

# THE CAPITAL

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

Vol. 28, No. 8 • [www.PearlChaseSociety.org](http://www.PearlChaseSociety.org) • August 2025

## AUGUST MEETINGS OF INTEREST

### PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

#### NEW LOCATION

Next Board of Directors meeting at the Santa Barbara Carriage and Western Art Museum, 129 Castillo Street, August 7 at 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. [HERE](#). AUGUST 5, 12, 19

#### Planning Commission

First, second and third Thursdays of the month at 1 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall. [HERE](#). AUGUST 7, 14, 21

#### Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. [HERE](#). AUGUST 13, 27

#### Architectural Board of Review

Alternate Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. [HERE](#). AUGUST 4, 18

### 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 a.m. 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. AUGUST 19 (SB), 26 (SM)

#### County Planning Commission

Three Wednesdays of the month at 9 a.m. 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. AUGUST 6 (SB), 13 (SM), 27 (SB)

#### County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

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

## News and Notes

By Cheri Rae

Photography by Monie de Wit

The Annual Meeting of the Pearl Chase Society on July 20 was a memorable one, well-attended, no doubt, due to the presence of our guest speaker, Mayor Randy Rowse. He wasted no time in addressing the top-of-mind development issue, the Builder's Remedy project at 505 E. Los Olivos Street. The proposal threatens the cherished historic setting of the Old Mission, the iconic building of Santa Barbara with a setting that has been protected for more than a century. The very idea of an eight-story apartment complex looming over the Queen of the Missions right next door mocks the community's long-held value of protecting our architectural heritage and spirit of place.

The Mayor chose his words carefully and reminded the group that citizen action has long been effective in Santa Barbara, and it makes sense of historic preservationists to stand up and speak out about their concerns. He noted the value of civic participation in preserving Santa Barbara. As he put it, "People have stood up before and come up with a solution." He added, "This group is a keeper of the flame of our community heritage—architectural and cultural."

He also encouraged community members to express their thoughts about State Street. "It's important we hear from you," he said, adding, "We don't have to re-design downtown; we have to clean it up!" He mentioned San Luis Obispo as a successful example: "They open and close streets all the time. They're doing a great job with downtown; it's beautiful and flexible."

During the question-and-answer session, he graciously fielded a range of concerns including housing, affordability, overdevelopment, fire zones, regional transit, neighborhood preservation, and the value of civic activism. He cautioned against the belief there are any quick or simple solutions to these complex issues, noting more than once, "It's going to be a long slog."

We are grateful to have had the time with the Mayor and the benefit of his thoughtful comments, especially in his concluding remarks when he referenced the large number of historic preservationists in attendance: "I'm so happy to see so many here. It is precisely what we need at this time."



*Society President Christine Neuhauser and Mayor Randy Rowse.*



*The Mayor's comments were well-received by the appreciative audience at Harry's, a classic Santa Barbara setting.*

**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**

Christine Neuhauser

**Vice President**

Emma Brinkman

**Secretary**

Dennis Whelan

**Treasurer**

Nate Cultice

**Historian**

Patti Ottoboni

**Board Members**

Barbara Boyd

Steve Dowty

Tina Foss

Maureen Masson

Brian Miller

Kitty Peri

Cheri Rae

**Members Emeriti**

Sue Adams

Bob Baum

Roger Horton

Barbara Lowenthal

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*

Materials published in The Capital are copyrighted by The Pearl Chase Society and may be reproduced only with the written permission of the editor.

## The Post-Earthquake Leadership of Bernhard Hoffmann

By Cheri Rae

Pearl Chase is frequently credited as the person who envisioned and led Santa Barbara's post-earthquake reconstruction in Spanish-style architecture. While she certainly supported the idea and had a long history of community beautification efforts, she was quick to point to Bernhard Hoffmann as the one who deserved the acclaim for seizing the moment and leading the way. He was successful, despite the obstacles posed by official short-term thinking, now long-forgotten.

