

# THE CAPITAL

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

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## MAY MEETINGS OF INTEREST

### PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

Next Board of Directors meeting: May 2, 2024 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: May 7, 14, 21

#### Planning Commission

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

#### Historic Landmarks Commission

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

#### Architectural Board of Review

Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. Full Board meets May 13, 28

### 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. May 7 (SB), 14 (SM), 21 (SB)

#### 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. May 1 (SB), 8 (SM), 29 (SB)

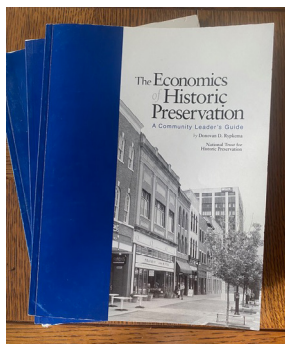
#### County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

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

## News and Notes

By Cheri Rae

Our first installment of the 2024 Kellam de Forest Speaker Series featured Urban Historian Nicole Hernandez who spoke about her work in historic preservation in Santa Barbara. It was an inspirational evening as she pointed out many examples of properties that have been protected thanks to her determined efforts. She detailed her work with homeowners to perform repairs and renovations to their historic properties, and how they are designated.



What is lost too often in discussions about historic preservation is how the benefits go far beyond aesthetic. In 2005, the National Trust for Historic Preservation published, *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide* by Donovan D. Rypkema. The slim volume has become a classic, well-worth reading and referring to often. As the title suggests, it provides solid information that counters the arguments often thrown about by those who are uninformed about the economic value of historic preservation.

In a series of 100 easily followed bullet-pointed statements, this resource addresses a range of issues that include how historic districts in increase property values; the benefits of historic preservation when creating affordable housing; the role of historic preservation in downtown and business district revitalization; historic preservation as a tourism strategy; and the difference between get-rich-quick development schemes and long-term investment; the environmental benefits of historic preservation, and how rehabilitation of a building costs are competitive when demolition costs are factored in.

Santa Barbara is a community where historic preservation has long been valued, indeed expected—by residents and visitors alike. This is an excellent resource for preservation-minded community members whose concerns are frequently derided by those who do not understand the value of the historic resources they're so willing to squander.



SAVE THE DATE

*A Path to Preserving Tradition*

**Friday June 7, 5:30pm**

Architect Cass Enberg, Historic Landmarks Commissioner and Architect Leslie Colhase share their perspectives about preserving Santa Barbara's public and residential architecture.

**Call (805) 961-3938 for reservations.**

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

## PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

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Please direct inquiries  
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#### Newsletter

Cheri Rae, *editor*

Lisa DeSpain, *graphics*

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## State Street Stories

By Cheri Rae

*Today State Street, this corridor for public gatherings, transportation, commerce, celebrations, safety, and aesthetics, is the subject of seemingly endless contention and strong opinions. It has always been the case.*

In 1877 an article in *The Morning Press* described a bustling downtown on a Saturday night: “Santa Barbara, or rather State Street, has something of the air about it to-day of the thoroughfares of a busy metropolitan city. The country round about must have pretty generally turned out, for almost the whole length of the street is lined with wagons and teams, carriages and phaetons [a lightweight horse-drawn carriage], as well as with stirring pedestrians, and the stores are filled with busy purchasers. Numerous are the nationalities that jostle along, English, French, Irish, American, Chinese, Spanish and native Californian.”

#### Safety and Aesthetics

That same year, an annoyed resident wrote a letter to the editor complaining about the street’s wooden sidewalks:

“All along on each side the nails are protruding, in some places as much as half an inch, greatly to the discomfiture of pedestrians. Ladies get their skirts torn and spoiled, and toes are stubbed, causing thereby a superabundance of powerful expletives on the part of the male sex, who rip right out, while the gentler sex thanks for the help but don’t say much. The storekeepers would perform a public benefit by having the nails in front of their stores hammered down. It seems to be the only way to get it done.”

A decade later, concerns focused not on the sidewalks but the condition of the dusty, sometimes muddy dirt street. *The Morning Press* suggested the city and property owners develop a partnership to pave State Street from Haley to Valerio. The article described conditions during the previous winter: “For days and week’s time, our main thoroughfare was buried deep in liquid mud.”

The article concluded, “It is only a question of common sense and business sagacity. Every man gets value received for what he pays out. It is a grave responsibility for any property-owner to assume when he attempts to block the way of an improvement which will benefit not only himself and his neighbor but the entire city as well. If Santa Barbara expects to become a prosperous city this work must be done.”

Paving State Street and keeping it clean was hotly debated for years under the heading, “We Want Good Roads.”

A local physician noted, “The swirls of dust and manure that the people along the street are forced to breathe during the sweeping of State Street is a menace to the health of the community.” Attempts to address the situation with what was termed “the archaic brush sweeper” was described as “extremely disagreeable and probably injurious to those who are unlucky enough to be on the streets while it is being operated.” Is generally admitted, but as yet, no practical remedy has been brought forward.”

