

THE CAPITAL

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

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JUNE 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: June 2.

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: June 7, 14, 21, 28

Planning Commission

First, second and third Thursdays of the month at 1 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall: June 2, 9, 16

Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street: June 8, 22

Architectural Board of Review

Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. Full Board meets June 13, 27

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

County Board of Supervisor Meetings and Planning Commission meetings are broadcast live on CSBTV20. 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. June 7 Election Day, no meeting; June 14 (SB); June 21 Juneteenth, no meeting; June 28 (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. June 1 (SB), June 8 (SM), June 29 (SM)

County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

Second Monday of the month at 10 am at 123 East Anapamu, Room 17 (unless specified otherwise). June 13

Society News & Notes

By Cheri Rae

In the absence of a quorum for the Board Meeting on May 6, via Zoom, there was extended discussion about De la Guerra Plaza as well as the current condition of State Street and concerns about the vision for it. A reminder, that the annual meeting of the Pearl Chase Society will be scheduled in July, according to the by-laws.

In community news, a group known as Citizens for the Restoration of Community Equity recently penned an op-ed in Noozhawk titled, *Equity: Here's How to Restore Downtown Santa Barbara Now*.

The piece detailed many concerns about the current condition of State Street, asserting, "The mayor and council now need to work in concert with each other and the city administrator to provide the leadership necessary to take immediate 'emergency' measures and help our struggling small businesses by restoring equity and fairness, and refocusing on our city's culture and beauty."

Calling this a "pivotal time in Santa Barbara," they offered several suggestions for immediate action while the Master Plan process continues. They include a streamlined permitting process; the elimination of parklets; signage according to the [Municipal Code Sign Ordinance](#); and addressed multiple aesthetic issues and transportation concerns.

While advocating for State to remain closed, they called for the painting over the of the green bike lanes and vehicle traffic restored to cross streets, such as West Victoria Street, where only one-way traffic is now permitted.

Further they requested the city "Create a fair and equitable environment by treating all blocks of State Street the same from the 400 block through the 1300 block, between Gutierrez and Sola streets."

It was signed by a group of 25 prominent individuals representing an array of interests including business and property owners, restaurateurs, citizens, longtime residents, a commercial real estate broker, a former director of the Downtown Organization and a former city councilmember.

Read the text [HERE](#).

"Good Style is Good Business." ~ Pearl Chase

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

Ten Questions With: Valerie Smith

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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*

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Valerie Smith is a student at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University. She recently completed her thesis "The Small House Movement of the 1920: Preserving Small "Better Homes," and has focused on Santa Barbara as a case study. She will be reporting on her work later this summer at a meeting with the Architectural Board of Review.



What got you interested in pursuing this study of the Better Homes of America Movement?

I was interested in researching traditional single-family dwellings of the 1920s and this decade, and type of architecture was under-represented in historic preservation. I read many 1920s trade catalogs and house plan books. I discovered a guidebook from Better Homes in America as my research developed. I was interested in the program's philosophies and the annual model house competition. It became essential to document the program's history and examine the extant model houses built during the national campaigns.

And using Santa Barbara as a Case Study?

It became clear that Santa Barbara's Community Arts Association made noteworthy contributions to the small house movement in the 1920s. Pearl Chase and the Plans and Planting Committee of the Community Arts Association were focused on small house design before Better Homes in America became a national government-endorsed program. After the program was incorporated, small house efforts continued in Santa Barbara with yearly Better Homes campaigns. The Better Homes campaigns in Santa Barbara were so successful that they won annual prizes in the national competition, and the model houses were regularly featured in Better Homes publications.

What do you think Santa Barbara residents should know about Pearl Chase and her leadership in this national movement?

Pearl Chase played a unique role in promoting quality houses for residents with moderate incomes in Santa Barbara. Many of the small houses around Santa Barbara may be built from plans she encouraged to allow everyone to own an "architect-designed" house even with a modest budget. Her accomplishments in conservation, preservation and civic planning are known. Still, I hope to highlight her role in the Better Homes program that brought Santa Barbara and the national attention in the 1920s.

What implications does this movement have for today, when homeownership is increasingly out of reach for so many?

