Nineteenth century preservation efforts reflected the then-current tendency of history books to focus on the "great men" and the singular events in history. But increasingly in the 20th century, as the historical community has expanded its appreciation of social and cultural history, the preservation movement has similarly come to focus on buildings and neighborhoods which have been significant in the daily lives of ordinary people.

Few neighborhoods in America are as well known as San Francisco’s Chinatown, and yet until recently little thought has been devoted to preserving the historic character of the area as a whole. In October, 1985, then-President of the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, Patrick McGrew, initiated a proposal to designate Chinatown as a historic district. The draft case report was substantially written by McGrew, Philip P. Choy and Jean Kortum. Chris H. Nelson, Heritage’s architectural historian at that time, and others provided additional research. The San Francisco Department of City Planning is currently reviewing that proposal.

The criteria for defining a historic district are outlined in Article 10 of the San Francisco City Planning Code. The Board of Supervisors may by ordinance "designate an area containing a number of structures having a special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value, and constituting a distinct section of the city, as a historic district." Within a district, buildings are designated according to the following categories: contributory, contributory/altered, and non-contributory. Buildings which date from the district’s period of significance, that period in which the character of the designated district took form, and retain their historic integrity are rated contributory. Buildings which have been substantially altered or were constructed before or after the period of historic significance are categorized as non-contributory. Contributory/altered structures date from the period of significance and retain relative integrity although altered.

Chinatown’s period of significance extends from its reconstruction on the ruins remaining from the devastation of 1906 through the decades of the 1910s and 1920s until about 1930, when its major development ceased. A number of San Francisco’s most distinguished architects designed buildings in the “new” Chinatown, including Julia Morgan, John Bakewell, Jr., Albert Farr, Albert Pissis, and Salfield and Kohlberg.

Several physical features characteristic of the rebuilt Chinatown can be identified. The overall proportions of...
San Francisco Heritage is a non-profit member-supported organization dedicated to the conservation of important architectural and historical elements and diverse neighborhoods of the City through planning, education, advocacy and technical assistance.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S COMMENTS

Recently, I was in Los Angeles to attend the annual State Historic Preservation Conference. Each year, conference sponsors meet in a different California community, affording attendees the chance to observe the state of preservation in that city, in addition to providing an opportunity to learn of new developments in the field. Hopefully, a review of the success of others emboldens participants as they return home to resume their own efforts. In any case, the opportunities for comparison are unavoidable.

The Conference was headquartered at Los Angeles’ well-known Biltmore Hotel, which, fronting on Pershing Square, is the rough equivalent of our Saint Francis. The Biltmore’s refurbished public spaces were an attractive setting for the sessions. I also took the opportunity, however, to check on the status of Pasadena’s Huntington Hotel, a grand dame and the object of a major controversy during the last several years.

Tucked deep in the pleasing residential landscape of the cities of San Marino and Pasadena, the Huntington Hotel has been a landmark in every sense of the word. Constructed in 1907, on a hilltop site, it was designed to ensure each of its hundreds of guest rooms received direct sunlight. Its acres of grounds include a collection of bungalows surrounded by gardens and lawns. The massive hotel itself is a powerful physical presence. Facing westward, it overlooks a vast, gently sloping lawn with decades-old plantings and the city beyond.

The building’s central tower, rising approximately 10 stories, stands above a pair of angled lower wings which reach out to embrace the great lawn. Built to appeal to those who could escape the less pleasant winters of much of the rest of the country, the Huntington symbolized the historical raison d’etre behind the growth and development of Southern California. Its calm grounds and vistas, its indoor and outdoor spaces have continued to serve visitors and Los Angeles residents for 80 years. In short, the Huntington represents an authentic creation—a structure designed with respect for its purpose and location, richly imbued with its own history and serving as a useful, meaningful and respected feature in the life of the community.

But in 1985, Pasadena and its admirers were shocked when the hotel was closed without warning by the operators, who charged it was unsafe in the event of an earthquake.

Pasadena Heritage, the local preservation organization, considered an effective and sophisticated leader in conserving Pasadena’s built environment, made a commendable effort to expose this fraud. Their failure culminated with a 1987 ballot referendum in which a majority of Pasadena voters were persuaded to accept the new property owners’ promises to construct a replica of the historic hotel, which they insisted must be demolished.

Not having visited the Hotel since its closure, I arrived anxiously seeking a first glimpse. I found it, ironically, under a full moon like those portrayed in turn-of-the-century postcards purporting to show the glories of balmy California nights. The moonlight illuminated the remaining central tower, still capped by its tile roof observation room but stripped of its adjacent sections and revealing the structural tentacles and wallpaper covering of rooms which no longer existed. The following day, I circled the grounds, ultimately reaching the foot of its great lawn, now a parched, dusty desert, and came into full view of the demolition underway. I watched the tower—the wings having vanished—undergo the assault which would soon reduce it to memory.

I cannot immediately contrast the differing outcome which will result from the recent closure of San Francisco’s premier historic hotel, the Palace. Both hotels were controlled by a combination of property owners and facility operators, both had been allowed to become somewhat lackluster in recent years, and both were physical, historical and social landmarks of unquestioned stature.

Whatever efforts Heritage and the Landmarks Board have maintained to ensure that the irreplaceable historical features and grand architectural character are not lost in the remodeling, and whatever ongoing concerns nag at our peace of mind, when the project is completed, San Francisco will still have its Palace Hotel, largely recognizable, as a continuing part of its urban life.

