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STORY ON PAGE 4

GETTING TO KNOW THE PARKSIDE

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I wrote the first version of this column on March 1st. Life has taken a sharp turn since then, and the world feels like a different place.

Like the rest of you, my family is confined to our home. We’re trying to use humor and gratitude to navigate this increased level of intimacy in our daily lives. I’m grateful that the Y has online exercise classes, and that we’ll still get to see A.C.T.’s production of Toni Stone, albeit from home. Nonprofit organizations everywhere are rising to the challenge with creative solutions to keep patrons engaged and their organizations alive. Keep an eye out for virtual Haas-Lilienthal House tours and interesting ways to engage with us on social media and our website: sfheritage.org

In the prior version of this column, I encouraged you to attend Soirée, Heritage’s signature annual fundraiser. After canceling the event, we were moved beyond measure by the number of sponsors and individual supporters who requested that we keep their Soirée payments as a way of supporting Heritage during these challenging times. Look for a complete list of Soirée donors and vendors on page 9 of this newsletter. We are deeply grateful.

I could not be more pleased about Heritage’s new program, Heritage in the Neighborhoods, described in the cover story. Rooted in the recognition that preservation is a grassroots undertaking, this program will support the efforts of residents, neighborhood associations, nonprofits, and more in saving local history. The results will be mutually beneficial; Strengthening our connections with the city’s neighborhoods will inform our work and lead to greater preservation of resources citywide. Check out the cover story on the Parkside and the Excelsior piece on our website.

The Heritage board and staff are excited to welcome Adam Swig to our board. Read about Adam’s commitment to uniting culture, entertainment, and connection through his nonprofit, Value Culture. Adam brings tremendous energy and a wealth of new ideas to Heritage. Welcome Adam!

Last but not least, Heritage is on the cusp of its 50th anniversary in 2021. We would not be where we are today without the legions of activists, supporters, board members, and staff who endeavored to keep San Francisco Heritage relevant and effective all these years. Later this year, we’ll outline our plans for this momentous occasion and ask for your help in preparing for the next 50 years. Stay with us.
Dr. Bernardo D. Gonzalez III Dentistry

BY KERRI YOUNG

Dr. Bernardo D. Gonzalez III Dentistry at 2720 24th Street is more than an important bilingual dental practice; it’s a significant place for San Francisco’s Latin Rock history. Dr. Gonzalez, aka “Dr. Rock,” is a fixture of the city’s local music scene. He served as manager of the pioneering Latin Rock group Malo, and organized the annual benefit “Voices of Latin Rock” for ten years. He opened his successful dental practice in 1985 in the same location where his father sold shoes a quarter century earlier.

Amid the Chicxn movement, San Francisco’s Latin Rock scene exploded in the 1960s and produced legendary bands Santana, Malo, Sapo, and Azteca. San Francisco’s Caribbean, Central American, South American, and Mexican roots produced a unique sound that combined musical styles and instruments from all over the Americas, and fused Latin beats with blues, funk, jazz, psychedelic, and rock in a new way. Harkening back to his long history with the movement, Dr. Rock proudly displays Latin Rock memorabilia on the walls of his dental office, many of which feature events that he helped organize. In 2019, he exhibited his collection at Brava Theater on 24th Street.

Dr. Rock’s many years in the music business began with volunteering for his mentor, the late-great rock empresario Bill Graham. From these early beginnings he was hired as a member of the Bill Graham Presents security staff, “The Blue Coats,” and worked in historic city venues such as The Warfield and Cow Palace until opening his dental practice in 1985. These experiences provided hands-on training for Dr. Rock in the music business, invaluable for his years managing Malo and producing the “Voices of Latin Rock” Autism Awareness Benefit concerts. The latter were in honor of his son, Alex, with proceeds distributed through the namesake Alex Speaks Foundation to Bay Area schools working with autism.