One hundred years later, we find our country in a situation where there is a housing shortage for people with a moderate income and now even a middle-class income. The 1920s was a time when the entire country focused on providing quality small houses for the masses. Pearl Chase used the platform of the Better Homes in America with the support of the Community Arts Association to accomplish this goal in Santa Barbara. Similarly, it may take the alliance of many different groups and the support of local and national governments before the extreme housing conditions can improve in our country.

Would you describe the difference between the word "home" and "house" in the movement?

The term "home" was often used in early pattern books to encourage the idea that the single-family dwelling was the most wholesome and comfortable option for families and raising children. The term "home" continued into the 20th century as house plan books and trade catalogs used it to sell building materials and plans. Marie Meloney strategically named the program *Better Homes in America* rather than *Better Houses in America*.

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How were these homes constructed in harmony with nature and respect to the individuality expressed by the owner?

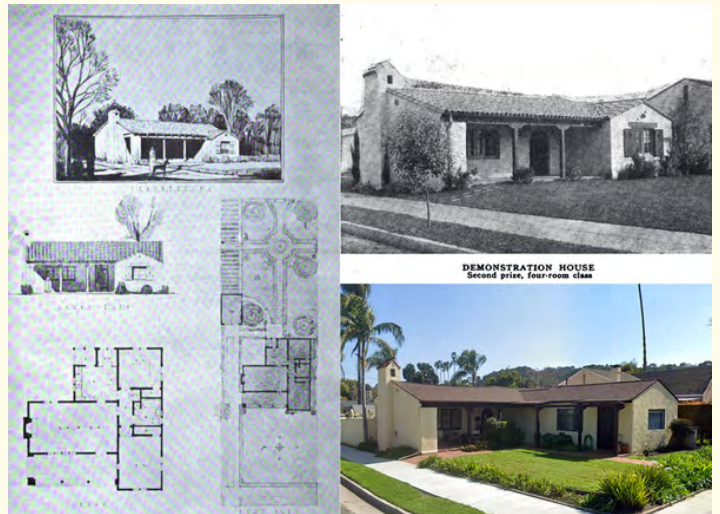
According to Better Homes in America leaders, individualization through selecting a house plan versus buying a house that was already built was also vital to achieving a small “better” house. There were hundreds of architect-designed house plans that prospective homeowners could select. The house plans could be customized based on the plot of land and the owner’s preferences. Small house architects also encouraged prospective owners to select a plan to achieve the best sun exposure and be sited to provide views of the surrounding landscape. Nature became a key component of small houses of the 1920s with a rear yard for recreation and dedicated garden space. Landscape architects were involved in Better Homes campaigns to show prospective owners how to create gardens and plant trees to have the house harmonize with nature. Santa Barbara led the nation with garden designs for small houses and was featured in many Better Homes publications in the 1920s.

What do you like most about the Everyman’s House?

Dr. Caroline Bartlett Crane was an exceptional woman and her Everyman’s House demonstrates how women were given a platform to become involved in architectural design, landscape design, and city planning through Better Homes in America. Everyman’s House was radical in how Crane designed the plan to be flexible depending on the family size and preferences. She included storage everywhere and made almost every inch of the house usable space. Despite some advancements for women during World War I as they worked in jobs outside of the home, the woman’s role as house manager was emphasized in the 1920s. Crane’s Everyman House demonstrates some of these societal norms, but she did her best to eliminate steps for the housewife by creating a compact plan. She also designed a kitchen that demonstrated a comfortable workspace and new “labor-saving” appliances.

You provided context for the now-famous photo of Miss Chase with a group of Black residents at the home at 206 Gray Avenue. Would you please tell us about that?

In a Better Homes Guidebook, I read that a Black minister participated in Better Homes Week in Santa Barbara by exhibiting a model house in the 1926 campaign. Although the guidebook gave details about other model houses that year, very little was found about the minister’s house. I visited the Hoover Institution Library & Archives at



In Santa Barbara, California, the Community Arts Association used architect Angus McDonald McSweeney’s small house plan (left) to design a model house (top right). The house was part of the national Better Homes in America campaign in 1925. The house is extant but has been altered (bottom right). Sources: *Small House Designs, California Southland, Google Maps.*

Stanford University, which retains many of the Better Homes in America files. One of my research goals was to find more information about the Black minister’s house. I felt it was important to Black history and Santa Barbara’s architectural history. I eventually found a historical photo along with the address of the model house. It turns out that the photo has been published in several articles regarding Santa Barbara’s Black history, but until now, the connection with the Better Homes program was not known. Pearl Chase and the Plans Committee were proud of Reverend Harris’ contribution to the 1926 campaign in Santa Barbara. They set an example for the nation by creating an inclusive Better Homes campaign.

