Preserving San Francisco’s Legacy Businesses

The Covid-19 pandemic is imperiling public spaces and small businesses significant to the city’s intangible cultural heritage. Heritage is redirecting its communications and advocacy work to meet this economic and preservation crisis. **STORY ON PAGE 4**
The social, economic, and public health crises enveloping our country demand a wholesale reassessment and reordering of pre-pandemic norms. These wrenching times have led many to question how we live, relate to one another, and the values we choose to uphold in our work. The field of historic preservation is no different. The Covid-19 shutdown has underscored the fragility of San Francisco’s cultural fabric and the importance of Heritage’s mission. Amid calls for racial justice and institutional reform, the country’s preservation movement is also confronting its traditional role in promoting structural racism and is attempting to forge a more inclusive, equitable future.

Our published histories and civic landmarks say a lot about how we choose to remember the past, and in San Francisco and across the country, official landmarks and monuments frequently overlook the contributions and struggles of marginalized communities. Decisions about what to keep, and how, echo for generations. As observed by Brent Leggs, Executive Director of the National Trust’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, "In the not-too-distant past, historic sites were preserved to reinforce the white majority’s narrative and to communicate idealized (but unevenly realized) American values. This must change. Done right, historic places can foster real healing, true equity, and a validation of all Americans and their history." (“Juneteenth 2020: Racial Injustice, Preservation, and Place,” June 19, 2020) Although this is certainly not a new conversation among preservationists, the ongoing societal reckoning demands honesty and accountability like never before.

Heritage is committed to ensuring justice and equity in the way we remember and protect the past. These values are reflected in our work to create the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry in 2015 and in programs like the Landmark Fund. The Legacy Business Registry and its benefits help to prevent displacement, support succession planning for businesses, and promote intergenerational equity (see cover story, p.4). The Landmark Fund aims to ensure that the city’s official inventories of historic landmarks and legacy businesses reflect the diversity of its people and places. Over the past three years, Heritage has completed or initiated more than 30 nominations for historic designation, including Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts, Royal Baking Company, and Ingleside Presbyterian Church/Great Cloud of Witnesses.

Despite some important strides, Heritage struggles to be truly representative of San Francisco in terms of our board, staff, and the constituencies we serve. As a movement, historic preservation continues to be viewed as a predominantly white, elitist endeavor. That perception is reinforced by a lack of diversity among preservation professionals, creating a crisis of cultural competency in efforts to document historic places in marginalized communities. As the country reckons with past injustices, and Heritage reflects on its first 50 years as an organization, our vision and commitment for the future will be—must be—premised on social equity, inclusiveness, and accountability.
Women in Preservation: 2020 Lecture Series

Heritage’s annual Lecture Series exploring the breadth of San Francisco’s cultural inheritance is usually held in historic settings throughout the city. For the 2020 season, due to the uncertain nature of the Covid-19 crisis, we will host a virtual series, free and open to the public online. We ask that you register for each program you plan to attend, and all programs will take place on Thursday evenings unless otherwise noted.

The theme of this year’s series is **Women in Preservation**, and each program will spotlight and celebrate women both past and present who have worked to preserve San Francisco’s unique cultural and architectural heritage. Carried out in partnership with the 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation, these virtual programs will be recorded for subsequent sharing and archiving. To register and to read additional details for each program, visit [sfheritage.org/upcoming-events](http://sfheritage.org/upcoming-events).

**Rooted in Resilience: Legacy Restaurants and Bars in San Francisco**
**JULY 16, 9:00 PM**

Denise Clifton, author of *Tables from the Rubble: How the Restaurants That Arose After the Great Quake of 1906 Still Feed San Francisco Today*, will lead a conversation with Julie Ho of Sam Wo Restaurant and Maralisa Simmons-Cook of Specs’ Twelve Adler Museum Cafe, women behind two of San Francisco’s most beloved legacy businesses. With historic context from Denise’s book, which highlights stories of food businesses that emerged in the recovery years after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, this panel will explore how legacy businesses are now struggling — and adapting — to a new and very different disaster.

**August 20**

*Neighborhood Heroines: The San Francisco Bay View’s Mary Ratcliff*

Lisa Ruth Elliott, project manager of the Neighborhood Newspapers of San Francisco, a collection of over 2,300 digitized local papers, will be in conversation with Mary Ratcliff, longtime editor and co-owner of the San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper, about the paper’s legacy of social justice work and carrying that legacy into the future.

**September 17**

*Sydney Stein: Golden Gate Park’s First Woman Gardener*

To mark the 150th anniversary of San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, Nicole Meldahl, Executive Director of the Western Neighborhoods Project, will recount the accomplishments of one of the park’s beloved unsung heroes: Sydney Stein, who in 1929 became the first woman hired as a gardener by the City of San Francisco.

