

# The Heritage Society of Pacific Grove NEWSLETTER

*Dedicated to Maintaining the Beauty and Individuality of Pacific Grove*

Volume 6, Issue 8

September 2006



## Historic Home Tour

*by Maryanne Spradling*



230 4th Street

The Heritage Society is hosting its 37th annual Historic Home Tour on Sunday, October 1, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Every house has a history and a story, and the homes on this year's tour will tell their own tales, as does the Uncapher home on 4th St. with its plaque from 1888 (above).

In addition to the historic homes, the other highlights on the tour include the Point Pinos Lighthouse, the Heritage Barn (celebrating its 25th year as the Heritage Society's headquarters), St. Mary's Church and Asilomar

Conference Grounds (Asilomar will only be available for viewing from 11am till 3pm).

Also, Chautauqua Hall will be hosting Artists in Chautauqua, and the birdhouse fundraiser will be immediately adjacent in Elmarie Dyke Park. No tickets are required for these two events.

For all home visits, please ... no spike heels, and be prepared to don cloth slippers.

Tickets are available at the Chamber of Commerce, at Forest and Central, for \$20 per person.

## Lecture Series: Modernist Summary

*by Sally Aberg*

Those of us who attended California State Historic Preservation Officer Wayne Donaldson's thought-provoking talk on July 21st were in for a fast-paced visual journey up and down the state of California and across the coun-

## Calendar

### SEPTEMBER

#### HERITAGE HOUSES for the BIRDS

Birdhouses due at Elmarie Dyke Park (next to Chautauqua Hall)  
Auction Kick Off  
Sunday, September 17  
Noon to 4 p.m.

### OCTOBER

#### HISTORIC HOME TOUR

Sunday, October 1  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

#### ARTISTS IN CHAUTAUQUA

Chautauqua Hall (Central and 16<sup>th</sup>)  
Sunday, October 1  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

#### HERITAGE HOUSES for the BIRDS FINAL AUCTION

Elmarie Dyke Park, next to Chautauqua Hall  
Sunday, October 1  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Silent auction ends at 2:45

#### ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES:

Appraisals and Clinics  
Co-sponsored by the Heritage Society and Meals on Wheels of the Monterey Peninsula (experts provided by the Cannery Row Antique Mall)  
Saturday, October 28  
Noon to 4 p.m.  
Sally Griffin Active Living Center, Pacific Grove

*All opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the Board of Directors, but are meant to stimulate interest in and discussion of preservation issues.*

try, too. Donaldson hit the podium running with his thesis that just like historic architectural resources must be protected today, it is never too early to recognize newer architecture as significant. Otherwise, Donaldson contends, we risk losing all trace of the contributions that modernist architects have made to our built environment during the second half of the 20th Century.

California architects are the single largest contributor to the modernist movement in the United States, so this is where Donaldson began our photographic tour. Reminding us that modern architecture is like residents in a nudist colony—not overdressed—he showed us local modernist masterworks like the Del Monte Laundry, Community Hospital, Wells Fargo Bank in Carmel, Carmel Valley Air Park and a Skidmore, Owings & Merrill building on Monterey's Naval Postgraduate School campus.

We then traveled north to another "mid-century marvel," The Sea Ranch (designed by Lawrence Halprin, Charles Moore, William Turnbull, Joseph Esherick, et.al., between 1963 and 1983) that still "sits lightly on the land" along the Sonoma Coast. Next we headed south to Lincoln Place Garden Apartments in Venice and the site of Donaldson's own 1972 all-plastic "nomadic, outer space vacation pad" that he is in the process of restoring on a site just east of Los Angeles.

Challenging his audience to imagine a world with nothing original still standing that was built between 1930 and today, Donaldson listed a number of endangered structures. In

California alone, these include 30% of the buildings on Mare Island, one of the former Santa Ana Naval Air Station's two gigantic dirigible shelters at Tustin (1942)—each measures 1,000 x 300 feet, making them the largest wooden structures in the world—and Hangar One (1932) at Moffitt Field near Mountain View, also once used to house lighter-than-air craft. Measuring 17 stories tall and covering 360,000 square feet, it is known as the "Golden Gate Bridge of Silicon Valley."



