

THE CAPITAL

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

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SEPTEMBER MEETINGS OF INTEREST

PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

Next Board of Directors meeting at the Carriage and Western Art Museum of Santa Barbara, 129 Castillo Street, on September 3 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. Or Watch on You Tube [HERE](#)

City Council

Tuesdays at 2 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall. [HERE](#). SEPTEMBER 1, 15, 22, 29

Planning Commission

First, second and third Thursdays of the month at 1 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall. [HERE](#). SEPTEMBER 3, 10, 17

Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. [HERE](#). SEPTEMBER 9, 23

Architectural Board of Review

Alternate Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. [HERE](#). SEPTEMBER 14, 28

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 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. SEPTEMBER 1 (SB), 15 (SM), 22 (SB)

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. SEPTEMBER 2 (SB), 9 (SM), 30 (SB)

County Historic Landmarks

Advisory Commission

Second Monday of the month at 10 a.m. at 123 East Anapamu St., Room 17 (unless specified otherwise). SEPTEMBER 14

News and Notes

By Cheri Rae

In our tribute to former mayor Sheila Lodge, we should have included the link to her interview with Jerry Roberts. She spoke about her book and many other subjects of interest. See it [HERE](#)

All about Affordable Housing—100 Years Ago!

Join us for a presentation by Valerie Smith as part of our Kellam de Forest Speaker Series September 18, 6 p.m. She will be speaking about the Better Homes movement in Santa Barbara.

Valerie Smith's research provided important context for the now-famous historic photo of Miss Chase with a group of African American residents at the home at 206 Gray Avenue (pictured at right). As she explained:

"In a Better Homes Guidebook, I read that a Black minister participated in Better Homes Week in Santa Barbara by exhibiting a model house in the 1926 campaign. Although the guidebook gave details about other model houses that year, very little was found about the minister's house. I visited the Hoover Institution Library & Archives at Stanford University, which retains many of the Better Homes in America files.

"One of my research goals was to find more information about the Black minister's house. I felt it was important to Black history and Santa Barbara's architectural history.

I eventually found a historical photo along with the address of the model house. It turns out that the photo has been published in several articles regarding Santa Barbara's Black history, but until now, the connection with the Better Homes program was not known. Pearl Chase and the Plans Committee were proud of Reverend Harris' contribution to the 1926 campaign in Santa Barbara. They set an example for the nation by creating an inclusive Better Homes campaign."

Read more about the Better Homes movement inside this issue.



Kellam de Forest Speaker Series Continues

Friday, September 18 at 6 p.m.

Santa Barbara Carriage & Western Art Museum
129 Castillo Street

Join us for a very special evening with Valerie Smith, architectural historian and preservationist and expert on the Small House Movement in Santa Barbara and Better Homes in America. She notes, "The 1920s Small House Movement is closely linked to Pearl Chase's legacy. The small houses that are still extant in Santa Barbara symbolize an era when architects, planners, women's organizations, and local communities collaborated to enhance the living standards of people with modest means while advocating for superior housing design." Her Master's thesis on the Small House Movement has helped document and nominate resources in Santa Barbara and beyond.

The event is free, however your donations are welcome to continue to support the Kellam de Forest Speaker Series, now completing its 4th year. Refreshments will be served. Call (805) 961-3938 to reserve your seat.



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

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(805) 961-3938**Newsletter**Cheri Rae, *editor*Lisa DeSpain, *graphics*

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Better Homes in America—and in Santa Barbara

By Cheri Rae

In 1922, Herbert Hoover, the Secretary of Commerce, was named president of the Better Homes in America movement based in Washington, D.C. Established in conjunction with Marie Meloney, editor of a popular women's magazine, *The Delineator*, it was a nationwide program designed to encourage the pride and investment of home ownership, and emphasized the values of efficiency, domestic arts and science, thrift and self-reliance.

Participation in the civic and economic movement was termed, "The most important public work to which women in this country could give their time." The movement included the building of a showcase home in the nation's capital, and competition among communities across the country.

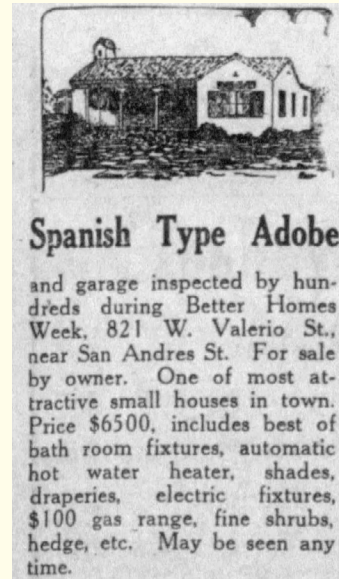
Entries into the competition for the affordable homes had to fit the criteria set forth by the contest rules: Constructed on a lot size fifty-foot wide by 150 feet deep, the home had to cost less than \$5000, with five rooms and a one-car garage. It had to include landscaping and formal drawings.

