Marcus Books: Living History in the Fillmore District

A keystone in San Francisco’s African American community, Marcus Books has illuminated the Fillmore District since 1960. Nonetheless, the historic business was served an eviction notice last spring, galvanizing a public weary of the displacement of beloved cultural institutions. STORY ON PAGE 6
The future of America's 15,000 house museums was an unexpected focus of the 2013 National Preservation Conference in Indianapolis. In her opening plenary address ("House Museums: A 20th Century Paradigm"), National Trust president Stephanie Meeks tackled the vexing state of house museums. "The time for talk has ended," Meeks declared, "and the time for action is upon us... If we are to preserve these properties, we need to think in new ways, and act accordingly."

The National Trust estimates that there are 15 million people actively "doing" preservation, but who are disconnected from preservation organizations. Why is that? Meeks submits that we are not meeting them where they are: "We have the opportunity to do that if we are brave enough to re-think our approach to house museums." This means "moving outside our long-standing preservation world. New ideas. New partnerships. And especially, new people."

We at Heritage could not agree more. In 2012, the National Trust selected the Haas-Lilienthal House as a "National Treasure" because it is emblematic of challenges facing urban house museums in the 21st century, including deferred maintenance needs and a perennial struggle to maintain local relevance. Heritage is grappling with these issues head-on, having compiled an array of studies, visitor surveys, and case studies to inform a sustainable long-term vision for the house. The centerpiece of this effort is a new operating plan – developed in collaboration with the National Trust – that would introduce locally-focused programs, expand hours, increase marketing, and employ digital technology to enrich the visitor experience.

Now, I'm not sure President Meeks would count the living dead among the “new people” we should engage, but they unquestionably brought new life to the Haas-Lilienthal House this Halloween. Heritage staged its first-ever "Mayhem Manor: Twisted Tours of Terror," a hallmark of the new operating plan. The event attracted nearly 900 thrill-seekers over three nights, the vast majority visiting the house for the first time. Advance tickets sold out days beforehand. The crowd was youthful, prone to tagging and tweeting the event on social media. Even Michael Jackson and a merry band of flash-mob zombies reenacted "Thriller" in the side garden (see page nine)! The feedback has been refreshingly positive.

"Mayhem Manor" was an extraordinary team effort by Heritage staff, actors, and docents. In particular, House Manager Heather Kraft proposed, conceived, wrote, cast, directed, and executed the entire production from start to finish. She deserves special recognition for her creative vision, hard work, and sheer wherewithal to make it all happen.
Citywide Latino Historic Context Statement
New Partnership Aims to Document and Preserve Latino History in San Francisco

Heritage is partnering with the newly-established San Francisco Latino Historical Society on a series of projects to document and preserve the city’s rich Latino history and to support the continued cultural and economic vitality of 24th Street in the Mission District.

As previously reported, the two organizations collaborated this past summer on a youth-developed walking tour of 24th Street, entitled *Calle 24: Cuentos del Barrio*. A self-guided walking tour booklet is now available for download at sfheritage.org/latinoheritage. The print version will be available at future Heritage events.

In 2014, Heritage and the San Francisco Latino Historical Society will launch a second project, entitled *Nuestra Historia: Documenting the Chicano, Latino, and Indígena Contribution to the Development of San Francisco*. Funded by the City of San Francisco’s Historic Preservation Fund Committee, this citywide historic context statement will document Latino history as it pertains to the physical and cultural landscape of San Francisco and will offer recommendations on how best to preserve and maintain architectural, cultural, and historical resources important to Latino communities.

These groundbreaking community-based projects come at a time of rapid change in the Mission District and throughout San Francisco, when numerous longtime Latino businesses and community institutions face uncertain futures due to gentrification, rising rents, and displacement. Project partners aim to build public awareness for the diverse and longstanding history of Latinos in San Francisco, identify significant historic and cultural places for conservation, and offer recommendations for preserving and protecting this enduring legacy.