*San Juan Capistrano declared their Post-Modern library designed by Michael Graves to be "historic" when it was completed in 1983.*

The National Parks Service is charged with determining what sites and what buildings are deemed architecturally significant enough to be added to their Historic Registry. Donaldson firmly believes that the standards they use to define "historic"—based largely on age and style—do not adequately assess modernist design.

"California cannot afford to wait until a building has been demolished or until an architect has died before

declaring them significant," he says. "The current 50 years-or-older rule makes no sense at all, but if we simply raise the standards bar on eligibility, we could find ourselves with, for instance, just two California Mission sites—the best of the best. This isn't the answer either." Instead, he believes "we need a paradigm shift in the way we look at buildings." He calls for an emphasis on architectural significance, whether because of a building's unique craftsmanship, siting, landscaping, design, a unique event occurring there or an important person living or creating there.

"Modernist buildings are most vulnerable because they are so young," he continued. "If we don't want to wake up one day with no record of the fact that there even was a 1960s, for example, we need to consider the best of modernist architecture as works of art. As such, they are a vital part of the cultural landscape of our state."

Donaldson left us with the challenge that "real protection starts right here in Pacific Grove. Preservation must be local." For anyone listening that night, this truth is felt with an especially keen sense of loss. During August, in the course of renovating the old Wilson Hotel building at the corner of Lighthouse Avenue and 16th Street, workers exposed the original façade through a process reminiscent of an "archaeological dig." Unfortunately, this building's tin, brick-shaped "skin," pressed to resemble the texture of stone, as well as a great deal of wood ornament and frieze work dating back to the turn of last century ended up in a dumpster.



*"Pacific Grove Victorian" created by Sherry & Norman Fagan won the "People's Choice" award and 1st Place in the "Victorian" category.*

## Auction: Heritage Houses for the Birds

A special presentation of the birdhouses and silent auction will be held at Elmarie Dyke Park (next to Chautauqua Hall) on Sunday, September 17, from noon to 4 p.m. Vote for your favorite birdhouse and bid in the auction to take one home. The bidding will continue through October 1, 2006, at sponsor/public locations. The winners will be announced on October 1 at Elmarie Dyke Park during the annual Historic Home Tour and Artists in Chautauqua, where the birdhouses will be on final display for final bids.

For additional information or an entry form call Craig or Rebecca Riddell at 831-646-0351 or fax your request to 643-0900.



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*"PG Four Square" created by contractor, Steve Honegger won 1st Place in the "Craftsman/Julia Morgan" category.*

## Chautauqua Artists

On October 1st during the Historic Home Tour, 20 artists will be convening at Chautauqua Hall for the 4th annual arts show. For sale will be a rich and assorted collection of art produced by local artists.



For example, Diana Rookstool, a teacher at Pacific Grove Middle School, has been working with gourds for 14 years. She was introduced to gourds by her mother, Carol Rookstool, who founded the California Chapter of the American Gourd Society. From the moment Diana picked up her first gourd, she knew she had found an art medium with vast applications. She has decorated and embellished gourds with everything from shoe leather dyes to pine needles.

Her current favorite method of gourd art is to wood burn designs of Geisha and then paint and stamp brocade patterns on the kimonos. Another approach is to create pitchers from gourds, with painted designs. With artistic themes ranging from Native Americans to Egyptians, Diana enjoys sharing her love of gourds and their endless possibilities with anyone who is interested. Please stop by Chautauqua Hall to visit Diana and the other artists along with their creations. There is no admission fee for this event.

## 837 Ocean View Historic? Yes or No?

This past March, the Architectural Review Board (ARB) took the unprecedented step of referring a remodeling proposal to the Historic Resources Committee. The majority of the ARB felt that approval of the project would have led to the unnecessary demolition of a potentially historic home. The Spanish Eclectic home at 837 Ocean View Blvd. is a familiar sight with its unusual outdoor fireplace. The owner's representative reported that he had checked with the Planning Dept. before the property was purchased, and again before design work began on the new home. He believed that since it wasn't on the inventory of historic homes, it could be demolished.

During ARB review, member Darlene Billstrom, who also sits on the Historic Resources



837 Ocean View

Committee (HRC), mentioned the possible historic status of the house. After deliberations, the majority voted to refer the home to the HRC for consideration.

