Neighborhood Preservation in Action

The effort to save 4038 17th Street began months ago with a lone voice that grew into a chorus by the time the Planning Commission heard the case. That singular voice belongs to Judith Hoyem, owner of the house next door, who came to Heritage seeking our help in the cause. With that help and with guidance from others seasoned in preservation battles, Ms. Hoyem—although she “had never done anything like this before”—mounted an effective campaign of public information and advocacy that included organizing neighborhood support and gathering 900 signatures on a petition.

On April 6th, weeks of preparation culminated in the Planning Commission hearing of her request for discretionary review of the project that required demolition of the small Stick Style house and construction of a new three-unit building. It was the last item on a long agenda that day.

The commissioners listened patiently and attentively to the statements of more than 30 people. Speakers addressed the historical and contextual significance of the building, which is part of a cluster of 19th century residences, its importance to the neighborhood, and the need to honor the priority planning policies of voter-approved Proposition M, including preservation of neighborhood character.

Heritage asked the commission specifically to consider the house’s link with Ms. Hoyem’s residence next door, recently designated a San Francisco Landmark. Both were built by a John McCormick for his family, and they reflect the man’s advancing fortunes, moving up from the humble older home (1888) to the grand new Queen Anne residence (1902).

This social phenomenon occurred many times in neighborhoods around the city. Typically, the older house was moved to the back of the lot, yielding the prime spot to an upscale residence. Because of this practice, these earlier houses and the history they reflect often remain hidden from the public. The pairing of 4038 and 4040, side-by-side, offers the unusual opportunity to view the houses representing the two stages of the family’s—and the neighborhood’s—history.

Speakers also questioned the project sponsor’s contention that rehabilitation of the historic house would be economically infeasible. They argued that many of the rehab costs the developer cited appeared to be the costs of deferred maintenance. The owner-developer acquired the house in 1971 and lived in it until 1986. He said he had an agreement with the tenant, who then moved in, not to raise the rent in return for her taking care of the house. Even so, the upkeep of the property legally remains the owner’s responsibility, and when he saw it was suffering from neglect, he should have taken remedial action.

Recognizing the pressing need for more housing units in the city and the impracticality of seeking a pure restoration of 4038 17th Street as a single-family home, advocates for the little house sought a solution that would combine preservation with new construction. Heritage first proposed this approach to the owner at a site meeting in September last year.

The project sponsor finally did present a preservation scheme, in March, in a meeting Heritage hosted at the Haas-Lilienthal House. Present were the owner, his attorney, his architect, Judith Hoyem, and representatives of Victorian Alliance, Castro Area Planning & Action, Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association, Friends of 1800 Market, Twin Peaks East Neighborhood Association and Eureka Valley Planning Association.

—continued on page 11, column 1
Architectural Fragments

From July 22 through October 17, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art will present *Experiments: Recent Acquisitions of the Permanent Collection of Architecture and Design*. The exhibition highlights over 100 pieces of furniture, architectural works, design objects and graphic design from the museum’s permanent collection, including recently acquired digital projects. It demonstrates how architects and designers are extending the experiments of contemporary art into the realm of architecture and design.

On March 4, the California Preservation Foundation (CPF) celebrated its 25th anniversary at Heritage’s Haas-Lilienthal House. The organization began with informal meetings of people interested in building a preservation movement in the state. The nascent group incorporated formally in 1976 as Californians for Preservation Action, and two years later became a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization under its present name, dedicated to promoting preservation throughout the state. Looking to the future, CPF’s strategic plan is to increase the size and diversity of its membership, strengthen its financial structure and become a more effective advocate for preservation.

Mark the calendar and start making plans now: this year’s National Preservation Conference will take place in Los Angeles, October 31 through November 5. The theme is “Saving America’s Treasures in the 21st Century.” For preliminary program information, call 800-944-6847; send an e-mail request to conference@nthp.org; or visit the National Trust’s website: www.nationaltrust.org

The 8th annual Summer Program in Historic Preservation at the University of Southern California School of Architecture runs from July 17 through August 2. The fifteen days of classes examine the history and philosophy of the preservation movement. For information contact Jody Cherry, 213-740-2420; e-mail: cherry@usc.edu

Park Place Press has announced publication of *I. Magnin & Co: A California Legacy*. The book, which features both the San Francisco and the Los Angeles stores, offers more than 100 archival photos and images, as well as interviews with store personnel and famous patrons. For more information, call 714-590-1711.

