

# THE CAPITAL

"Preserving Santa Barbara's historic sites of enduring community value"

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## APRIL MEETINGS OF INTEREST

### PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

Next Board of Directors meeting: April 6 at the Santa Barbara County Genealogical Society, 316 Castillo Street, 3:30 p.m.

### CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

#### City Council Public Comment and Participating Online

City Council chambers are now open to the public for in-person meetings, or you have the option to participate electronically: 1) via telephone: Call (805) 564-5301 and leave your name, return phone number and the number of the item you wish to speak on. You will be called back during the meeting and will have the chance to make your statement then. 2) you may participate in the Zoom meeting that may be accessed [HERE](#).

City meetings are broadcast live on City TV channel 18 and streamed live [HERE](#), where they are also archived and viewable on demand.

#### City Council

Tuesdays at 2 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall: April 11, 18, 25

#### Planning Commission

First, second and third Thursdays of the month at 1 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall: April 6, 13, 20

#### Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street: April 12, 26

#### Architectural Board of Review

Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. Full Board meets April 3, 17

### COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

County Board of Supervisor Meetings and Planning Commission meetings are broadcast live on CSBT20. They are also streamed live [HERE](#) where they are also archived and viewable on demand.

#### County Board of Supervisors

Three Tuesdays of the month at 9 am. The first and third meetings are held in Santa Barbara in the Board of Supervisors Hearing Room, 105 East Anapamu St., 4th Floor. The second meeting is (typically) held in Santa Maria at 511 East Lakeside Parkway. April 4 (SB), Budget Workshops: 10, 12, 14 (SB), 18 (SM)

#### County Planning Commission

Three Wednesdays of the month at 9 am. The first and third meetings are held in Santa Barbara at 123 East Anapamu Street, Room 17, and the second meeting is (typically) held in Santa Maria at 511 East Lakeside Parkway. April 5 (SB), April 12 (SM), April 26 (SB)

#### County Historic Landmarks

##### Advisory Commission

Second Monday of the month at 10 am at 123 East Anapamu, Room 17 (unless specified otherwise). April 10

## Society News and Notes

By Cheri Rae

On Thursday, March 2, Board Members met at the Genealogical Society meeting room. The first order of business was to discuss the recent lunch meeting with City Parks and Recreation Director Jill Zachary initiated by President Steve Dowty and Board Member Christine Neuhauser. They had a substantive discussion about the fate of Francheschi House, long an issue of concern.

The City is preparing a new RFP for a conceptual study for the property. Proposals include a pavilion, an interpretive center, demolition—from partial to complete—the retention of a perimeter footprint and archways, and/or a corner as well as the medallions. The intention is to integrate the park plan and its relationship to the building, for a cohesive feel for that special property. [NOTE: See Rick Closson's story behind one of the medallions on pp 2-3 this issue.]

They also discussed the need for a plan to address the Italian stone pines on Anapamu Street. The canopy trees comprise a City Historic Landmark, and the city is grappling with multiple issues, including safety, and the reality of traffic and utility lines. The irricades donated years ago by the Pearl Chase Society have served their purpose and will soon be removed, possibly relocated.

Third on the agenda was a discussion about the Cabrillo Pavillion, where the Pearl Chase Society has made a substantial donation to name the upper terrace in honor of Miss Chase. We hope there will soon be an opportunity for members to gather in the space.

Save the Date, April 14, for the first presentation in the Kellam de Forest Speaker Series.

PEARL CHASE SOCIETY CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO KICK OFF THE KELLAM DE FOREST LECTURE SERIES

Featuring local historian Richard Closson to discuss the life and legacy of one of Santa Barbara's best-loved residents and noted preservationist.

FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 2023  
6 PM-7 PM

CARRILLO RECREATION CENTER  
100 E. CARRILLO ST.  
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93101

This event is free to the public with a reservation. Seating is limited.

Please call 805-403-7053 to reserve a seat.



Want to get involved, or have submissions for The Capital? Email us at PCS@pearlchasesociety.org.

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Please direct inquiries  
and comments to:

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**Newsletter**

Cheri Rae, *editor*

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# A Franceschi House Medallion Revisited, Part 1

By Rick Closson

March 25th was the 112th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City. For all of us too young to remember what is a “shirtwaist,” it was a functional button-down blouse, popular for its workplace appeal and simple design. (Ref 1) The largest company in New York City manufacturing shirtwaists was the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, which had more than 500 employees (mostly immigrants and children) (Ref 2) working on the eighth, ninth, and tenth (top) floors of the Asch Building.



Ref 1

In 2002, I wrote in *The Capital* (Ref 3) about the 1927 Montarioso Medallion honoring Frank H. Sommer. His connection with Alden Freeman, our Franceschi House and Park benefactor, dates to liberal New Jersey politics perhaps as early as 1902. Almost a decade later, Sommer played a role in saving victims of a disaster that has been labeled, “the fire that changed America.”



