



THE CAPITAL

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

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JULY MEETINGS OF INTEREST

PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

NOTE: The MacVeagh House on the grounds of the Natural History Museum is no longer available for meetings of the Board. The Board continues to meet via Zoom; meetings are typically held the first Thursday of the month at 3:30. Next meeting: July 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: July 19, 26

Planning Commission

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

Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street: July 20

Architectural Board of Review

Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. Full Board meets July 11

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. July 12 (SB), only meeting of the month.

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. July 6 (SB), July 13 (SM), July 27 (SM)

County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

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

Society News & Notes

By Cheri Rae

The Board of Directors of the Pearl Chase Society met (via Zoom) on Thursday, June 10. Several ongoing issues remain of interest and in need of resolution, including the re-establishment of the Preservation Watch Committee. The monthly meetings and reports were handled with such efficiency and expertise by our late Kellam de Forest that it has proved difficult to begin again on a regular basis. If there are any members who would be interested in participating, please feel free to get in touch.



SAVE THE DATE

Thursday,

July 28, 2022

Annual Meeting of the

Pearl Chase Society

GUEST SPEAKER

Valerie Smith

on

"Better Homes
in America"

5 - 7 P.M. Arnoldi's

600 Olive Street



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

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The Historic State Street Median, Mission Street to Constance Avenue

The Upper East Association Board of Directors has requested consideration from the Historic Landmarks Commission to designate this landscape median as a cultural landscape landmark.

By Fred L. Sweeney AIA, Chair Upper East Association Historic Resources Committee

Noted architectural historian, Dr. David Gebhard, in the book *Santa Barbara a Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, describes how city planning took root in Santa Barbara in the early part of the 20th century. Santa Barbara's urban design benefited from planners like Charles Cheney, Charles Mulford Robinson, and the Olmstead Brothers, as well as participation by private citizens planning groups, such as the Community Arts Association, including the Plans and Planting Committee, and the Chamber of Commerce.

As Santa Barbara began to develop westward, de la Vina Street connected to Hollister Avenue, which later was renamed State Street. This was the original stagecoach path due to impassible Mission Creek boulders blocking State Street. That is why the westerly portion of State Street is locally referred to as "outer State Street," with Mission Creek the unofficial boundary between outer and upper State Street.

Interestingly, as late as 1924, consulting transportation planners thought Santa Barbara Street would be easier to cross Mission Creek to intersect with de la Vina at Alamar Avenue, but this option was not pursued.



Artwork by Fred Sweeney

Continued on page 3

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Continued from page 2

By the early teens of the 20th century, the developing city of Santa Barbara ended at Mission Street. A historical report prepared for a home at 2227 State Street, built in 1922, shows few structures existing in the area above Mission Street. The approved subdivisions were the "Van Vactor and Myers Tract," and the "Mission Hill Addition," both of which created lots for individual sale and designated streets above Mission Street as First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth (or Constance Avenue). The dates of these tract maps are March 4, 1874, superseded by tract maps recorded in 1888, 1906 and 1923.

By 1914, the real estate developers for these subdivisions sought to have the portion of State Street above Mission paved. Local newspaper records show intense debates occurred regarding parking automobiles in the middle of State Street, termed "hobbleskirts," a prerogative term coined after the fashion of women's skirts narrowed at the ankle, thus 'hobbling' their walking.

Especially controversial were hobbleskirts in the downtown retail business portion of State Street between Sola and Arrellaga Streets where the medians made it difficult for cars to maneuver. Developers of the area above Mission Street to Constance proposed parking in the middle of the State Street, which was later modified to allow vehicles to turn-around at the end of each block, so that cars would not have to go all the way to the end of State Street at Constance Avenue.

In March of 1917, the *Morning Press* described petitions being circulated within the community to remove hobbleskirt parking from the retail area of State Street below Mission Street. To the disappointment of some who wanted to save the landscaped parking median on State below Arrellaga Street, the Council established a policy that no hobbleskirts would be constructed in commercial zones. Discussions at City Council about what to do with the paving of State Street above Mission Street ranged widely from providing herringbone parking in the middle of the street, to parking on both sides of the street.

However, in 1917, the inclusion of the median on construction documents from the City Public Works Department show a median with landscaped areas between the blocks on State Street between Mission Street and Constance. What was referred to as a parking "hobbleskirt" was newly defined as landscaped "parkway." This appears to be a local effort to beautify a neighborhood before there were established community plans, zoning codes, standards for streets or design review processes.

The term "parkway" was coined in the 1860s by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux as part of their recommendation to the Borough of Brooklyn to introduce wide tree-lined boulevards in residential neighborhoods. Those wide boulevards created vehicle surfaces for the new automobiles on each side of a center

landscape area with a "roadbed" in the middle for horse-drawn carriages. That term then became commonly used to describe landscape areas that were part of a street system. To this day, this term is not only used for middle of a street's landscape area, but also in city ordinances to identify the landscape area between street curbs and gutters and the adjacent public sidewalk.