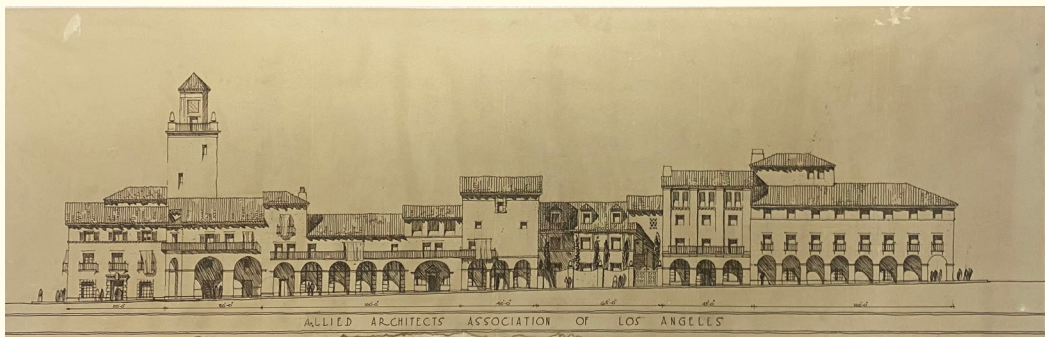
In 1959, Chase wrote an article, *Bernhard Hoffmann: Community Builder*; she described him as "...a practical idealist who worked tirelessly and with farsighted vision to make Santa Barbara a beautiful city, with an architecture in harmony with its historical background and adapted to its distinctive topography, its climate and its delightful location." She added, "Mr. Hoffmann was indefatigable in his efforts, unflagging in his interest, and wonderfully generous."

On July 10, 1925, less than two weeks after the earthquake devastated many of the downtown buildings, Bernhard and Irene Hoffmann hosted a "Reconstruction Dinner" at their historic property, Casa de la Guerra. The 75 guests included a cross-section of community members including business leaders, local politicians, planners, and members of civic organizations. At the dinner, drawings were shown and consensus was reached about the way forward: "A consistent architecture would mean an increasing of revenue and a general stimulation of business."

The next morning, the headline of the front-page story read: "Hoffmann Takes Lead in Program." The article detailed the plan to rebuild downtown in a distinctive design termed "Santa Barbara architecture." Hoffmann spoke to the opportunity of the moment: "This is no new thing. For years past the leaders of this community have backed the movement toward a distinctive type of architecture



All decked out for Fiesta: New Englander Bernhard Hoffmann embraced the culture, architecture and even the festive wear of what he termed "New Spain" in his adopted home of Santa Barbara. Photo courtesy Santa Barbara Historical Museum Gledhill Library.



Architectural drawing of the proposed arcade for State Street, prepared by Allied Architects Association of Los Angeles, dated July 10, 1925. This rendering currently hangs in the David Gebhard Meeting Room.

LIKE us on Facebook. 

[www.facebook.com/PearlChaseSociety](http://www.facebook.com/PearlChaseSociety)

in Santa Barbara and experiments have proven it to be an unqualified success. But never before have we had the opportunity to establish the plan throughout the city that the earthquake has afforded us."

Appointed to the Architectural Board of Review he spear-headed (and funded) the Community Drafting Room that offered architectural assistance to owners of business and residential properties. He also served as a combination spokesperson/promoter of the reconstruction plan to convince the public of the economic and aesthetic benefits—for both residents and visitors—of rebuilding the wrecked downtown with a uniform Spanish-style architecture.

But Hoffmann was fully aware of the grumbling in various sectors of the community over the legitimacy of the ABR. Many members of the business community believed imposing architectural controls violated their freedom, charging it was elitist, overbearing and too expensive. He described the situation to a friend back East: "The Architectural Advisory game is going quite well, but we are in the position of the man on the surf board, if he stays ahead of the crest of the wave he may reach the beach, if not, he gets a dousing."

Discontent spread over the plan for an arcaded Spanish-style architecture with uniform signage, lighting, shade on both sides of the downtown business district and very the notion of the review board. Outspoken Council Member H.L. Sweeney characterized the plan as "selfish greed, thirst for political power and the disregard of citizenship and property right."

Sweeney's outrage was aided by editorials the *Santa Barbara Daily News*, owned by the powerful publisher Thomas M. Storke. An example: "The *News* has criticized the architectural board chiefly because the method of selection of its members in effect took the power out of the hands of the city's representatives and transferred it to others... unwarranted interference with the rights of property owners and others is improper."

The usually mild-mannered Hoffmann publicly took the criticism in stride, but wrote to his friend, architect T. Mitchell Hastings, "Speaking of politics, just at the present time there is the usual acrimonious pre-election discussion raging and the Storkes are playing their usual contemptible role. I wish that I were an advertiser so I could have the satisfaction of withdrawing any connection with the paper." He solicited and received the support from a variety of powerful figures in publishing, banking and philanthropy; they wrote letters but they had little sway on public opinion.

