At its hearing on October 18, the Planning Commission denied the request to demolish 620 Post Street (See Newsletter, Summer 1990), one of nearly two hundred buildings whose retention is encouraged by San Francisco’s Downtown Plan. When it was adopted, in 1985, after years of effort, the Plan received national attention as one of the most significant actions taken by any American city addressing urban design and architecture. As the first attempt to win demolition by claiming the building, if retained, had no substantial market value, this case was bound to set critical precedents, whatever the outcome.

In August, at the strong urging of Heritage and the Mayor’s Office of Housing, the Commission directed the Planning Department to hire an independent structural engineer to study the claims of the attorneys, engineers and others hired by the owner. Those claims were that damage from the 1989 earthquake, coupled with the 1910 building’s highly unusual construction, had caused it to be in danger of immediate collapse and that multi-million dollar repair and rehab costs exceeded its value.

The Planning Department wisely chose the firm of Rutherford and Chekene. This firm is close to completing a multi-year study of unreinforced masonry buildings in San Francisco in preparation for the proposal of new city policies on strengthening of existing masonry buildings against future earthquakes. Rutherford and Chekene’s experience with this larger city-funded study has given them great familiarity with San Francisco masonry buildings, with various methods for reinforcement and with new studies and code systems which are adding significant knowledge to the field.

Rutherford and Chekene’s opinion indicated that the building was neither dangerous nor unusual and that its minor earthquake damage could be repaired for roughly $10,000. However, earthquake damage repair costs were not the only factor which the Commission had to consider.

In approximately 1984, the owner closed the structure and began interior demolition work, such as the removal of plumbing fixtures, which rendered the building uninhabitable. It has remained vacant since that time. The cost of replacing missing features, included by the owner in his arguments that cost was prohibitive, could trigger city building code provisions which mandate further upgrades. Whether these provisions would apply and, if so, what the true cost of required work would be became another point of debate.

Rutherford and Chekene’s report, together with a critical analysis by the Mayor’s Office of Housing of the continued on page 3
Increasingly, the outcome of public deliberations on the fate of existing buildings is becoming almost preordained by inflexible code requirements enacted into law without a full understanding of their implications.

Several recent cases, involving structures which contribute to the design quality of our city or which have the potential to provide valuable civic resources have been lost, or nearly so, because of a belief that there is no alternative to abstract formulas or rules which do not take the specifics of the case into account.

One example is that of the Embassy Theater (See Preservation Notes). A one thousand-seat facility, the theater could be used for performing arts, large meetings or other purposes. Its studio/office space could enable several small businesses or creative enterprises to grow and develop.

Preliminary engineering studies prepared for the owner convinced him that he could not afford to reopen the structure because the City Building Department would not allow him only to correct the specific problem created by the earthquake. Instead, it was assumed that Section 104(f) would be applied.

Section 104(f) of the San Francisco Building Code gives inspectors the authority to require work which can come close to the complete reconstruction of a building, as if it were a new structure. If such requirements were made only after establishing that real and probable hazards existed, there would be no reason to disagree. However, often the assumption of 104(f) by consulting engineers or its application by the City is not based upon a detailed study of the specific conditions of the individual structure but uses rules which are prejudiced against older buildings, not because they have demonstrated significant structural or safety inferiorities, but because they are different and their materials, construction methods and structural systems untested. "We don't do it that way today, so it must be wrong."

In many fields, learning lags behind reality. Were it not for the complexity of code issues, we could perhaps remain hopeful that generally, as with social discrimination, experience and education will eliminate human misconceptions. But because most people do not understand them, code deliberations are left to the experts, and the key decision makers adopt their recommendations unexamined.

Every few years, San Francisco enacts into law a new building code, one written within national organizations by individuals who are skilled and highly specialized but with very narrow concerns. The content of that code affects every building owner, every resident and every business in the city. But the code receives little discussion before it becomes law. No truly public process exists to facilitate understanding of the implications of the proposed code requirements. The issues are so complex and appear so mundane, it seems natural to leave it to the "experts."

These kinds of questions are central to the future urban fabric of our city. Upcoming debate on reinforcement of masonry buildings can, if we choose, help focus this concern. For the issue is not whether something is or is not in fact safe, but what the "experts" recommend as safe, based upon what prejudices or untested assumptions and finally which of the assumptions the Board of Supervisors determines to elevate into law.
620 Post St.
continued from page 1

economic claims made in studies commissioned by the owner, provided the Planning Commission a sound basis to deny the request for demolition. However, several Commissioners expressed an inclination to approve a new request, if combined with a proposal for a replacement structure on the site, as provided under another section of the Downtown ordinance. While Heritage would regret the loss of this building, demolition is clearly allowed by the Plan, when done in conjunction with a new, compatible replacement structure.