The San Francisco History Association, which recently lost its meeting space in the Cannery, has found a new home. The organization’s monthly programs, open to the public, now take place at the Ebenezer Lutheran Church, 678 Portola Drive, near Woodside Avenue. Muni bus lines 36, 44 and 52, which connect with Muni Metro at Forest Hill Station, and the 48, all stop nearby. For program information call 415-750-9986.

In another change of venue, the American Decorative Arts Forum of Northern California now offers its monthly lectures at the Florence Gould Theatre, California Palace of the Legion of Honor. Admission to the lectures, which are on the second Tuesday of every month, at 8 pm, is $7. The September lecture is co-sponsored by the Commonwealth Club and will take place at their facility at 595 Market Street. For information about the Forum and its programs, call 415-431-6930.

San Francisco Architectural Heritage

A non-profit member-supported organization dedicated to the preservation and adaptive reuse of architecturally and historically significant buildings in San Francisco, since 1971.

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Heritage welcomes unsolicited articles and will consider them for publication.

Heritage News is published six times a year by San Francisco Architectural Heritage

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Jewish Museum Presents Reuse Plan for Substation

Heritage has indicated its support for the efforts of the Jewish Museum San Francisco toward adaptive use of the Jessie Street Substation.

On first appearance, the design approach may seem to be a drastic departure from Secretary of the Interior’s Standards. However, it does successfully combine historic preservation with a new function in a highly original solution.

The architect has taken advantage of the singular opportunity that the historic building’s orientation and physical setting offer to weave new construction into existing historic fabric. Until redevelopment of the area, the substation sat on a blind alley concealed amid taller buildings. Most of the building’s powerful front elevation is now open to view from Mission Street and Yerba Buena Gardens across a space that will become a new plaza. Framed by historic St. Patrick’s Church, a new high-rise taking form behind the substation, and the proposed Mexican Museum, the landmark building lends itself to the integration of contemporary and historic forms.

Plans, still at the schematic stage, indicate that 90 percent of the principal character-defining south façade will remain intact, and proposed exterior additions will not significantly alter the perception or understanding of the 1909 composition of the substation. The intervention of the non-orthogonal modern form (clad in metal) into the orthogonal historic brick form will be only partially visible above the parapet of the substation and behind St. Patrick’s, allowing the experience of the historic building’s exterior volume and character to remain strong.

Inside, upon entering the main door, the public will be able to experience the original soaring volume of the power station in the front portion of the structure. New construction that redefines the remaining space will clearly differentiate the historic from the new use. Partial retention of historic walls, trusses, skylights, hoists, cranes and gantries will recall the building’s industrial past.

The present scheme is more sensitive to preservation than the first one the Jewish Museum offered nearly two years ago. However, we will want to see more detailed plans for converting several lower level windows to doorways on the south elevation and to ensure the selection of appropriate conservation methods for the brick walls and decorative terra cotta elements. In concept it is an exciting and imaginative adaptive use that is without precedent and, therefore, likely to stir up controversy among some preservationists. While that controversy surfaced in the deliberations of the Heritage Issues Committee, the weight of opinion was decidedly in favor of the proposal.

The design for the Jewish Museum San Francisco is a joint venture of Daniel Libeskind with Gordon H. Chong & Partners. Architectural Resources Group is preservation architect.

Bush Street Synagogue Update

Periodically, Heritage receives inquiries from concerned members regarding the status of the Bush Street Synagogue. Although the Redevelopment Agency selected a developer for the historic temple and the adjoining vacant corner lot at Bush and Laguna in September 1996, the landmark building still awaits rehabilitation.

According to the Agency, the developer, the Japanese American Religious Federation Assisted Living Facility, Inc., has diligently pursued predevelopment requirements. These include a geotechnical and soils investigation, documentation of the historic building’s existing conditions, fundraising and securing an operator for the residential facility.