Mark Ryser
South End Historic District

As part of its evaluation of the south of Market area for potential rezoning, the City Planning Department, with the assistance of a survey by San Francisco Heritage, defined an historic district comprised largely of late nineteenth century through early twentieth century warehouse buildings (please see site plan). The site was later named the South End Historic District. While the architectural character of this area ranges from such simply articulated brick structures as the Oriental Warehouse (1867) to sophisticated design in reinforced concrete (the San Francisco Fire Department Pump House No.1 of 1909-12), as a group these buildings provide evidence of the vital role the port of San Francisco played in the development of the city and the nation.

The Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board has recommended approval (with minor revisions) of the district as documented in the draft case report prepared by Paul A. Lord of the Planning Department. However, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency Commission, which holds jurisdiction over a number of lots fronting onto First Street, has opposed inclusion of its properties in the district. Among the properties affected is the Oriental Warehouse, a building which has individual city landmark status. However, its exclusion and that of the adjacent lots located to the north and west poses a threat to the historic and architectural “anchor” of this warehouse district.

Heritage continues to follow the case, which currently awaits a resolution from the office of the City Attorney, and supports the efforts of the Landmarks Board to establish logical boundaries and will participate in discussions with the Agency.

1989-90 Office Development Limitation Program

Once again, the candidates for the annual “Beauty Contest” for new office building construction are lined up and await a final decision from the City Planning Commission. Among the evaluation criteria are several of direct concern to Heritage. These include the use of Transfer Development Rights (TDR) by the project sponsor, the preservation of landmarks and historic buildings and the conservation of existing neighborhood character.

The competition involves four projects. It is of particular interest to Heritage that each project sponsor intends to use TDRs; all projects propose the demolition of buildings rated by Heritage; and three of the four are partially within or adjacent to conservation districts.

Pacific Properties has commissioned Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) to design a 230,000-square-foot structure for a site at 138-150 California Street. The project entails the preservation and reinforcement of the Marine Building at 158 California Street (a Category 1 Significant Building). The Marine Building is located within the Front-California Conservation District, though most of the construction site is outside this District. The project would require the demolition of 150 California Street, a 1919 Spanish Colonial Revival stucco-sheathed brick building design by Walter H. Ratcliff (Heritage Rated C) and 130-138 California Street, a 1907 terra cotta-clad Renaissance Revival office building (Heritage Rated C).

Howard Associates has commissioned a design from Heller and Leake for a 199,000-square-foot building for 524 Howard Associates for a site at 524 Howard Street. The project calls for the demolition of a brick automobile garage designed by Henry Geilfuss in 1910 for the California Boiler Works (Heritage Rated B). The project site is within a block of the New Montgomery-Second Street Conservation District.

Sepulveda Properties, a subsidiary of Chevron has commissioned Gensler and Associates to design a 220,000-square-foot building at the southwest corner of Second and Howard Streets (222 Second and 611-13 Howard Streets). The project would entail the demolition of the Holabird Building at 611 Howard Street, a 1924 Regency/Federal Revival reinforced concrete building designed by B.G. McDougall (Heritage Rated C) and 613 Howard.
Street, an unrated 1923 Regency Revival commercial building. The William Volker Building, located at 631 Howard Street stands immediately west of the new building site. This 1929 industrial (currently office) Gothic/Moderne structure was designed by George Kelham; it is located within the New Montgomery-Second Street Conservation District.

Finally, SOM was also commissioned by Markborough Properties to design a 393,000-square-foot building at 101 Second Street and extending from 575-599 Mission Street. The present corner lot, occupied by a building (Heritage Rated D) is located within the New Montgomery-Second Street Conservation District. The project sponsor proposes to construct an outdoor sculpture enclosure intended to be consistent in scale and proportion with the requirements of the conservation district. This project would require the demolition of 575-79 Mission Street a six-story 1912 brick structure (Heritage Rated C), 581 Mission Street (an unrated building), 583-585 Mission Street, a three story 1906 brick building (Heritage Rated C) and 589-591 Mission Street, a 1907 four-story brick building (Heritage Rated C).

1501 Pacific Avenue

The demolition of a 1931 Zig-Zag Moderne service station has recently been proposed to accommodate a new four-story mixed-use project comprised of three dwelling units and an automotive repair shop with office space. Heritage became interested in this case because of the architectural significance of the structure and the rarity of its type in San Francisco. Located at the intersection of Pacific and Larkin, it is another instance of the disappearing neighborhood service station.

Heritage, in accord with the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board which heard the case in early February, and City Planning staff recognized that the city's housing needs mitigated against a pure preservation solution. Heritage believed that the existing station could be retained on its present site (though an adjacent service bay would be lost) and still accommodate the needs of the project sponsor. The San Francisco architectural firm Hood/Miller developed a proposal, on Heritage's behalf, that utilized the existing structure as an entry on Pacific Avenue to two flanking residential units, with entry to the third unit from Larkin Street.

Heritage will continue to negotiate with the project sponsor.

Brief Notes

Recently, Heritage opposed several demolitions in the city's residential neighborhoods. These include a three-story residential-above-commercial structure located at the southeast corner of Sutter and Steiner in the Western Addition. Designed by the San Francisco architect Albert Schroepfer, the building was completed as a speculative property for the Cox Seed Co. in 1905. Hispanic detailing suggestive of the newly fashionable Mediterranean/Mission Revival Style distinguishes this typical Edwardian period mixed-use block. However, without support of the neighborhood, which had already endorsed the 38-unit residential project proposed for the site, Heritage withdrew its appeal of the permit to demolish.

The other proposed demolitions involve an 1880s Italianate/Eastlake wood-frame residence in Noe Valley and a c.1910 Mission Revival residential-above-commercial building in the Richmond.
Owner Demolishes Fire-Damaged Historic Synagogue

Despite Heritage’s efforts, the fire-damaged structure of the former Beth Israel Synagogue at Fillmore and Geary was demolished in March. As a result, Heritage representatives and city officials will discuss a revision of the city’s emergency order procedures.

