San Francisco’s Hobart Building: Honoring 100 Years

Constructed in 1914, Willis Polk’s extraordinary scheme for the Hobart Building revealed the architect’s talent for erecting singular designs on idiosyncratic sites. Though controversial for its time, the City Landmark stands today as a testament to San Francisco’s illustrious spirit. STORY ON PAGE 6
Upon its completion in 1914, the Hobart Building was the tallest building in San Francisco, a soaring symbol of the city’s recovery from the devastation of the 1906 earthquake and fire. It is also said to be Willis Polk’s favorite among his many San Francisco masterworks. Heritage’s 1978 Downtown Survey description observes, “The complex of blocks, angles, ornamental walls, and plane surfaces which unite under the tower is just as elegant a union of beauty and necessity as San Francisco ever received.”

In 2014, the Hobart Preservation Foundation was established to hold, preserve, and maintain this venerable City Landmark in perpetuity. We can think of no better gift to the city to mark the building’s centennial. Heritage is proud to celebrate the Hobart Building with this issue of Heritage News, including stunning photography by Jeremy Blakeslee. The building also will be the highlight of our Annual Membership Meeting on June 14.

The Hobart Building rose during a wave of construction aimed to showcase the resilience and ingenuity of “The City That Knows How” in anticipation of the Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915. On the eve of the PPIE centennial, Heritage saluted the Palace of Fine Arts at the 40th annual Soirée on May 10. It was a spectacular prelude to next year’s celebration. We were honored that so many who were instrumental in the Campaign for the Palace of Fine Arts were able to join us as members of the Honorary Committee.

The “Legacy Bars & Restaurants” initiative has reached its own century milestone, with 100 businesses now certified. A new foldout pocket guide was unveiled on June 2 at Cha Cha/Original McCarthy’s, one of the new inductees. We are thrilled that the project continues to win accolades, including listing in 7x7 magazine’s ”Best of San Francisco” issue this month.

Looking ahead, Heritage is excited to offer a particularly eclectic and adventuresome season of programming. On July 17, renowned conguero and music historian John Santos will kick off the 2014 Lecture Series (page 8) with a first-hand account of the history of Latin Jazz in San Francisco, held in conjunction with the Citywide Latino Context Study. And be sure to mark your calendars for an extra-special City Arts & Lectures program on October 27 with Jack Dorsey, co-founder of Twitter and founder of Square, and Paul Goldberger, Vanity Fair architectural critic, exploring the tech industry’s influence on urban design and historic preservation in the Bay Area. All proceeds benefit San Francisco Heritage and the Haas-Lilienthal House.
Recognizing 100 Legacy Bars & Restaurants
Heritage Celebrates Milestone in Trailblazing Initiative

A year and a half after the initiative was first introduced, Heritage announced the final formal round of “Legacy Bars & Restaurants” inductees on Monday, June 2 during a happy hour gathering at Cha Cha Cha/Original McCarthy’s in the Mission District. The latest unveiling brings the total number of certified Legacy establishments to 100, a milestone in Heritage’s pioneering efforts to foster public awareness of San Francisco’s longstanding cultural institutions. To learn more about the last round of 25 inductees, please visit sfheritage.org/legacy.

In conjunction with the announcement, Heritage released a printed pocket guide featuring all 100 Legacy establishments. Designed by Chen Design Associates, the visually rich foldout map will be distributed free of charge at participating businesses, libraries, hotels, and at special events; a downloadable PDF is also available at sfheritage.org. The Legacy map was made possible with generous support from Cyrus Noble, a San Francisco bourbon brand introduced by distilled-spirits wholesaler Haas Brothers in 1871.

Since its launch in January 2013, Legacy Bars & Restaurants has demonstrated the important role that heritage businesses play in sustaining neighborhood vitality, engaging preservationists and communities at large to promote the economic and cultural value of historic places. As a model for recognizing sites that may not be eligible for formal landmark designation, the initiative has also guided Heritage’s efforts to create new tools for protecting and interpreting places of intangible cultural significance, including the forthcoming policy paper, “Sustaining San Francisco’s Living History: Strategies for Conserving Cultural Heritage Assets.”

Beginning this summer, eligible businesses will be able to apply for certification as Legacy establishments; an application will be available on Heritage’s website in coming weeks. Future plans include a book on San Francisco’s historic bars and restaurants, due late 2015, in partnership with Heyday and author J.K. Dineen. Heritage thanks Andrea Dumovich, Stephen Hannibal, Tom Spaulding, and Arianna Urban for their recent contributions to Legacy Bars & Restaurants.

