



# THE CAPITAL

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

Vol. 25, No. 4 • [www.PearlChaseSociety.org](http://www.PearlChaseSociety.org) • April 2022

## APRIL MEETINGS OF INTEREST

### PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

In-person **Board Meetings** at the MacVeagh House on the grounds of the Natural History Museum been suspended due to Covid protocols. The Board continues to meet via Zoom; meetings are typically held the first Thursday of the month at 3:30. Next meeting: April 7.

The **Preservation Committee** is being re-organized and regular dates for Zoom meetings will be determined.

### CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

#### City Council Public Comment and Participating Online

In order to promote social distancing, City Council chambers will not be open to the general public. Public participation can be done in two ways: 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 12, 19, 26

#### Planning Commission

First, second and third Thursdays of the month at 1 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall: April 7, 14, 21

#### Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street: April 13, 27

#### Architectural Board of Review

Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. Full Board meets April 4, 18

### 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 5 (SB), April 19 (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 6 (SB), April 13 (SM), April 27 (SM)

#### County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

Second Monday of the month at 10 am at 123 East Anapamu, Room 17 (unless specified otherwise). April 11

## Society News & Notes

By Cheri Rae

On the afternoon of March 3, 2022, the Board of the Pearl Chase Society met via Zoom for its monthly meeting. Detailed, thoughtful discussions took place about the proposed redesign of De la Guerra Plaza; how best to assist St. Paul AME Church with its repairs and restoration; and reviewing the suggestions about the name of the Pearl Chase Society.

**De la Guerra Plaza:** Many factors of the proposed redesign were considered, including paving, the amount of grass; landscaping; the size and placement of the arcade feature, the location of the restrooms. In evaluating all these features, the overriding question was "What would Pearl do?" There was a general agreement that the "lightest, simplest approach" in updating this significant historic spot would be the best.

It was also pointed out that the city's historic paseo system should be heeded, and that the paseo connection Storke Placita with De la Guerra Plaza should be enhanced to provide both a view corridor and an inviting passageway from State Street.

And the need for creating green space, rather than a large, paved plaza, would be beneficial for downtown residents and visitors alike, creating almost a feeling of a simple pocket park in this neighborhood—as it is, and as it may take shape.

The Board is in the process of writing a letter to the De la Guerra Plaza Committee, with a copy to the HLC.

**St. Paul AME Church:** Several ideas were discussed about how best to maximize any contribution to assist the congregants of this century-old historic landmark with its preservation needs. It was agreed that the Pearl Chase Society could offer guidance about how to enlist appropriate consultants and community support to possibly develop a master plan and access grants and funding to meet the Secretary of Interior standards. Discussions will continue among Board Members and with church officials.

**Name:** Thanks to a good deal of input from members, the possibility of adding to the name of the Pearl Chase Society has been tabled for the foreseeable future.

**A few last thoughts:** Members are encouraged to attend and participate in Board Meetings, to add your thoughts and experience to the discussion. Contained in this issue is the first in a new series of interviews with community members. This month's "Ten Questions With" presents the City of Santa Barbara's Architectural Historian Nicole Hernandez.

As always, feel free to offer your questions, comments, and suggestions, including possible interview subjects you would like to see featured here.



**The next Board Meeting is Thursday, April 7, via Zoom.**

**Want to get involved, or have submissions for The Capital? Email us at [PCS@pearlchasesociety.org](mailto:PCS@pearlchasesociety.org).**

## PEARL CHASE SOCIETY Board of Directors

### President

Steve Dowty

### Vice President

Dennis Whelan

### Secretary

Barbara Boyd

### Treasurer

Nate Cultice

### Historian

Patti Ottoboni

### Board Members

Tina Foss  
Maureen Masson  
Christine Neuhauser  
Kitty Peri  
Dennis Whelan

### Members Emeriti

Sue Adams  
Bob Baum  
Roger Horton  
Barbara Lowenthal

Please direct inquiries  
and comments to:

PEARL CHASE SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 92121  
Santa Barbara, CA 93190-2121  
For information, call  
(805) 961-3938

### Newsletter

Cheri Rae, *editor*  
Lisa DeSpain, *graphics*

Materials published in The Capital is copyrighted by The Pearl Chase Society and may be reproduced only with the written permission of the editor.