One of the most prominent architectural landmarks in the Western Addition, the former Beth Israel Synagogue erupted into flames on the night of February 16. Although the fire consumed the roof and roof structure as well as some interior spaces in the rear of the building, most of the structure was saved, including all of the first floor, nearly all exterior walls, and the entire front of the building. The city issued an emergency order to the Duquette Foundation, legal owner of the property, to correct or eliminate a potential hazard.

Heritage moved quickly to help the Duquette Foundation assess the future of the damaged structure. Peter Culley and Associates, well-known engineers who oversaw the structural aspects of the reconstruction of the Concordia Argonaut Club, which suffered a more serious fire in 1982, considered the feasibility of stabilizing the exterior brick walls. Mayta-Jensen, a major San Francisco contractor who oversaw the recent major rehabilitation of the Temple Sherith Israel, estimated the costs of saving the structure. Both firms determined that temporary stabilization of the building was not only feasible, but could be done for less than the cost of demolition.

Stabilizing the structure would have allowed the Duquette Foundation time to decide to either repair and reoccupy the building or sell it. Moreover, it would have given preservation groups and the Landmarks Board a chance to work with the owner to ensure reuse and expedite permit approvals.

Heritage exhausted every option available to try and persuade Duquette to stabilize the structure and consider reconstruction. A meeting was held which was attended by representatives of the city’s building department and neighboring businesses.

Unfortunately, the Duquette Foundation did not respond to several requests to participate. Mr. Duquette and his advisors, still angry with the preservation community for failing to support Duquette’s bid to acquire the Bush Street synagogue in 1987 and disheartened by the loss of their years of creative efforts, refused to consider any option other than complete demolition. Furthermore, Mr. Duquette’s spokesmen misrepresented the City’s order in discussion with the media, claiming that the City of San Francisco had ordered demolition of the building.

Without Mr. Duquette’s participation and with the determination of his organization to demolish the structure, its fate was sealed. As currently structured, emergency orders are subject to none of the normal review processes governing other building permits. Moreover, the current process places nearly total control in the hands of the property owner.

The unnecessary loss of this very important structure has led both city officials and representatives of Heritage to agree to a reconsideration of the current emergency order procedures, in order to protect historic structures which have suffered damage as a result of fire or other disasters.

BETH ISRAEL:
A BRIEF HISTORY

Congregation Beth Israel was organized in San Francisco in 1860 and incorporated in 1872. The Conservative congregation held services in a small rented building downtown on Sutter Street until construction of its first synagogue, on Mission near 5th, in 1874. Growing membership forced relocation to larger quarters on Turk Street, between Jones and Taylor, in 1878, and again 13 years later, when Beth Israel first moved into the Western Addition, a neighborhood it would serve for nearly 80 years. That first Western Addition Beth Israel was dedicated on Geary near Octavia in 1891. In 1905, construction began on the temple at 1839 Geary. It was nearing completion when the earthquake of April 18, 1906 struck. The seriously damaged structure was rebuilt and dedicated on September 20, 1908. In 1969, Beth Israel joined with the Reform Temple Judea and moved to a new synagogue on Brotherhood Way, in San Francisco.

Post-fire photo of Duquette Pavilion (by Kevin Levine).
San Francisco's "Youngest" Landmark

"It ain't old enough." That is how one Landmarks Board member was quoted, explaining the Board's decision not to designate the Crown Zellerbach Building a landmark in 1981. The effort to seek landmark protection at that time had resulted from rumors that the building was to be enlarged or demolished for a larger office tower. When the threat to San Francisco's first International Style skyscraper seemed to fade, so did the pressure to make it a landmark.

However, by 1986, with Crown Zellerbach Corporation vacating the building and the possibility of disfiguring alterations by the new owner, James Goldsmith, the cause was taken up once again. On May 17, 1987, the Crown Zellerbach Complex and Site at One Bush Street, including the tower, plaza, and pavilion became San Francisco Landmark #183.

The passage of six years did not bring the patina of old age to the structure. Rather, the Landmarks Board and other City officials recognized that age is not the only, nor even the most important factor, in defining a landmark. One Bush Street is a landmark because it is San Francisco's most important example of the International Style, which now has taken its place with the Beaux Arts and the other historic styles of the city's built environment. It is also a landmark because it represents Crown Zellerbach Corporation's historic associations with San Francisco and embodies that company's civic spirit. Alan Temko wrote, "It is San Francisco's supreme monument to corporate generosity and architectural idealism of the late 1950s."

Anthony Zellerbach (1832-1911) came to California during the Gold Rush, and to San Francisco in 1868. In 1870, he established a small stationery business, not far from the site of One Bush Street. The business grew into a forest paper products enterprise deeply rooted in the economic life of the United States and Canada. His grandson James David ("J.D.") worked in the family business at all levels, and ultimately became chairman of the board.

Like other San Francisco civic leaders, Zellerbach was concerned by the apparent decline of the city following World War II. Years of depression and war had brought construction downtown to a near standstill, while the tremendous growth of the suburbs threatened the continued viability of the central city. When he selected the San Francisco office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, along with the San Francisco firm of Hertzka and Knowles to design a new headquarters for Crown Zellerbach Corporation, he wished to express his and the company's confidence in the future of the downtown.

When it was built in 1959, the Crown Zellerbach Building departed radically from the historic styles of architecture in San Francisco. A classic example of the International Style, the building's steel-framed glass curtain walls contain the volume of unobstructed space within. The flat roof, the absence of ornamentation, and the few graceful stilts raising the structure out of a landscaped plaza below contribute to the sensation of pure space.