25 New Establishments Inducted into “Legacy” Initiative

At a celebration brimming with local history and lore, Heritage announced the third round of establishments to be recognized by the “Legacy Bars & Restaurants” initiative. Business owners, long-time patrons, and members of the media gathered at North Beach’s Vesuvio Café on November 18 to honor 25 new inductees, whose contributions to San Francisco’s unique character and culture distinguish them in their communities. The latest round brings the total number of certified “Legacy” establishments to 75.

The launch of Round Three coincides with a number of exciting developments for the initiative. During the November 18 festivities, Heritage unveiled a new decal program for “Legacy” establishments (proudly displayed at Vesuvio Café, at left). In order to publicize the decal and brand, Heritage is sponsoring an Instagram challenge through December 16. Please visit sfheritage.org for details.

Staff is also collaborating with local college students on the production of a short documentary film intended to build visibility for “Legacy Bars & Restaurants.” Featuring archival footage and interviews with longtime Legacy business owners, the documentary will be available in early 2014.

Special thanks to the Entertainment Commission and Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development for their support of the event on November 18! To view the most recent inductees, please visit sfheritage.org/legacy.
Spotlighting Historic Theaters
New Projects Revitalize Strand and Balboa Theaters for the Twenty-First Century

Two iconic San Francisco theaters will continue to serve as cultural anchors, thanks to the dedication of local nonprofits, the arts community, and the public.

Nearly 100 years old, the Strand Theater (1917) will soon be transformed for use by the American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.). The much-anticipated venue will contain 299 seats, ancillary and support spaces, a ground floor café, and an interpretive display in the lobby. Originally operating as a vaudeville theater and cinema, the Strand Theater was shuttered by the San Francisco Police Department in 2003 and languished in deep disrepair until A.C.T. announced its intent to purchase the building in 2012.

Although the Strand Theater is not formally designated, it is considered an historic resource for the purposes of CEQA. Heritage’s Issues Committee reviewed and commented on the project earlier this year, praising the project for its meticulous treatment of the exterior and its continuation of the building’s historic use as a theater. Most exterior features will be retained, restored, and/or replicated to match their original appearance. With a view onto UN Plaza, City Hall, and other Civic Center buildings, the next incarnation of the Strand Theater is sure to bring new energy to this corner of Market Street.

The Balboa Theatre, a pillar in the Richmond District for generations, grappled with an entirely different challenge this summer: the need to modernize in the era of digital film. Though the historic theater has thrived under the stewardship of the San Francisco Neighborhood Theater Foundation (SFNTF), which owns the lease and provides financial support, the Balboa is emblematic of the difficulty many classic cinemas face in competition with modern multiplexes.

This year, however, the film industry raised the stakes for traditional movie houses when it announced the conversion to digital after 100 years of using 35 mm film, compelling theaters across the country to upgrade their projectors and equipment in order to continue screening first-run movies. Though SFNTF had converted the projection equipment to digital at its 1910 Vogue Theatre in Presidio Heights in spring 2013, both of the Balboa Theatre’s auditoriums still required digital upgrades.

Designed in 1926 by architects James and Merritt Reid, the Balboa plays a vital role in the vibrancy of the Balboa Street commercial corridor. In order to keep the lights on, SFNTF turned to the public for support, launching a Kickstarter campaign in August to raise funds for the conversion of one of the auditoriums. San Franciscans enthusiastically responded, with more than a thousand people pledging donations to the “Go Digital or Go Dark” campaign. Over the course of six weeks, the organization raised nearly $102,000, exceeding its original goal by $27,000. As a result, SFNTF was able to convert both auditoriums, helping to ensure that the Balboa will remain a glowing beacon of neighborhood cinema in the Richmond.
Sustaining Japantown
City Approves Innovative Cultural Heritage Strategy

On September 24, 2013, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution endorsing the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS), paving the way for Japantown to implement strategies aimed at preserving and enhancing the neighborhood’s intangible and tangible cultural heritage. Prepared by the San Francisco Planning Department, Japantown Organizing Committee, and Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development, the JCHESS is the first City document offering solutions for preserving and promoting a neighborhood’s cultural and social heritage. Its adoption represents a critical moment in preservation planning for San Francisco and speaks to the urgent need for cultural preservation throughout the city’s diverse neighborhoods.