What is holding the project up is the recent cost estimate that has come in “well over” the original estimate provided more than a year ago. Anyone who has undertaken even a modest project recently will recognize this condition as a symptom of the booming local construction market.

The developer has undertaken value engineering in an effort to reduce construction costs and anticipates acquisition of the property from the Redevelopment Agency by October 25, 2000, at the latest. The project, which includes rehabilitation of the synagogue and new construction on the vacant site to provide 54 assisted living residential units for the frail elderly, should then be able to move forward.
Design Would Preserve The Jewish Community Center

A dedicated volunteer effort has produced a preservation alternative for the Jewish Community Center. Leadership of the JCC proposes complete demolition of the historic facility at California and Presidio, designed by Arthur Brown, Jr., for a new building.

The alternative, generated in a series of design charrettes, would save the portions of the existing center that are architecturally most significant. Demolition of a woodframe structure (a later addition) adjoining the original complex on the east side and partial demolition at the rear of the main building would allow new construction that would be integrated with the historic building.

The preservation scheme accommodates about 90 percent of the JCC’s program for the site. In the matter of parking, which the JCC has maintained all along stood in the way of a feasible preservation solution, the alternative would accommodate up 190 spaces, compared with the 181 spaces in the proposed new facility.

Heritage participated in some of the design sessions, and we have assisted the effort by bearing the cost of printing presentation material on the preservation scheme for distribution to the JCC board members and contributors.

Heritage’s Issues Committee enthusiastically endorsed the proposal.

Key people who lent their professional expertise to preparation of the preservation alternative include Arnie Lerner, Lucia Bogatay, Milton Marks, III, Zachary Nathan, Ef Hirsch, Peter Tardos, Rebecca Schnier, Alan Levy, Susan Brael and Terry Salpeter.

Demolition Threatens Historic Sunset District Building

The owner of 1984 Great Highway, a church congregation, plans its demolition and replacement with a new church structure. The existing building is not only architecturally significant (it appears in the Here Today survey), it has some historical significance, as well.

When most of the Sunset District was still a “great sand waste,” as it appears on early maps, a few intrepid characters ventured to build out by the ocean. One of these was the chief engineer of the San Francisco Fire Department, Dennis T. Sullivan. The shingle residence he had built at what is now 1984 Great Highway, in 1905, probably served as a weekend get-away or vacation home, since, as chief, he enjoyed the use of an official residence at 412 Bush Street; that was where Chief Sullivan suffered fatal injuries in the first moments after the great 1906 earthquake struck the city.

His widow, Nellie Sullivan, took up residence at the Great Highway house after the earthquake and remained there until 1922, when she sold to then chief engineer, Thomas R. Murphy. It appears he and his family also used it as a second home until his death in 1931, after which his widow and son lived there. In 1937, Mrs. Murphy sold to Rudolph (a musician, not a fireman, according to city directories) and Gertrude Logar.

A change of use occurred in 1947, when the 8th Church of Christ, Scientist, acquired the building. The Salvation Army continued that use when they bought the property about 1991, up until the time they vacated the building two years ago.

Chief Sullivan’s house was no ordinary beach cottage, such as survives in several examples in the neighborhood of 1984 Great Highway. It was a rather eccentric expression of the shingle style in favor at the time of its construction. Bill Kostura (who provided much of the historical information for this item) describes it as, “one of the most striking and avant-garde examples of the shingle style in San Francisco.”

The broad hipped roof flattens slightly and forms a wide overhang. The walls flare outward to meet the roof. Essentially a single story over a high basement that originally was mostly open, at least in front, the house lacked only a wide veranda to complete the impression of a colonial bungalow on the subcontinent.

—continued on page 11, column 2
Demolitions Threaten Character of San Francisco’s Neighborhoods

The struggle to save older single family houses is intensifying throughout the city. There has been an apparently successful effort to save 4038 17th Street (See page 1), while Potrero Hill neighbors have staved off a second attempt to demolish a house at 407 Connecticut Street. Others are fighting the battle in the outer Sunset, Laurel Heights and elsewhere.