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SOIRÉE 1989 to be held at One Bush Street

This year's annual black-tie gala at One Bush Street, "Cirque de Soirée", will feature circus performers and jungle animals, casino gaming and prizes. There will be dancing to Walt Tolleson's Orchestra and buffet dining catered by Dan McCall and Associates. The beautiful sunken plaza and cantilevered balcony will be tented over to create room for the performers and the animals, including a tiger and a leopard, all of whom will meander among the guests during the course of the evening. Come learn the exciting new gaming fad, Pai Gow and try your luck at blackjack. Gaming will occur in the glassed-in lobby of the building. Complimentary parking will be available at the One Bush Street Garage. Please call Christy Kent for further information, at 441-3000.

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT FOR INNER RICHMOND SURVEY

Heritage's survey of San Francisco's Downtown and South of Market is nationally recognized. This summer we will begin to extend our survey to the city's residential neighborhoods. The survey will document a portion of the Inner Richmond which is under greatest pressure for new development. Volunteers from the Inner Richmond and elsewhere in the city who are interested in field work and library research are strongly urged to contact Lauren Bricker, survey coordinator, at 441-3000.

SPOTLIGHT ON REHAB

When Jane Sutton's children grew up, she went looking for a second career. She found it in a paintbrush and a pair of orphan buildings that were begging for some tender care. Today her "baby," as she calls it, is a Victorian duplex on the southwest corner of Scott and Pine Streets.

In 1985, when she bought the building at 1859/1861 Scott Street, it was covered with a layer of asbestos shingles which itself had replaced a layer of perma-stone. At some point, a misdirected car had apparently left the Pine Street speedway and crashed into the bay at the corner of the house. Inside, much of the detailing including rosettes on the doors and windows, period lighting fixtures, and some of the lyncrusta wainscoting had been severely damaged or removed.

"It was such an orphan," said Sutton. Over the last three and a half years, Sutton and her contractor have worked to restore the building with its prominent Queen Anne tower to some of its former glory. Outside, the contractor stripped and removed the asbestos. Using the pattern left on the walls, Rich Schaffer and George Payne created molds and recast the swags which had been affixed just below the roofline. The dentil and egg and dart work which remained were cleaned up. At the entrance on Scott Street, Sutton had new bases and pilasters installed in the portico.

Inside, Sutton did much of the refurbishment herself, haunting antique and salvage shops from Berkeley to Kentucky looking for just the right details. "I'm a big fan of salvage," she says. "Most of the lighting came from Kentucky, and many of the doors and the hardware came from Omega Salvage in Berkeley." In the living room on the second floor, the marble Sutton used around the fireplace was salvage from renovation at the Ferry Building.

Where elements of the original design still existed, but pieces were missing, Sutton improvised. Using latex molds and Bondo and the existing lyncrusta, Sutton recast and replaced missing sections on the walls. Likewise, she cast plaster of paris rosettes to replace the missing ornamentation around the doors and windows.

In the dining rooms of the upstairs units, working with Paul Duchscherer of Bradbury and Bradbury, Sutton combined a dark green trim with an elegant band of wallpaper to create a distinctive border just below the plate rail. In the dining rooms upstairs and downstairs, built-in china cabinets have been restored. Both kitchens have black and white checkered linoleum floors, and upstairs everything has been redone in basic white.

Work on the first and second floor units was basically completed sometime ago, and now Sutton is concentrating on converting the attic into a master suite for the second floor. Dormer windows have been added. Plans include three casement windows for the tower.

"There wasn't room enough for one large window," Sutton says, "plus curved glass is so expensive." Skylights have been opened up.

But Sutton acknowledges that it has not all been easy. A bathtub in one bathroom had never been hooked up to the sewer system, and water was draining into the ground below the house. Sparks from a plumber's welding torch smoldered for several days under the floorboards until the upstairs tenant became alarmed. "And the City has not been helpful," she says. Despite the fact that she intended to convert the attic to living space, the City required her to insulate the attic to bring it up to code. "We had to tear it all back out again when we went to start work up there," she says. "But basically they have been so bureaucratic and seemingly arbitrary. You would think they would want to encourage this kind of work more. You would think they could be more helpful."

Ultimately though, Sutton confesses, working on the building has given her pleasure. "I'm a preservationist at heart. I just wanted to bring this building back to what it once was."
The Friends of the San Francisco Arts Commission, a non-profit support organization, recently committed itself to developing and administering a monument restoration and maintenance program in San Francisco. Following the example of The Municipal Art Society of New York’s “Adopt-A-Monument” program, the Friends are seeking to interest private citizens—individuals, civic and neighborhood organizations, and businesses—in contributing to the cost of cleaning and conserving more than 60 monuments in San Francisco.

Civic art in the form of monuments and statues has been a part of urban life from earliest times. Monuments have served to inspire patriotism and civic pride, often by invoking the heroes of the past or the founders of the community. They may memorialize an important shared experience, such as a great military victory or a triumph over adversity. Other monuments seek to inspire respect for leaders; portray the symbols and icons of a community; and, not least, enrich the spirit by the mere presence of beauty in public places.

Romans of the golden age greatly valued civic art in their cities. Prominent citizens vied for the privilege of endowing monuments. Following the decline of urban life in early medieval Europe ancient monuments were neglected and sometimes overtly vandalized by Christians who rejected the symbols of a pagan past. The remarkable equestrian statue of the pagan emperor Marcus Aurelius now in the Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome probably survived because it was long thought to be a portrayal of Constantine, the first Christian emperor.