Scavenger Hunt Electrifies

On Saturday, March 22, two dozen intrepid neon enthusiasts competed in Heritage’s first-ever photo scavenger hunt, a fast-paced search to uncover vintage neon in Union Square. Participants raced to solve 17 riddles, cleverly prepared by Education Committee members Katherine Petrin and Shayne Watson, and snapped photos of neon signs. Photographer Jeremy Brooks, who aided in the planning of the event, offered tips for shooting neon before the hunt commenced. A sequel to Heritage’s popular 2013 neon lecture, the scavenger hunt helped raise awareness for San Francisco’s “enviable” concentration of historic neon signs. To learn more about the city’s neon, please visit sfneon.blogspot.com. Special thanks to all of our event volunteers for their time and energy, and to Lefty O’Doul’s for their generous hospitality.
Conserving the New Deal

Initiatives at Coit Tower and the Mother’s Building Bring Attention to the City’s Historic Murals

It is no secret that San Francisco is home to one of the best collections of New Deal public art in the country. President Franklin Roosevelt initiated the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) in the 1930s as part of his overall agenda to boost economic activity and create jobs during the Great Depression. Among the public art projects funded by the PWAP are the murals at Coit Tower, completed in 1933. Spurred by the passage of a ballot measure introduced by the Protect Coit Tower Committee in 2012, the much-anticipated restoration of the tower and its frescoes was completed in May 2014 by a team of conservators that included Anne Rosenthal, who led the 1989 mural restoration, and staff at ARG Conservation Services. The work, which consisted of both structural repairs and conservation of the iconic murals, was made possible with $1.7 million in funding from a voter-approved bond. After being closed to the public for over six months, the tower reopened to great fanfare at a ceremony on May 14.

A lesser-known New Deal mural located inside the 1925 Mother’s Building at the San Francisco Zoo may also receive attention thanks to the perseverance of a local community advocate, Richard Rothman. Dedicated to the mother of the Zoo’s founder, Herbert Fleishhacker, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the building was originally envisioned as a resting station for visiting mothers and children. From 1978 to 2002, it was repurposed as a gift shop. Artists Dorothy Pucinelli and Dorothy Forbes painted the egg tempera mural of Noah’s Ark that adorns the building’s interior. Pucinelli and Forbes belonged to the same artists’ collective that realized the murals at Coit Tower, although they did not contribute to that project.

In addition to Pucinelli and Forbes’s artwork, the Bruton sisters—artists Margaret, Ester, and Helen—embellished the exterior with narrative mosaic panels. At the time of their creation, this ancient art form was undergoing a renaissance in San Francisco. The mosaics at the Mother’s Building depict St. Francis of Assisi blessing an animal gathering, as well as scenes of people and animals in harmony.

Like Coit Tower, the Mother’s Building was not originally designed to house murals. The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department (RPD), its owner, shuttered the building in 2002 due to severe damage caused by weather exposure. Both the structure and its murals, the latter owned by the San Francisco Arts Commission, are in great need of repair. When local mural advocate and Heritage member Richard Rothman brought the issue to the attention of City staff and the preservation community, the RPD agreed to pursue funding to conserve the building and its murals.

The Department and the Arts Commission recently submitted an application to the City’s Historic Preservation Fund Committee for a grant to conduct a conditions assessment and to devise a treatment plan for the building and its murals. Although additional monies would need to be secured for the actual rehabilitation and conservation work, the assessment and preservation plan are critical first steps.
California State Historic Tax Credit Legislation

Bill Would Offer 25% Tax Credit to Qualifying Properties

In recognition of the connection between historic preservation and economic growth, California’s new Speaker of the Assembly, Toni Atkins (D-San Diego), has introduced the Economic Development and State Historic Tax Credit Act (AB 1999) for the 2014 legislative session. The main proponent of the bill is the California Historic Tax Credit Coalition, led by the California Preservation Foundation (CPF) and the American Institute of Architects, California Council (AIACC), and including local preservation organizations, chambers of commerce, and development interests across the state.

