



CALIFORNIANS FOR PRESERVATION ACTION NEWSLETTER

Volume I, Number 1

January, 1976

Formation

Californians for Preservation Action developed rapidly with a series of meetings in San Francisco and Pasadena over the past six months. Recognizing the pre-eminent position in the preservation field of other organizations and agencies--most notably the National Trust, California Historical Society, and State Office of Historic Preservation--one major function remained unmet, open and active lobbying.

Californians for Preservation Action intends to fill the void and dedicates itself to the active encouragement and support of measures at all levels of government advancing historic preservation and neighborhood conservation.

Our goals are:

1. to unify the state-wide preservation constituency into a force for change
2. to influence public and private policy
3. to serve as an information exchange to further growing community awareness.

This newsletter serves to inform you and your organization of pressing issues, to generate position letters, and to direct your efforts to the proper person at the right time. As an awareness of the need for preservation evolves, a constituency must make itself known.



Pen-and-ink sketch of Market Street drawn in 1900 by Willis Polk. The old Chronicle Building, the old Palace Hotel and the old Hobart Building are shown in this sketch.

The Next Step SB 927 Alternative Building Codes

SB 927 (Mills) was signed into law by Governor Brown on September 19, 1975. The State Historic Building Code Advisory Board is expected to adopt a draft interim policy statement at its meeting this month. Six to twelve months will be required to prepare the final code. Until that time, the interim statement will recommend that the State Buildings Standards Commission put all building enforcement officials on notice that the State Building Code now recognizes historic structures. Officials could then review all qualified buildings and adopt alternative codes in the spirit of the new law.

Interest and concern in the adoption of the interim statement should be expressed. Write: William Vick, Deputy State Architect, Office of Architecture & Construction, State Capitol, Sacramento 95814.

SB 927 is permissive. Encourage your local building officials to develop alternate codes for historic structures. No one will know you are there unless your support for the conservation of historic structures is vigorous, persistent, logical, broad-based, and polite.

The recent adoption of an amendment to the Uniform Building Code [U.B.C. section 104(j)] alludes to waivers for historic structures.

Building Code adjustment is a difficult area for most of us. Learn the language and approach your city to begin the process of adopting an alternate code. Some careful questions might also reveal that your city has "administrative procedures" which may apply to your historic buildings and can be worked to your advantage. Rumor has it such administrative procedures are common. Remember, though, you cannot afford to ignore or alienate the Building Official. An informed approach coupled with the U.B.C. amendment and SB 927 should get you started in the Building Officials domain. A helpful publication is Preservation and Building Codes (\$4.00) from the National Trust for Historic Preservation Bookstore, 740-748 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Grand Central Terminal Redivivus

In a decision of national importance, the New York Supreme Court on December 16 voted 3-2 to reverse a lower court decision by affirming the landmark status of Grand Central Terminal. The decision has the effect of preventing construction of a 55-story tower atop the Terminal, according to a December 17, 1975 New York Times article.

Penn Central and the developer claimed that landmark status would cause economic hardship and, thus, would constitute taking of property. Presiding Judge Harold A. Stevens' opinion, however, maintained that "such hardship, in the proper exercise of the city's police power, must be subordinated to the public weal".

Demolition and Taxes

Preservationists and owners of historic properties point to taxation policy as the major cause for landmark losses. Two constitutional amendments have been drawn up to address this problem. One of these, Assembly Constitutional Amendment III, goes before the voters in the June 8 general election. Titled "Tax Relief for Historic Properties" the constitutional amendment would exempt qualified historic properties from the requirement that they be taxed at the uniform rate:

To promote the preservation of property of historical significance, the Legislature may define such property and shall provide that when it is enforceably restricted in a manner specified by the Legislature, it shall be valued for property tax purposes only on a basis that is consistent with its restrictions and uses.
ACA III

The death of Senator Z'berg has left co-sponsor Assemblyman Boatwright with sole responsibility for preparation of the pro side of the argument in the voters' handbook. Spread the word--individual and particularly organizational letters should be sent immediately to: Dave Doerr, Office of Assembly Revenue and Taxation, State Capitol, Sacramento, California 95814.

This is only the first stage. The second phase will involve a combined effort including financial and publicity support for this measure. Watch the Newsletter for details on the campaign.

The second constitutional amendment--Senate Constitutional Amendment 22--is currently in limbo in committee. This legislation would provide tax benefits for property owners' expenses incurred in improvement of historic properties.