**October 22**

*Intersection of Racism, Gender, and Historic Preservation in San Francisco’s Asian American Communities*

Join us for a panel discussion led by Michelle Magalong, Executive Director of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation (APIAHP), on the intersection of racism, gender, and historic preservation in San Francisco’s Asian American communities. Panelists to be determined.

**November 19**

*Preservationists on Preservationists*

Women architects/preservationists currently in the profession will give lightning-round presentations about their favorite women architect/preservationists, past and present. Speakers to be determined.
San Francisco Heritage is fighting to save San Francisco’s legacy businesses in the face of the Covid-19 crisis. The survival of public spaces, small businesses, and nonprofits significant to the city’s intangible cultural heritage is an economic emergency and the paramount preservation issue of this time. Heritage has dedicated communications and advocacy work to meet the challenge and keep alive what makes San Francisco special.
San Francisco’s businesses, especially public-gathering places such as restaurants, cafes, and bars, are threatened and face a very uncertain future because of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. While government agencies, charitable foundations, and private philanthropists continue to assist in keeping businesses alive, the severity of the crisis means the great need will outstrip any aid available.

In 2015 San Francisco Heritage led the effort to create both the Legacy Business Registry and the Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund, the first legislation passed in the county to recognize notable small businesses as historic assets and assist in their preservation. At the time, small businesses faced unprecedented pressures, with 4,000 closing in 2014 alone. The Registry provided a framework to recognize businesses and nonprofits with intangible cultural significance to the city, and the Fund offered direct financial benefits to those businesses in the form of payroll grants and incentives for long-term leases.

The Legacy Business Registry program supports significant businesses and nonprofits, from the San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper to Caffè Trieste to Project Open Hand. These community institutions, officially recognized by the City of San Francisco as important to its history, character, and identity, need every resource to survive and contribute to the city’s cultural and economic recovery.

While the number of legacy businesses on the Registry has grown from zero to over 230 in the past four years, the grant budget has remained flat at $1 million. The Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund was not keeping pace with demand before the 2020 pandemic and now is woefully inadequate to assist the businesses recognized.

Heritage has redirected resources to aid legacy businesses in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic by (1) working directly with businesses to amplify their own marketing and fundraising through Heritage’s broader communications channels; and (2) advocating with them in partnership with the City of San Francisco to protect current funding for the program, identify emergency grants directed to the Registry, and seek increased annual funding of the Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund.

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Benkyodo Company in Japantown (top left), Little Joe’s Pizza in the Excelsior (top right), and Cliff’s Variety and Dog Eared Books in the Castro District (bottom).
few San Francisco neighborhoods have an origin story as fairy-tale-like as the Marina District: a muddy cove is transformed into a fantastical fair of courtyards, towers, and light, and then from the dust of that ephemeral landscape arises a fashionable neighborhood of winding streets, village shops, and a bayside park.

Set between the six-lane Lombard Street Expressway and the San Francisco Bay, bookended by the two former military installations, Fort Mason and the Presidio, on the city’s northern shore, the Marina District is made land, former tidelands filled with sand from surrounding dunes and mud piped up from the bay’s floor. In the early twentieth century, most of it was still a shallow cove ringed by a coal-gasification plant, scattered laundry operations, roadhouses, shooting ranges, and a pleasure resort with hot and cold baths named Harbor View Park.

**Marinaland**

TEXT BY WOODY LABOUNTY
PHOTOS BY LISA ERDBERG

View from the rooftops of Fort Mason towards the Palace of Fine Arts.

View West from Russian Hill towards the future Marina District, circa 1865. Washerman’s Lagoon, Cow Hollow, and Presidio are visible. Future intersection of Lombard and Larkin at right. The road to the left is the old Presidio Road, which roughly ran between Union and Filbert Streets.
In 1911, San Francisco won the right to host a world’s fair to celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal, and the following year an organizing committee leased land and “water lots” on the bay from Theresa Oelrichs and Virginia Vanderbilt for the exposition. From today’s Lyon Street to Buchanan Street, 475,000 cubic yards of dirt and sand filled in and smoothed out a landscape for what would be called “The Jewel City.”

A World’s Fair

Although the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) lasted just one year, it was a showcase of design, color, and architectural exuberance. The 435-foot Tower of Jewels acted as centerpiece to a vista of statue-lined courtyards, iridescent domes, and majestic halls inspired by ancient monuments. Fair buildings were intended and constructed to be temporary, and all were demolished or relocated with the exception of architect Bernard Maybeck’s beautiful lagoon landscape of colonnades and rotunda for the Palace of Fine Arts.