Even though city life regenerated in 13th century Europe, there was little in the way of monumental civic art, perhaps because the shared symbols of medieval civilization tended to be religious and were incorporated into the design of the great Gothic cathedrals. Only with the Renaissance in Italy and its idealization of the ancient world did Europe see the return of civic art such as the Romans understood it.

In the United States, it was the City Beautiful movement with its classical ideal of the city as art and a source of edification that gave impetus to civic monuments. In San Francisco, in 1904, a group of businessmen joined under the presidency of James D. Phelan to form the Association for the Improvement and Adornment of San Francisco. Their purpose was “to promote in every practical way the beautifying of the streets, public buildings, parks, squares, and places of San Francisco; to bring to the attention of the officials and the people of the city the best methods for instituting artistic municipal betterments...to make San Francisco a more agreeable city in which to live.”

The Burnham Plan, presented to the city in 1905, sought to embody that purpose. Among other things, it called for great tree-lined boulevards radiating from central plazas around the city which would have offered natural settings for monuments of civic art. However, in the swift reconstruction following the '06 calamity, business interests were in no mood to undertake the realignment of streets, cutting grand avenues diagonally across the grid, plotting new plazas, and altering property lines to realize the Burnham Plan. Market Street remained the city's main commercial artery, with its monuments in place.

As in the period before 1906, public art found refuge in Golden Gate and...
some other city parks, despite park superintendent John McLaren's determined resistance. A man who believed parks were for plants and people, McLaren instructed his gardeners to conceal every new statue in landscaping as soon as possible. Even though Civic Center offered a logical context for public monuments, relatively few have been placed there over the years.

Today, statues and monuments all over the city suffer from the silent but sure effects of modern urban pollution and demand attention. Two years ago, city funds were spent to restore the 1894 Pioneer Monument in Marshall Square, at Hyde and Market, which was built with a bequest from James Lick. Last year Glendale Federal gave $10,000, and the city provided $8,000 for the cleaning and conservation of Douglas Tilden's Admission Day, or Native Sons Monument, at Market, Montgomery and Post. Commissioned by Phelan in 1897, the monument commemorates California's entry into the Union. It stood at Mason, Turk and Market until moved to Golden Gate Park in 1948. It was returned to Market Street in 1977.

Recent fiscal problems make it unlikely that additional city funds will be allocated to conservation any time soon. The Friends of the San Francisco Arts Commission have stepped in. In a pilot project, the Friends have selected five monuments for priority restoration funding: Abraham Lincoln in Civic Center; Christopher Columbus on Telegraph Hill; and, in Washington Square, Ben Franklin, Man Drinking Water, and the Volunteer Firemen. Based on a survey of civic art in San Francisco done in 1986, a case report has been prepared on each monument which includes the artist's name, a history and description of the monument, the present condition, work needed to restore the monument, and the estimated cost.

A major work earmarked for restoration once the program is fully launched is Tilden's energetic Spanish-American War Monument at Market and Dolores. Dedicated in 1898 at

The typical bronze statue in San Francisco suffers from years of exposure to fog, pollution, bird droppings, dirt and grime. As a consequence, layers of corrosion cover the bronze surfaces. A certain amount of vandalism and abrasion from rubbing have added to the deterioration. It is hoped the pilot effort of The Friends of the San Francisco Arts Commission will call public attention to the problem of maintaining civic art and open the way to a full-scale promotional campaign to fund the monument program.

A city so conscious of its beauty and so proud of its history has double cause to care for the monuments which enhance the urban landscape and represent its past. Like the schools, the libraries, and the other public structures and institutions that are the patrimony of the citizens of San Francisco, civic art expresses civic pride, and that pride is set for burnishing.

Funding for New and Old Monuments

Two years ago, Gannett Outdoor Company entered into a long-term contract with the City of San Francisco to install bus shelters along the Muni lines. It was recently announced that 28 shelters would be installed as part of the current remake of Market Street. Under the terms of this phase of the program, Gannett will pay to the Arts Commission a minimum of $50,000 per year, increasing to $100,000 over the next 13 years. The funds will be spent at the discretion of the Commission to restore and maintain existing Market Street civic art and to fund new street art.
the structures, width of the streets, small and irregular lot sizes and variety of alleys recall those of 19th-century San Francisco. The physical continuity of the new Chinatown with its predecessor was a product of the combined economic, social and cultural factors that resulted in the rapid rebuilding of the area.

The majority of the buildings dating from the first decade of the 20th century are typical of the multi-story brick buildings constructed throughout the city at that time. Their tripartite composition, symmetrically placed openings and subtle surfacing of glazed brick express a bland classicism typical of one aspect of the Edwardian period.

The introduction in Chinatown of the "sinicized" decorative vocabulary was based on a loose interpretation of the pagoda expressed through the vertical succession of balconies, the illusion of tile roofs or cornices (often executed in galvanized iron) and occasionally miniature three-dimensional pagodas terminating the corners of the roofline.

The most visible examples of buildings originally incorporating these features are the Sing Fat Co. (1907) and the Sing Chong Co. (1908) buildings designed by T. Patterson Ross and W.W. Burgen at the southwest and northwest corners of Grant and California Streets, respectively.

In 1908, Look Tin Eli, general manager of the Sing Chong Bazaar, praised the new face of Chinatown. He described it as "so much more beautiful, artistic, and so much more emphatically Oriental, that the old Chinatown... is not worthy to be mentioned in the same breath." The San Francisco Real Estate Board also applauded the use of Oriental imagery, to make Chinatown "picturesque in appearance and attractive to tourists and visitors."