In addition to the exemptions otherwise provided in this Constitution, the Legislature may provide that specified structures and fixtures and improvements to an existing dwelling occupied by the owner as a principal place of residence are exempt from taxation for a five-year period following in an amount equal to the full value, up to \$12,000, added to the dwelling by reason of the improvements. SCA 22

In order to get them off the dime, write: Honorable Daniel E. Boatwright, Chairman, Assembly Revenue & Taxation Committee, State Capitol, Sacramento 95814; and/or to your Assembly representative who serves on this committee:

William McVittie (Dist 65) 1603 W. 6th St., Ontario 91762 (Vice Chairman)
Richard Alatorre (55) 5916 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 90042
Paul T. Bannai (53) 1919 W. Redondo Beach Blvd., Gardena 90247
Victor Calvo (21) 2570 El Camino West, Mountain View 94040
Fred Chel (58) 2750 Bellflower St., Long Beach 90815
Robert Cline (37) 19240 Nordhoff St., Northridge 91324
Lawrence Kapiloff (78) 424 Pennsylvania Ave., San Diego 92103
Jerry Lewis (67) 101 S. 6th St., Redlands 92373
William Lockyear (14) 14895 E. 14th St. San Leandro 94578

S. Floyd Mori (15) 5135 State Capitol, Sacramento 95818
Frank Murphy (28) 215 W. Franklin St., Monterey 93940
Richard Robinson (72) 822 N. Broadway, Santa Ana 92701

Background: Tax assessment, the primary source of governmental revenue, is an arcane science. Two things are certain, however, market value and home improvement, including restoration, raise taxes. The owner of an historic property whose intention is to maintain present use is treated as an investor; in the second case, he is punished for restorations.

The Mills' Bill SB 357, passed in 1972, was the first attempt to provide tax incentives for historic properties. This measure, has rested quietly in the Government Code (Chapter 1442). It has been argued that "Tax Rule 60," as applied by the Board of Equalization has effectively vetoed SB 357.

In all fairness to the assessors, they are charged with a significant obligation, to raise revenue, and are directed by the state constitution to assess property at fair market value. The Mills' Bill provided for the possibility of tax relief if a twenty-year contract froze development potential. Richard Nevins, member of the State Board of Equalization, District 4, contends that historic designation increases property value and that the "20 year freeze" is no guarantee against development as the contract is renewable yearly. No historic properties thus far have benefitted.

ACA III was designed to secure the ground preservationists assumed they had won with the Mills' Bill.

While specific legislation is being generated, other areas of tax incentives can be explored. The Seattle conference on the Economic Benefits of Preservation, put on by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, opened many eyes. The State of California could plan for a similar program. One interesting avenue to investigate is that of making existing tax law work for preservation as suggested in the August 18, 1975 Business Week based on the successes achieved by Trenton H. Parker, a Denver investment counselor involved in putting historic properties to new uses.

Do It Now

1. ACA III tax relief for historic properties on June 8 ballot
write: Dave Doerr (official consultant for Assemblyman Boatwright), Assembly Revenue & Taxation Committee, State Capitol, Sacramento 95814
2. SCA 22 tax exemption for restoration costs presently in committee
Write: Honorable Daniel E. Boatwright Chairman, Assembly Revenue & Taxation Committee, State Capitol, Sacramento 95814
or your local Assembly committee member

Designed and produced by the Californians for Preservation Action Newsletter Committee.



Longfellow/Hastings House-Pasadena Octagon

MA in Preservation Offered

The University of California is planning a graduate program leading to an M.A. in Historic Preservation. The proposal, put together by Dr. David Gebhard of UC Santa Barbara, is scheduled for a Fall enrollment of 7 or 8 students with faculty from 5 UC campuses.

The program is designed to provide technical background for persons already trained in architecture, landscape architecture, history, or architectural history. One aspect of the course is a required field project in preservation.

For information write Dr. David Gebhard, The Art Galleries, University of California, Santa Barbara, California 93106.

Preservation Effort Receives New Emphasis

The California Office of Historic Preservation, under the direction of Dr. Knox Mellon, has been formed to replace the History Preservation Section of the State Department of Parks and Recreation. Dr. Mellon reports directly to Herbert Rhodes, recently named Director of Parks and Recreation.

The newly formed Office, with a staff of 8 and a budget of \$800,000, will continue the work of the History Preservation Section. Dr. Mellon sees the Office as assuming an increasingly active role in preservation efforts. He is currently working toward co-sponsorship with the National Trust of two state-wide preservation conferences in May of 1976. We are impressed by the clearly evident ability and approach of Dr. Mellon and see this new independent Office as a significant indication of the State's commitment to preservation.

For assistance in your preservation efforts contact Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Parks & Recreation, P.O. Box 2390, Sacramento, California 95811, (916) 445-8006.

HRC Initiates Bicentennial Program

The State Historic Resources Commission, in an effort to encourage broader participation in the Bicentennial, has initiated a program which allows each local Official Bicentennial Committee to select the most significant and appropriate structure for designation as the focal point of the Bicentennial celebration. Upon submission to the Commission, the local Committee will receive a plaque for Bicentennial recognition.

In Print

Essential for your survival kit: Historic Preservation in California: A Legal Handbook, Grady Gammage Jr., Philip N. Jones, Stephen L. Jones, March 1975. Price \$3.75 plus tax and handling (total \$4.20) from Stanford Environmental Law Society, Stanford Law School, Stanford, California 94305.