While the retention of 620 Post is by no means assured, the "escape valve" provision for excessive economic hardship has been successfully defended against false claims and remains reserved for cases which genuinely meet the conditions called for in the law. It can be expected that the outcome of 620 Post Street's application for demolition will be studied by current and future owners of approximately six hundred fifty buildings protected by or listed in the Downtown Plan.

ST. ROSE ACADEMY

The Planning Department is considering a request to demolish St. Rose Academy, a prominent landmark at Pine and Pierce Streets since the turn of the century.

The Board of the Academy decided to cease operating the school last year, prior to the October earthquake, and the 1989-90 school year was the last. The Dominican Sisters, who operated the school since its founding, built the structure on land owned by St. Dominic's Church. The Sisters have stated that they intend to meet a moral and legal obligation to return a vacant site to St. Dominic's but have also cited earthquake damage, although repairable, as reason for demolition.

Heritage has reviewed the building with structural engineer John Kariotis, well-known for his pioneering studies of seismic issues in historic buildings, and is attempting to assist the Order in identifying alternatives to demolition. Concerned readers are encouraged to contact Heritage.

EMBASSY THEATER

When the Planning Commission refused to take discretionary review of the demolition permit application on 1125 Market Street, it spelled doom for the oldest remaining theater in downtown San Francisco and one of the oldest operating theaters in the city. The Embassy Theater was near to opening its doors as a vaudeville house under the name Bell Theater, when the 1906 Earthquake struck. This Reid Brothers-designed building survived that temblor with minor damage and opened, after some reconstruction, in 1907, as the American Theater. In 1913, architect Charles Peter Weeks designed alterations that included conversion of the theater to a movie house. The first showing of a sound movie in San Francisco occurred in this house, in 1927. After undergoing several name changes over the years, it was finally tagged The Embassy, in 1933. The building received a "B" rating in Heritage's downtown survey.

Following the October 1989 earthquake, the Department of Public Works "red-tagged" the theater and, in December, required shoring of the structure. In February, after the owner failed to act, the City contracted to shore the building. Meanwhile, the owner applied for demolition, claiming that the cost to repair and upgrade the building was prohibitive. Heritage engaged structural engineer, John Kariotis, who, after a walk-through at the theater and upon reviewing structural reports, disputed the owner's claims of the extent and seriousness of the damage, as well as the cost estimates of repair and retrofit. Supporting Heritage's effort to preserve The Embassy were Leah Forbes and Richard Reineccius of the State-Local Advisory Task Force to the Arts Commission, Theater Bay Area, The San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum, The John Sims Center for the Performing Arts and the North of Market Planning Coalition.

130-44 LANGTON ST.

On October 17, the Landmarks Board voted to approve a compromise proposal to rehab four fire-damaged Langton Street buildings (See Newsletter, Spring 1990). The owners' original scheme was to replace the existing structures with twelve new single-family homes. The owners' architect, Donald MacDonald, presented a new proposal that will retain the existing 1907 street façades, with the addition of a new set-back loft level, and result in sixteen two-bedroom condominium townhouses with new interiors.
Cultural and ethnic diversity has historically been, and continues to be, an essential factor defining San Francisco. This is reflected in the city’s architectural development, as well as its economic, social, and cultural growth. In order to document the character and quality of San Francisco’s architecture more accurately, Heritage has continually sought to make its architectural surveys sensitive to these issues, first in its assessment of the Downtown and in its extensions, which include Chinatown and the Tenderloin, then South of Market and, most recently, the Richmond District.

Essential to Heritage’s assessment of San Francisco’s built environment has been an attempt to see architecture as a response to the physical and cultural needs of its builders and users. This perspective on architectural history is one which has recently been identified with the study of vernacular architecture.

As defined by the architectural historian Dell Upton, vernacular architecture is the “visual embodiment of a social process, in which available architectural ideas from many sources, local and international, traditional and novel, are shaped into buildings answering the special requirements of a social class, an economic group or a local or ethnic community.” (“Vernacular Buildings,” Built in the U.S.A., 1985) This view seeks to provide a basis for the evaluation of a wide range of structures, many of which have been excluded from the pantheon of architectural icons represented in the standard works on architectural history.

Vernacular architecture was first studied during the second half of the nineteenth century, when architects, designers, folklorists and historians sought to preserve vestiges of a rapidly disappearing pre-industrial rural life. In northern Europe, in particular, buildings, crafts, literature and many other cultural artifacts found their way into museums or were the basis of the collections of classical origins to its use as an egalitarian method of land subdivision. The grid is of such symbolic potency in America that it supersedes considerations of topography, as in San Francisco. He considers the relationship between the American

“...The preservation movement needs to embrace all people and recognize the diversity of human interest.”

new institutions. By the end of the century, the architectural avant-garde had grown uneasy with academic design solutions, many of which were associated with the Ecole des Beaux Arts. A number of them derived creative stimulus from the architectural form of rural and industrial structures as products of a direct response to materials and usage.

