

THE CAPITAL

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

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NOVEMBER MEETINGS OF INTEREST

PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

Next Board of Directors meeting: November 2 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: November 7 (only meeting scheduled)

Planning Commission

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

Historic Landmarks Commission

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

Architectural Board of Review

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

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. November 7 (SB), November 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. November 1 (SB), November 8 (SM)

County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

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

Society News and Notes

By Cheri Rae

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of the Pearl Chase Society was postponed until Thursday, October 19 to accommodate autumn travel plans by some members who visited far-flung places. Upon return, the Board conducted regular business and held an in-depth discussion about how to restore or revise the popular Historic Homes Tour.

As we consider options that include access, walkability and feasibility in a post-Covid world, it makes sense to reach out to our membership to discover

preferences. Are there members and friends who would like to offer their homes? Are there specific neighborhoods or themes that members and friends would like to explore? Would members and friends be interested

in widening the notion of tours to such options as private clubs not typically accessible to the public, or various cultural establishments who might be willing hosts or part of the planning team? In short, we would like to hear from you! Please email your thoughts to PCS@PearlChaseSociety.org.



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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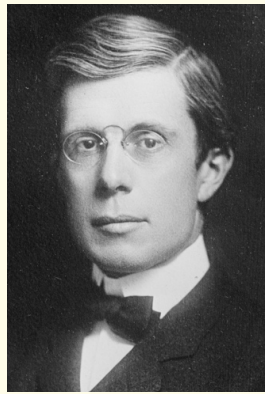
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A Franceschi House Medallion Revisited, Part 2

By Rick Closson

[Ed. Note: See Part 1, April, 2023 *The Capital*]

The connection between Alden Freeman (the man who remodeled Franceschi House in 1927 and donated it as a park to Santa Barbara) and Frank Sommer (whose image became a medallion on the Franceschi House exterior) began years before the drama of the New York City fire, "The Triangle Fire." Frank H. Sommer and Alden Freeman worked together in Essex County NJ, where Sommer was a liberal reformer and one-time sheriff just miles away from Freeman's home in East Orange. This is the story of that early association.



7. Alden Freeman in 1909

Freeman (b. 1862) had a typical childhood in a middle-class Cleveland family. The family later became fabulously wealthy through his father's association with the Rockefeller brothers and their Standard Oil Companies. The Freemans moved in 1877 to the fashionable enclave of East Orange NJ to be near the Rockefeller business center in New York City.

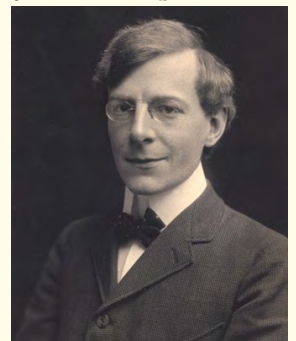
After graduating from New York University (B.S. 1882, M.S. 1887), Freeman dabbled in a variety of endeavors afforded him by wealth, and settled into his lifelong liberalism, including vocal socialism before The Great War. (Ref 6) In 1902 he turned to politics and ran unsuccessfully for local offices when local Republicans were the progressive reform party and Democrats were corrupt. A New York Times article described him:

"If anybody has the idea that Alden Freeman is a 'sissy,' he should revise his opinion. He has got the lower jaw of a bulldog and the upper jaw of a philosopher. He looks like ... Pete, President Roosevelt's bull terrier. There is a gleam of humor lurking all the time behind his earnestness, and he is the sort of man that a real man warms to. If anybody has concluded that because Freeman has taken up Emma Goldman's cause he is a crank, that man is just as much mistaken as it is possible." (Ref 7)

In 1903 Freeman was part of an Essex County Grand Jury that indicted directors of the New Jersey Traction Company related to a tragedy in the Roseville district of neighboring Newark. (Ref 8) A Delaware & Lackawanna train had run into a trolley, filled with high school students, at a Clifton Avenue track crossing near what is now Branch Brook Park and the Essex Freeway. It occurred less than three miles from Freeman's home in East Orange and nine high school girls were killed. Sommer was a vocal attorney who championed the cause for corporate responsibility and better New Jersey public safety laws in what became known as the "Roseville Movement."

Sommer (b. 1872) was from a poor Newark family, ten years younger than Freeman. From an early age he bootstrapped himself to success in a way rarely heard in the 21st century. He graduated from high school at age 12, sold newspapers and worked as an office boy after school, was noticed by a lawyer who gave him a job in his law office and encouraged him to attend law school after hours. Sommer entered night school at Metropolis Law School and graduated as valedictorian in 1893. He joined the Metropolis law faculty before the school merged with the NYU Law School in 1895. (Ref 9)

Eight years later, the Roseville catastrophe occurred in Sommer's hometown of Newark. His interest was



8. Photo of Frank H. Sommer taken about the time of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.

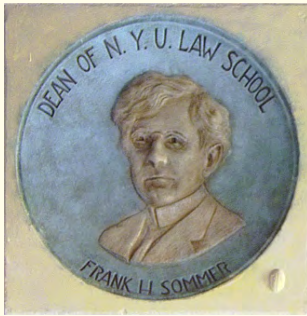
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personal and his populist oratory was fiery. At a public gathering, he pressed,

"We have been sluggards. It was our duty to see to it that those in power made the trolley company and the railroad company do away with these dangerous [track] crossings. The coroner's jury and the grand jury [on which Freeman sat] will settle the question as to the real blame, but we are all morally responsible. Now don't let us waste time in unfruitful criticism, but let us set to work and see that something is done." (Ref 9, again)

Freeman took note. Sommer was a well-spoken progressive who shared Freeman's anti-corruption views. In 1904 Sommer was elected to the Newark Board of Education and, the following year he was elected Sheriff of Essex County as part of the Colby New Idea Movement. In 1908 he was appointed by New Jersey governor John Fort to the State Board of Railroad Commissioners. The Railroad Commission became the Public Utility Commission in 1910 with authority over gas, water, electric power, telephone, and telegraph companies, as well as transportation companies. (Ref 10) Subsequent governor Woodrow Wilson appointed Sommer as the commission's lead counsel.