In the 1980s and 2000s Dr. Rock led the production of Mission District cultural events such as Cinco De Mayo, Día De Los Muertos, and Carnaval, and has also served in important community-leadership positions at the 24th Street Merchants Association and Mission Economic Cultural Association (MECA). He also started a community Little League, a scholarship program, and helped fund a Mission mural that became "the Mount Rushmore of 24th Street."

Working with Gabriella Lozano of the Calle 24 Cultural District, Heritage recently helped complete and submit a Legacy Business Registry application for Dr. Rock’s dental practice, documenting his community service in the Mission and his wider contributions to Latin Rock history in the city. Over the years, his dental practice has served as a gathering place for much of his music-industry work; he fondly reminisced about times in the 1980s when members of Malo would return to the office for parties after their performances.

He continues to run and operate a bilingual dental practice primarily serving the Mission Latinx community. His clientele spans three generations, with some of his longtime patients now bringing in their own children. Dr. Rock stressed the importance of providing services in Spanish to the community that he serves, and he vows to remain a bilingual practice. The community "has really appreciated coming to me over the years," he said to us.

Dr. Rock continues to be involved with the Mission community, and as an elder he is a paramount source of local history and knowledge to future generations. Agencies and nonprofits value his advice, and at 65 years of age he is not showing signs of slowing down. When asked how he manages so much, he replied: “If you can think it, dream it, then you can make it happen.”

(LEFT) HERITAGE PHOTO, (RIGHT) COURTESY OF DR. BERNARDO D. GONZALEZ III

Bernardo Gonzalez, AKA “Dr. Rock,” displays memorabilia from his career in Latin Rock on the walls of his dental office.
Cover Story

Parkside District Heritage
BY WOODY LABOUNTY

On January 30, 2020, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to allow the demolition of one of the Parkside District’s first houses. While acknowledged as a potential historic resource by the Planning Department, it was also determined by preservation staff to have lost physical integrity and therefore be ineligible for review under the California Environmental Quality Act.

A neighborhood petition to save the house, letters of protest, and testimony at the Planning Commission hearing (in which speakers were allotted just 60 seconds each) were barely acknowledged by the commissioners. One neighbor pointed out that the project did nothing to alleviate the affordability crisis in the city, as the 1907 house—affordable to its roommate occupants—would be replaced by three market-rate units. Commissioner Joel Koppel opened consideration of the matter after public comment by addressing the affordability question: “We're also in dire need of middle class, middle income housing and this is what we're looking at as [...] the best solution.”

Neighbors are appealing the decision, but the lost, and frankly one-sided, battle at the Planning Commission to save 1420 Taraval Street clearly illustrated the threats to Parkside District architecture and potential historic resources in the neighborhood. A general unfamiliarity with the district’s character, history, and streetscape was evident among the commissioners during the hearing. West side neighborhoods are targeted for increased densification and potential historic resources are threatened by a long-standing assumption that the Parkside is a landscape entirely made of featureless “cookie-cutter” stucco houses. By selecting the Parkside as one of our first targets for the new Heritage in the Neighborhoods program, we hope to prove this assumption incorrect.

Out of the Dunes

The rectilinear street grid of the Parkside and greater Sunset District was defined by an 1868 map commissioned after Congress granted jurisdiction of the western half of the peninsula to the City of San Francisco. The “Outside Lands” map grid liberally reserved space for parks (including Golden Gate Park) and other public uses. Parkside Square and McCoppin Park in the Parkside both have their origins in the 1868 map, but both the squares and streets of the neighborhood existed only on paper through the nineteenth century. The Central Ocean Road, an early 1860s toll road between the Haight and Lake Merced, needed to chart a winding path to skirt scrubby hills and towering sand dunes, belying the orderly promise of the Outside Lands street plan.