The proposed state tax credit would incentivize rehabilitation of historic properties that are already listed or eligible for listing on the California Register of Historic Resources or National Register of Historic Places. As currently drafted, the program would offer owners of qualifying buildings a 25% state income tax credit that could be combined with the existing 20% federal rehabilitation tax credit. An additional 5% credit would be available for projects that meet special needs, such as those involving local, state, or federal surplus properties, low-income housing, or located in Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) areas. Unlike its federal counterpart, both income-producing and non-income-producing buildings would be eligible to participate.

Thirty-five states currently offer state rehabilitation tax credit programs, all of which more than recoup tax losses in new sales tax and income tax revenues. In California, AB 1999 would spur new job growth in construction and the building industry, enhance state tax revenues through increased economic activity, promote sustainable building practices, stimulate heritage tourism, and help to preserve the state’s historic and architectural resources. Additionally, the bill contains a project analysis component that would calculate benefits to the state. If passed, the program would begin in January 2015 and sunset in December 2024.

The State Assembly unanimously passed AB 1999 on June 3, sending the bill to the Senate floor. A fundraiser to support the coalition’s legislative advocacy was held in Oakland on February 27, after the City of Oakland formally endorsed the bill. Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP, Page & Turnbull, and CPF co-hosted a luncheon in San Francisco on March 28 to introduce the proposed program to the local development community. Heritage and CPF will host another gathering for members of the preservation community at the Haas-Lilienthal House this summer. For more information about the bill or making a donation to the campaign, please visit californiapreservation.org.

The federal rehabilitation tax credit has helped fund numerous preservation projects in San Francisco, including the Veterans Commons (2012) and the Exploratorium (2013). The proposed legislation would further incentivize the rehabilitation of historic properties in California.
Illis Polk’s Hobart Building, constructed in 1914 and one of the most distinguished visual landmarks in San Francisco’s Market Street District, is celebrating its centennial this year. Lauded for its sculptural terra cotta exterior and handcrafted brass and Italian marble interior, the building stands apart from its contemporaries due to its idiosyncratic shape and bold painted signs on its east and west façades. Designated City Landmark No. 162 in 1983 for its architectural merit, distinct setting, and high integrity, this Baroque and Renaissance-style icon exemplifies the vision and workmanship of master architect Willis Polk (1867-1924).

**Hobart Estate Company Commissions Willis Polk**

Preeminent mining and milling speculator Walter S. Hobart (1840-1892) founded the Hobart Estate Company that commissioned both the original 1886 version and the 1914 iteration of the Hobart Building. The former, built in the Victorian Gothic style, was so severely damaged during the 1906 earthquake and fire that the company deemed it best to demolish and rebuild. In 1913, they hired esteemed San Francisco architect Willis Polk for the job.
As one of the most influential architects of his era, Polk amassed an impressive portfolio that includes numerous designated City Landmarks, including the Merchants Exchange Building (1904), Hallidie Building (1917), and Beach Chalet (1925), among many others. At the time he was hired to design the new Hobart Building, Polk was immersed in planning the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition as the chair of its architectural committee.

When the new Hobart Building debuted in 1914, it housed several subsidiaries of the Hobart Estate Company, including an ore mining and lumber company and a machinery company focused on developing new logging and mining technologies. Today, the building is home to numerous professional offices and banks.

**A Landmark is Born**

The project site for the original Hobart Building was selected by Walter Hobart, who wanted direct access to the vehicular traffic and passersby on Second Street. Second Street served as the primary transportation artery for affluent residents of Rincon Hill. As a result, Polk was charged with orienting the building so that it could be viewed from both Market and Second streets. Further complicating the design challenge was the angle at which Market Street intersected Second. Moreover, the adjacent Wells Fargo Building compelled Polk to design the western elevation so that it was flush with its neighbor. The Wells Fargo Building was later demolished, leaving behind a wall void of ornamentation or fenestration, save for the sign painted at the top that reads, “HOBART BUILDING.” What emerged from the peculiarities of the site was a structure unlike any other.

The final product was a steel-framed commercial office building with reinforced concrete floors and terra cotta bricks encasing the exterior walls. Characterized by its three-part composition, the Hobart Building contains a three-story base, nine-story shaft, and eight-story tower on the eastern side of the building visible from both Market and Second streets. The roof is clad in green, red, and black terra cotta tile. Other exterior features include double-hung wood and steel-framed windows and a round chimney flute with bronze-colored terra cotta creasing and finials. Its machinery, smokestacks, steam exhaust, and vent pipes have either been concealed or imaginatively integrated into the architecture of the building. An ornate granite entryway provides the transition into the building interior, which reveals a lobby of rose marble floors and walls with black marble trim, marble stairs, a large chandelier, bronze elevator doors, and a mail chute with bronze and glass detailing.