Beginning in the 1950s, the cultural geographer John Brinkerhoff Jackson began to write about the familiar, commonplace and often quite ordinary aspects of our built environment in his periodical, Landscape. In his many publications, which include the volumes Landscapes, The Necessity for Ruins and American Space, Jackson discusses the values (usually historically based) that precondition the way we subdivide land, design our dwellings and respond to the cultivated landscape.

Jackson traces such commonplaces as the rectangular street grid from its
COMMERCIAL REHAB STRIKES A RESPONSIVE CHORD

Commuters who make the daily drive north from Market Street have, in recent months, observed the gradual transformation of an old three-story red brick structure at the northwest corner of Franklin and Hickory Streets. R. Kassman Piano Company opened its new showrooms in the building following completion of the rehab in mid-October.

Geilfuss and Son designed this small unreinforced masonry structure, which went up in 1909, to house the San Francisco Grocers Exchange. Henry Geilfuss was born in Germany, in 1850, and received his architectural training there. In 1876, he relocated to San Francisco, where he served a two-year apprenticeship before setting out on his own. Between 1878 and 1900, he received at least four hundred and fifty commissions, including the flats at 2733-35 California Street (See Newsletter, January 1988), the landmark Westerfeld House at Fulton and Scott and St. Mark’s Lutheran Church. Geilfuss’s son joined his practice after the turn of the century.

The grocery business continued to operate at this location until 1937, when Fred Muther, a wholesale wine merchant, acquired the property. The building changed hands, again, in the late 1940s, and the Sanborn Map, updated through 1951, shows the building as “popcorn factory,” with no other identification. Kassman bought the building from the Assemblies of God Church, which operated a Christian bookstore on the premises and held church meetings on the third floor. Proximate to the Opera House, Davies Symphony Hall and Herbst Theater, the site is a prime location for Kassman.

Architects Duval and Wittnebel contracted Stan Teng as project architect for the job, which began in February. After gutting the interior walls, the contractor did a seismic upgrade, tying all the floors to the walls. Large windows made the south and east walls particularly vulnerable to seismic activity. The installation of "K" bracing, unfortunately visible from the street, strengthens the walls in this area. They have added sprinklers throughout and generally brought the building up to current codes. A new elevator replaces the existing one, which had been an earlier addition to the original building. Each floor will have handicapped-accessible restrooms.

Water leaking from the roof had damaged the roof trusses, which were not strong enough to support the new skylights and mechanical equipment added to the roof. New laminated beams have re-placed the original trusses, and a lightly applied paint mix masks their too-new appearance. Exposed brick walls, stripped of the plaster and wood paneling where offices once stood, existing ceiling joists and exposed new mechanical ducts give the interior the look of an open warehouse space, recalling the building’s original use.

On the ground floor, which will contain a display area and a few offices, part of the ceiling has been finished with gyp board and recessed lights, leaving the joists partially exposed. The curved line of the finished portion of the ceiling and of the walls of the offices reflects the lines of a grand piano.

The second floor, with the lowest floor-to-ceiling height, is the most utilitarian. Because the heavy timber beams were below minimum allowable head clearance, Teng located walls at the beams. Thereby he was able to limit their alteration to notches at two doorways. This floor includes double glazed windows and sound-insulated rooms for piano demonstrations.

Original arched windows and three new skylights bathe the wonderful tall space of the third floor in light. New Brazilian cherrywood flooring adds a warm touch. This level accommodates two offices and a recital hall, which seats one hundred sixty guests.

On the exterior, the third floor arched openings and windows are original. They are wood double hung windows with the jambs and sills clad continued on page 12
Vernacular Architecture continued from page 4

house, its front lawn and the road as the popularization of the dominance of medieval manor house over its grounds.

The methodology of vernacular architecture studies employs several categories which, although they were formulated to appraise vernacular structures more accurately, may be applicable to the evaluation and study of all buildings. Each of the following means of classification is worthy of consideration, but none can be used exclusively in assessing the value of a single structure or a group of buildings.

**Typology**—Many vernacular studies group buildings into types which are defined by their structure, usage and spatial organization—both in plan and elevation. This approach has the great value of placing an individual structure within the context of several sets of buildings. As a consequence, for example, a modest cottage would be seen in comparison with other low scale domestic buildings of similar construction and design. Not only does this method clarify similarities and differences that exist within a range of buildings of similar function, it also parallels the attitude of the builder/architect who may incorporate a number of distinctive features in an otherwise "formula" design. The danger of depending on this approach to the exclusion of others is that one can lose a sense of the intention behind the design of individual structures.