Hoffmann's close ally, Dr. Rexwald Brown, a member of the Planning Commission and the president of the Chamber of Commerce, offered a prescient observation, "In fifty years, the citizen then living would pay us homage, but at present we are ten years ahead of our time."

Barely six months after the earthquake, newly elected City Council members who were hostile to the planning and approval process voted to abolish the Architectural Board of Review. The act was "to Mr. Hoffmann's sorrow," as Pearl termed it. Years later she admitted, "He was just heartbroken."

He returned to his leadership of the Community Arts

Association, and continued to cheer on the efforts of those who moved forward in rebuilding Santa Barbara in a distinctive style. On June 29, 1926 his byline appeared on a full-page article in *The Morning Press*. Titled, "A Year's Work in Building up 'City Beautiful,'" he asserted, "The horizon is full of rosy possibilities." He referred to the termination of his work only obliquely, noting: "In future days the happy results of cooperation and coordination in a general plan without sacrificing anything in the way of individuality, can be had by some such coordination as was brought about through the work of the architectural advisory committee."

Hoffmann resigned as the chair of the Plans and Planting Committee in 1927, and Pearl stepped into the role she kept until 1973. The Hoffmanns continued to split their time between Santa Barbara and Stockbridge, where they the couple increasingly resumed their civic and philanthropic work.

Hoffmann's visionary leadership in Santa Barbara was hailed outside the city: he was named an Honorary Member of the American Institute of Architects in 1929, and when he died in 1949, he was eulogized in the *New York Times* as the man who "Restored 'Quake City.'" The obituary in the *News-Press* noted—quite belatedly considering Storke's earlier hounding of Hoffmann's efforts—"We have not carried on the dream as well as we should. We might, if we really appreciate what he thought out and what he did for this city, try to revive and restrengthen his hopes for his adopted city. He tried to perpetuate the best in the spirit of this city." Chase observed, "His work has been, and should continue to be, an inspiration to our public officials and to our fellow citizens—newcomers and old-timers alike."

## **BERNARD HOFFMANN, RESTORED 'QUAKE CITY**

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

STOCKBRIDGE, Mass., July 7—Bernard Hoffmann, a retired electrical engineer and civic leader, who led in the restoration of Santa Barbara, Calif., after the earthquake of 1925, died last night at Brookside, his summer home, of a coronary thrombosis. He was 74 years old.

A native of Stockbridge, Mr. Hoffmann was the son of Ferdinand and Caroline Bullard Hoffmann. His father was headmaster of the former Hoffmann School.

The son was graduated from Cornell University in 1895, and from that year until 1916, he was with the New York Telephone Company. Santa Barbara was his winter home for many years. He was president of the architects planning and rebuilding board of this city after the earthquake. He also had served as adviser to the Stockbridge planning and zoning board.

Mr. Hoffmann had been chairman of the Stockbridge library historical committee. He and Mrs. Hoffmann established the Margaret Hoffmann book fund in memory of their daughter.

Surviving besides his widow, the former Irene Botsford of Chicago, are two sons, Walter Hoffmann of Washington, D. C., and Henry B. of New York, and a sister, Mrs. Rudolf F. Ohle of Celso, N. C.

## **HOFFMANN TAKES LEAD IN PROGRAM**

Widening of State Street  
Proposed as New  
Improvement

**TIME HELD OPPORTUNE**

Community Arts Leader  
Says Quake Brings City  
Great Opportunity

"Santa Barbara architecture," a plan for a distinctive design to be followed in rebuilding a great Santa Barbara, became a reality last night when more than 75 business men met in El Paseo with the new architectural board of review and announced plans for applying the new design in a number of important business blocks.

**The New York Times**

Published: July 8, 1949

Copyright © The New York Times



*Save the Date!*

# The Gamble House:

A Landmark's Power to Inspire and Transform

## Alhecama Theatre Sept. 12, 6 p.m.

We are pleased to present

Ted Bosley of Pasadena's Historic Gamble House  
for the next installment of our popular  
Kellam de Forest Speaker Series. He writes:



“The preservation goal in Pasadena was not to preserve everything in amber, but rather to recognize that the broader cultural landscape—historic neighborhoods and gardens—are key context for attracting a range of community benefits: aesthetic, economic and emotional.”

Join us for another inspiring and informative evening!

## Welcome to our New Members!



- Nancy Bedford
- Kristan Borgatello
- Kim Brynes
- George Burtness
- Donald DeLuccio
- Leslie Franklin
- Narci Friedlander
- Teresa Jamison
- Sally Leon-Tondro
- Linda Seals
- Nicholas Sebastian