The fair had a “Palace of Fine Arts Preservation Day” on October 15, 1915, to raise money for its preservation. While the curved exposition hall was constructed of concrete, the rest was not and, by the 1960s, Maybeck’s haunting masterpiece had badly deteriorated and needed saving once more. After a citizen-led fundraising drive, the rotunda and colonnades were rebuilt.
Marina Gardens

Before 1915, the tidelands area was generally known as Harbor View after a small bayside bathing and pleasure resort. The PPIE had created a true-marina and real estate development of the cleared fair land capitalized on the concept.

“Marina Gardens” broke the city’s projected street grid with diagonal boulevards, triangular blocks, and curving avenues. Built out in the 1920s and early 1930s in popular styles ranging from Tudor Revival to Streamline Moderne to Art Deco, the Marina District’s houses, apartment buildings, and storefronts still carry a sense of consistency and unity. The designated commercial corridor of Chestnut Street retains a main-street feel with markets, restaurants, bars, two movie theatres, and a number of legacy businesses such as Lucca Delicatessen and Izzy's Steaks and Chops.

While the Palace of Fine Arts, the San Francisco Gas Light Company Building on Buchanan Street, and the Marina Branch Library on Chestnut are city landmarks, there are significant buildings in the Marina without any form of historic designation or special protection. Outstanding Period Revival homes stand around Baker Street. The many elegant apartment buildings with elaborate entryway treatments could comprise a historic district.

In plainer view, the New Deal-era Marina Middle School on Fillmore Street is a prominent example of what might be called “WPA Moderne,” designed by master architects John Bakewell, William P. Day, and George W. Kelham. The Marina Safeway is a Midcentury Modern jewel, and the seminal model for hundreds of the supermarket chain’s stores across the country.
Marina Heritage Month

All through the month of October, Heritage will highlight the Marina District’s history, culture, long-standing businesses, community groups, institutions, and significant buildings. As part of our Heritage in the Neighborhoods program, the month’s activities will kick-off community conversation on the needs of threatened legacy businesses, unrecognized historic buildings and landscapes, and potential preservation projects. More information on specific programs will be released in late summer. Stay tuned at sfheritage.org/heritage-in-the-neighborhoods and on our social media. We welcome participation from all with connections, resources, or strong interest in the Marina District. For any comments or questions, contact Kerri Young at kyoung@sfheritage.org.

LISA ERDBERG

HERITAGE NOTES

The Marina Safeway, built in 1989, is one of the significant Modern-style buildings in the district.

Artist-in-Residency Pilot Coming to the Haight-Ashbury

San Francisco artist Jeremy Fish will inaugurate Heritage’s Haight-Ashbury Visual Artist Residency at the Doolan-Larson Building thanks to recent funding from the city’s Grants for the Arts program. Fish’s three-month residency will begin in September 2020, activating the iconic landmark on the corner of Haight and Ashbury. He will interview local residents, counterculture figures, historians, and other denizens to imbue his art with depth and authenticity. In his own words, Fish aims to “create works of art to attract the new young San Franciscan to this wonderful piece of San Francisco history,” while “helping to extend San Francisco’s poster-art tradition” that originated on this very corner with artists such as Wes Wilson, Stanley Mouse, and Victor Moscoso. Jeremy’s artwork will be displayed and distributed in various formats and venues, including a free poster at an “open studio” event during the residency and an exhibition at the Haight Street Art Center to kick off Heritage’s 50th anniversary year in 2021.

Built in 1903, the Doolan-Larson Building was bequeathed to Heritage in 2018 after the death of its longtime owner-resident, Norman Larson. Heritage is currently working to reimagine the property as a cultural destination, which is likely to include a permanent artist-in-residence program guided by this pilot residency.

In the meantime, Fish has been doing his part to support San Francisco businesses that were forced to shut down as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. The artist’s version of the San Francisco flag is freely available online to print, with a scan code that directs the public to donate to the USBG Bartenders Guild. Both bars and restaurants alike are displaying Fish’s poster in their windows, a reminder that, according to Fish, “our city’s motto describes our resilient past.”

Artist Jeremy Fish.
UCSF Threatens to Destroy Celebrated Bernard Zakheim Murals

The University of California San Francisco (UCSF) plans to destroy a series of celebrated New Deal-era murals painted by artist Bernard Zakheim to make way for a new hospital and research center at its Parnassus campus in the Inner Sunset District. Claiming that it will cost $8 million to relocate the frescoes, UCSF announced that it “has decided not to use public funds to physically preserve the murals” in Toland Hall, and proposes to create a digital record of the 1930s artwork instead. Since 2013, UCSF has conducted a fundraising campaign that has raised more than $4.2 billion, including $1.2 billion in 2018 alone, but the administration cited financial impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic as a reason it could not afford to save the Zakheim murals.