**Architectural Imagery**—Architectural imagery or style is one of the most direct methods available for the expression of a building's social, economic and cultural meaning. In the case of a commercial or office building, like the Transamerica pyramid, the architectural design may become synonymous with a business' corporate image. Architectural design may be a product of commonly held values ranging from a fundamental respect for neighboring buildings, manifested in decisions about a building's scale, surface material and detailing, to formally instituted guidelines governing new construction within established historic districts. In addition, highly personal responses to the working and living environments are likely to influence the selection and interpretation of a particular image.

The issue of style has been somewhat controversial among vernacular architecture scholars, in part due to an over-dependence on style as the identifiable characteristic of a building. Style has also been a troubling subject to some historians due to the volatile and somewhat subjective nature of its categories or labels. The most reliable stylistic designations, and the most continued on page 14

**Contemporary architects continue to borrow from the vernacular. In the case of the Landers house (1989), designed by Kotas and Pantaleoni, the adjacent 1930s Spanish Colonial Revival houses provided initial stimulus.**

**Palliser's New Cottage Homes** (1887) is one of the numerous pattern books which architects and builders used in the nineteenth century.
SPECIAL FEATURE

EXPLORING THE BAYVIEW'S HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

In the heart of the Bayview District, at the corner of Newcomb Avenue and Mendell Street, a two-story late nineteenth century building proclaims itself the "South San Francisco Opera House." Unsuspecting visitors may think they have crossed the county line to find themselves in the city of South San Francisco. But, in fact, when the theater opened, in 1888, this part of the city was known by that name. It sat along the Bay in an area bounded today by Selby Street on the west, Evans Avenue on the north and Shafter Avenue on the south.

Today, Bayview faces increasing development, as the search for buildable--and affordable--land continues in San Francisco. The increase of new construction in the district is already notable, as is the number of demolition permit applications for that area. If the federal government releases the more than seven hundred acres that comprise the Hunters Point Naval Reservation sometime in the future, development of that site, which offers attractive bay vistas and good weather, is likely to bring the greatest surge of growth to neighboring Bayview since World War II.

Originally part of the Rancho de las Salinas Potrero Viejo, granted by the Mexican government to José Cornelio Bernal, the land was uninhabited and used primarily as a grazing area for the cattle of Mission Dolores. In 1849, Dr. John Townsend and Corneille deBoom, encouraged by the influx of Forty-Niners into San Francisco, conceived the idea of creating a city a few miles south of the historic settlement around Portsmouth Plaza. The location seemed ideal for home building and commerce, as it possessed a deep water harbor close to shore and was free from most of the prevailing winds that blew in from the west. An abundance of free-flowing springs ensured an adequate supply of fresh drinking water.

Getting José Bernal interested in their idea was not a problem. With his blessing they placed an advertisement in the October 18, 1849 edition of the Alta California and waited for a landslide of buyers to appear. They never came. "The distance and difficulty of access to the district long proved a bar to its settlement," wrote nineteenth century California historian Hubert H. Bancroft. Potrero Hill and the waters of San Francisco Bay, not yet filled in at Mission Bay and Islais Creek, cut South San Francisco off from the city that was forming north and south of Market Street. "In the end," wrote another author of the time, "nothing remained of this fine project but some uninhabited shacks, and fifteen thousand dollars in unpaid bills."

If a multitude of new settlers did not appear, there were still a few hardy souls who recognized the potential of the area. In 1849, when Robert Eugene Hunter and his brother Philip Schuyler Hunter arrived in San Francisco from New York, instead of rushing to the gold fields, they chose to remain and live in the area selling real estate for Townsend and de Boom. They built a house and dairy farm near the present day corner of Griffith Street and Oakdale Avenue. Joined later by their
brother John and their families, they were able to supplement their incomes by selling bottled water from the springs on their property. They remained in this area until 1874, and subsequently it became known as Hunters Point.

South San Francisco may not have drawn residential development, but it did attract charitable organizations, which city officials encouraged to seek sites outside of heavily built up neighborhoods. In the late 1860s, the Sisters of Mercy established a home for “wayward women,” the Magdalen Asylum, “in an area that could have hardly been more removed from public view.” At the same time, the Catholic Sisters of Charity moved their orphanage from Market and Montgomery Streets to the top of Mount St. Joseph (Revere Avenue and Newhall Street). This institution—although not the original building—survived until the 1960s, when housing replaced it.

South San Francisco also attracted a race track and hotel resort, which operated between 1866 and 1871, near the present site of Bayview Park (Third and Bancroft Streets). Upon the construction of Long Bridge over Mission Bay and a bridge over Islais Creek inlet, a horse-drawn streetcar line went into service to transport people from the center of San Francisco, out what is now Third Street, to the track five miles south. With the barriers of distance and topography overcome, people frequented the area for recreational purposes, and it is not surprising that real estate investors took an interest, once again. Beginning in 1865, speculators organized homestead associations to sell property in South San Francisco.