The importance of awarding contracts to pave and landscape this portion of "upper State Street" is that it provided a visual beautification of a new residential neighborhood at the top end of the city in the early 20th century. To date, there are ten residences and the Congressional Church located adjacent to the median that have been designated as historic structures.

The State Street landscaped median above Mission Street is a defining characteristic of early 20th-century city planning movements. This includes the Garden Cities Movement, which promoted communities surrounded by "green belts", and the City Beautiful Movement, where cities introduced beauty and monumental grandeur, exemplified by Chicago's Columbian Exposition. Santa Barbara's State Street median represents the community's desire to create an ideal residential area, enhanced with formal landscape in this tree-lined neighborhood.

These two planning movements came just a few years before Santa Barbara changed from a street grid town of Victorian dominated architecture to the Spanish Andalusian influence of neo-Spanish Colonial, much as a consequence of the devastating 1925 earthquake. It was an architectural style that already had begun to dominate Santa Barbara's landscape and architecture, thanks in part to the early Plans and Planting Committee and the nation's first Architectural Board of Review. The City of Santa Barbara was expressing its intention to become a city known for extraordinary architectural and landscape design.

Credit to those who embraced the City Beautiful Movement can be widely shared. They include the Community Arts Association who hired the noted planner Charles Cheney to prepare building and zoning ordinances and develop architectural controls for the city. It includes civic leaders from the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce. Another prominent leader identified in the City Beautiful Movement is City Parks Commission Chairman, A. Boyd Doremus, who was the Park Superintendent from 1902 to 1920, and transformed the waterfront into a palm-lined promenade, landscaped Plaza del Mar into a Mediterranean-style promenade, planted street trees, and improved parks and public spaces.

We would like to recognize these persons, as well as many city staff, for developing a parkway, rather than a parking strip, on State Street between Mission Street and Constance Avenue.

Miss Chase Goes to Washington...And Makes National News

By Cheri Rae

In April of 1973, President Richard Nixon signed a proclamation designating the first National Preservation Week, May 6 to 12. The proclamation read, "As the pace of change accelerates in the world around us Americans more than ever need a lively awareness of our roots and origins in the past on which to base our sense of identity in the present and our directions for the future."

First Lady Pat Nixon was scheduled to host an awards luncheon at historic Decatur House on May 8th honoring six individuals selected to receive the National Trust for Historic Preservation Award for their years of distinguished service to the cause of preservation. Miss Pearl Chase of Santa Barbara was one of them, the only one from the West, honored for her decades of service to the local community, California and beyond.

Miss Chase, then 84, was a lifelong Republican who had been invited to Nixon's inauguration in 1969. She was delighted to travel East to accept the award. She lined up her accommodations and made arrangements with friends and family members for visits before and after the event.

As the Administration and the First Family struggled to maintain an air of business as usual, the nation was abuzz with reports of the Watergate scandal. With the resignation of FBI director L. Patrick Gray and top aides John Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, along with the firing of White House counsel John Dean, and the scheduling of the hearings on television, it was a challenging time in Washington, D.C.

Beyond any consideration of politics, Miss Chase felt sympathetic to the personal toll the scandal was taking on the First Lady. She made the national news when she surprised everyone when she unexpectedly spoke up in support of



her hostess. When introduced, she rose from her seat and said, loud enough for the whole room to hear, "The people of California are very proud of this lady. I want to say this lady's courage, manners and delightful feeling of friendship wherever she goes is a great asset to this country."

The Associated Press reported, "tears came to Mrs. Nixon's eyes" when Pearl spoke, and the assembled guests gave her a standing ovation. Although she wasn't expected to—or even supposed to—give a speech, Miss Chase was directed to the microphone by the First Lady. She walked to the designated spot, seized her moment and comfortably spoke for several minutes, offering her thoughts about preservation: "It's a matter of good housekeeping," she said, "Pick up, change and improve after you." And she offered additional insights from her years of experience: "My pollution solution is simple—get rid of anything which offends your eyes, ears, nose and mouth."

The Washington Post wrote its own exclusive, and newspapers from coast to coast picked up the story from the Associated Press, the Panama City News-Herald, the Long Beach Press-Telegram, and the Santa Barbara News-Press, where Miss Chase's friend, Beverley Jackson added her own thoughts.

After her successful trip to the nation's capital, and making headlines across the nation, Pearl traveled directly to San Francisco, where she visited with her dear friend, Alice Cooper Bentz who had just celebrated her 102nd birthday.

Years later, Vie Obern, one of "Pearl's Girls" remembered what Pearl had said about the event, "In 1973, she was presented the national citation from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She loved that and she always said that that was the last pleasant thing that Mrs. Nixon probably did."