More frequently, the identifiable oriental imagery was incorporated in alterations of the 1910s and 1920s, just as exotic imagery from the Mediterranean, Ancient America and other distant sources was being incorporated into buildings elsewhere in the city.

Finally, the character of buildings in Chinatown also derives from the way they address the vital street life. Numerous buildings in Chinatown were commissioned by religious, social and family associations. Typically, these groups occupied the upper stories. Their dignified presence was expressed exter-

![Treatment of the top floor of many association buildings represents a unique style in San Francisco. (Photo by Kevin Levine)](image)

ally through the elaboration of the top floor balcony and formal ground floor entry, usually set-off from the commercial space by a marble surround and a classical pediment or tile canopy. Large plate glass windows, signage and other features plainly advertise the commercial enterprise occupying most of the ground floor. The remainder of the buildings were leased as office or residential space. This intensive land usage continues to be a significant feature of Chinatown.

The proposed Chinatown historic district centers on the Grant Avenue corridor between Bush and Broadway. The boundaries widen to encompass Stockton Street and the west side of Kearny between Sacramento and Jackson (please see map). The district is defined on the basis of historical patterns of Chinese settlement and the continuity of Chinese life within the area for over 100 years.

Both the "oriental bazaar" southern
section of Grant Avenue favored by visitors and the northern neighborhood-serving commercial section fall within the lines of the historic district. The stretch of Stockton Street included, from Sacramento to Pacific, is associated with many of the political, social, and cultural institutions of the Chinese community, such as the Chinese Six Companies, the Chung Wah Chinese language school, the Kong Chow Temple, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance, the Nationalist Party, St. Mary's School, the Chinese Methodist Episcopal Church and the Chinese Presbyterian Church.

Historic district designation does not limit the uses of property beyond what is already specified in zoning regulations for the area. Nor does Article 10, in its present form, restrict interior alterations or remodeling. Of course, any such changes must comply with existing building codes. In many instances, the California State Historic Building Code would allow more flexible code requirements for buildings in historic districts than the standard Uniform Building Code, which was written to apply to new construction. Furthermore, property in a historic district suffers no impediment to sale or inheritance as a result of the designation.

Exterior changes to a structure in a historic district that are visible from a public street or other public place are subject to review by the City Planning Commission, with the advice of the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board. Such changes include structural or design alterations; removal or replacement of decorative elements; replacement of windows; painting; and installation or removal of signs, awnings, lighting fixtures, or other appendages. In Chinatown, zoning regulations already include sign controls.

Review will determine whether or not proposed alterations damage or destroy valuable exterior architectural features or otherwise detract from the special character or special historical, architectural, or aesthetic value of the site or the district. Exterior changes must be compatible with the character of the historic district as described in the ordinance establishing that district. In the case of a building that is not compatible with the character of the historic district (a non-contributory building), "reasonable efforts" ought to be made in any proposed alteration to produce compatibility or at least not to introduce greater deviation.

If, upon review, a proposal for exterior changes is found not to have a significant negative impact on the district's character, the Department of City Planning will grant a Certificate of Appropriateness. Necessary building permits may then be issued, allowing the work to begin. If the Certificate is denied, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the case. In 1987, of 23 applications citywide, 22 were granted. On resubmission with changes, the 23rd application was also granted. The average time lapse between application and approval was 3 weeks.

Article 10 specifies that demolition of a contributory structure within a historic district may be delayed for up to one year. In any case, under present zoning rules, residential demolition is prohibited in Chinatown. While an entirely commercial structure may be demolished, present density and use restrictions in Chinatown make it unlikely that such a demolition and replacement construction would be economically feasible.

In sum, designation of a historic district does not freeze a neighborhood at one point in time and turn it into a museum. It is intended, rather, to assure that change will be orderly and compatible with the district's historic character. Furthermore, Article 10 of the Planning Code is no impediment to any needed seismic-retrofitting of existing unreinforced masonry structures in Chinatown, nor does it stand in the way of upgrading of interior spaces to improve the living or working environment.

No provision in the proposal for an historic district threatens the economic vitality of this commercially active neighborhood. On the contrary, the experience of other commercially-centered historic districts in San Francisco—Jackson Square and the Northeast Waterfront—tell the tale of economic revitalization.

One particular aspect of the Chinatown economy, tourism, can only benefit from the assured preservation of the distinctive character and sense of place that have always drawn visitors to the neighborhood. It is that sense of place, that quality that is more than the mere sum of the parts, more than the individual "landmark-worthy" structures, but rather the whole rich fabric of a community that historic district status can best preserve.

San Francisco's Chinatown has been the capital city of the Chinese people in America. Traditional festivals and celebrations draw large numbers of Chinese back to this "urban village." However, it is more than a colorful neighborhood, dear to its present and former residents. As the Historic District Case Report states, Chinatown's history is "rooted in San Francisco. In no other ethnic community of the City can be found the concentration of landmarks where the continuity of its history dates back to the Gold Rush. Its presence is a reflection of the political past of the City, the State and the Nation."
The First Reinforced Concrete Bridge Built in America Celebrates 100 Years

Children inspired the construction of America’s first reinforced concrete bridge—children and the curiosity of an immigrant engineer. This year that bridge, erected at the pedestrian entrance to Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, celebrates its 100th birthday.

Designed and built by Ernest L. Ransome, the great 19th-century proponent of reinforced concrete, the Lake Alvord Bridge serves as a whimsical portal through which children and adults enter Golden Gate Park by way of the Children’s Quarters. But it is also an important civil engineering landmark.