How did the 1925 earthquake affect this movement?

A week after the 1925 earthquake, Chase received news that Santa Barbara had won first prize for the national Better Homes campaign. Amazingly, all the model houses they had featured were still standing after the earthquake. Pearl Chase and her committee’s small house efforts continued and set out to prepare the small house campaign for 1926. In addition, the Architectural Board of Review led by Bernhard Hoffmann oversaw rebuilding a “new” Santa Barbara that furthered the design goal to rebuild in a style that reflected the city’s Mexican and Spanish Colonial past. Many of the model houses for future Better Homes campaigns would be built in this style, creating a cohesive aesthetic in the city.

What surprised you most in conducting the research for this study?

I was surprised by how many model houses are hiding in plain sight. Fortunately, many are extant with their original integrity intact. It became clear as my research developed that not only were single-family dwellings of the 1920s underrepresented, but the history of model houses built by local Better Homes committees all over the nation was long forgotten. Each of the houses contains a unique and exciting history and much can be learned about 1920s small house architecture and social ideals by studying the model houses.



Pearl Chase, third from right on porch.

Julia Morgan and the Santa Barbara Earthquake, 97 Years Ago this Month

By Cheri Rae

Like Pearl Chase, architect Julia Morgan was a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, and member of the same sorority, Kappa Theta Alpha. Pearl referred to her as “a very brainy little lady.”

On June 29, 1925, Morgan was visiting Santa Barbara to discuss the possible commission to build a women’s hotel. As she awaited the arrival of the State



746 State Street, corner of De La Guerra

Street streetcar to transport her to the meeting, she was brought to her knees by the shaking of the earth.

She stayed safe from dust and falling debris by covering herself with a gunnysack she hastily retrieved from an ice wagon parked nearby. She recounted her experience in the Santa Barbara earthquake in the Berkeley-based journal *Architect and Engineer*, noting, “As I stood resting, I saw fine white dust coming from a brick building nearby, the same white dust which I had seen come out of the chimney near my room in San Francisco [in 1906].

“After the dust cleared it was a perceptible time before anybody came out of the buildings. When they appeared from little lower State Street hotels and rooming houses, fathers and mothers were carrying children of 8, 10 and 12 years. No children were walking. It was very touching. Evidently in the great catastrophe the parents reverted to protecting them as little children.”

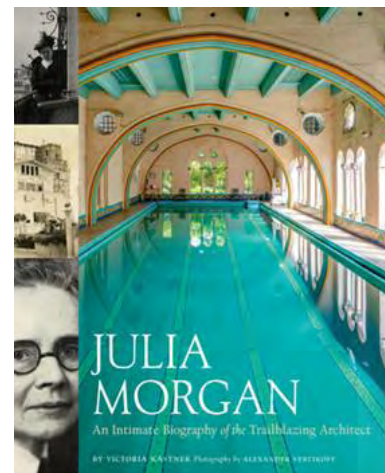
The experience offered her a unique opportunity to examine buildings, compare those that were

damaged with those that were not, and better understand the geographical features of town. She put a positive note on the harrowing morning when she noted, “I spent hours among the buildings; it was a great practical experience.”

Morgan negotiated the commission and built the Margaret Baylor Inn (now known as the Lobero Building) at 924 Anacapa Street.

Learn more about the talented architect in the exquisite new volume, *Julia Morgan, An Intimate Biography of the Trailblazing Architect* by Victoria Kastner (Chronicle Books).

To hear more information about Julia Morgan from author Victoria Kastner as well as other experts, check out the podcast and transcript [HERE](#).



Our Lady of Sorrows Church, State and Figueroa



Santa Barbara Library. All photos: Edson Smith Collection