Heritage staff have been reviewing demolition permit applications in the field for the past 13 years. Fortunately, we have not often found reason to contest the proposed demolitions. The subjects may have lost architectural integrity to alterations over time, or they may not be significant to begin with. A few are beyond rehabilitation. However, in the last two years we have encountered more houses proposed for demolition that appear to be in good shape and that have been consistently well cared for. While most are not distinguished by high architectural style, they are often good examples of vernacular architecture from the early 20th century that define the character of our neighborhoods.

Sometimes we encounter an individual house that is part of a group of houses of similar design built at the same time, whose demolition will adversely affect the entire group and increase the vulnerability of the others. Not infrequently, the demolition candidate has a nice front garden. In nearly every instance, the house is the sort we all remember from the neighborhoods we grew up in, the older houses that gave character and diversity to San Francisco’s dense urban streetscape, the places we miss when they are gone.

Illustrated here are some subjects of demolition permit applications we have reviewed during the past several months.
The San Francisco Swedish Society marks its 125th anniversary this year. Its roots go back a bit further, to 1873, and the formation of an organization called The Original Orpheus Singing Club. After that group changed its name to the Singing Society Svea, it held its first recorded monthly meeting, April 12, 1875. According to the 1925 official history, “from this date it might be truthfully stated dates our present Swedish Society.”

At the same time, the Svea Society, like so many ethnic associations in San Francisco, took steps to provide its members with sick benefits. Bylaws adopted June 14, 1875, stated: “It shall be the purpose and object of this Society to assist the sick and bury its deceased members, to work for the maintenance of a choir, and to give literary and social entertainments.” For a time, it appears there were two classes of members: the singers and the ordinary members, who probably joined for the social activities and to take advantage of the benefits.

The name “Svea Society” did not survive long. One attempt to change it, to “The Swedish Union,” failed, but at the meeting of September 6, 1875, the membership abandoned Svea in favor of “The Swedish Society of San Francisco.” Membership at that time may have been between 40 and 60.

The Society lost virtually all its records in 1906, and only a minute book covering meetings through February 14, 1876, survived to tell the group’s early history. Interviews with older members, in 1911, aided the reconstruction of the succeeding 30 years of history up to the earthquake and fire.

The Society’s first meetings took place in a building on Montgomery Street, on the present site of the Mills Building. In the years that followed, City Directories show the organization at a variety of downtown locations. In April 1906, their meeting place, Skandia Hall, on City Hall Avenue, fell to the flames on the first day of the fire that followed the great earthquake. With it, the conflagration consumed all the Society’s papers and other property, including its cherished library, begun in 1877 with a handsome $500 appropriation to purchase books.

The Swedish Lutheran Church, at 15th and Dolores, which itself had barely escaped the fire, generously offered a temporary home to the Society. The disaster focused the members’ attention on having a permanent home. The Society’s official history states, “For many years it had been a latent wish, an unrealized ambition; but catastrophe and adversity had brought the question to the fore; it was to be now or never.”

With the generous assistance of a member of the Swedish community who did not even belong to the society, and insurance money, paid in full by a Swedish company, the Society began its recovery. It purchased a 50 x 100-foot parcel on the north side of Market Street near Sanchez. An existing structure occupied the lot, but the building committee found it was not adaptable to their needs. They sold it, and the new owner moved it to another location.

The Society engaged the Swedish-born San Francisco architect August Nordin, who developed plans and specifications for the new building. Laying of the cornerstone took place in “an impressive ceremony” amid “gala festivities,” and dedication of the completed structure, designated “The Swedish American Hall,” occurred on December 22, 1907.

During the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, in 1915, the hall received many Swedish visitors. “Banquets and festivities of all kinds were frequent,” according to the golden jubilee history, “and it might not be too boastful to say that all citizens of San Francisco of Swedish birth or descent, whether members of the Swedish Society or not, pointed with a great amount of pride to the beautiful building at 2174 Market Street. . . .”