In 1905, a group of investors led by William Crocker filed a plat map to develop a residential section of the Outside Lands that ran from the diagonal western boundary of an old Mexican land grant

The house at 1420 Taraval Street in 2019, the last of five similar houses built on the block (top); an architect’s rendering of the proposed mixed-use building that would replace it (bottom).
(Rancho San Miguel) to 33rd Avenue and from Quintara Street on the north to modern-day Sloat Boulevard on the south. The plan of the Parkside Realty Company involved major infrastructure creation, including the grading of streets and installation of water and sewer lines, as well as securing a new streetcar franchise. The investment amounted to $1,000,000, a number which appeared frequently in advertisements. The corporation boldly named the new residential district “Parkside,” despite Golden Gate Park being a mile and a half away, and preposterously marketed the foggy landscape of sand dunes and scrub as “ten degrees warmer than any other part of the city.” Ads published as far away as Los Angeles promised that Parkside would be “the Champs Elysee [sic] of San Francisco.”

The project was delayed by the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, and then by Parkside Realty Company’s entanglement in post-quake court trials exposing corruption in city government. (The corporation admitted to securing its streetcar franchise with bribes.) Development finally began in 1907. While the strategy had always been to attract “working people” to the Parkside, the imperative to retain blue-collar workers for rebuilding after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire pushed the Parkside Realty Company to build on speculation 60 small cottages in 1907-08. These 800-square-foot houses seeded blocks from the corner of 26th Avenue and Ulloa Street southwest around a large sand dune to 32nd Avenue and Vicente Street. The path of the cottages followed part of the old Central Ocean Road, a line perhaps chosen because of easier grading. The simple frame houses with essentially identical floor plans had six different facade treatments.

1 Los Angeles Times, April 18, 1906, 5
2 Advertisement on April 8, 1906, reported: “Grading contract nearly finished. Water contract 50 per cent finished. Macadamizing contract now being let. Sewer contract now being let. Sowing grass seed contract, 20% finished. Curbing contract 50% finished.”
Each one-story cottage offered two bedrooms, one bath, “front and rear porches, open fireplace, [was] wired for electricity, piped for gas, [with] large closets, ornamental mantel,” and a tree in the front yard. Five-to-seven year mortgages were offered. Most of the cottages still stand, although many have been unsympathetically remodeled and raised for garages over the past 113 years.

The Parkside tract officially “opened” in June 1908, with the company’s involvement in the city graft trials playing counterpoint to boosterish advertisements. By June 28, 1908, the company reported twenty of its houses sold in just ten days, with prices ranging from $3,000 to $3,600, and proposed building plans for some fifty other residences by lot owners. The long-awaited streetcar line on 20th Avenue began service in July, and the company claimed five thousand people rode it in the first week of operation, with fifteen families moving into the district during the same time.1 In September 1908, the company advertised that cottages could be acquired for $250 down and $35 a month.2

In addition to capitalists and real estate brokers, the Parkside Realty Company’s Board of Directors included builder Hugh Keenan. The house currently targeted for demolition at 1420 Taraval was one of five Keenan built on either side of the block between 24th and 25th Avenues. Of the group, only 1420, and 1409 Taraval across the street, remain. From 1907 until the start of the first World War, some 120 Arts-and-Crafts-style houses, both large and humble, were built in addition to the 60 small cottages the company erected in 1907-1908. While 200 houses may sound like a respectable number for a decade of work, the Parkside development had more than 4,000 buildable lots.

**Mediterranean Exuberance**

Significant in-fill of the neighborhood did not occur until the 1920s. Period Revival facade treatments, popular throughout the city in the 1920s and 1930s, became the Parkside’s dominant style. The level of detail and quality in the rows built by Parkside Realty, the Lang Company, and smaller-scale builders are acknowledged by many architectural historians as superior to most houses of the Sunset District. Shaped and curved entry stairs, storybook turrets, expressive moldings, and florid Baroque window surrounds are all found in the blocks between Taraval Street and Stern Grove.

While not approaching the heights of unity and style found in other neighborhood shopping corridors such as Chestnut Street or West Portal Avenue, Taraval Street has some stand-out storefront buildings, especially at the intersection of 21st Avenue, where a Mediterranean-style commercial block retains high integrity across from an individual building with a highly-elaborated Art Deco parapet.