According to the 1866 Langley City Directory, “One of the most important as well as pleasing features in the unexampled progress of our city is the organization of numerous Homestead Associations, which, by unified effort and consolidated capital, place it within the scope and means of any industrious and prudent individual to secure a tract that he can call his own and secure to him the proud title of lord of the soil.” Associations in Bayview included the Central Park Homestead Association, the South San Francisco Homestead and Railroad Association and the Haley and O’Neill Tract Homestead Association.

An 1867 Alta California ad for the Haley and O’Neill Tract, bounded by today’s Evans Avenue, Bayshore Boulevard, Third Street and Revere Avenue, stated that “the lands cover...”
employment for residents.

Nevertheless, some construction did take place, as famous photographer Eadweard Muybridge’s photos promoting the homestead tract show. Federal Revival residences, typical of early San Francisco but now rare in the city, survive at 1547 Oakdale and 1548 Palou and represent this early development of the Haley and O’Neill Tract, in the late 1860s. A two-story “L”-plan farmhouse with a side porch, a type still found in older areas of San Francisco, also remains from this period, at 1863 Oakdale.

Increased residential development followed the establishment of industry in South San Francisco. This began, in 1870, with the relocation to this area of the city’s slaughterhouses, from the vicinity of Ninth and Brannan Streets. “It is with feelings of pleasure and satisfaction,” wrote C.M. Bates, M.D., Health Officer of the City of San Francisco, “that I am enabled to state, with positive assurance that this great ‘eyesore’ and olfactory offender will in a very short time be removed to the place designated and provided for it by the Legislature of the State. . . .” (San Francisco Municipal Reports, 1869-1870)

The California Legislature reserved the area called The Tidelands, bounded by the present Arthur Avenue, Galvez, Ingalls and Phelps Streets, for “Butchertown,” as the area came to be called. Continuing through the 1890s, Bay View developed as a thriving commercial and residential area mostly dependent on the slaughtering of animals and the preparation of meat for the marketplace. Subsidiary industries included fertilizer and glue works, tanneries and soap and tallow works.

James Beatty, the owner of a large tannery in South San Francisco, commissioned the flat-front Italianate house, now at 1528 Jerrold Avenue, for himself, in 1873. The Beatty family still owned the house as late as 1972. The Italianate Quinn House at 1562 McKinnon, a designated City Landmark, was built for an important physician, about 1870. Housebuilder Stephen L. Piper laid out the imposing Italianate Sylvester House around 1870. Originally on Quesada Street, it was moved to 1556 Revere Avenue in 1913, at which time the present garage level was added with wood siding from the original carriage house. The Sylvesters, principal figures in the wholesale meat business, occupied the house from 1884 to 1900. Corinthian columns support a formal veranda, unique in the nineteenth century domestic context of San Francisco, that runs the length of the front of the house. The upper floor is articulated by handsome window surrounds and a bracketed cornice. Heritage holds a conservation easement on this building, another City Landmark, assuring its preservation in perpetuity.

With settlement underway, the community acquired a school, in 1870, the South San Francisco School, at the corner of Newcomb Avenue and Lane Street. A volunteer fire department, organized on October 18, 1870, with forty-nine men, acquired a station house the next year. Neither of these remains. Places of worship also appeared in the area about 1870. These were the South San Francisco Methodist-Episcopal Church (1869) on Oakdale Avenue, near Phelps Street, still extant but altered beyond recognition, and the Memorial Presbyterian Church (c. 1871) at Latona and Third Street, a Carpenter Gothic building now occupied by the Pearlgate Temple Baptist Church. John J. Clark, a well-known architect of late Victorian Era homes in San Francisco, designed the fine Carpenter Gothic All Hallows Church.

A Queen Anne Style house is paired here with a Federal Revival residence at 1552 and 1548 Palou.

All Hallows Church

The front bay on this 1860s farm house at 1863 Oakdale was a later addition.
Hallows Church (1888) at Oakdale and Newhall Street. By the time the South San Francisco Opera House opened, in 1888, the area had attained considerable development.

The Opera House served as both theater and Masonic Hall. According to materials at the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum, minstrel shows and medicine shows, popular plays and melodramas played the theater, along with singers, comics and other performers doing one-night stands before heading into the city to appear at the major theaters. By the turn of the century, it became a recreation and social hall where amateur dramatic clubs and lodge shows appeared. In the late 1930s, community meetings, dances and club theatricals still took place there. The City designated the South San Francisco Opera House an official landmark in 1968. This handsome two-story Eastlake Style building preserves a remarkable amount of its original ornament at the ground floor entrance and second story window surrounds. Today, the City owns the theater and, under the auspices of the Arts Commission, it serves as a neighborhood cultural center, offering classes in art, dance, music and drama, as well as performance space for the community.