Ransome was an English-born engineer whose father had invented and patented several methods for producing Portland cement. In 1868, he founded the Pacific Stone Company in San Francisco, and over the next several decades experimented with various methods aimed at improving the tensile strength of concrete structures. In 1884, he patented the use of twisted steel bars for reinforcing concrete—the first use of what became known as rebar.

Through the late 1880s, Ransome designed and built a number of buildings which used reinforced concrete including the California Academy of Sciences building on Market Street, but his first bridge was the Lake Alvord Bridge in Golden Gate Park. The Lake Alvord Bridge was designed to allow carriage traffic to pass overhead on what is now Kezar Drive without disturbing the peace and quiet of pedestrians who entered the park from Stanyan and Haight Streets.

Sixty-four feet wide and 56 feet long, the bridge is constructed as a single arch. While the retaining walls that buttress the sides of the earth on each side and at each end of the bridge have cracked, the structure of the bridge itself has held up remarkably well. As a result, its construction methods remain somewhat of a mystery. Engineers who examined the bridge as part of the process of documenting it for national civil engineering landmark status deduced that Ransome probably employed his cold-twisted square steel reinforcing bars longitudinally near the arch.

Ironically, given that Ransome has been described as the man “who did more to advance the art of concrete construction than any other American builder,” Ransome, or perhaps architect G. W. Percy, disguised the face of the bridge to make it look as if it were sandstone. But lightheartedly, the builders used wire mesh to mould concrete stalactites in the passageway underneath the bridge’s deck to enhance the fantasy of passing through a magical cave into the wonder of the park and the Children’s Quarters. Some years ago, all the stalactites were broken off by vandals.

Ransome eventually grew frustrated with the San Francisco building community’s reluctance to accept concrete construction. He opened an office in Chicago and his firm, the Ransome Company, played a major role in the early development of steel reinforced concrete skyscrapers. Ransome, himself, became an evangelist for the new technology, taking to the lecture circuit in the 1890s to preach the virtues of concrete to architects and engineers around the country.

In California, it took the 1906 earthquake to prove the value of concrete as hundreds of masonry structures were severely damaged while the few reinforced concrete buildings that existed survived the quake and fire remarkably intact—including Ransome’s Academy of Sciences Building. By 1909, more than a decade after Ransome had left San Francisco, the city claimed to possess more than half of all the reinforced concrete structures in America, including, of course, the Lake Alvord Bridge in Golden Gate Park.

William Alvord was a park commissioner in the 1880s who personally donated money to improve the small lake which bears his name, at the Stanyan and Haight St. entrance to Golden Gate Park. (Photo by Jaroslav Polivka)

During the Depression, the United States Civil Works Administration invited suggestions for programs to relieve unemployment in the nation. The Interior Department offered a proposal that would employ architects and draftsmen to inventory the nation’s heritage of historic structures. Since the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began in 1933, it has documented nearly 20,000 structures through photos, drawings, and written data.

The National Park Service administers HABS with the professional advice of the AIA. The collection of survey data is maintained by the Library of Congress, which provides public access to the materials.

In 1975, HABS and the California Historical Society joined in co-sponsoring the publication of *California Architecture.* Now, after a 10-year study, the book as appeared under the byline of Sally Woodbridge, noted architectural historian and author. The book documents the sweep of California’s architectural diversity in over 1000 historically significant structures dating from 1769 to 1948. The listings are alphabetized by town, and each includes a statement of architectural details, date of origin, architect or builder’s name, and the structure’s present condition. Over 200 photographs and drawings accompany the text. Where appropriate, a statement of architectural or historic significance accompanies the entry. Each listing is identified by a HABS number, which should be used when consulting the records at the Library of Congress or ordering copies of individual case reports.

A particular strength of the book is Ms. Woodbridge’s introductory essay on the history of California architecture. It is interwoven with bits of cultural and social history and is wonderfully compressed while managing to avoid any hint of superficiality.

Nationwide, about 30 percent of the 20,000 structures surveyed have been destroyed since the HABS project began. This fact demonstrates the importance of the effort to document significant structures. If the buildings do not survive, the survey data will. That was the thinking when the project began in 1933. Today, as *California Architecture* makes clear, proper documentation is considered the first step to preservation. Buildings themselves become “documents,” which, James J. Rawls writes in a foreword, “tell us much about the values, lifestyles, and institutions of past generations of Californians.” It is the hope of this book to promote the appreciation and the study of California’s architectural heritage so that these “records” of our past will be preserved as readily as any archive of written records would be.

LET'S HAVE A PARTY!

The historic Haas-Lilienthal House is available for your special event. This unique landmark adds a touch of San Francisco history and tradition to your wedding, corporate party, buffet reception or sit-down dinner. Call Ruth Spitzler, Events Coordinator at Heritage, 441-3011, for rental information.

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Beautifully illustrated and formatted, the slimness of this 117-page hardbound book belies its thorough and scholarly treatment of the subject. *Victorian Exterior Decoration* could well serve two distinct audiences—one being the conscientious homeowner seeking practical, immediately applicable information; and the second, a student or scholar seeking information on the historical application of color to homes in the United States through 1920.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first, “How Authentic Must My Paint Scheme Be?” is a thought-provoking discussion about “levels” of authenticity coupled with practical methodology for researching and achieving any desired level. The spectrum of authenticity presented ranges from the most exact historical reproduction (scientific level) to a non-historic use of chroma or brilliant colors typical of a trend popular in the 1960’s and 70’s (“boutique” or “painted lady”). The most commonly sought-after level of authenticity lies somewhere between and is characterized by the use of historic colors appropriate for the age and style of a building, without necessarily being the original colors.

