

# THE CAPITAL

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

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## DECEMBER MEETINGS OF INTEREST

### PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

Next Board of Directors meeting: December 7 at the Santa Barbara County Genealogical Society, 316 Castillo Street, 3:30 p.m.

### CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

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: December 5, 12

#### Planning Commission

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

#### Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street: December 6, 20

#### Architectural Board of Review

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

### 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. December 5 (SB), December 12 (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. December 6 (SB), December 13 (SM)

#### County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

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

## 2023 Year-end Report from the President

I am happy to report that the Pearl Chase Society has realized significant membership growth this year. A good reason being the success of our five-part Kellam de Forest speaker series. It culminated with the premiere showing of the movie "Birth of Beauty." All events were well attended and helped to reinvigorate public interest in the Society.

Currently we are considering public and private sites for a historic architectural tour in 2024. This will help generate much-needed funds so that we may continue to support preservation projects in the community.


Other projects completed in 2023 include the reconstruction of the Main-Begg farmhouse porch (entirely funded by the Society) and the official plaque for the portrait of Pearl Chase, an oil painting, which hangs in the City Recreation Center on Carrillo Street.

Our ongoing projects include a status report for the landmarked Italian stone pine trees along Anapamu Street. We are also assisting the Bungalow Haven Neighborhood Association with their application through the City to receive Federal Historic Register and State Historic Register status for the neighborhood located in the Lower Riviera.


We continue to follow important projects in design within the City of Santa Barbara, including the State Street Promenade and the De la Guerra Plaza Revitalization project.

We also are very excited to have redesigned our website. Please go online and check us out: [www.pearlchasesociety.org](http://www.pearlchasesociety.org)

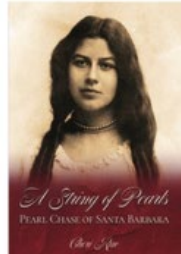
~ Steve Dowty



Join us and  
*Celebrate Santa Barbara!*



Shopping, membership drive for the Pearl Chase Society, book signing, & Pearl Chase's birthday party.



In the garden of the Santa Barbara Company  
Saturday, Dec. 2, 12 ~ 4  
214 E. Victoria Street  
*refreshments will be served*

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

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**Secretary**

Dennis Whelan

**Treasurer**

Nate Cultice

**Historian**

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Cheri Rae

Claudia Schou

**Members Emeriti**

Sue Adams

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Roger Horton

Barbara Lowenthal

Please direct inquiries  
and comments to:

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

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**Historic Holidays: Pearl Chase and Christmas Celebrations**

By Cheri Rae

*Holiday art from greeting cards Pearl Chase received in 1978, her final Christmas. Courtesy the archives of the Pearl Chase Society.*

Annual community Christmas celebrations were very important to Pearl Chase. Her training as a social worker gave her a sensitivity to widespread community needs. She knew that for many, the holiday season could be a lonely time—whether it was servicemen stationed far from home, the elderly or low-income children and families who had little hope of feeling special at that time of year.

The holiday activities began as a simple tree lighting ceremony and holiday gathering and grew into much more. In 1920, as reported in the *Morning Press*, Pearl strolled around Santa Barbara's then-Greek Revival-style courthouse, she pointed to the largest evergreen tree on the grounds. That was the one she wanted decorated for the community Christmas tree celebration. She reassured those who expressed concerns that the tree was about to be sacrificed. "The big evergreen is not to be cut down, nor harmed in any way," she declared. As the head of the celebration committee, she oversaw the arrangements that required scaffolding for the decorating crew. She reminded them, "We used the same tree six years ago and a great crowd enjoyed the unique outdoor celebration. The tree was sprayed with white, which by first rains washed away. Well, it was much healthier than it was before it was sprayed." After that, another tree was chosen to be the annual Community Christmas Tree.

The Norfolk Island Star Pine, located at the corner of Chapala and Carrillo streets, was famously planted as a seedling by Dr. Winchester, in honor of the birth of his niece in 1878. Today, it soars some ninety feet into the sky. It has continued to serve as the community Christmas tree, decorated with lights, and is known as the Tree of Light, designated a City Landmark in 1977.

Early each December, Pearl requested assistance from the electrical union and the Santa Barbara Police Department to ensure the success of the annual event. And she always wrote letters of appreciation for their services, as well as to the Parks Department for their assistance in decorating civic locations including the post office, the train station, and the recreation center.