**Erected in Record Time**

The Hobart Building became enveloped in controversy after it was completed in a mere eleven months by being among the first projects to utilize a planned, scheduled building construction program. The public speculated about the unusually short timetable and, subsequently, rumors started to circulate about a careless and hasty construction process.

In reality, however, great care was exercised during its construction. All phases were methodically orchestrated, with safety heavily emphasized. Working conditions proved challenging due to high winds, with the potential of raining liquid concrete onto adjoining streets. To prevent this, workers erected canvas coverings to protect the surrounding areas and, as a result, far fewer accidents were reported during construction of the Hobart Building than other buildings.

**Hobart Preservation Foundation**

The Hobart Preservation Foundation was established on the building’s 2014 centennial specifically to hold, preserve, and maintain the Hobart Building as a structure of historical and architectural merit. The trustees of the Niantic Charitable Trust created the Foundation to ensure the long-term sustainability of the building. In order to fulfill its mission, the Foundation collects and preserves documents, artifacts, and other ephemera relating to the building’s history; installs interpretive displays with these materials in the lobbies to educate the public about the building’s history and architect Willis Polk; and provides access to the building to historical societies and academic institutions for tours and study. The Foundation has also commissioned a comprehensive historic structures report, prepared by Page & Turnbull, to guide future maintenance and capital improvement expenditures.

Join Heritage for a behind-the-scenes look at the Hobart Building at our Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, June 14! More information about the event is available at sfheritage.org. ■
2014 Lecture Series

Each year, Heritage’s Lecture Series explores the breadth of San Francisco’s cultural inheritance in historic settings throughout the city. From July through November, lectures are held in the evenings at 6:00 p.m. Series passes are available for $40 for Heritage members and $60 for the general public. Individual lecture tickets are $10 for members and students and $15 for the public. For additional details and to buy tickets, visit sfheritage.org or contact Laura Dominguez at 415-441-3000 x22. Special thanks to our 2014 Lecture Series sponsors: California Office of Historic Preservation, Cody Anderson Wasney, Martin Building Company, Plant Construction Company, L.P., San Francisco Waterfront Partners, and TEF.

JULY 17
Latin Jazz in the San Francisco Bay Area: A Retrospective
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION (FLICKR)

August 21
Reel San Francisco Stories: On Location Movies and Preservation
CHRISTOPHER POLLOCK

OCTOBER 16
Recovering from Depression: The New Deal’s Contributions to San Francisco
ED BIERMAN (FLICKR)

NOVEMBER 6
Alice Ross Carey Memorial Lecture
TUNNELBUG (FLICKR)

Grammy award nominee John Santos will lead guests on a rhythmic exploration of the roots and preservation of Latin Jazz in the Bay Area. Hosted at the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts.

Author Christopher Pollock will examine the unexpected role of on-location movies in recording and conserving historic places in San Francisco. Hosted at the Roxie Theater.

Dr. Gray Brechin (The Living New Deal) will delve into the history of San Francisco’s Depression-era architecture and public art. Hosted at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Dr. Anthea Hartig (California Historical Society) will discuss the legacy of pioneering preservation architect Alice Ross Carey, including projects such as the Palace of Fine Arts and San Francisco City Hall. Hosted at the Metropolitan Club.

The Magic City: The Golden Gate International Exposition
SEPTEMBER 18

Authors Therese Poletti and Anne Schnoebel will explore the history and cultural legacy of the 1939 World’s Fair on Treasure Island. Hosted by Perkins+Will at 2 Bryant Street in partnership with Heritage YP.
Welcome John Adams

Heritage is pleased to announce that John Adams has joined our staff as the new full-time administrative and volunteer coordinator. John holds degrees in history from the University of Michigan and San Francisco State University and brings a wealth of experience to the position.

Originally from Michigan, John developed a passion for preservation, education, and public engagement as a volunteer docent on Alcatraz Island. Upon receiving his Master’s degree, he worked as the volunteer and interpretation coordinator at the Western Railway Museum in Solano County. During his time there, he helped lead the team that curated “Traction Labs,” an interactive exhibit about past and future sustainable energy and electric transportation. John was also responsible for training and supervising a corps of more than 200 volunteers and managed the museum’s school programs. In addition, he ran the museum’s membership program and assisted the Executive Director with fundraising and facilities management.