Typical examples of late nineteenth century San Francisco residential architecture reflect this period of growth in the Bayview and include the Milley residences at 1515 and 1517 Jerrold (1888), the work of architect George E. Voekel, and the Queen Anne Style McDonald house (1895), 1552 Palou, by Michael J. Welsh, who designed many Victorian Era homes in the Mission.

In 1910, the Bay View Improvement Club unsuccessfully promoted the area as an "Ideal Exposition Site," offering good weather and abundant cheap land for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition. During the years that followed, in-fill construction of single-family houses in the Bayview reflected other residential districts of the city during the 1920s and 1930s, particularly the Sunset.

Employment opportunities offered by the naval shipyards during World War II and the construction of temporary wartime housing brought a four-fold increase in population to the Bayview and neighboring Hunters Point, between 1940 and 1950. Thereafter, the district went into a period of adjustment, as population declined from the unusually high numbers that resulted from the wartime boom. The slaughterhouses left the area, driven by the economic reality that it was cheaper to bring the processing plant to the livestock than to ship cattle into the city for slaughtering. The last slaughterhouse in Butchertown closed in the early 1970s, and the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency developed the site as the India Basin Industrial Park.

The Department of City Planning expects that the 1990 census will show a modest reversal of the population decline that set in since the 1950s and projects a thirty percent increase by the year 2000. Both the Planning Department and the Redevelopment Agency have turned their attention to the Bayview with proposals to manage this growth. Heritage expects to play its usual advocacy role, on behalf of this district's architectural resources, as it does in the city's other neighborhoods.

—Gary Goss, a San Francisco architectural historian
**HOUSE HISTORIES: A Guide to Tracing the Genealogy of Your Home**
Sally Light
Golden Hill Press
Spencertown, NY

This thorough “how to” book describes the technique of “reading” a house and its site for information. It explains how to determine the period of construction from the materials, design and construction techniques and how to recognize regional, national or ethnic characteristics in the handiwork. At the next stage, the author conveys the fascination, and the pitfalls, of researching deeds and wills, tracing genealogies, reading maps and burrowing through archives. Finally, there is the process of putting the data all together into some sensible timeline or narrative form or for a National Register nomination.

The book is more than a way to satisfy your curiosity about doing house histories, although it is also that. Author Sally Light, a practising house historian in New York State, tells how to set up a small house history business, from naming your enterprise, choosing a logo, preparing a brochure, right down to estimating how much time it takes to research and write up the typical case report and billing the client.

**Landmark Yellow Pages**
Diane Maddex, General Editor
The Preservation Press
Washington, D.C., 1990

*Landmark Yellow Pages* is a greatly expanded successor to the National Trust’s 1983 reference work, *The Brown Book*, and it purports to contain “all the names, addresses, facts and figures you need to determine what is happening” in today’s preservation movement. A short chronology of key events in preservation and an abstract of milestone legal cases also give some idea of the movement’s growth to date. The book’s first part is a kind of preservation primer that covers such topics as conservation easements, the Secretary of the Interior’s rehabilitation standards, the nomination process and evaluation criteria for the National Register of Historic Places and tax incentives to preservation. Part two of the *Landmark Yellow Pages* is a directory to the “state and local network,” which lists some 3500 individuals and organizations who are members of the National Trust’s Preservation Forum.

-D.A.

**San Francisco Heritage Hosts Open House**

San Francisco Heritage cordially invites its members to attend the annual Holiday Open House. With pine garlands over the fireplace mantel, Victorian ornaments adorning a twelve-foot tree and music filling the air with holiday cheer, the Haas-Lilienthal House will usher in Holiday festivities on Sunday December 2nd, from 1 to 4 pm.

You can feast on holiday fare, participate in an auction and sale of holiday gifts and welcome Santa Claus, who will arrive at 3 pm with treats for the children. All the while you will enjoy the Haas-Lilienthal House, dressed in its splendid holiday decorations.

Bring your family and friends to the Holiday Open House, where you will find a warm group enlivened by the spirit of the season. The event is free for members of Heritage and $5.00 for non-members. No-host wine bar.

**Michael Steingraber**
Office 415 921-5555
1892 Union Street
San Francisco, CA 94123

Call for a complimentary opinion of value
As the plans for Mission Bay make their glacial way toward realization, it is worth noting the proposal to incorporate the existing, but inactive, Fire Station at Third and Mission Rock Streets, into a new fire and police facility. The plan calls for the design of this Public Safety Complex to enhance the historic fire station "as a strong architectural element." New construction at the facility "should be of a sensitive scale and articulation" to allow the existing building to "dominate the Third Street façade wall." Architect Frederick H. Meyer designed the fire house, constructed in 1928.