## Ten Questions With: Nicole Hernandez, Architectural Historian, City of Santa Barbara



Nicole Hernandez, Santa Barbara's Architectural Historian

### *How did you become interested in historic preservation?*

I started to love historic buildings in high school. I grew up in the downtown area of Denver that actually has an amazing collection of historic buildings, but they were tearing them down fast and constructing massive suburbs with rows and rows of identical houses constructed with plastic materials that had no sense of place, did not express any artistry, unique touches or materials.

I went to study Art History and Italian at Tulane University in New Orleans and Padua, Italy and those two places just sold me how amazing historic buildings make great cities. I saw that art is not just in museums, but lining streetscapes for people of all economic status's to enjoy. So many historic buildings provide intricate details and features

that are compositions creating beauty for people to enjoy while they are just walking down the street on their way to work or school. The demolition of these buildings seemed like very short-sighted decisions for a community. So, to help preserve these places, I decided to pursue a Master of Fine Arts degree in Historic Preservation from Savannah College of Art and Design, a beautiful city that is a playground for a historic preservationist.

### *Where did you work before you came to Santa Barbara?*

After graduate school, I went back to my hometown of Denver, and I worked for a restoration masonry firm that restored many of the historic schools and brick buildings in Denver. I then took a position running a program to help restore inner-city historic Churches at the non-profit, Historic Denver, while I restored my own 1906, brick, Queen Anne Free Classic House.

After Hurricane Katrina, Historic Preservationists were in demand in New Orleans to assist with the recovery. New Orleans was calling me back and I took a position as Architectural Historian for the City of New Orleans for four years.

### *What made you decide to come here?*

I decided to move to California in 2012. I had actually come to Santa Barbara often as a child with my family, so when I was ready to move to California and saw that Santa Barbara was hiring an Architectural Historian, I felt like all my experience had led to this incredible opportunity. It would be a dream come true to be part of the preservation of such amazing historic resources in such a beautiful setting. I was so fortunate to be offered the position in 2012 and it has been an amazing 10 years.

### *What do you do in your job as an Architectural Historian?*

My job as Architectural Historian has a diverse array of responsibilities. One of the largest parts of my job is to review alterations to historic buildings to make sure they are appropriate for the resources. This often requires extensive education to property owners on why it is important to maintain their historic features, like windows, doors, and other elements.

I also process historic designations; this involves documenting all the historic and architectural information to present to the Historic Landmarks Commission

*Continued on page 3*

Don't forget to LIKE us on Facebook.   
[www.facebook.com/PearlChaseSociety](http://www.facebook.com/PearlChaseSociety)

*Continued from page 2*

and City Council so they can make the designation decision. Since I have been with the City, we have designated 336 historic properties over the past 10 years.

In addition, I manage the Historic Significance Reports on-line on a historic resources map, so the public can learn the age and history of historic buildings. I also played a major part in writing and adopting the Historic Resource Design Guidelines and Revised Historic Resources Ordinance. I keep the historic preservation webpage as updated as possible, the site has short bios on architects that designed many of the historic buildings in the City and guidelines to historic architectural styles of the City.

Finally, I run the Mills Act Program, a property tax reduction program for properties actively restoring their buildings, the City now has over 60 Mills Act Contracts. I feel like I could use an army to help preserve even more of the City.

***What is your favorite view in Santa Barbara? And why?***

I love the view of the row of Spanish Colonial Revival style houses on Plaza Rubio from the Mission. They are framed by the beautiful Mission Rose Garden and create an incredible composition with their terra-cotta roofs over the smooth white stucco walls. It is incredible that Mary McLaughlin Craig was able to design these as a newly widowed woman in 1926.

***What is the point of historic preservation these days?***

I cannot tell you how many calls I receive requesting to demolish a historic resource. It is so disheartening to know how undervalued so many of these buildings are. The materials and details are not replaceable and all that artistry that makes places so unique will be lost. Santa Barbara has an amazing collection of small historic homes that are perfect for providing quality housing that include features not often considered anymore. For example, high ceilings, large windows for light, coved arched doorways, expansive front porches and details that most people would find too expensive to replace now. I think we have all been to communities that do not have unique historic buildings and find it rather bleak.

Environmentally, it is so important to preserve our existing built environment. In this age of mass production of plastic architectural features—known to be toxic—that are shipped across the world, it is important to preserve what we already have rather than sending it to the landfill. The greenest building is a historic building.

People love Santa Barbara for our unique place that is different from any other. Not only for its architecture but the unique sandstone walls that line our streets. Can you imagine if someone took it all down and replaced with CMU (Concrete Masonry Unit) walls? I think it would result in a place that looks much like the many American expansive suburbs that pretty much eliminates the humanity and artistry from our streetscapes.