In his new position with Heritage, John oversees Haas-Lilienthal House tours, docent training, walking tours, Heritage Hikes, and other volunteer opportunities. He also provides support to membership and development programs. His skills were on full display at Heritage’s recent Soirée, where he calmly deployed a platoon of volunteers to cover all aspects of the event.

Docent Profile: Rajni Gagnon

Since 2011, docent Rajni Gagnon has connected with her adopted hometown by leading inquisitive visitors on tours of the 1886 Haas-Lilienthal House. A lover of history and architecture, she exposes tourgoers to the social rituals and design values of the Victorian era with stories about the extended Haas and Lilienthal families.

“My favorite room is the water closet,” Rajni revealed. “In those days, men and women traveled from house to house on social calls in the afternoons, drinking tea along the way. It was impolite to ask to use the bathroom, so visitors excused themselves ‘to put water on their faces’ instead.”

Rajni has found that the Haas-Lilienthal House often inspires guests to share personal memories of living in a Victorian-era residence. “I hope that the tour experience motivates people to research their own homes and family histories,” she said, “and leaves them with a greater appreciation for the importance of historic preservation.”

A former massage therapist, Rajni is aiming to become a full-time tour guide in San Francisco. Her most memorable visitor? A friend of Florine Bransten, whose father, William Haas, built the House. “She had such vivid recollections of visiting the family here!”
Soirée 2014

Guests Enjoy a Magical Evening at the Palace of Fine Arts

On Saturday, May 10, nearly 500 guests celebrated the extraordinary vision of architect Bernard Maybeck and his iconic Palace of Fine Arts during Heritage’s 40th annual Soirée.

Those in attendance enjoyed cocktails and fine dining by McCall’s, lively casino gaming, and dancing to David Hardiman’s 19-piece All-Star Orchestra. Vocalists Janice Maxie Reid and Abbie Rhone delighted guests with sounds reminiscent of Cab Calloway, Josephine Baker, and Nat King Cole, brought to life with performances by the Marilyn Izdebski Dancers. A superb silent auction and raffle offered fine wines, restaurants, and a spectacular trip to Washington D.C. A Cyrus Noble bourbon tasting bar paid tribute to our Legacy Bars & Restaurants initiative. Guests reveled into the night, proclaiming Soirée 2014 a spectacular success!

Our sincere thanks to our Honorary Committee Co-Chairs, Linda Jo Fitz and Stewart Morton, and the following underwriters, donors, and volunteers for their generous support of Soirée 2014:

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(Drew Altizer Photography)
(L-R) Bill Russell-Shapiro, Honorary Committee member Alice Russell-Shapiro, Heritage Executive Director Mike Buhler, and Heritage Board President David Wessel.

(L-R) Stewart Morton and Linda Jo Fitz, Honorary Committee Co-Chairs, with Jane and David Hartley.
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Top: Honorary Committee members Donny and Janie Friend.
Middle: Emcee Christopher Caen and Melissa Griffin Caen.
Bottom: Heather Ryan and Honorary Committee member Karl Hasz.
Thursday, August 21, 6 PM
Lecture: Reel San Francisco Stories
Roxie Theater
3117 16th Street

June 2014

SATURDAY, JUN 7, 10:30 AM
Latino Historic Context Statement Community Meeting
City College of San Francisco
1125 Valencia Street

SATURDAY, JUN 14, 10 AM
SFH Annual Membership Meeting Hobart Building
582 Market Street

July 2014

THURSDAY, JUL 17, 6 PM
Lecture: Latin Jazz in the Bay Area Mission Cultural Center
2868 Mission Street

September 2014

THURSDAY, SEPT 18, 6 PM
Lecture: Treasure Island’s GGIE Perkins+Will
2 Bryant Street, Suite 300

SATURDAY, SEPT 27
Oliver Ranch Tour Additional details to be announced

October 2014

THURSDAY, OCT 16, 6 PM
Lecture: New Deal San Francisco SF Art Institute
800 Chestnut Street

SUNDAY, OCT 19, 11 AM
Free Community Day Haas-Lilienthal House

November 2014

THURSDAY, NOV 6, 6 PM
Alice Ross Carey Memorial Lecture Metropolitan Club
640 Sutter Street

December 2014

SUNDAY, DEC 7, 12 PM
Holiday Open House Haas-Lilienthal House

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