Removed from other settled sections of the Sunset District during its primary development, the Parkside established a sense

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1 Advertisement, San Francisco Chronicle, July 10, 1908, 16.
2 Advertisement, San Francisco Examiner, September 19, 1908, 7.
of individual identity. From the beginning it had strong community groups, neighborhood newspapers, merchant associations, and annual May Day celebrations known across the city. A queen and her entire court were selected each year from Parkside children. The pageant drew mayors and elected officials from the 1930s to its end in the 1970s.

Institutional Roots

The remoteness and large open spaces of the Parkside, which may have been a check to early prospective house buyers, attracted institutions looking to move from the city’s urban core to more bucolic settings. The Presbyterian Orphanage relocated to a new “Edgewood” campus centered on Vicente Street and 28th Avenue, in 1924. In 1928, the Junior League of San Francisco opened its Pinehaven Emergency Lodge on 30th Avenue and Esolta Way, to serve at-risk children needing short-term accommodation while awaiting placement in orphanages and foster homes. Pinehaven became Pinehurst after its transfer to the Salvation Army in 1946, and continues a mission of service to this day as a temporary home for women enrolled in alcohol and substance-abuse programs. Both buildings retain a high degree of architectural integrity almost a century after construction.

The Parkside Branch Library on Taraval Street was the first in a series of 1950s system branches designed to resemble the openness and coziness of a suburban ranch-style home, complete with fireplaces, large plate-glass windows, and patios. While other branches designed by Appleton & Woldorf from this era have been designated with City Landmark status, their first and most realized version in the Parkside so far has not.

Parkside Heritage Month is coming in July! Stay tuned for more information as we work on kicking off our work in the neighborhood.

For up-to-date news, visit www.sfheritage.org/heritage-in-the-neighorhoods and follow us on social media.
On October 17, 1989, the San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board of the San Francisco Department of City Planning was in the middle of a survey of the city’s Unreinforced Masonry Buildings (UMBs). The vulnerability of such structures in a seismically active city was made manifest at 5:04 p.m. that day when the Loma Prieta Earthquake struck. Within a matter of seconds, brick and stone buildings across the city, including significant warehouses, churches, and theatres, were structurally compromised.

Heritage worked hard during the recovery to stop needless demolitions of damaged buildings, including UMBs, by convincing city officials to bring in engineers, architectural historians, and other experts to assess the condition of potentially historic structures before official determinations. Multiple battles to save damaged buildings of merit went on in the months after the earthquake. Preservation victories included the tower of the Jackson Brewing Company building at 11th Street and Folsom Street. The demolition of 235 Front Street and the nearby Marine Building at the northeast corner of Front Street and California Street, numbered among the disappointing losses. Meanwhile, the surveying and evaluation of unreinforced masonry buildings continued with renewed urgency.

Findings from the UMB study were presented to the Board of Supervisors in July 1992 and it quickly passed an ordinance directing owners of 2,007 properties across the city to apply for permits either to seismically strengthen or demolish their vulnerable buildings. A bond measure to create a loan fund for these affected building owners was also put forward by the Board—a move Heritage supported, concerned that without financial incentives, owners of potentially historic structures would default to demolition. Over the next decade, a number of former automobile garages and neighborhood churches were lost, but many more UMBs with historic merit were saved from demolition by inclusion in the survey’s evaluation and inventory.

The UMB survey continues to inform planning decisions, and aids research today. The Randolph Apartments on the corner of London Street and Russia Avenue, recognized during our Heritage in the Neighborhoods program as a standout Excelsior District building, was evaluated as part of the UMB Architectural/Historical Survey. Built in 1915, the stately three-story building at 35 Russia Avenue was formerly the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Company’s Randolph Exchange. The company’s bell logo is depicted in the original tile entryway. Before switching to dial-operation in 1946, some 5,000 local area telephone lines were managed manually by staff inside the building and at a peak hour—for the Randolph Exchange in the mid-1940s this was between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m.—an average of 3,600 separate calls were connected. The property was rezoned and the building sensitively adapted into residential apartments in the late 1970s.