Apparently poor drainage on State Street has been an issue for more than a hundred years. As a 1922 letter to the editor noted, “With the gradual emergence of Santa Barbara from swaddling clothes into the semblance of a real city is it



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not time to correct some of the drainage perplexities that appear at every sudden shower? Planks across gutters at the post office, Catholic church and at other points on State Street tell in no uncertain way that some means should be devised to get rid of surplus water that accumulates at every rainfall. These planks are a menace to motorists and an annoyance to pedestrians. If this volume of water cannot be diverted, appropriate crossings should be provided. Downspouts at a number of places on State Street empty upon sidewalks where the water becomes a nuisance to walkers. Channels should be provided so that these tiny streams may not bother those who have to use the sidewalks."

### Traffic Congestion

By 1903, harrowing incidents of runaway horses and dangers to pedestrians were reported in detail horse-drawn carriages, electric cars, automobiles, and even bicycles all competed for space on the increasingly crowded street—sometimes with unpleasant outcomes. "Prominent Society Matron Knocked Down By Bicyclist," read the headline in 1909. The story detailed how Mrs. Charles Eaton, of Montecito, was knocked unconscious when a young delivery boy pedaling down State Street ran into her as she crossed the street. The paper reported, "She sustained several severe bruises and abrasions over her body and a badly lacerated lower lip."

In 1911, William Wyles, chairman of the city council street committee, addressed the growing concerns about automobile traffic. He suggested eliminating parking on

State Street, which was finally accomplished two years later by city ordinance. *The Morning Press* welcomed the news, "Traffic conditions on State Street are no longer a joke. With automobiles holding down the pavement for hours pedestrians often experience considerable inconvenience and especially in trying to catch a street car."

The paper ran a letter by a disgruntled resident who noted, "No one may travel on the central portion of State Street at his discretion, even when there is no danger of interfering with street car traffic without taking the chance of being arrested. The fact is, Santa Barbara is ordained to death. The place will soon be so good no one will want to come here to live; or if they do happen this way they soon run up against so many ordinances that they want to get out on the first train."

By 1924 the city adopted the "Major Traffic Street Plan" by consultants Charles H. Cheney and the Olmsted Brothers. It stated, "In small towns business often tends to spread up and down one main street and in Santa Barbara, State Street until recently served this purpose. But now as the city grows from twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand people, business is fast being established on the adjoining parallel streets of Anacapa and Chapala, and on the cross



streets between them. These three streets and the network of adjoining cross streets, together offer business space enough for a much larger city. For the most convenient and effective handling of traffic, a diverting traffic loop should be established outside them."

A century later, we're still trying to figure it out.

Page 2: Shopping for essentials on State Street: Quality footwear, sewing supplies, books and more, circa 1880. Page 3: Top: Mule trolley, circa 1883. Open-air fruit stand located at State and Cota streets, 1890. A mix of vehicles and commercial establishments on the 800 block of State Street, circa 1908.

All photos: The Edson Smith Photo Collection.



## In Memoriam

We note with sadness the recent passing of Edward C. Fields, the Assistant Director of the Department of Special Collections at the Davidson Library at UC Santa Barbara. He was a tremendous source of information and enthusiastic support of our research efforts and will be greatly missed. Our condolences to his family, friends, and associates.



## Santa Barbara's Grand Hotels: The Arlington

By Cheri Rae

*Other than a written record and historic photos, there's not much left of the grand and gracious hotels that once beckoned travelers to visit Santa Barbara. We begin here a series of articles celebrating these luxurious lodging destinations, now lost to history.*

The Arlington Hotel, situated on a square block on State Street between Victoria and Sola streets, was opened in 1876. It was known for its beautiful gardens and a six-story observation tower. The guest rooms in the three-story hotel were appointed with fine furnishings; the property included several rooms for guests to gather.

Although several presidents stayed at the Arlington, the visitor of perhaps of most consequence to the direction of Santa Barbara was named Nina Dempsey. In the mid-1880's, she traveled from her home in Boston to Santa Barbara, where her uncle, C.C. Wheeler, was the manager of the Arlington. During her months-long stay, she enjoyed side trips into the foothills and on her return home, kept her fond memories of the hotel and the small town.

In 1886, Nina married Hezekiah Chase, and in 1888, the couple became parents to their first child, Pearl Chase. As Pearl's brother Harold reflected, "Mother evidently fell in love with Santa Barbara, as have so many others before and since." The Chase family relocated from the East Coast to Santa Barbara in 1900.

The original hotel was destroyed by fire in 1909, rebuilt in the Spanish Colonial Revival style and reopened in 1911. The new hotel, constructed of brick and concrete, featured a rooftop water tower as a convenient way to douse a fire; ironically, it was the collapse of the water tank during the 1925 earthquake that destroyed the hotel and caused the death of two of the hotel's guests. It was not rebuilt, and today, the Arlington Theatre, the Public Market, a housing development, and an array of commercial businesses occupy the site.



The Arlington Hotel over time: (Right) Logo from 1880s, when Nina Dempsey visited her uncle, proprietor C.C. Wheeler. (Top) The grand hotel, circa 1884. Photo: UCSB Special Collections. (Middle) In 1911, a Spanish Colonial Revival design rose from the ashes of the devastating fire. (Bottom) Devastated by the 1925 earthquake. Both from the Edson Smith Photo Collection.