Developed in consultation with twenty-five stakeholder groups over the past several years, the JCHESS includes a needs assessment and vision for Japantown and more than a dozen economic-based strategies for securing Japantown’s future as the historic and cultural heart of the city’s Japanese and Japanese American communities. Strategies include creating a Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District and a Community Land Trust. The report also promotes implementation of existing preservation tools, such as local Landmark designation of historic sites. During the research phase, the Planning Department and their team of consultants developed the Japantown Historic Context Statement, as well as “cultural heritage inventory forms,” which helped to define significance and categorize cultural/social heritage resources by type.

Although not explicitly called out for Landmark designation in the report, two additional buildings – the Kinmon Gakuen Institute and the former Japanese YWCA building – are identified in the context statement as important cultural resources. The Historic Preservation Commission has since added these sites to the Planning Department’s Work Program. While inclusion in the Department’s Work Program does not guarantee initiation of local Landmark designation, it requires Department staff to work with the property owners to explore the possibility.

Heritage’s involvement in the development of the JCHESS dates back to 2010. Staff facilitated a community presentation about existing historic preservation tools, attended meetings, provided input, and invited the Planning Department and Japantown Task Force to present the JCHESS during Heritage’s June 15 Community Summit, “Sustaining San Francisco’s Living History.” We hope that this documentation and planning process will be a model for other communities looking to conserve their social and cultural heritage.
Layers of History:
Marcus Books

Local Community Rallies to Preserve Historic Bookstore

The historic home of Jimbo’s Bop City and Marcus Books, located at 1712-1716 Fillmore Street, is on its way to becoming San Francisco’s next local Landmark. Built in the Stick Eastlake style, this 1883 Victorian is significant for its association with pioneering jazz club Jimbo’s Bop City, community leaders Raye and Julian Richardson, and Marcus Books, the country’s oldest Black-owned and Black-themed bookstore. Having been relocated by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in 1978, the building also embodies the history of government intervention in the Western Addition neighborhood and its impact on the local Japanese American and African American communities.

This recognition of 1712-1716 Fillmore Street as an important cultural resource comes at a difficult time in its history. Earlier this year, the property was sold in foreclosure to investors, prompting efforts to evict Marcus Books and its owners who live on the upper floors of the building. While neighborhood nonprofit Westside Community Services offered to purchase the building to enable Marcus Books to remain...
Richardson. Moving to the city from Alabama in 1941, the Richardsons quickly became pillars of the African American intellectual and activist communities. They offered small-scale publishing and book-selling to the Black community beginning in 1947, served as professors at San Francisco State University, and mentored people of all ages. As the oldest continuously operating Black bookstore in the country, Marcus Books has contributed profoundly to Black intellectualism, culture, and political life in San Francisco since its origins in the historically Black Fillmore neighborhood in 1960, three blocks from its current location on Fillmore Street. Its present site represents the only extant building in the Western Addition that maintains an association to the bookstore, as buildings that housed earlier iterations of the business have since been demolished by the SFRA. Marcus Books has also been a bedrock of Black community empowerment and action, functioning as a community center in social and political struggles ranging from organizing against SFRA activity to the 1968 student strike at San Francisco State College (now University). The Richardson family has lived and worked out of 1712-1716 Fillmore Street for 30 years, from 1980 to 2013.

