

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 at the Santa Barbara Carriage and Western Art Museum, 129 Castillo Street, November 6 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](#). November 18

Planning Commission

First, second and third Thursdays of the month at 1 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall. [HERE](#). November 6, 13, 20

Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. [HERE](#). November 5, 19

Architectural Board of Review

Alternate Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. [HERE](#). November 10

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 Street, 4th Floor. The second meeting is (typically) held in Santa Maria at 511 East Lakeside Parkway. November 4 (SB), 18 (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. November 5 (SB), 12 (SM)

County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

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

News and Notes

The State of State: Share Your Thoughts

By Cheri Rae

In 1990, I co-wrote the book, *Walk Santa Barbara: City Strolls & Country Rambles*. It now reads as a historic relic of a time gone by. Witness my description of the downtown walk on State Street: *Santa Barbara's main street has difference moods at different times of the day. On cool mornings, a stroll down the shady street reveals the city just waking up. Traffic is light, sidewalk cafes, muffin shops and*

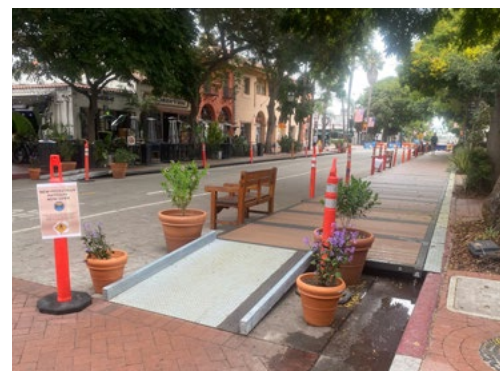
bakeries serve up their best cuppa joe to early rising tourists and impatient commuters; shop owners sweep the sidewalk and tidy their storefronts. Only the whine of the gardeners' leaf blower disturbs the tranquility of the morning.

By mid-afternoon, the street bustles in the bright sunlight. The air filled with a dozen different languages as visitors shop the day away. In the evenings, diners and film-goers replace shoppers on the sidewalk. Theatres turn on their signs and the whole street takes on new life. Restaurants open their doors and the hippest of clubs attract decked-out dancers for a night-on-the-town. The street becomes a cruise strip, music blares from car stereos, and everybody checks out everybody else....

State Street is the commercial heart of the city, and interesting mix of old and new. It's still possible to discover some Mom-and-Pop shops, but rising rents and redevelopment are forcing many to relocate or got out of business, while others advocate modernization as necessary for the city's economic health. Without a doubt, State Street its changing and at a much more rapid pace than ever before. Time will tell if the street will keep its charm, or grow to resemble the mini-malled and overdeveloped shopping strips of suburban Los Angeles.

Following the Covid shutdown, we hardly know from one month to the next what State Street will look like next. But just about everyone has an opinion about it. Consider this your opportunity to make your voice heard by sending us an email expressing your thoughts. Email to PCS@pearlchasesociety.org

An Evening With
Robert Ooley,
November 7, 6:00
for reservations:
(805) 961-3938



State Street has seen many changes over the years, including the newly installed "pedlets."

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

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NewsletterCheri Rae, *editor*Lisa DeSpain, *graphics*

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Ten Questions for Nicole Hernandez, City Architectural Historian

By Cheri Rae

Nicole Hernandez is just the fourth person to fill the important position in Santa Barbara. In her thirteen-year tenure as the City Architectural Historian she has distinguished herself as a friend to the historic preservation community with her wealth of knowledge and experience in the field. She recently announced her retirement at the end of the year, and graciously provided some insights into her vitally important job. The City is conducting a nationwide search to find a suitable professional to take on the task Hernandez has performed so admirably.



What exactly is the job of the City Architectural Historian? What advice do you have for the next person to take the job?

Remember that City Council has made historic preservation a priority through our general plan's historic resources element. As the only preservationist in the Planning Department, this section gets forgotten—often you need to be the advocate for historic preservation within the department. The building is the client and doing what you can to make sure that building survives for the community is the goal.

Please tell us a favorite highlight of your tenure...

I am very proud we designated more than 400 buildings as Structures of Merit—as the State Laws are getting stricter about only protecting fully designated resources from demolition, this is really important. I loved creating the African American/Black Historic Context Statement and identifying the important history and buildings representing this under-represented community. Telling the story of all the people of Santa Barbara has been so inspiring. The City has many beautiful cultures and making sure they are all represented in our written history makes the whole City richer as a whole.