Ref 2



Ref 3

The stone-exterior Asch Building at 23-29 Washington Place, Manhattan, is now called the Brown Building, part of New York University, and listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. In 1911 the building was just below the New York City safety requirement (11 floors and higher) to have stone floors and metal window frames. Both were constructed of wood on all floors of the Asch Building. The building was required to have three staircases per floor, but it had only two. Its required fire escape reached only to the second floor, not to the ground. Labor laws required outward-opening doors; its doors opened inward. Other laws required factory doors to be unlocked during working hours, but the Asch Building doors were routinely locked to prevent workers taking breaks or stealing materials.

Near the end of the shift on that Saturday, about 4:40 pm, a fire was discovered in a rag bin on the eighth floor. Not an uncommon occurrence, but this quickly spread to other fabrics, the wood floor trim, sewing tables, and ceiling despite attempts to extinguish it with pails of water. Eighth-floor workers ran to the two exit doors; one was locked.

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The other door opened inward and was quickly blocked by the crush of frightened escapees. Some ultimately got through to the staircase, but tumbled down until that, too, was completely blocked. Some eighth-floor workers climbed out the windows to fire escapes and reentered the building on the sixth floor to an interior staircase, escaping to the ground floor.

Ninth-floor workers learned of the fire when it flamed up to their windows, making the fire escape too hot and prohibiting that as an exit. The fire escape pulled away from the building and partially collapsed. Some workers jumped from windows anyway; they broke through fire department nets at the street and the impacts of their falling bodies damaged the concrete sidewalk. Others jumped into empty elevator shafts to escape the heat and smoke. They all perished.



Ref 4

On the tenth floor, workers were rescued by the quick thinking of New York University law students and their professor, Frank H. Sommer in the adjacent building. (Ref 4) Sommer was lecturing and heard the fire engine bells and sirens coming closer until they were right below him on the street. He stopped his lecture and went to a room with a window where he could see across the airshaft between buildings to

the fire next door. He knew painters had been working on the NYU building, but it was the weekend and they had left their equipment on the roof. Sommer instructed his students to rig two ladders across the airshaft to the Asch Building and several students climbed over to the inferno as guides.

Sommer would tell the *New York Times* that day, the students,

*“worked like beavers, apparently never giving a thought to the possibility that their own building might catch fire from the flames that were leaping out into the open space. How it was done, I don’t know, but in surprisingly short time about fifty girls were brought across the ladders to safety.”* (Ref 5)

Sommer’s 1911 quick thinking and heroism might have been the reason for a Montarioso Medallion on Freeman’s remodeled Franceschi House, but it wasn’t.



Ref 6

*Next month’s story will tell the even earlier connection between Frank H. Sommer (by the time of the 1927 medallion, he was the Dean of the NYU Law School) and Alden Freeman.*

## Save the Historic Airport Hangars Campaign

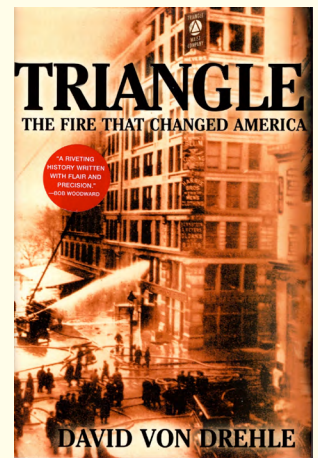


*By Tom Modugno*

*“The only thing more destructive to historical landmarks than a bulldozer is procrastination on the part of preservationists.” ~ Walker Tompkins*

Read more about them [HERE](#)

Sign the petition [HERE](#)



Ref 5

## Preservation in Action: The Main-Begg Farmhouse

By Cheri Rae

On Wednesday, March 15, Pearl Chase Society Board Member Emma Brinkman met with representatives of the Main-Begg Farmhouse and presented them with a check from the PCS. After many months of consideration of the grant application and evaluation of costs associated with the project, the PCS awarded the amount of \$7,450 earmarked for porch repairs.

The farmhouse, designated a County historic landmark in 2020, is located at 5001 Hollister Avenue. It stands on a half-acre lot, what remains of a one-time 24-acre walnut ranch. The fine Craftsman bungalow, built in 1911, is an important reminder of Goleta’s long agricultural past and today’s threatened farmlands. The

PCS is pleased to contribute to the preservation and protection of the farmhouse’s graceful porch area, to make it accessible to visitors once more.



PHOTO COPYRIGHT 2023 BY THE SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS/KENNETH SONG.

## Update: The Cabrillo Pavilion

When the city of Santa Barbara restored the classic beachside Cabrillo Pavilion, the Pearl Chase Society was presented with the opportunity to name the eastern terrace. With its expansive view of the shoreline she worked so hard to protect, it’s a fitting tribute to remember the woman whose vision inspired present-day preservationists to continue her work.

Built in the 1920s and donated to the city by philanthropist David Gray, the Pavilion was renovated nearly a hundred years later. Today it is one of Santa Barbara’s most popular venues, regularly booked to host weddings, conferences and special events. The recreational facilities include fitness rooms, lockers and showers available at modest fees for visitors and residents; the popular Reunion Restaurant offers casual and fine dining morning, noon and night.

The ever-popular children’s playground provides active fun for the littles, and the sand-friendly walker and wheelchair—available at no charge—allows each access for all.