Gaslamp Gazette, covering the Gaslamp Quarter and San Diego city and county preservation activity. Available from San Diego Gaslamp Quarter Association, 2936 Meade Ave., San Diego, California 92116, (714) 224-6270.

Dr. Robert Winter reports a new version of Gebhard and Winter: A Guide to the Architecture of Los Angeles and Southern California will be published in the fall. This edition is more than a revision. It will contain new photographs and more information in a new format. Look for the blue cover with palm trees.

A list of newsletters published throughout California of relevance to this organization will be included in a future newsletter. Please send to Californians for Preservation Action, P.O. Box 2169, Sacramento, Calif. 95810.

Please Note

CDA Block grant applications are due February 1. If preservation deserves money in your city, get your program in now.

Office of Planning and Research is preparing guidelines for Historic Preservation Elements to the General Plan, a result of SB 2309. Such Elements are not mandated. Is your city planning to include a Historic Preservation Element in your general plan; if not, why not?

Dear Mom, Send Money

Californians for Preservation Action will incorporate as a non-profit organization. Because we intend to actively lobby to influence legislation, the IRS will not offer you a tax-deduction for your contributions. Membership categories are listed below. Indicate the appropriate status, make checks payable to Californians for Preservation Action and send them to:

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CALIFORNIANS FOR PRESERVATION ACTION
Post Office Box 2169, Sacramento 95810

I want to help; sign me up as:

<input type="checkbox"/> student membership	\$ 7.50
<input type="checkbox"/> individual membership	15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> family membership	20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> organization membership	15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> sponsor	25.00 or more

Name _____

Organization _____

Street Address _____

City _____

Zip _____

.....

Notice of Meeting

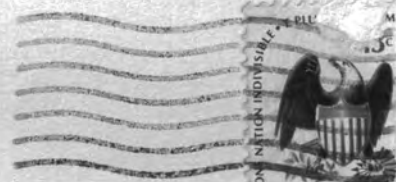
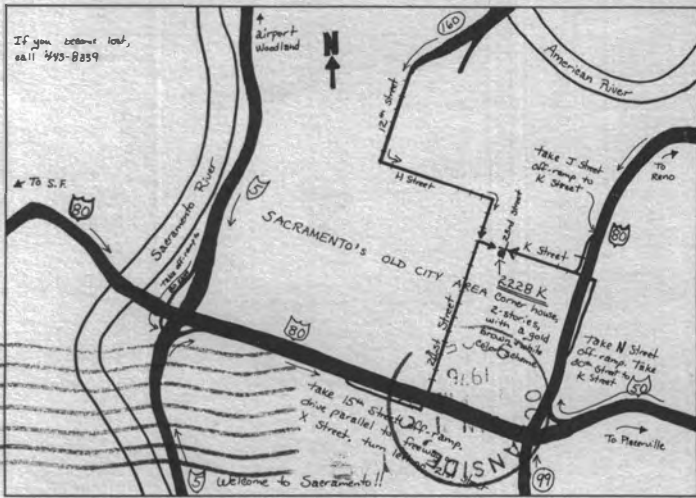
At our last Steering Committee meeting-- December 7 in San Francisco--some thirty participants worked on by-laws and adopted membership fees. The next meeting will be held Sunday, February 1, 1976, starting at 10:00 A.M. The Agenda includes adoption of by-laws (final draft), authorization of incorporation, and setting legislative priorities. All interested preservationists are invited. The meeting will be held at the home of Mary Helmich, 2228 K Street, Sacramento (see map). A tour of Sacramento historic sites follows the meeting.

L A County Art Museum Lectures

Preservation Issues: Decisions for Your Environment is a series of five lectures being offered by the Department of Arts in cooperation with the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, UCLA. Its focus will be the man-made environment--its sites, structures, neighborhood, the open space within, and the countryside without. The lecture course will stress the value and methods of preservation. Among those scheduled to participate are James Biddle, Robert Winter, David Gebhard, Sally Woodbridge, John Pastier, Norm Murdoch, Knox Mellon, and Albert C. Martin.

The series will take place Thursdays, April 1-29, from 7:30 to 10:30 PM at the Leo S. Bing Theater, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 5905 Wilshire. Cost for the entire series is \$25 with single lecture tickets available. Inquiries should be addressed in care of the Museum to William E. Jones, Curator of Decorative Arts and Design.

- April 1 Preservation Planning and Action: Keeping the Best of Yesterday for Tomorrow
- April 8 Southern California: A Culture Worth Preserving
- April 15 San Francisco Bay Area: Gains and Losses
- April 22 Neighborhoods and Urban Centers, Landscapes and Open Spaces
- April 29 Debate: Profit vs. Loss



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NOT DELIVERABLE
AS ADDRESSED -
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