Chapter two, “Colorful Victorians, 1840-1900” is a detailed historical review of the four major color phases of the 19th century—late Federal and Neo-classical (to c. 1840); Gothic and Italianate Revival, or early Victorian (c. 1840-1870); high Victorian (c. 1870-1890); and Colonial Revival (c. 1890-1920). It covers tastes in architectural style and decoration, and discusses the impact of many technological innovations in the paint industry.

“Selecting Colors for Victorian Buildings,” chapter three, is genuinely user-friendly. The authors layout a step-by-step process of color selection for each of the major elements of a house. They systematically relate historic shades to what colors are currently available on the market, and this information is indispensable.

The authors devote 65 percent of the entire text to the last chapter, “Color Placement on Victorian Buildings.” This is another section of extremely well-documented information, laden with a dazzling array of plates depicting detailed reproductions of historic architectural color renderings; plates from historic color sample books; original black and white photo reproductions; and an excellent collection of color photographs illustrating contemporary applications of historic color schemes.

Finally, the appendix, “Paint Failure and Surface Preparation,” is a compilation of substantial information sufficient to serve as a general guide for a handy do-it-yourselfer, or for a homeowner evaluating painters’ recommendations and deciding on a procedure.

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**THE FOUNDATION FOR SAN FRANCISCO’S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE**
HERITAGE'S 1989
ARCHITECTURAL AWARDS
PROGRAM

Heritage is pleased to announce its first juried Architectural Awards Program. This project has arisen from Heritage’s desire to acknowledge and honor excellence in the following areas: restoration, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, building upgrade, and new construction in historic settings.

As part of Heritage’s advocacy program, we are committed to a proactive effort to encourage innovation, creativity and a standard of excellence, and we believe the Architectural Awards Program will help accomplish this goal.

This program seeks the submission of projects by those professionally involved in residential and commercial architecture and development, as well as those personally involved in building remodeling or neighborhood conservation. The application forms, available in June, will request a narrative on the building project as well as photographs documenting the structure. The deadline for project submissions is September 1. The panel of five jury members, now being selected to include representatives from the architecture community, architectural historians, critics and preservation experts, will then meet to review the submissions and determine the winning projects in each category.

Through the architectural awards program, Heritage hopes to publicize innovative preservation work and increase the public’s awareness of its contribution to the city’s “built environment.” Heritage also proposes to foster public discussion and inquiry into what constitutes excellence in restoration, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse and new construction in historic districts.

On October 24, Heritage will sponsor an architectural awards luncheon. Winning projects will be featured in a slide program, and awards will be presented.

If you would like to submit an entry or know of an outstanding, innovative restoration project, please call Christy Kent at 441-3000.

CHINATOWN WALKS

Every Saturday, beginning June 24 and running through October 28, Heritage guides will lead tours through San Francisco’s historic Chinatown. Tours will meet at the Commodore Stockton School, 950 Clay Street, at 10 am. Be sure to tell your out-of-town visitors this summer. This is a great way to learn about this fascinating San Francisco neighborhood. The charge is $3.00 per person. Reservations are not necessary.

SUMMER WALKS

Heritage will offer a series of three special walks this year during the summer months. July 8 features the Inner Richmond District. As Heritage prepares to survey the neighborhood, the tour will focus public attention on the rich architectural legacy and the conservation issues of the Inner Richmond.

On August 26, Heritage guides will conduct tours of historic Russian Hill, often described as one of America’s finest urban neighborhoods. The route includes a sampling of architectural styles, such as Bay Area Shingle, Mission/Colonial Revival, and one of San Francisco’s two remaining octagon houses.

As plans for the 6th Army’s move from the Presidio progress, the public discussion on the specific uses of this 1400-acre site intensifies. In the interest of educating the public to the historic and architectural resources of the Presidio, Heritage will offer a tour of the post on September 23.

Heritage members will receive further information and reservation forms in the mail by the first week of June.
**CALENDAR**

**JUNE**

Cirque de Soirée
One Bush Street
June 9 at 7:30 pm.
(See page 7)

Treasure Island Museum Tour
Oakland Heritage Alliance
June 10 at 1:30 pm
For information call 763-9218.

Fort Mason Tour
June 10 and 24 at 11 am
Free (call to reserve space)
441-5706.

Frank Lloyd Wright Butterfly-Wing
Bridge: A Southern Crossing for San Francisco Bay
Oakland Museum, through July 2
For information call 273-3842.

Twelfth Annual San Francisco
Decorator Showcase
Willenborg House 2898 Broadway
May 13 through June 4
For ticket information call 771-4272.

**JULY**

Luther Burbank Home and Gardens
Santa Rosa
Docent tours Wednesday-Sunday
Every half hour, 10 am-3:30 pm
For information call (707) 576-5115.

Chinatown Walking Tour
Every Saturday, June 24 through
October 28 at 10 am
Meet at 950 Clay St.
$3 per person

Inner Richmond Walk
July 8.
(See page 15)

Fort Mason Tour
July 8 and 22 at 11 am
Free (call to reserve space)
441-5706.

**AUGUST**

First Church of Christ, Scientist
1700 Franklin Street
Open for informal tours and
archival exhibit in celebration
of the Church’s centennial.
August 5 and 6. Free.
Call 673-3544 for information.

Russian Hill Walk
August 26
(See page 15.)

Coming in September:
Conference on the Art and
Architecture of the Golden Gate
International Exposition
September 16, on Treasure Island
For information call Anne Schnoebelen
524-2015.

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**NOTE: The photo of Mission Presbyterian Church on page 7 of the February 1989 Newsletter, supplied by Victor Miller of the North Mission News, ought to have been credited to photographer James Binder of San Francisco.**

HERITAGE EVENTS ARE LISTED IN BOLD TYPE

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