***If you could have dinner with any three Santa Barbarans from the past, who would they be? Why? And where would you go?***

I would go to dinner with architect Lulah Maria Riggs, architect Joseph Plunkett and Rev. Thomas of 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church.

*Architect Lulah Maria Riggs* I could get a glimpse of her creative genius as she was one of the first women working as a licensed architect and designed buildings from the 1920s and transitioned into the Mid-Century modern movement so seamlessly. Plus, she was known to be a bit eccentric and that sounds wonderfully interesting.

*Architect Joseph Plunkett* had such amazing talent, every time I describe his buildings in report, I find a unique curve line, turret or amazing large arched window that define Santa Barbara’s streetscapes. I think he would be pleased that so many of his buildings are still standing and preserved today. He was known for designing on cocktail napkins. I imagine him to have all the charm that talented architects as artists have that make them so delightful.

*Rev. Thomas* was an amazing Black pastor of 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church. He was such a visionary, he designed two churches for 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church at 26 East Gutierrez Street. One before and one after the 1925 earthquake. He had the most exquisite stained glass installed in the existing church. He also designed and built a beautiful apartment building at 23 East Gutierrez Street to provide affordable housing for Black people in Santa Barbara. He was an amazing leader for the Black community and I admire how he enriched the community life in Santa Barbara. I imagine talking to him would inspire anyone to do more and be more for the community.

I would invite them all to my kitchen for dinner. I love to cook and love having people over with no time limit so we can talk for hours over a bottle of wine.

**IMPORTANT UPDATE**

Starting on April 1, City Boards and Commissions will return to in-person meetings. Remote participation will no longer be available at these meetings. Persons with disabilities that prevent them from in-person attendance can participate by contacting the Commission or Board clerk 24 hours in advance to make arrangements to call in.

City Council, Finance Committee, and Ordinance Committee will continue to be accessible to the public via Zoom. ~ from the City of Santa Barbara



## Picturing Pearl: Bringing an Image to Life

By Cheri Rae

When a person lives a very long life, it's likely a given that it's difficult to think of them as young and vibrant, with ideas dancing in their minds. Such is the case with the Society's namesake, Miss Pearl Chase, who passed away just a few weeks before her 91st birthday. She is typically pictured as a distinguished older woman, befitting her many accomplishments and accolades for her work.



Artist Hannah Jaffe, then a student at Santa Barbara High School, Class of 2014, and her inspired depiction of youthful fellow alumna Pearl Chase Class of 1904. Photos: Above by Cheri Rae; right, courtesy Gledhill Library, Santa Barbara Historical Museum

But there's another image of her ~ likely taken when she was a thoughtful student at UC Berkeley ~ that many find intriguing, depicting her as full of promise and curiosity. And that image was taken to another level by a young artist intrigued by her life and times.

Some background to how it all happened: Back in 2013, the Pearl Chase Society had been approached for assistance by school district officials who noted that the historic campus of Santa Barbara High School needed repairs. Members of the Society happily stepped up to help. Miss Chase graduated from the original campus of Santa Barbara High, Class of 1904, and she later taught there in the home economics department. The current campus was built in 1924.

When a celebration of the 125th anniversary of Miss Chase's birth in 1888, was planned, donations for the event were earmarked for the school's restoration fund, along with a generous donation from the Society.

Then-principal John Becchio was so grateful for the generous support of the Society that he came up with a novel idea: He appealed to the director of the school's art academy known as VADA: Visual and Design Academy to ask a promising art student to create a painting as a way of giving thanks to the Pearl Chase Society. Hannah Jaffe stepped forward to take on the opportunity, inspired by historic photos and anecdotes of Miss Chase.

She created a painting based on the youthful photo, but so much more. She depicts Miss Chase as a charming figure with a twinkle in her eye, and places her in modern-day Santa Barbara, standing head and shoulders above the red-tile-roofs she envisioned, and helped bring into reality. The painting was presented as a gift to the Pearl Chase Society, and the Board decided to gift it back to the high school, where it could be seen by students.

Today, the painting hangs in the school's library, with a note crediting the Society for its donation. We hope that it helps inform and inspire young scholars to follow Miss Chase's example to become good stewards of our community and its significant heritage.



Pearl Chase ran the California Conservation Council for decades, voicing her concern for preserving open space and promoting "Outdoor Good Manners."