York, Potsdam, New York, and her MS in American Studies from Purdue University. She was a teacher prior to coming to San Francisco in 1972, and has been active in the volunteer sector since then.

Peggy is the past president of the San Francisco Community Music Center. Presently she is Ways and Means Board Member of the San Francisco Junior League and was chairman of the Junior League Fashion Show in 1983. She recently chaired the Schools of the Sacred Heart International Drawing, which netted over $117,000 for the schools.

Peggy is wife to Dick Mitchell, a Director of the Biomedical Institute at the Medical Research Institutes in San Francisco, and mother to Katherine, a 5th grader at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, and Dickie, a 4th grader at Cathedral School for Boys.

New Book a Valuable Resource for Owners of Old Homes

Last fall, the Planning Department of Oakland published Retrofit Right: How to Make Your Old House Energy Efficient ($7.95; illustrated with many useful line drawings). This compact, jam-packed resource book offers energy conservation strategies tailored to the architectural style of your house, your family, your budget and your inclination to tackle building projects yourself (because not everyone is the do-it-yourself type). It deals specifically with upgrading weatherization, installing more efficient equipment and appliances, and substituting renewable (solar, wind) energy for non-renewable (fossil) energy. It also offers information about codes, permits and financial incentives.

Where can you get a copy? Call (415) 273-3941 for order information.

Thank You

To the following volunteers who assisted with the Sally Woodbridge lecture series events: Joe DiNallo, Philip Partipilo, Frances White, Carol Sims, Lydia Tolmacch and Virginia Campeau.

To Union Bank, for Heritage's booth at the bank's First Community Involvement Fair; also to Union Bank Community Affairs Coordinator, Shirley J. Evans, for her help; and to volunteer Joe DiNallo, for his assistance in the booth.

To Marie Winton, for two dozen Lilies of the Nile, for use in the front flower beds.

To Steve Gruber, for planting those lilies -- and for all he's doing in the garden: the mowing and trimming, the weeding and pruning -- it's looking beautiful out there!

Are You Moving?

If you are, please let Heritage know so we can correct your membership card and address labels.

Send a note with your new address to Heritage, 2007 Franklin Street, San Francisco, California 94109.

Thank you.
1984 Class of Docents Graduates
Heritage honored its newest class of docents at a reception at the Haas-Lilienthal House on March 25. Docent Coordinator Laura Pilz welcomed the graduates to the roster of H-L docents and to the extended ranks of volunteers who serve Heritage.

The official ceremony focused on the awarding of docent badges to the graduates. Docent Training Coordinator Barbara Kerrigan made the presentation. On hand to congratulate the new class were Julie Geiger, Director of Education for Heritage; Philip Partipilo, Assistant Docent Trainer; Christa Vrege, Special Tours Scheduler; and friends and family of the class.

The new Haas-Lilienthal docents are:

- Zoe Adorno
- Ann Bennett
- Rebecca Bingham
- Yvonne Cappeller
- Michael D'Ambrosio
- Judith Endelman
- Sandi Gerrity
- Patricia Hallstein
- Forrest Helton
- Jacqueline Jarrett
- Madalyn Kinney
- Denise Kivlen
- Sarah Landau
- Judy Liljenwall
- Jenny Prince
- Barbara Potts
- Norman Saitnes
- Michael Steingraber
- Sharyl Thode
- Sharon Thorp
- Beverly Weber

Welcome New Members
February, March, April and May

Anto Aghapekian
Alpha Industries Inc.
Kimball A. Baker
Kathleen D. Baldanzi
Dimitri and Mariann Barton
Dana J. Bedford
Philip Bois
Allan Bruckner
E. B. Byrne
Jane Causer
Jim Coffey
Posie Joyce Conklin
Ron Connelly
Nancy Cornell
Pamela E. Cringle
Corinne Davis
Agnes Dejnendetti
Destination Management
David F. Durham
Jane Fletcher
Sandi Gerrity
Herb Greene
Donna Haage
Forrest D. Helton
Connie J. Johnston
Kathleen Ann King
Sally J. Knodell
Margot G. Kozlowski
Carter Larsen
Lois Lewis
Susan W. Lowenstein
Mary R. Mantone
Luis F. Martin
John Mehring
James L. Miller, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Mitchell
John Moczulski
Ernest Ng
Nora Nolan
Martha Pahnke
Rick Peterson
Jenny Prince
Victoria Ramsay

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The architectural drawings on pp. 6-8 were done by Didier Repellin.

Mrs. S. B. Regalbuto
Mrs. J. Martin Rosse
Denny Shaffer
Mr. & Mrs. John P. Shelton, Jr.
Shore, Young and Tomi
Susan Sirrine
Dorothy Slaton
Edgar Mathews Sliney
Elaine Stone
Burleigh Sutton
Talk of the Town
Edward H. Tower
W. H. (Tib) Tusler, Jr.
USA Today
U.S. Leasing
David Vogi
Norma M. Walden
Susan Wilner
Heritage Calendar

Weekly Tours and Walks

Every Wednesday & Sunday

Haas-Lilienthal House Guided Tours, meet at the Haas-Lilienthal House, 2007 Franklin Street.
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.
Each walk, 12 noon; $1

Monthly Members Evenings to Resume This Summer

"San Francisco Civic Center: Architecture, Planning and Politics" will be the title of Joan Draper's slide and lecture presentation at Heritage on Tuesday, July 31, at 7:30 p.m. Ms. Draper and Waverly Lowell will be two of the speakers in the monthly Members Evenings, being resumed this summer.

On July 26, Mr. Lowell will speak on "Conservation of Architectural Records," at 7:30 p.m. This will be co-sponsored with Heritage by the Northern California COPAR, the Western Chapter of APT, the Friends of Terra Cotta, and the Art Deco Society of California.

The evening programs are being resumed as a direct response to the many members who have asked for them. Lectures will be held in the ballroom of the Haas-Lilienthal House, 2007 Franklin Street. For more information, please call 441-3000.

Seattle Conference on Parks

"Olmsted Parks of the West: The Future of the Tradition" is the title of a national conference to be held this September 13th-16th in Seattle. The conference is being sponsored by the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, the Seattle Design Commission and the Department of Parks and Recreation.

The conference will be held at the University of Washington. If you're interested in finding out more, call (206) 543-5280.