The UMB surveyor in September 1990 noted, “For its location it is highly unusual as to structure, style, and integrity. Its design is a remarkably sophisticated ‘downtown’ type, unexpected in this working class residential neighborhood. The building is intact as to walls, parapet fenestration, materials, entry, design, and location. The only exterior alteration [is] the garage doors.” The survey rated 35 Russia Avenue as eligible for listing in the National Register and for local Landmark designation. Thirty years later, the former Randolph Exchange is on a short list of buildings Excelsior District neighbors are considering nominating as their next City Landmark.
An Update on Soirée 2020

For the first time in our 49-year history, San Francisco Heritage has made the difficult decision to cancel Soirée due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are profoundly grateful to our Soirée underwriters who have stepped up to convert their sponsorships into donations. Special thanks to our event vendors, especially Bimbo’s 365 Club and Mc Calls, for their collaboration and understanding amid unpredictable circumstances. We are truly heartened by the overwhelming generosity exhibited by Heritage’s community of supporters.

The board and staff of San Francisco Heritage look forward to better times together, especially Soiree 2021, which will celebrate Heritage’s 50th anniversary year.

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Welcome New Board Member Adam Swig

In February, Heritage welcomed Adam Swig as the newest member of its board of directors. Adam is the founder and executive director of Value Culture, a California non-profit focused on engaging the next generation in culture and philanthropy through events and cultural programming.

Since 2012, Adam has worked with over 50 non-profit organizations to raise over $1 million for philanthropic causes. His sold-out events have increased awareness for the environment, children in need, Shabbat and Jewish life, homelessness, public institutions, the arts, up-and-coming musical artists of all genres, disaster relief, cancer, women’s issues, goats, the strengthening of Bay Area culture, and the fostering of philanthropy.

A graduate of Santa Clara University, Adam currently serves on the Contemporary Jewish Museum’s Contemporaries Board Committee, the Giants Community Fund Lab Young Professionals Board, and the Bammies Music Foundation Advisory Board. He is also an advisor to Ever Gold [Projects] art gallery, and a member of the Jewish arts-and-culture non-profit Reboot.

“As a 4th generation San Franciscan, the mission of Heritage sits close to my heart,” said Swig in expressing his desire to join the board. “When I heard about [Heritage’s] plans as an organization, it was something I wanted to be a part of. I hope as the youngest member of the board I can bring innovative ideas to Heritage and get new generations aware and involved.”

Established in 2017, Heritage’s Landmark Fund ensures that the city’s official inventories of historic landmarks and legacy businesses reflect the diversity of its people and its places.

To commemorate our 50th anniversary, in 2021, Heritage has worked for the protection of 50 buildings, districts, businesses, and nonprofits important to San Francisco’s history and culture.

In addition to the nomination of Dr. Bernardo Gonzalez III, D.D.S., as a legacy business (see p. 3), in recent months we have assisted with applications for Bimbo’s 365 Club on Columbus Avenue, La Reyna Bakery on 24th Street, and Teevan Restoration on Union Street.

In partnership with staff from the San Francisco Planning Department, we have prepared the City Landmark nomination for the Royal Baking Company building on Mission Street in the Excelsior and are exploring further joint efforts on Planning’s list of community-proposed individual landmarks and historic districts.

Two unusual structures Heritage is currently researching and evaluating for landmark nominations are related to San Francisco’s water history. The University Mound reservoir-keeper’s house at 401 University Avenue in the Portola District dates back to the 1880s and is the last survivor of several reservoir-keeper’s cottages built in the nineteenth century. Thirty years later, in 1912, Willis Polk designed the Central Pumps building on Sloat Boulevard and 22nd Avenue in the style of a “water temple” with classical reliefs of harvest gods, dolphins, and waterfalls. Both buildings, still part of San Francisco’s water system, are owned by the Public Utilities Commission.