That pride has remained strong, as is evident in the care the Swedish Society
of San Francisco has taken of its historic home for all its 92 years. Except for altered groundfloor storefronts and the addition of a fire escape, the exterior retains a high level of architectural integrity. Recent exterior painting and replacement of cedar shingles have renewed its appearance. Long-range plans include remodeling the storefronts to an appearance more compatible with the historic façade. Inside, although some alterations and modernization have occurred, the hall’s principal ceremonial and public spaces remain in original condition.

**August Nordin, Architect**

There is some inconsistency in the biographical information on the architect of the Swedish American Hall, August Nordin, who was born in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1869. A search of city directories between 1892 and 1899 shows an August Nordin (variants include Norden, Nordan, Nicolaus A. Nordin and N. August Nordin) listed as “carpenter” or “contractor.” On the other hand, the entry in the Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased), whose source of information is given as Robert Nordin, says he did not leave for the United States until 1895, by which time he had received “a thorough training in architecture.”

The 1900 city directory lists August Nordin as an architect, with offices at 1926 Market Street. That corresponds closely with the biographical entry, which says he opened an office in the city in 1899. By 1908, Nordin had set up practice in the Mills Building, where he remained until his death in 1936.

August Nordin’s obituary in The Architect and Engineer (January 1936) attributes to him an output of more than 300 structures. These include single-family residences, flats and apartment houses. Among the notable examples are houses at 199 Carl Street (1900) and 435 Cabrillo (1912), flats at 1080-82 and 1086-88 Fulton (1902), the Whiteside Apartments (1912) at 150 Franklin, the Windeler Apartments (1915) at 424 Ellis, the Cristobol Apartments (1913) at 750 O’Farrell, and the Altamont Hotel (1912) at 3048 16th Street. He also designed the building at Hyde and Beach that houses the famed Buena Vista Cafe (1911).

Nordin was also architect for the

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**Scandinavian Enclave**

Early in the 20th century, the Swedish Society was one of a cluster of institutions (mostly churches) serving the Scandinavian community that centered on the Duboce Triangle. Among them were the following, concentrated in the neighborhood west of Mission Street, north of 18th Street, east of Castro and south of Duboce:

**St. Ansgar Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church**
Church near Duboce

**First Swedish Baptist Church**
17th and Dearborn

**First Swedish Methodist Episcopal Church**
Guerrero at Camp

**Norwegian Lutheran Church**
Dolores near 17th

**Swedish Lutheran Ebenezer Church**
15th and Dolores

**Swedish Mission Tabernacle**
Dolores at Dorland

**Swedish Singing Society**
Duboce near Church

**Norwegian Singing Society**
Church and Belcher

**Swedish Home for Girls**
17th Street between Church and Sanchez

**Norwegian & Danish Methodist Episcopal Church**
17th Street near Mission
Getting It Right: New Design in an Existing Residential Context

In the fall of 1998, Heritage held a symposium on contextual design. A distinguished panel discussed how to achieve good design that responds to a given historic context. The appropriate massing, scale and materials constitute what may be called the gross details of contextual design; the finer details come in the decision how to respond to historic ornamental features in a way that is neither merely imitative nor post-modern fakery.

We illustrate here two fairly recent—and quite different—examples of good contextual design, one in Pacific Heights and one in “the Avenues.” The latter is noteworthy because it occurs in a district that has witnessed many examples of incompatible new construction in the last 30 years.

This typical two-story-over-garage residence (photo below) avoids the mistakes of the so-called “Richmond Specials”: no amber fiberglass panels in the lower portions of the windows, no low quality brick or aggregate fascia and no unfinished aluminum window frames. A modest-size garage opening that does not overwhelm the entry, a subtle rhythmic articulation suggestive of bay windows that gives visual interest but does not dominate the façade, and nicely detailed stucco work make this building a good addition to the neighborhood. Neither high architecture nor low burlesque, it is clearly new but also consistent with earlier design patterns in this part of the city.

In the Pacific Heights example, in the row of eight houses shown here (photo right), the last four on the left are new infill construction on a formerly vacant parcel. Seen at this angle from the older end of the row, the entire group would likely appear to the casual observer to be historic. The fact that three of the four older buildings had modern garage additions helps the newer buildings “to pass” for old.