In 1924, the Community Arts Association and Plans and Planting published the book, *Small House Designs*. Pearl wrote the dedication to Bernhard Hoffmann, "In recognition of his devoted, farsighted, and generous leadership in promoting the development and enhancing the attractiveness of Santa Barbara." It was fitting, therefore, that she was named the chair of "Better Homes in America, and she organized the prize-winning Santa Barbara entries of the national competition for years to come.

"The small home with a small garden and all the related types of activities and knowledge that would help the small owner who couldn't hire an architect and a landscape architect so they asked me if I wanted to do this," she noted.

It was work the consummate organizer was born to do, combining her expertise in home economics, her concern for social welfare, her interests in culture and architecture, and her ability in motivating individuals to work together for the common good. Not incidentally, focus on home ownership had to have a positive impact on the family real estate business.

As she termed it, "The effort was to encourage families to own their own homes and gardens, and to put knowledge of high standards in house building, home furnishing and equipment, and home life within the reach of all citizens. That the splendid cooperation of the organized groups of the city and the hard work of the hundreds of committee members has counted, may be seen in the increasing number of attractive small houses and gardens throughout Santa Barbara."

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Post-Earthquake Award

The 1925 competition, that Santa Barbara had entered, was completed in May, before the earthquake. As Pearl noted, "The first telegram I received after the earthquake of June was from the demonstration houses that had survived." None of the demonstration homes had been damaged in the temblor.

Nothing could have been more positive for the revitalization of Santa Barbara after the earthquake than the announcement that the city shared the first-place award with Atlanta in the National Better Homes Campaign. As Pearl observed, "spectacular recognition came with the announcement a week following the 'quake."

In 1926, the Plans and Planting Committee published a book about what they termed "New Santa Barbara," and Pearl wrote the section titled "Better Small Homes in Santa Barbara." She detailed how Santa Barbara answered the question posed by Herbert Hoover, then-president of the Better Homes in America movement: "Do you want Better Homes in your community?"

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Pearl shared how the city was beginning to take shape in the post-earthquake era, calling it an issue of "considerable importance." She wrote, "While most American cities have been content to drift in our traditionless flux, Santa Barbara has consciously set herself the problem of reviving the forms of her Spanish-Californian past. I believe this is a legitimate step. These traditions are beautiful in themselves; they are historically, climactically, and aesthetically appropriate."

The national program offered Santa Barbara a way to shine, a small town with big ambitions to be forward-thinking with an eye on the glories of its historic past. In educating the masses about the benefits of home ownership on a moderate income, Pearl helped instill locally the values of stability and the desirability of strong family ties bound together in a home that was beautiful comfortable

and utilitarian. It was the ultimate combination of individual and community pride.

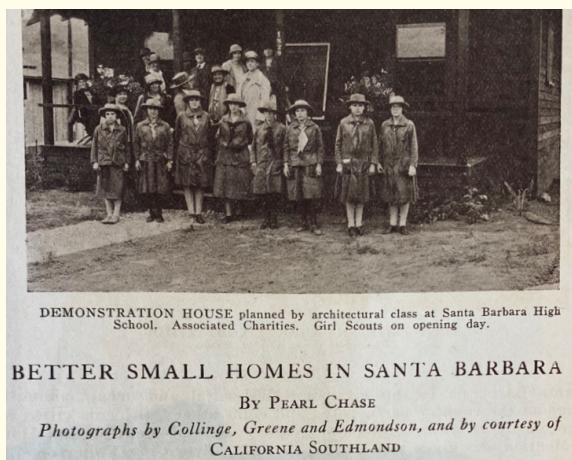
Hoover reinforced the notion when he offered his congratulations for special recognition of Santa Barbara County in 1928, "It had seemed that in previous years your programs had reached an all-around standard of excellence which were felt could hardly be equaled. But this year, you again have set a new standard of achievement in the number, quality and diversity of houses demonstrated, in enlisting organized cooperation and public interest throughout the entire county, in school participation, and in rendering service to the community on a continuing basis."

When he was elected president, Hoover recognized Pearl's multiple areas of expertise and invited her to participate in several conferences, including the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership and the White House Conference on Child Health and Welfare. Since Santa Barbara was a perennial winner in the competition, she was recognized as a leader in the Better Homes in America program and referred to as "one of the brilliant persons on any of the committees."