In a letter published in the *Santa Barbara News-Press* she thanked community volunteers: "Your help and assistance, well as that of many others, was so kindly and generous! Helping with the preparation of Santa Barbara's Community Christmas celebration, that the work of arranging for the Christmas carols and tableaux and the community Christmas tree was really a great pleasure to the committee. As you know, the plan is to perfect so beautiful and impressive an expression of the Christmas spirit that it will be well worth repeating each year. We are sincerely grateful for your interest and help and trust that when the holidays come round once more that you will again stand ready to assist." She signed it,

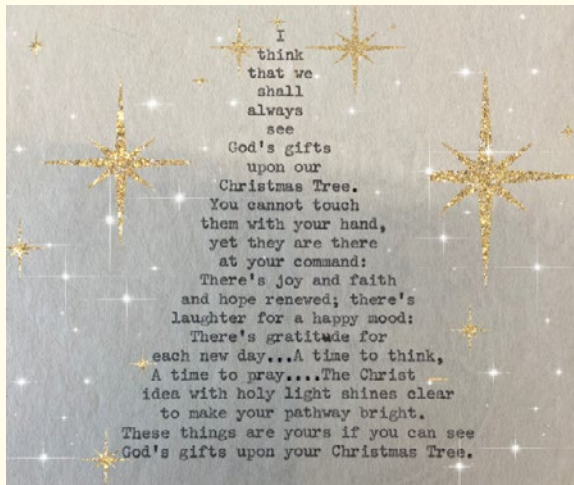
"The Community Christmas Committee of the Community Arts Association. Pearl Chase, Chairman. Georges Clerbois, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Herter."

Each year, Pearl tried to improve and add to the celebration. She worked with the County Welfare Department to coordinate updated lists of what she termed "aged boarding homes" so that groups of Christmas carolers could spread holiday cheer by



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visiting the elderly, the housebound and the infirm who could not attend the community celebration.

The annual Open House at the Recreation Center on Christmas Day became a community tradition, a welcoming place for those who might not have another place to celebrate the holiday. The invitation was issued throughout town for "those who are away from home and lonesome to join us Christmas afternoon." It was the warmly welcoming site of holiday entertainment; dinner and refreshments were served, along with cakes and cookies donated by local bakeries.

Pearl once observed that she hadn't spent a Christmas with her family in more than two decades; instead she found her celebration and joyful holiday spirit by sharing with those in need.

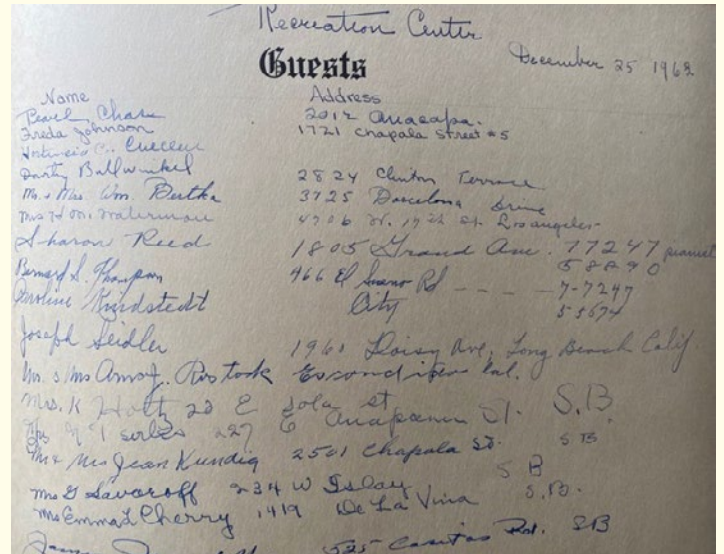
During World War II, Pearl focused on the needs of the local population as well as the numerous members of the military stationed nearby. She invited them to celebrations on Christmas Day and New Year's Eve so that the lonely soldiers could still have a place to feel a bit of holiday cheer.



A guest book from 1943 to 1945 includes entries from military members hailing from such distant locales as Chicago; Dayton, Ohio; Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania; Burlington, Vermont; Dothan, Alabama; and Paris, Texas. Even members of the Royal Australian Air Force were welcomed from Perth and Sydney, Australia.

The Recreation Center's annual Christmas Dance was referred to as "the City's Dance," a primary celebration for the community. Hundreds of people streamed through the center during the holiday season, not only for the dances, but, as one reporter noted, "there is a lure for those who wish to enjoy quietly the cheer of big blazing fires and softly lighted rooms away from the music."

In addition to serving the community, Pearl enjoyed selecting



Guest book signatures from Christmas Day Open House at the Recreation Center, 1962. Courtesy the archives of the Pearl Chase Society

and sending personalized California-specific gifts to friends and family members on cold and wintery the East Coast. She typically ordered in bulk, always asking for a quantity discount, sending holiday treats like figs, dates, almonds, and oranges, shipped as gift packs from the growers. Invariably these thoughtful, edible California-themed gifts were received with surprise and much appreciation from the recipients; her mail throughout the month of January was typically filled with thank you notes.