Next year's National Preservation Conference, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, will meet in San Francisco, October 16-20. Sponsors, including the National Trust, the Park Service, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, have issued a call for papers, to come under the conference's three topics: What do we value and want to preserve? How will we live and how will historic preservation be part of our lives, in the next twenty-five years? What are our vision, goals and strategies? Abstracts are due no later than December 15, and interested individuals should write: Vice President, Programs; National Trust for Historic Preservation; 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.; Washington, D.C. 20036.

The National Park Service and the Golden Gate National Park Association have jointly issued the first number of two periodic publications intended to inform the public about the Presidio planning process. A newsletter, Reveille, will appear at key stages in the planning for conversion of the post to a national park, while Presidio Update will report interim news. To get on the mailing list for both publications, contact the Presidio Planning Team, at 556-8600.

The preservation community noted, with sadness, the death of Jonathan Malone, on September 28. Secretary to the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board from 1980 until 1988, Jonathan was the City's first full-time staff person for preservation planning. His tenure saw the establishment of six historic districts and the designation of seventy-seven individual landmarks in San Francisco. On his death, the Planning Commission observed that he served "with great distinction, professionalism and efficiency."

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HERITAGE SETS 1991 PROGRAMS

The Education Department of San Francisco Heritage has planned a full schedule of events for 1991. On February 23, we will present our annual Chinese New Year Program, which includes a lecture and architectural walk of Chinatown, with an optional dim sum lunch at the end of the event.

Several programs will take advantage of summertime in the Bay Area. We will repeat last year's highly successful Architectural Bay Cruise, in June. Participants will view San Francisco's historic architecture from the water, while enjoying a fine buffet luncheon on board one of Hornblower Yachts' excursion boats.

A self-guided tour of house interiors in the Western Pacific Heights will also take place next summer. On Saturdays, June through September, Heritage guides lead regular walks of Chinatown and the Presidio. Finally, a special family event for the summer is also in the planning stage.

A Labor History Tour, on the calendar for September, will survey labor history and view landmarks of the labor movement in San Francisco. Next year's Fall Lectures will be a three-part series, in late October and early November. It will explore the subject of new construction in historic settings.

Watch future issues of the newsletter for additional information about these programs. Members of San Francisco Heritage receive advanced notice of all events in the mail and enjoy the advantage of priority reservations, as well as special membership prices. If you are not yet a member, use the coupon at the back of this newsletter to join.


Thank you for your support.

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Vernacular Architecture
continued from page 6

The Chinese/Italian cultural overlay of Chinatown and North Beach takes visible form on the entrance elevation of the Vittorio Sattui Building (1911), at 1115-1121 Stockton St. Italian architect Louis Mastropasqua designed the building for an Italian client. Its overscale classical detailing combines with the characteristic "sinicized" features of tiered balconies and half-roof with ridge detailing that refers to the pagoda tradition. Revealing of architectural intention, are those which were used at the time of the construction of the building or of contemporary buildings with similar features. This information can be found in contemporary documents — newspaper and periodical articles, pattern books and, where available, correspondence and architectural drawings.

Siting—The siting of a building on its individual lot, within the context of a particular street, block, subdivision, or town is an important indication of a building's role within a social context. The relationship of the building's "footprint" to the lot boundaries and the type of access from the street to the structure are important considerations in the interpretation of a building within its social environment. These include the contrast between a building's formal, publicly visible entrance and its private access reserved for the structure's occupants, and the relationship of a building to the out doors.

"Special Requirements"—To borrow from Dell Upton's definition, these comprise the social, economic and cultural needs that play a role in the development of architectural form. In some cases, a number of factors coalesce as contributors to the way a building looks and functions. A building's design may reflect the cultural overlay of diverse ethnic communities, as in the example of a Chinatown building designed for an Italian client. Other categories of buildings, such as industrial structures, address production needs, available technology and the need to house machinery. Architecture also responds to broad social trends, such as the dependence on the automobile. Our cities contain commercial strips that combine features of the turn-of-the-century Main Street with those of the automotive strip.

Vernacular architectural studies continue to emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to the interpretation of buildings which draws upon the fields of geography, landscape architecture, sociology and cultural history. Although research on vernacular architecture has as its starting point the commonplace structures of our environment, the evolving methodology addressed to these buildings teaches us a great deal about the ways we can look at all buildings.

—L.W.B.