Next Steps for Landmark Designation

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) added Jimbo’s Bop City/Marcus Books to the Planning Department’s Landmark Designation Work Program in June 2011 and recommended approval of the Landmark Designation Case Report to the Board of Supervisors on November 6, 2013. As this issue of Heritage News goes to print, the Board has yet to vote on the nomination, but supporters remain confident that 1712-1716 Fillmore will become San Francisco’s next official Landmark.
Semi-Annual Meeting

On Wednesday, January 15 at 6:00 p.m., Heritage will host the 2014 Semi-Annual Meeting at one of Van Ness Auto Row’s grandest automobile showplaces: British Motor Car’s historic showroom at 901 Van Ness Avenue (pictured, left). Designed by John H. Powers (1873-1936) and John Ahnden, in collaboration with Bernard Maybeck, as Earle C. Anthony’s Packard Showroom, this 1928 Greek Revival building exemplifies the grandeur and romanticism of the early automobile industry in San Francisco, with its temple-inspired salesroom and slick utilitarian service section. Guest speaker Professor Christopher Carlsmith (University of Massachusetts-Lowell) will discuss Powers’ legacy and architectural contributions to the San Francisco Bay Area. Professor Carlsmith’s appearance coincides with the publication of his research in *The Argonaut*, the journal of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society.

Executive Director Mike Buhler will provide an overview of Heritage’s latest initiatives, including “Legacy Bars & Restaurants” and the upcoming launch of the citywide Latino Historic Context Statement. Admission is free for Heritage members. To RSVP for the meeting, please visit sfheritage.org or contact Carolyn Squeri at 415-441-3000 x14.
Thank You Interns!

This fall, Heritage welcomed the talents of two undergraduate interns: Dakota Gross (San Francisco State University) and Charles Morone (University of San Francisco). In addition to providing support to advocacy and public programming, the pair was instrumental in advancing the “Legacy Bars & Restaurants” project.

Together, the interns researched content for the announcement of the third round, developed walking tour scripts, and assisted with outreach to participating businesses. Dakota and Charles also collaborated with film student Stephen Hannibal (San Francisco State University) to conduct on-camera interviews with “Legacy” business owners for the forthcoming short documentary. The students met with representatives of numerous establishments, learning about their origins and contributions to the city’s cultural identity, and their plans for the future.

“Heritage has opened up my knowledge of San Francisco’s historic built environment,” says Dakota, “and has given me a hands-on approach to learning about the unique cultural presence deeply embedded within the city’s urban fabric.”

Adds Charles, “Interning for Heritage has deepened my understanding of the events and communities that compose the historical tapestry of this dynamic and cosmopolitan city.”

Charles and Dakota honed their research, photography, and interviewing skills while contributing to the “Legacy” project.

Thank you to all of our “spooktacular” volunteers who made “Mayhem Manor” at the Haas-Lilienthal House a terrifying success in its first year! The Bay Area Flash Mob gave four performances of Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” during the event, which sold out on October 25, 26 and 31.
DEVELOPMENT

Profile: Moses Corrette
Longtime Member and Donor Reveals His Reasons for Supporting Heritage

Born and raised in Connecticut, Moses Corrette first visited San Francisco in late 1999 after receiving his master’s degree in historic preservation from the University of Pennsylvania. Within months, he had adopted San Francisco as his new home and had become a member of San Francisco Heritage. A preservation planner at the San Francisco Planning Department from 2000 until earlier this year, Moses continues to work for the City and is a passionate advocate for the preservation of San Francisco’s cultural heritage.

In addition to being a loyal dues-paying Heritage member for nearly 15 years, Moses regularly contributes to Heritage’s annual appeal campaigns. Asked why he supports the organization, Moses explains, “I believe that Heritage has made an enormous impact on San Francisco’s physical and political environment. From the development of public policy, to the feet on the ground conducting surveys, to the maintenance of one of two house museums in San Francisco, Heritage has a seat at every table.”

As a former member of the Planning Department’s historic resource survey team, Moses has helped document and protect many of the city’s significant — if unheralded — buildings and neighborhoods, including Showplace Square/Northeast Mission, the South of Market Area, and Van Ness Auto Row Support Structures, among many others. He was lead author of the pioneering City Landmark nomination for Twin Peaks Tavern, only the third San Francisco Landmark designated based on its association with LGBT history.