Key to the compatibility of new with old here is a consistency of massing, scale and set-back. A closer look reveals clear differences between the new and the old buildings, and among the four newer ones (two have gables, two—not the same two—have two-story bay windows), reminding us that the four older homes are not identical, one to another, either (not even considering the garage additions).

When long-time architecture critic for the Chronicle, Allan Temko, spoke several years back in a Heritage lecture series, he observed that what good contextual design comes down to is simple: it is just good design, period. And that aptly describes the two examples illustrated here.

...Not

In our opinion, new construction does not always make an appropriate response to context. A recently completed building, shown here, replaced a modest shingle-clad wood frame house.

Although not an exceptional piece of architecture, the woodsy character of the older building did suit the neighborhood, across from Buena Vista Park, as did its scale and massing. By comparison, the new building appears as an unwelcome intruder.

A modern or contemporary architectural statement in this setting would be appropriate, if expressed in materials and on a scale compatible with the neighborhood.
Soirée 2000

The last time Heritage partied at City Hall, the historic Beaux-Arts monument was looking less than her best. That was Soirée 1994, and the grand old building was showing not only the effects of years of deferred maintenance, but the consequences of the 1989 earthquake, as well. City Hall closed not long after for a four-year rehabilitation and restoration that since its completion in January 1999 has drawn wide-spread praise and garnered a raft of awards. The night of April 22, Heritage had its first opportunity to pay homage to the renewed building. Some 500 attendees wined, dined, danced, participated in charitable gaming and took home some attractive silent auction prizes. Rutz Cellars provided the wine. McCall Associates catered the sit-down dinner and the dessert buffet later in the evening. The Richard Olsen Orchestra supplied the dance music.

Our thanks to the following for their generous support of Soirée 2000

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Palo Alto-Stanford Heritage
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Pardee Home Museum
Oakland
Tours Call 510-444-2187

Strybing Arboretum
Golden Gate Park, San Francisco
Tours Call 415-661-1316, ext. 312

Continuing Heritage Events

Haas-Lilienthal House Tours
Sundays 11 am to 4:00 pm
Wednesdays 12 noon to 3:00 pm. $5

Pacific Heights Walking Tour
Sundays 12:30 pm. $5

All regular Heritage tours are free to Heritage members and their guests

Group Tours by Arrangement
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For information about current Heritage events
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Heritage programs supported in part by City of San Francisco Grants for the Arts.

June

June 28, 12:30 PM
SPUR Forum: Managing Public/Private Partnerships. 312 Sutter St., Ste 500 Call 415-781-8726; web: www.spur.org

June 29, 12:30 PM
SPUR Forum: End of the Western Addition Redevelopment Project 312 Sutter St., Ste 500 Call 415-781-8726; web: www.spur.org

Through July 30
Exhibition: Germaine Krull: Photographer of Modernity SFMOMA. Call 415-357-4000, or visit www.sfmoma.org

Through September 3

July

July 11, 8:00 PM
Lecture: The Decorative Arts of Charles & Henry Greene
American Decorative Arts Forum Call 415-431-6930

July 11, 8:00 PM
Lecture: Ben Swig: Dealing from the Heart.
SF Historical Society 3333 California St. Call 415-775-1111; web: www.sfhistory.org

July 13, 7:00 PM

July 22 - October 17
Exhibition: Experiments: Recent Acquisitions of the Permanent Collection of Architecture and Design (See page 2) Museum of Modern Art Call 415-357-4000, or visit www.sfmoma.org

July 27, 7:00 PM
Lecture by Nancy Olmstead: Sunken Ships in San Francisco Bay. 678 Portola Drive S.F History Assoc. Call 415-750-9986

August

August 8, 8:00 PM

August 8, 8:00 PM
Lecture by Mae Silver: The Sixth Star: California Women’s Political History, 1868-1915. SF Historical Society 3333 California St. Call 415-775-1111; web: www.sfhistory.org

August 24, 7:00 PM
Lecture by Mae Silver: The Sixth Star: California Women’s Political History, 1868-1915. 678 Portola Drive S.F History Assoc. Call 415-750-9986

September

September 10
Alameda Legacy Home Tour
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society. Call 510-523-5907

September 12, 8:00 PM
Lecture: The Decorative Arts and Craftsman, 1640-1830
American Decorative Arts Forum Call 415-431-6930
This step was decisive. Although the owner did not prefer the solution and remained firm in his determination to replace the old house with new construction, his architect had demonstrated that an alternative to demolition was possible. Most present at the meeting acknowledged the breakthrough, and Heritage countered the owner’s resistance by saying the problems he had with the design were not insurmountable.