Zakheim created the murals at the UCSF campus between 1935 and 1938. Drs. Isabella Perry and Chauncey Leake, who appreciated Zakheim’s recent mural work at the City of San Francisco’s Alemany Public Health Center, initiated the commission to educate medical students about the history of their field. After painting a pair of panels titled Ancient Medicine: Superstition in Medicine and Modern Medicine, which now reside in the campus’s Health Science West building, Zakheim obtained additional funding to paint ten fresco panels for the auditorium in Toland Hall titled History of Medicine in California.

History of Medicine portrays an abundance of specific events and details drawn from extensive research by Zakheim and his assistant, Phyllis Wrightson. The university provided them access to medical faculty for interviews and its collection on the history of medicine. Zakheim wrote, “I did not pick only the beautiful or heroic parts of history,” and
the murals include scenes of amputations and autopsies. Not just a historical record, they are infused with Zakheim’s leftist perspective, depicting medicinal practices by California’s native peoples and their subjugation by colonizing Europeans. As author Anthony W. Lee wrote in *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco’s Murals* (1999), “The murals fit into an explicitly programmatic argument about class conflict and the superexploited races and peoples.”

Shortly following UCSF’s announcement, Supervisor Aaron Peskin introduced an emergency resolution to the Board of Supervisors on June 23 to designate the *History of Medicine* mural cycle as a City Landmark. The resolution is informed by Heritage’s forthcoming San Francisco New Deal-era Historic Context Statement, written by Christopher VerPlanck and Donna Graves, which details the origins and history of the murals and their depictions.

Acknowledging that local designation would not legally protect the murals, because UCSF is a state institution, Supervisor Peskin told *J. Weekly* that he “hope[s] this symbolic action helps to bring the university to its senses.” As a champion of the city’s diverse public art, Heritage condemns the proposed destruction of *History of Medicine* and is committed to working with UCSF to live up to its responsibility as stewards of this irreplaceable, publicly commissioned artwork.

**PHOTOS COURTESY OF UCSF ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

(Top) Mural detail of artist Bernard Zakheim’s ten-panel series *History of Medicine* in California. (Bottom) UCSF nursing students attend a lecture in Toland Hall; Bernard Zakheim murals in background. Circa 1941.

**HERITAGE LEGACY CIRCLE —THE NEXT 50**

As we look to celebrate the 50th anniversary of San Francisco Heritage in 2021, we salute Heritage Legacy Circle members who have pledged and provided for the future of our mission work to preserve and enhance San Francisco’s unique architectural and cultural identity, including advocacy for historic resources, and education programs. All of this is possible because of thoughtful, passionate individuals who give support, voice, and financial resources, now and for the future.

After taking care of yourself and loved ones, it’s a good time to consider what else really matters to you. Providing for Heritage in your wills or trusts can give you the satisfaction of knowing your legacy will help future generations enjoy the San Francisco you love. These gifts may also provide you and your heirs with valuable tax benefits.

There are a number of ways to include San Francisco Heritage as part of your estate plan. If you have made plans already, please let us know so that we can include you in our Legacy Circle activities. For more information or to add your name to the Legacy Circle: Contact Deb Grant at dgrant@sfheritage.org, 415.441.3000 ext 11.
July 2020

SATURDAY, JULY 18, 2:00 to 3:00 PM
Beer, Dunes, and Trains Walking Tour
Meet outside SOMARTS, 934 Brannan Street
Join Shaping San Francisco for a walk through the lost industrial landscape of South of Market, passing the ghosts of old train lines, former and current breweries, and learn about the remarkable landscape that was buried under the urbanized pavement—not quite a beach, but lots of dunes! Tour ends at 7th and Channel.
RSVP by emailing shaping@foundsf.org.

TUESDAY, JULY 28, 9:00 to 9:30 PM EST
Dismantle Preservation: A Virtual Unconference
The #DismantlePreservation Virtual Unconference will be a one-day free event that will delve into implicit bias in preservation, preserving the full story, how to expand who is investing in old buildings, and more. This event is about rebuilding preservation for the benefit of our communities today and tomorrow. For sign-up information, visit sarahmarsom.com/dismantlepreservation.

August 2020

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 6:00 PM
San Francisco Neighborhood Heroines: The San Francisco Bay View’s Mary Ratcliff
This event will take place on Zoom. Register for free at sfheritage.org/upcoming-events.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 12:00 to 1:30 PM
Modernism 3: Saving the Seventies
The counter-culture of the 1970s birthed a new movement in design and architecture that inspired some of the late 20th century’s most iconic architects and engineers. This webinar from the California Preservation Foundation intends to present challenges for evaluating cultural resources from that period that are just now coming of age, especially related to unusual and yet historic sites from the counter-cultural movements active at that time. Register at californiapreservation.org/events.

For more information about upcoming Heritage events, please visit sfheritage.org or call 415.441.3000

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