The national organization kept two offices: one in Washington, D.C. and one in Santa Barbara. Pearl managed to conduct research and work with Better Homes committee members on the East Coast for numerous meetings, providing her with a welcome reason to travel, visit friends and relatives across the continent and get away from Santa Barbara, sometimes for more than a month, depending on the state of her father's health.

The purpose of Better Homes in America was to encourage the stability of home ownership and illustrate to the millions of American families of moderate incomes how they could make the most of their homes from the standpoints of beauty, comfort, and utility.

The principal demonstration home in Santa Barbara was called "The Home That Budget Built." It was planned and built by the local committee expressly for Better Homes Week. It was a single-story, six-room home was located on a lot that cost just over \$2,000, with materials that cost just over \$6,000. Total furnishings were estimate at \$1,600; a smaller floor plan could save about \$1,000. Plans and Planting offered brochures about every aspect of home ownership, from applying for a loan to selecting appropriate furniture and accessories.



The Better Homes in America movement extended to lessons taught in the local schools. Pictured is a display created by students at Santa Barbara Junior High School for a Better Homes exhibition. As noted on the back: "The House of Woe was built of flap jacks, peppers, doughnuts, soda pop, sausages, coffee grounds, jelly beans, all day suckers, chocolates. The House of Health built from graham crackers, milk, fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, cereals, raisins, prunes, and pure stick candy."

Pearl's brother Harold came up with an even more modest approach to help develop housing for low-income families. During the Depression, he developed the northwest area of Hope Ranch, a former walnut orchard, as Arboleda Acres.

Small, efficient model homes from the project were prize-winning entries in Pearl's Better Homes in America efforts, and they served as inspiration for self-sufficient living in a difficult time. Today, the area is known as Hope Ranch Annex, and it still retains its unique semi-rural feel.

The neighborhood was built of comprised of small, four-and-a-half room home farms on one-acre lots, complete with their own private fruit and nut orchards, and room for vegetable gardens. Purchasers were offered alfalfa lawns to support a neighborhood cow—that moved from one home to another—and areas for poultry houses, limited to twenty hens that could be located no closer than 75 feet to the home. The price of these homes ranged from \$3,900 to \$4,500.

In a letter that she sent to hundreds of newspapers across the nation, Pearl summed up the benefits of working on the Better Homes movement: "The Community Arts work for more attractive homes and gardens and a more beautiful city has been strengthened. More people realize that this making of a Home City Beautiful is everybody's business, not that of a comparatively small number. The Better Homes campaign was a good thing for Santa Barbara because it was one on which there was no division of opinion. Many groups worked together in it, which had recently been antagonistic in other public matters."

Pearl and the Future President

One year after the City of Santa Barbara's first-place honors for the Better Homes in America competition, Pearl Chase, who organized the local program and demonstration houses, received this letter from then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. Facing competition from 3,000 other communities, Santa Barbara won the award again in 1926, and for several years afterward—prompting some entrants to complain that Santa Barbara should not be allowed to enter anymore.

July 22, 1926

Dear Miss Chase,

I offer my heartiest congratulations to you and the other members of the Better Homes Demonstration Committee of Santa Barbara for your fine achievement in the 1925 campaign which was deemed worthy of a first prize.

Your work was of the profoundest significance for it demonstrated practically that the resources of present day civilization are making possible in this country an art of home making that has never before been generally available.

All of us are familiar with the complaint that there is excessive uniformity and lack of craftsmanship in American life. However overdrawn such complaints may be, it is true that in the planning and setting out of houses we do need a finer, more painstaking touch if there is to be individuality, and good artistic quality inside and out economy in the use of space, and ease of housekeeping.

Your demonstrations have shown how, within range

of the incomes of a majority of our people, attractive homes may be built in keeping with their setting in nature and with local traditions, how they may be artistically decorated and conveniently furnished, and how labor saving devices may contribute to a higher standard of living with less drudgery.

You not only have furnished an example to the building industry, but have gone far to awaken a keen desire and appreciation in the people of your community which will create a demand of a craftsmanlike project. You have aided those who wish to improve their homes, and have obtained excellent co-operation from the press for reaching all elements of the population.

I hope that your good work may continue and that it may result in Santa Barbara's earning a reputation for the high quality of its homes.

Yours faithfully,

Herbert Hoover

Secretary of Commerce



Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover.



Winning Better Homes in America became an annual event in Santa Barbara.