Historic designation is the most effective and proactive way to safeguard important places from demolition, destruction, and displacement. An appeal to donate to the Landmark Fund, which provides the resources for this important work, will be sent out in the mail in the coming weeks. We appreciate all who have contributed to this aspect of Heritage’s mission and thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

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San Francisco made a strong first impression on Charles Olson. “I came to San Francisco in 1975 and will never forget my first views of the city and its architecture while driving across the Bay Bridge.”

Legacy Circle members Charles Olson and Yoko Watanabe have in turn made a lasting impression on San Francisco Heritage. With the encouragement of John Sanger and Bob Thompson, two of his partners at the law firm of Pettit & Martin, Charles joined the Heritage Board of Directors in 2004. He chaired what was then called the Issues Committee (now Projects and Policy Committee) and eventually served as board president, from 2007 to 2011. Yoko, who moved to California from Nagoya, Japan, in 1993, has fond memories of being chef for board-sponsored dinners at the Haas-Lilienthal House—a popular Heritage Soirée prize—and Charles agrees that the Heritage community stands out for both of them.

“Besides the buildings that have been preserved or promoted by Heritage, our best memories are of the many great people that we got to know through our involvement—other board members, staff, and supporters.”

A great deal of the credit for Heritage receiving the transformative gift of the Doolan-Larson Building is due to Charles's leadership and effort, having worked closely with Norman Larson during his lifetime to finalize the terms of the agreement in 2010. His current firm, Lubin Olson, later donated pro-bono legal services to Heritage to effectuate the gift following Norman’s death in 2018. Is the iconic building at the corner of Haight and Ashbury Streets his favorite?

“There are so many incredible historic places in San Francisco that it is impossible to pick a favorite [but] Yoko and I were extremely impressed by Orton Development’s rehabilitation of the historic core buildings at Pier 70, which was host site of the Heritage Soirée in 2018.”

Charles and Yoko joined the Legacy Circle by including Heritage in their estate plan in 2019. “We have been donating to Heritage annually ever since I joined the Board. [...] So it just made sense to find a way to ensure that our support for Heritage would continue in some way. That said, we truly hope that we will continue to make real-time annual gifts to Heritage for many, many years to come.”

We are grateful to Legacy Circle members who have pledged and provided for the future of Heritage’s mission to preserve and enhance San Francisco’s unique architectural and cultural identity. Remembering Heritage in your will or trust is not only a long-term investment in what makes the city special, but may also provide valuable tax benefits to you and your heirs.

To learn more about the benefits and opportunities in joining Heritage’s Legacy Circle, contact Deb Grant, Vice President of Advancement, at dgrant@sfheritage.org or 415-441-3000 x 11.
Soirée 2020 Cancelled
Heritage wishes to thank our generous sponsors, vendors, and donors. Please see page 9 for more information.

A Note About San Francisco History Days 2020

San Francisco History Days, the annual citywide event dedicated to city history, was set to launch in a new format across the city on May 8-9, 2020. It has now been postponed, with a new date in the late fall to be announced shortly.

The San Francisco Department of Memory, a grassroots network of local history groups and independent historians committed to preserving and presenting San Francisco’s history, is producing the event, and San Francisco Heritage is participating as a member of the Host Committee. While we will adapt our plans as necessary (pending further developments in the COVID-19 pandemic), this new iteration of History Days will activate all of San Francisco, highlighting local history in neighborhoods. Moving beyond the walls of the Old U.S. Mint, multiple host sites will showcase exhibitors and presentations, with participants and a schedule of programs featured on a free illustrated map.

Many of the Bay Area’s local history groups are seizing the moment and bringing you diverting digital content throughout this crisis. Check out Shaping San Francisco’s digital archive at foundsf.org, The Western Neighborhoods Project’s podcasts on outsidelands.org, and much more.

In addition to sfhistorydays.org, follow the Department of Memory on Facebook at @SFDepartmentofMemory and on Twitter @SanMemory for updates on History Days.