Nonetheless, he showed no willingness to compromise right up to the end of the hearing. It is true, he had from the beginning offered the building for relocation or to store its façade offsite for several years, in the event a location for reconstruction might become available. Neither option would be sound preservation practice.

When the last word was heard from the floor, the commissioners lost no time in reaching a decision. They voted unanimously not to allow demolition of 4038 17th Street and directed the owner to return with a project that retains “a substantial portion” of the existing building. The planning director indicated that the department would look favorably on any application for a variance that might be necessary to achieve a project combining partial preservation with new construction and providing the three residential units the owner is seeking.

Although the building has undergone some unsympathetic alterations, it retains much of its character and could easily be rehabilitated. At some recent point in time, smooth-sawn shingles, interrupted by a wood course between the two levels, replaced the original rough-hewn shingles that formed a continuous skin. A brick stairway now leads to the main floor, where the second of five original semicircular windows across the front has been converted to an entrance. Metal frames have replaced the center sections of the tripartite windows on both the front and rear elevations. Of the two balconies that ran on either side of the house, only the one on the south side remains; a build-out of the north wall eliminated the other.

The neighborhood organization, Sunset-Parkside Education and Action Committee (SPEAK) has expressed interest in gaining recognition for the significance of 1984 Great Highway through designation as a city landmark or listing on the National or the California Register. The group hopes to enlist the owners’ support in this effort and is offering to assist the church in whatever way it can to achieve the preservation and rehabilitation of the building in such a way that meets the congregation’s programmatic needs.

New Docent Class Graduates

Congratulations to the new Heritage Docent Class of Spring Training 2000. At an evening reception on April 27, the president of Heritage’s board of directors, Bruce D. Judd, and the executive director, Charles Edwin Chase, extended words of welcome. Other Heritage staff and members of the board, as well as many veteran docents and guides, were on hand to greet the new group of volunteers and offer encouragement. The graduates quickly entered the ranks and are already giving tours of the Haas-Lilienthal House.

Vikki Bay
Louie Brown
Al Ciabattoni
Steven Clark
Donna Downey
Tracey Harris
Danielle Holmes
Vern Horner
Stuart Johnson
Bonny Lin
Mimi Manning
Julia Mason
Anita Max
Liz Schoff
JoAnn Stewart
Johanna Street
Dorothea Weidinger

Not too Early to sign up: Heritage Planning Docent Training in Fall 2000

Planning is already underway to recruit a second docent class this year. The training, to be offered in the fall, emphasizes the social and architectural history of San Francisco, with particular focus on the Victorian era, the Haas and Lilienthal families and the Pacific Heights neighborhood.

This is a great volunteer opportunity, if you are interested in learning about the history and architecture of San Francisco and sharing that knowledge with the thousands who visit the Haas-Lilienthal House each year. The docents are an integral part of Heritage’s work, which seeks to promote the principles and practice of historic architectural preservation in San Francisco.

As a graduate of the training program, you will have the chance to give guided tours of the historic 1886 Haas-Lilienthal House or to lead two-hour walking tours of the house’s Pacific Heights neighborhood. In addition, you can participate in our elementary school program, Heritage Hikes, and help to form a new generation of preservation-minded San Franciscans.

Become part of this select corps of volunteers and make your contribution to preservation in San Francisco. For more information, call Lyla Max, 415-441-3000, ext. 11; or e-mail: lmax@sfheritage.org.
In This Issue

1 Neighborhood Preservation in Action
2 Demolitions Threaten Character of San Francisco's Neighborhoods
5 Swedish Society Continues Proud Stewardship of its Historic Home
6 August Nordin, Architect
7 Soirée 2000
8 Getting It Right: New Design in an Existing Residential Context

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