9. The Frank H. Sommer Medallion on Casa Casuarina (1931), now best known as the "Versace Mansion" in Miami Beach FL.

Sommer was a professor at the NYU Law School, lecturing to students on March 25, 1911, when the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire occurred and he became Dean of the school in 1916. Created a decade later, the Montarioso Medallion notes his rank as Dean, as does the later medallion at Casa Casuarina in Miami Beach. One hundred forty-six garment workers ultimately perished in the worst industrial fire in New York City's history and revolutionized safety codes across the nation. As a result, the day is publicly recognized each year by a huge array of impacted groups, including workplace safety advocates, child labor law activists, labor unions, federal agencies, and women's movement marchers. There is a memorial organization that sponsors scholarships. Many books have been written, plus movies and television specials made about the tragedy. Interested readers are encouraged to sample many online information sources [HERE](#).

Alden Freeman died at Casa Casuarina in 1937, beset by Alzheimer's dementia. Frank Sommer would die 2 decades later in Newark, having been a private practitioner, an academician, and public servant. (Ref 11)

At the time of his death, Sommer was Dean, emeritus, of



10. The photo of Frank H. Sommer on which the medallions at Montarioso and Casa Casuarina were based.

the NYU Law School and a deputy state attorney general supervising work of the New Jersey Public Utilities Commission. In addition, he had been chairman of the judiciary committee at the New Jersey Constitutional Convention, on the New Jersey Water Board, an advisory board member of the National Industrial Advisory Corporation in New York and Washington, on the Joint Conference on Legal Education in New York State, and president of the Essex County welfare committee.

References (1-5 apply to the first installment, *The Capital*, April, 2023)

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Present-day Santa Barbara: Cranes, construction and congestion. Is this the future we envision?

Photo: Christine Neuhauser

The Kellam de Forest Speaker Series: It's a Wrap!

By Cheri Rae

Our inaugural season of the speaker series inspired by and named in honor of the incomparable Kellam de Forest has come to a close. After his passing in 2021, Society members puzzled over the best way to honor Kellam and to designate the generous donations made in his name. Board members enthusiastically worked together, offering time, talent, and treasure in planning and participating in this community outreach; no doubt our illustrious founding member would have approved. Collectively, we thank community members for your interest, support, and contributions to this inaugural effort.

As noted by series organizer, Claudia Schou, "Among the highlights of our Kellam de Forest Speaker Series achievements are highly attended lectures and presentations that demonstrated the Pearl Chase Society board members' [past and present] expertise on local history, including the first installment, *Kellam de Forest* by member Rick Closson; *The Social Work of Pearl Chase* by Cheri Rae; and Dennis Whelan's collaboration with Dr. Lauren Bricker for her presentation of *David Gebhard's Santa Barbara*.

She added that author Douglas Woods offered a "presentation that appealed to fans of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture."

The series culminated with the screening of



filmmaker Jim Cutsinger's *Birth of Beauty: The Santa Barbara Renaissance*, commissioned by the Pearl Chase Society. Schou noted, "Mr. Cutsinger's film added depth and intrigue to the women who helped shape Santa Barbara's

architectural landscape. It was also a successful end note to this season's Kellam de Forest Speaker Series."

As we look forward to planning more events in 2024, we would appreciate input about those you attended, and what sort of presentations and subject matter you might like to see in the second year of the series. Please take a few moments to send an email to with your comments and preferences, and even suggestions for speakers you might want to hear.

A few suggestions: Films? Individual Speakers? Panel Discussions? Architects? Planners? Historians? Preservationists? Authors? Elected Officials?

What subject areas would you like to have presented? The 1925 Earthquake? Focus on important individuals in Santa Barbara history? Gardens? Insights from members of boards and commissions?

Your input will help us create another successful series as we explore the untold and special stories of Santa Barbara. Email us at PCS@PearlChaseSociety.org

November Birthdays of Note

Kellam de Forest, November 11 and Pearl Chase, November 16: both Scorpios who shared the qualities of leadership, independence, and determination. Santa Barbara celebrated Pearl's 80th, 90th with her, and her 100th birthday was a day to honor



From the Pearl Chase Society archives: A portion of the five-inch stack of cards, letters, and well wishes for Pearl's 90th birthday celebration. Sent to great woman from a grateful community from near and far.

her memory. In 2013, The Pearl Chase Society commemorated her 125th birthday, and the following year, it was Kellam who insisted we throw her another party. That one, he planned and selected the menu at Arnoldi's—and was surprised when presented with a birthday cake to celebrate his special day!

This year, the Society is teaming with the charming, woman-owned shop, [Santa Barbara Company](http://SantaBarbaraCompany.com), 214 E. Victoria Street, on November 18, noon to 4 p.m. to celebrate Pearl's 135th birthday with a garden party, membership drive and book-signing of *A String of Pearls: Pearl Chase of Santa Barbara* by Cheri Rae. Do some early holiday shopping and wear your pearls in memory of our community gem!



When Kellam got a birthday surprise.