In January 2013, the self-described “gay Cheers” achieved City Landmark status “as the first known gay bar to feature full-length open plate glass windows,” as well as “a living symbol of the liberties and rights gained by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered community.” Located at 401 Castro Street, the bar was founded by two lesbians in 1972. As part of the research and public engagement process for the nomination, Moses conducted several in-depth oral history interviews with key people involved in the development of the bar, including one of the original owners, MaryEllen Cunha. The Planning Department also hosted three “History Happy Hours” at the bar to create an opportunity where longtime patrons could come and share their stories about the tavern. Notably, the Landmark designation protects both the exterior of the building and the interior of the bar.

Heritage nominated Moses and the Planning Department for a 2013 Governor’s Award for Historic Preservation in recognition of the extraordinary efforts to document the rich cultural history of Twin Peaks Tavern. We were delighted to join him and other Department staff at the awards ceremony in Sacramento on November 21. The nomination effort was also honored at the National Preservation Conference in Indianapolis in October.

 Appropriately, Moses and his longtime partner Isaac Amala will soon exchange wedding vows at the 1886 Haas-Lilienthal House. “What a house!” he remarks. “The Haas-Lilienthal House is an extraordinary sculpture, with such beautiful public rooms. When it came time to discuss wedding venues, it was always my top choice. My partner Isaac Amala is an artist and always appreciated the building, but wasn’t convinced until we visited other options. After seeing other spaces it was a quick decision. In March, as we celebrate seven years as a couple, we will be married in the parlor, and dine and dance in the ballroom. Every last one of our friends has commented that they couldn’t imagine a better-suited place for us.”

Above: Moses Corrette (second from the right) and partner Isaac Amala (far left) converse with guests at an event at the Haas-Lilienthal House, where they will marry in March 2014. Below: The California Office of Historic Preservation honored Moses and the Planning Department in November for Twin Peaks Tavern’s Landmark nomination.
Include Heritage in Your Will or Estate Plans

Your legacy gift will reflect what is important to you and can provide tax benefits to your heirs. There are many tax-efficient options from which to choose:

» Remembering San Francisco Heritage in your will or living trust (fixed dollar amount or percentage of remainder) removes that portion of your assets from taxation.

» Stock transfers avoid capital gains tax and give you a charitable deduction based on the current value of the asset.

» Naming San Francisco Heritage as a beneficiary on your life insurance can provide current or future tax deductions.

» Gifts of retirement funds avoid the two-fold taxation on IRAs and allow less costly assets for your heirs.

» Gifts of real estate avoid capital gains taxes, provide an income tax deduction based on the current value of the property, and can lower taxes by keeping your estate within the exemption allowance or below a higher level.

» Gifts of personal property provide a charitable deduction based on the full fair market value of the item.

Planned gifts can help sustain Heritage over the long-term, while providing donors with valuable tax and income benefits during their lifetime and future benefits for their heirs. With the advice of your financial advisor, you can set up a trust that benefits you now and your family in the future, while helping Heritage.

Legacy Circle

San Francisco Heritage has established the Legacy Circle to acknowledge and honor our lifetime friends who have named San Francisco Heritage or the Haas-Lilienthal House in their estate plans through bequests, charitable trusts, gifts of life insurance, retirement funds, real estate, or other planned-giving vehicles. Planned giving provides for the long-term welfare of Heritage, helping to protect San Francisco’s unique architectural and cultural identity and preserve the Haas-Lilienthal House.

After taking care of yourself and loved ones, it is a good time to consider what else really matters to you. Providing for a future gift to San Francisco Heritage can give you the satisfaction of knowing your legacy will help future generations enjoy the San Francisco you love. These gifts may also provide you with valuable tax benefits for you and your heirs.

We are deeply grateful to all our Legacy Circle members for their forethought and generosity. If you have decided to include San Francisco Heritage in your estate plans, please let us know so that we can include you as a member of our Legacy Circle. For more information about planning a bequest and becoming a member of the Legacy Circle, please contact Carolyn Squeri, director of membership and development, at 415-441-5000 x14 or csqueri@sfheritage.org.
**Sunday, February 9, 2 PM**
Black History Month: An Afternoon of Jazz
Presented by the Bayview Opera House and San Francisco Heritage
4705 Third Street