Subsequently, at a special meeting of the HRC, the issue was reviewed. After discussion, the majority of the committee found that the house did qualify for the historic inventory because 1) it retained its original integrity and 2) it is in a unique location or has singular physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood.

This HRC decision was appealed to the City Council. On June 21, the Council heard arguments made by a lawyer and an architectural historian hired by the owners. Members of your Heritage Society Board and others gave a spirited defense of the home's historic status. The City Council voted 5-1 to uphold the HRC's decision.

During public commentary regarding this project, a member of the audience who was a long time resident in Pacific Grove, recounted the parties that she enjoyed in the home. She attributed the introduction of the "magic carpet" of ice-plant to the determined original owners, who initiated the planting on the shoreline, becoming one

of Pacific Grove's symbols.

There are measures under way within the Community Development Department and the HRC to make sure that a situation like this does not rise again.

*Khinsba2@aol.com*

## City Deals with Illegal Demolitions Opinion

*by Ken Hinsbaw*

The Director of Community Development has sent letters to the owners of both homes that were illegally demolished, assessing damages and levying stiff fines. Both homes had been issued permits for extensive remodeling. Back in February, the city "red tagged" 275 Spruce because it appeared that the allowable limits of demolition had been exceeded, as the owner left just the front portion of the home standing. The fine proposed in the letter is \$47,710. The only part of the home at 156 13th that was left was the floor platform when a stop work order was issued in April. The owner has been ordered to pay \$90,150. Both owners will be limited to the original floor area for five years if they choose to rebuild.

# New Members

Ruth Hartmann  
David and Lois Hines  
Robert Paslay and  
Karen Warwick  
Robert and Paula Weaver  
Jacqueline Pickett

Membership Count:  
**1024**

The projects will be required to submit new plans and pay the usual application fees if they contemplate any construction.

These fines far surpass those of a shingle cottage at 230 Locust back in 1998, which was demolished while being remodeled. The owner was fined \$20,000.

This is a positive benchmark for preservation in Pacific Grove. For the first time the ordinance is being applied to the letter. An outside consultant was retained by the Planning Department to advise on the extent of monetary damages. The fines were based on average per square foot costs of construction and the extent of damage to the structure. These decisions reflect the strong

support within our community as a whole and the tough standards written into our preservation ordinance. This should send a clear message to other builders who contemplate any such action in the future.

*kenl@redsbift.com*

## The Board & Batten Re-Surfaces

*by Sally Aberg*

To borrow from John Steinbeck, who in turn borrowed from the late Scottish poet, Robert Burns, “The best laid plans of mice, men and The Board & Batten co-editors go oft’ astray...” Yours truly and my co-editor and neighbor, Betty Aickelin, extend apologies to Heritage Society members for our long gap in publishing new issues of this much-loved source for Pacific Grove history—architectural and otherwise. Since our inaugural issue as co-editors last spring, numerous unanticipated concerns of our respective daily lives intruded on our best-laid

plans for quarterly issues. As a result, our volunteer contributions to The Board & Batten necessarily had to take a back seat.

But please don’t despair. Betty and I expect to get the next issue into members’ hands sometime this fall, thanks to two local writers. Heritage Society members Sarah J. Diehl and Lillian Wright have each conducted extensive personal research into two fascinating new chapters in Pacific Grove’s history. With such submissions, Betty and I hope to publish on a much more consistent basis in the months and years ahead.



### Newsletter Staff

*Editor*

Maryanne Spradling

*Typesetting*

A Volunteer

*Contributing Editors*

Ken Hinshaw

Sally Aberg

Send your submissions to:

Maryanne Spradling

The Heritage Society

of Pacific Grove

P.O. Box 1007

Pacific Grove, CA 93950

After reading our first issue in 2005, many of you gave Betty and me helpful feedback and constructive criticism. Some of you asked questions, such as the Pacific Grove Reference Librarian who wanted to know who the artist portrays who appears in the mural on Central Avenue and 15th Street. She guessed it might be the mural artist himself, making a sly cameo appearance. Sure enough, an e-mail to now-83-year-old Bernard McDonagh in Sligo, Ireland, confirmed that this hypothesis is indeed true!

Send your submissions to:  
Maryanne Spradling  
The Heritage Society  
of Pacific Grove  
P.O. Box 1007  
Pacific Grove, CA 93950



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