...And a lowlight.

I find it so frustrating how many people do not value historic buildings and their beautiful details and not sure how to inspire more people and engage more of the community in their value. Every vinyl window installed in a historic building breaks my heart, as they are such a short-term product that will need to be replaced over and over. Not to mention they are plastic and they are not good for our environment.

Thanks to your leadership, the Mills Act has really benefitted our community. Would you please explain a bit about it.

When I started with the City there were two Mills Act Contracts, now there are more than 90. The program allows for a property tax reduction

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for ten years to offset costs of restoration and maintenance of historic resources. I love working on this program as the property owners do such amazing work on the houses, the transformation is so inspiring and a continual reminder that old buildings just need new ideas—and not demolition.

What do you think is the greatest challenge to historic preservation efforts in Santa Barbara?

The lack of interest much of the population has in learning about the historic buildings and adaptive reuse. There seems to be more people requesting demolition without thinking it through. It is so bad for the environment and the unique character of the City to just throw these beautiful resources away. The artistry in the details is so wonderful and it saddens me how many people do not value them. So many of the new materials in buildings are made of plastics and shipped across the ocean and strip our city of the beautiful rich materials that the historic buildings have.

...And the greatest hope?

Santa Barbara is lucky to have a City Council that values historic resources, features a really strong and protective Historic Resources Ordinance to protect our resources, and employs a full-time Architectural Historian to enforce it. And we provide free historic designation to encourage property owners to designate their buildings. We try to make the City Process for preserving historic resources as easy as possible. I know our City is unique in this, while some jurisdictions require significant application fees for administrative costs, research, and the approval process.

What do you think that Santa Barbara can do to best attract younger people to become interested and active in historic preservation of this unique community?

Many of the property owners of Mills Act properties are owned by younger people and most of them really do value historic resources. I know the City of West Hollywood recently hosted a Historic Preservation evening that drew many younger generations with a history of Sunset Blvd. I think the City could be more proactive in engaging more events to celebrate preservation—it might need more attention and a targeted public relations campaign to accomplish this.

Under your leadership, there was an update of the 350-page document known as the Historic Resources Design Guidelines. Would you please address the amount of work that went into this, and its value to community members.

This took a huge team effort, two years of work, with Chair of the Historic Landmarks Commission, Anthony Grumbine and Commissioner Bill Mahan. They contributed drawings combined with my research and writing the guidelines and the expertise of our graphic designer; finally, the Commissioners and staff members helped proofread the document. It is very helpful to have the philosophy, best practices and important architectural styles in the document to send to property owners embarking on a project on a historic resource—it provides an already written framework so staff can consistently answer questions on historic resources.

What are you looking forward to in Santa Barbara's future protection and preservation of its architectural, natural and cultural resources?

We have a City Council and the current leadership staff in the Planning Department that are dedicated to preservation. There is a strong tradition of historic preservation in the community through the preservation groups like Pearl Chase Society, Santa Barbara Conservancy and the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation and their advocacy is critical. They are the voices that City Council listens to, remember, it is your Council members who can change the City policies and staff works at their direction, so if staff cannot make the change, go to City Council.

What concerns do you have about the possible loss of its character and the "community mosaic"?

Although we have done some survey work to identify historic resources proactively, there is so much more to do. This is the most important preservation tool and difficult to do with only one member on the historic preservation staff. It is expensive to hire consultants who possess the professional credentials to meet current standards. I am also concerned about the more vernacular small houses that are undervalued by many people who want something larger. I have seen in other communities where they were demolished one by one and it really loses any unique value a community may have—and creates something very ordinary.

What's next for you?

I have a much more creative side that needs some attention, so getting back into my pottery studio is my first step. I also have a degree in Italian along with my Master of Fine Arts in Historic Preservation, so I'm hoping to merge those and restore my own little historic treasure in Italy. Or enjoy traveling there much more extensively and enjoy house hunting!

The Scorpio Club: Membership Determined by Astrology and Community Service

By Cheri Rae

In November of 1942, Pearl Chase realized that she and several of her friends were all born under the astrological sign of Scorpio—and they shared several characteristics of the sign: ambitious, hard-working, strong, confident.