Pearl and her friends recognized and respected the inherent dignity of low-income families who needed assistance; they came up with the novel notion of allowing them to select the items they needed, rather than simply receiving a boxed-up handout. They could browse the shelves lined with food for their family, toys for their children and determine their own selections. This respectful approach continued as the Council of Christmas Cheer, originally a holiday project, has expanded to serve year-round need, and is now known as Unity Shoppe.

After Pearl bowed out in 1974, local dynamo and longtime volunteer, Barbara Tellefson, took over the task of running the organization for decades. She expanded its mission, organized an annual telethon broadcast locally, and attracted the assistance and support of many dedicated community members, as well as entertainers Kenny Loggins and Brad Paisley. Although Barbara passed in 2020, the Unity Shoppe, with its deep roots in the community, continues to serve, now as a year-round source of assistance.

**A Comment on the Year Ending 1978**  
 Your Koran, Torah, Bible  
 Brought forth from their pages  
 Peace seeking psalms of the ages  
 Sadat, Begin, Carter  
 Expectations, Complications  
 Confrontations, hesitations  
 Will the trio's trying triumph  
 Into creation  
 A modern hymn the world to sing  
 In jubilation  
 ~ by Edwina & Sheridan Hegland



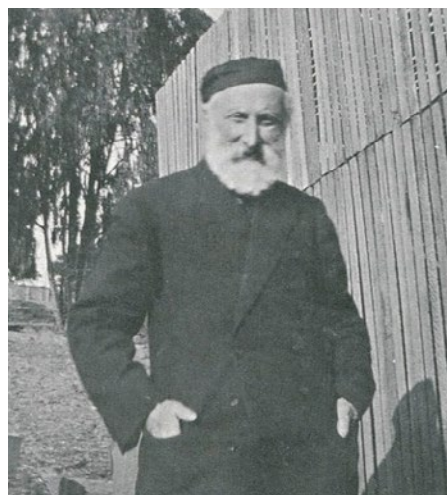
## Franceschi House Update

**B**uilt in 1905, donated to the City of Santa Barbara in 1931, the story of the Riviera structure known as Franceschi House or Montarioso has many chapters—and the Pearl Chase Society has been closely involved in many of them. Here's a new one. The Santa Barbara City Council authorized a professional contract of \$302,530 with an additional \$30,253 for design services produced by local firm DesignArc.

Jill Zachary, Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Santa Barbara reported, "On November 7, 2023, the City Council approved a professional services contract



*Franceschi House, circa 1907.*



*Francesco Franceschi, who had his home, Montarioso, "my mountain" built in 1905.*

with DesignArc to prepare preliminary design plans for the Franceschi Park Interpretive Pavilion. The scope of work for Design Arc includes community meetings to discuss constraints, options and opportunities for the pavilion design and other site improvements, development of design alternatives, and review of the design alternatives by community stakeholder and by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Although dates are not yet established, it is anticipated that the Parks and Recreation Department will be hosting community meetings at Franceschi Park in early 2024. Beginning in 2024, project updates will also be shared through stakeholder email lists as well as posted on the City's webpage. The City welcomes the involvement of the Pearl Chase Society as a key stakeholder in the project."

Here is a link to the City's 2015 Report, with an extensive history about the property: [HERE](#).

In 2017, Pearl Chase Society members were allowed a tour of a portion of the interior; you can view that [HERE](#).

## PRESERVATION WATCH

### We Hear You!

*By Christine Neuhauser*

**M**any thanks to members who expressed their concerns about Santa Barbara and issues where they would like the Pearl Chase Society to represent them. This list will help inform the Board in establishing priorities in the year to come. The most popular issues are focused on the ever-present concerns about preserving the character and quality of life of Santa Barbara while addressing housing, growth, and infrastructure. Specifics include the following:

- State Street (all of it)
- De la Guerra Plaza
- Save the charm of Paseo Nuevo
- La Cumbre Plaza mix of stores and restaurants
- Spanish Colonial Revival and all gardens

- Mission Creek Bridge and Canyon
- Bungalow District, City Landscapes, and trees
- Motorcycle shop on Montecito Street
- Upper Eastside
- Beck House and Barnsdale Rio Grande Service Station
- Troll Bridge on East Mountain Drive – capstones below the bridge
- Please keep unaffordable housing units, trash to a minimum
- Housing at Paseo Nuevo, Macy's and Sears must be 50 percent low-income. Where is the consideration for the water, traffic, air quality, trash, and emergency services?
- Neighborhood preservation – too many hotel approvals
- Improvement of public transportation

Please feel free to continue to express your concerns and priorities throughout the coming year!