NOTICE—
In December, Heritage's survey of the Inner Richmond enters its second phase, which will extend our building-by-building assessment from Sixth Avenue to Park-Presidio Boulevard. Volunteers are needed as photographers and researchers and to provide various forms of administrative assistance. If you would like to volunteer for the survey, please call Lauren Bricker, Survey Coordinator, 441-3000.
DOCENT TRAINING
Heritage turns to its members every year at this time, to make a special appeal for volunteers to join the docent training class in February.
The training prepares you to become a Haas-Lilienthal House docent, a guide for our Heritage Hikes school program, or a Heritage Walks guide. Several acclaimed authors are among those who conduct the training classes, and you will learn more about San Francisco than you can imagine.
Docents also learn the history of the Haas, Lilienthal, and Bransten families along with the history of the House.
On completing the course, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that by serving as a docent or guide and making a commitment for just three hours a month, you become a more involved member of Heritage. Each member is important to this organization and its vital task of protecting San Francisco’s architecture and quality of life. Yet those members who become volunteers give so generously of themselves that Heritage could not be as effective as it is without them.
Education of the public is a kind of early intervention in the preservation process. Our guides and docents assist in that education when they interpret the Haas-Lilienthal House for visitors, introduce school children to historic architecture, or lead architectural tours through the city’s neighborhoods, including Pacific Heights, Chinatown, the Richmond district and the Presidio. Many of our guides and docents assist at special Heritage events, like Holiday Open House and Soirée. Others are working to complete our survey of the Inner Richmond.
This is your chance to make a more active contribution to preservation, while learning more about San Francisco, meeting some interesting people and enjoying yourself, all at the same time. To sign up for the training program or for further information, call Rick Propas at 441-3000.

STAFF CHANGES
Ruth Spitzler, coordinator of Haas-Lilienthal House rentals for four years, left Heritage in September. Ruth helped reorganize the rental program, which provides income for House maintenance and Heritage programs. Aimée Helweg succeeds her as rental coordinator and will assume additional responsibilities in marketing and development. A graduate of Southwestern University, Ms. Helweg comes to Heritage from San Antonio, Texas, where she worked as Director of Special Events for The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

HOLIDAY SHOPPING AT THE BOOKSTORE
This year, do your Holiday shopping at San Francisco Heritage! As this busy season approaches, remember that you can beat the crowds by shopping at the Heritage bookstore. Located in the ballroom of the Haas-Lilienthal House, the store has a wide range of books on San Francisco and the Victorian Era. Included are the popular and colorful Painted Ladies series, the elegant American Victorian Sourcebook, Victorian Classics of San Francisco, and several outstanding guidebooks and histories of San Francisco, as well as lithographs and sketches of the Haas-Lilienthal House. We have great stocking stuffers in the form of Victorian paper dolls and cut outs. The House, decorated for the season in the spirit of the Victorian Era, is a great place to bring out-of-town holiday guests. The bookstore is open Wednesdays 12 noon to 3:30 pm and Sundays 11 am to 4:30 pm, and during the Holiday Open House, December 2. Members receive a twenty percent discount.

NEW MEMBERS JOIN HERITAGE BOARD
Three new members joined the Board of Directors of San Francisco Heritage this summer. Steve Plath heads his own firm, Plath & Company, Inc., and brings to Heritage his considerable experience as a contractor for major rehab projects of large San Francisco residences. He has had a long association with us, actively supporting such Heritage events as Soirée and the Architectures Auction.
Melinda Ellis Evers is a portfolio manager with Grubb and Ellis Realty Advisors, where she is responsible for the acquisition, management and disposition of commercial properties. In her prior involvement with Heritage, she has applied her energy and experience on behalf of fund raising efforts, particularly Soirée.
Sara Barnes knows Heritage from the inside, having served on the staff as Director of Administration and Development, in 1982-83. She is now with The Napa Group, management consultants to businesses, government agencies and non-profit institutions.
Plath and Evers will serve on the Architectural Services Committee of the Board and will be particularly involved with conservation matters at the Haas-Lilienthal House. Ms. Barnes has taken up the Holiday Open House as a special project and will serve on the Membership Development Committee.
CALENDAR

CONTINUING HERITAGE EVENTS

Sundays 11 am to 4:15
Wednesdays 12 noon to 3:15
Haas-Lilienthal House Tours

Sundays 12:30 pm
Pacific Heights Walking Tour

For information concerning all Heritage events, call 441-3004

DECEMBER

December 2 From 1 to 4 pm
Heritage's Holiday Open House
(See page 11)

Throughout December
For a complete listing of holiday events at historic houses in the Bay Area, call (415) 581-0223

Through February 3
Exhibition: Christmas in Rome
Museo Italo/Americano
Call (415) 673-2200

Throughout the year
Cameron-Stanford House, Oakland
Tours Call 836-1976

Throughout the year
Palo Alto-Stanford Heritage
Tours Call 321-8667 or 324-3121

JANUARY

Throughout the year
Tours of a Victorian Estate
Falkirk in San Rafael
Call (415) 485-3328

FEBRUARY

February 11
Heritage Docent Training Begins
(See page 15)

February 23
Heritage's Chinese New Year Program
Details will be announced

February 22-24
California Women in Environmental Design Annual Conference
St. Francis Hotel
Call (415) 548-6209

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