Pearl's friend Edith Hancock, the first female City Council Member of Santa Barbara, was looking forward to celebrating her 46th birthday. Edith was dismayed, however, when her physician husband was called out of town, and she lamented the fact she would be alone on her special day. When Pearl got wind of her friend's disappointment, she invited Edith to lunch to celebrate their mutual birthdays, and surprised her by inviting several other prominent women who also were born under the sign of Scorpio.

They were joined by Mrs. Hilmar Koefed (president of the Lobero Theater Foundation), Mrs. Michael Levy (chairwoman of American Women's Voluntary Services), Grace Ruth Southwick (director of Adult Education) and Dr. Anna McCaughey (detention home superintendent) at the landmark El Paseo Restaurant. The distinguished group enjoyed a convivial celebration, including the round of drinks sent to their table by local gentlemen who were dining nearby. By the end of the gathering, Pearl floated the notion of an annual meeting of the Scorpio Club, limited to civic leaders born under the same sign.

The Scorpio rule held fast over the years. *News-Press* publisher Thomas Storke had hoped to become an honorary member, except his November 23rd birthday made him ineligible by just one day. And Mary Louise Days, who worked closely with Pearl, noted, "She flattered me when she asked me when my birthday was—I missed it by one sign because I was a Libra."

Still, the group expanded yearly. By 1944, it had grown to more than a dozen members. The club had a motto: "Work and Serve," a purpose: "To Discuss Why We Are the Way We Are," and several rules. The rules required designated members to send and telephone reminders; make arrangements for the luncheon; secure decorations and pay for the birthday cake. Additionally, each member was required to pay for their own lunch when it was held in a restaurant or club, bring a small, wrapped gift and a birthday card to participate in the anonymous exchange with other members.

The Scorpio Club may have started out as a bit of a lark, but with Pearl in charge, it soon became more formalized as an organization, complete with officers, a membership roster, an agenda, and high expectations for the members' enthusiastic participation.

Each meeting followed a familiar format. Long-term members were encouraged to sit with new ones so that everyone would get to know each other. Pearl began the

annual event with the ritual retelling of the history of the group. One member described the story as important as the holiday recitation of "The Night Before Christmas."

Next on the agenda was a time when members had the opportunity to talk about the trips they had taken in the past year and share the photos they had taken, from the nearby Channel Islands to the Canary Islands, from Mexico to Madagascar.

After that, Pearl would quiz everyone assembled about their work in civic activities and organizations. As one member described it, "We would all be seated and had to tell what we had contributed to the community that year, what we were doing."

Following the convivial gift and card exchange and dessert of cake and ice cream, Pearl would wrap up the meeting by distributing a selection of inspirational quotes, and always, the wish for "A Happy Scorpio Year."

Beverley Jackson, the longtime society columnist for the *Santa Barbara News-Press*, with her November 20th birthday barely making the cut. When she assumed the Presidency of the Scorpio Club in 1973, Pearl sent her a directive: "We should be diligently looking for Scorpion leaders in the major organizations that are continuing support of major community affairs, culture, education, athletic, etc."

When submission of a photograph was required in 1974, architect Lutah Maria Riggs, a member since 1946, submitted hers to Pearl with a note, "I became only 78 years old on Thursday October 31, although I see I really look to be about 1,000 years old! I dedicate the snapshot of this homely visage to you, for the record! With love and affection on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Scorpions!"

An additional requirement was added in 1978, Pearl's last meeting: "To succeed in long time public service, a Scorpio leader must: Practice cooperation, cultivate understanding of others' points of view. Lack or have overcome the possible faults of jealousy, possessiveness, and extreme emotion."

Pearl called Beverley "the Party Lady and good friend." Shortly before her death in 1979, Pearl exacted a promise from her, "Please promise me you'll keep the Scorpio Club going," she pleaded. Beverley agreed. She hosted annual meetings at a variety of locations including private homes, the Coral Casino where she was a lifetime member, and the Santa Barbara Yacht Club. She confessed that the members sometimes chose to sip pink champagne instead of the hot tea that was Pearl's preference.

In an article she wrote for *Santa Barbara Magazine*, Beverley recalled one meeting that gave her chills: "As the club motto was being read, the front door blew open. It was a lovely calm day. There was no one at the door. I still get shivers remembering that, but I definitely believe that if Pearl wanted to remind us she was watching, she'd find her way back to a Scorpio meeting."