



UTILITAS • FIRMITAS • VENUSTAS

Northern California Chapter
Society of Architectural Historians

The Newsletter

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NCCSAH Goes to the Southland: New & Historic Architecture Downtown Los Angeles

“Yes, Virginia, there is a downtown Los Angeles. . . .”

David Gebhard and Robert Winter,
Los Angeles: An Architectural Guide (1994)

The NCCSAH board has planned a very exciting and unique tour for spring, 2018. The program, set for May 26-27, will sample both recent architecture and historic buildings in Downtown Los Angeles, all of national significance. Because all the sites are within walking distance—five or six blocks, mostly flat—the tour will not involve carpooling or a bus.

The Tour Itinerary

Saturday May 26 – The Cultural District: Significant Recent Architecture

The “Cultural District” along Grand Avenue includes many of the most significant recent works of architecture in the United States (if not the world). Saturday will include guided tours of Walt Disney Hall, The Broad (museum of contemporary art) and the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

Disney Hall, completed 2003, is widely regarded as one of the greatest modern concert halls in the world, both acoustically and architecturally. It is visually dazzling. Philip Johnson anointed its architect, Frank Gehry, as “the greatest architect we have today”. The interior is not available for touring during the performance season. However, we can attend a 2 PM concert of the LA Philharmonic conducted by their charismatic music director Gustavo Dudamel, in a program of works by Robert Schumann. Our ticket price reflects a substantial group discount.



Disney Hall, Los Angeles. Photo: Ward Hill

—continued on next page



Above: *The Broad, Los Angeles.* Photo: Jane Shabaker
Below: *Central Library rotunda.* Photo: Central Library website

The Broad (Diller, Scofidio & Renfro, 2015; MacArthur Genius Award recipient Elizabeth Diller, principal designer), recognized as one of the most inventive and innovative art museum designs of recent decades, houses the famous contemporary art collection of philanthropist Eli Broad.

Los Angeles Cathedral, completed in 2002, was designed by the Pritzker Prize-winning Spanish architect Juan Rafael Moneo. *Wall Street Journal* architecture critic David Littlejohn described the building as having “the most impressive large interior space in Los Angeles.” The Catholic Archdiocese will provide a tour of the cathedral (including the mausoleum with its 14 beautiful stained glass windows made in Munich in the 1920s), and a short concert on the pipe organ, one of the largest in the country. Lunch in the cathedral courtyard will follow.

Members opting for the concert at the Disney proceed to the hall for the 2 pm start of the program.

Sunday, May 27: The Great Landmarks of Historic Downtown LA

On Sunday, LA Conservancy docents will meet our group, at 9:30 a.m., at the center of Pershing

Square, directly across from the Biltmore, for a customized version of the Conservancy’s Historic Downtown Tour. This may include Pershing Square, the PacMutual Building, and the exterior of CalEdison. A visit to the Central Library (Bertram Goodhue, 1926) will include review of the issue that led to formation of the LA Conservancy, in 1978: the fight to save this historic Spanish Colonial Revival building.

The Central Library is the subject of two recent books, *Los Angeles Central Library: A History of its Art and Architecture* and *The Los Angeles Central Library: An Architectural Icon*, by SAH President Ken Breisch. A review of both books in the December, 2017 *JSAH*, states, “[T]he building deserves to be recognized as one of the most significant American buildings of the twentieth century.” A remarkable collaboration of muralists, mosaic artists and sculptors created the library interior.

The tour route then takes us up Bunker Hill, across Wells Fargo Center and on to California Plaza, offering views up Grand Avenue to the Broad and Disney Hall. A ride down the restored Angels Flight funicular brings us to the lively Grand Central Market, and through the market to the Bradbury Building, which Reyner Banham, English architectural historian and critic, named one of the greatest 19th century commercial buildings in the world. The park, behind the Bradbury, honors the life of Biddy Mason, a former slave, who became a successful real estate investor and was a founding member of the first Black church in Los Angeles. She gave the land on which the church (not extant) was built, now Biddy Mason Park.



We return to the Grand Central Market for a lunch break (11:30 - 12:30). After a brief respite, at 1:30, Biltmore docents will take us on a 90-minute tour of the hotel. We then return to the Central Library for a tour hosted by library docents, ending about 4:45.

See page 11 for registration information.

Los Angeles and San Francisco: A Tale of Two Cities

At the start of the American period in California, San Francisco and Los Angeles stood pretty much on an equal footing. Los Angeles was the center of a thriving rancho economy. San Francisco enjoyed the advantage of one of the great deep water harbors of the world, but with little return, as yet, on that asset.



Yankees; rather, the Spanish-speaking culture held its own.”

“In the decade of the 1870s,” Starr continues, “it became an American city. Adobe gave way to brick and wood, candles and kerosene to gas. The streets were paved and tracks laid for horse-drawn streetcars. Police and fire departments

It was the happenstance of the discovery of gold, in 1848, and the subsequent rush to mine the Sierra foothills that catapulted San Francisco (“the instant city”) ahead as the leading city in California, indeed in the entire West. Reinforced with the flow of tremendous wealth from Nevada silver mines in the 1870s, it would hold that position into the early 20th century.



were organized on a permanent basis and a lending library was established. A city hall was built, together with a train station, a county hospital, an opera house, and a theater seating four hundred.

In 1878, the Methodist Church founded the University of Southern California.” (*Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era*, (1985)

L.A. Leaps Ahead

Los Angeles, on the other hand, was willed onto the path to greatness by the unrelenting boosterism of its leading citizens, beginning in the 1870s. The opening of transcontinental rail links, in 1876 and in 1885, drew mostly midwesterners to Los Angeles, many of them attracted by the healthy climate advertised widely. By the 1880 census, the population had nearly doubled.

Other advances marked the growth of Los Angeles in the decades that followed. In 1892, the first oil well came in, and by 1900, an oil rush had contributed to significant population growth, the city reaching 102,479 people. In the first decade of the 20th century, Los Angeles acquired the port at San Pedro, saw creation of what Sir Peter Hall (*Cities in Civilization*, 1998) calls “the most extensive light rail system in the world”, and by 1913 tapped into the Owens Valley to secure water for a growing metropolis. By the 1920s, Hollywood had become the movie capital of the world, with twenty studios producing some 800 films a year.

Of Los Angeles, Kevin Starr wrote, “Invaded in 1846, annexed in 1848, taken into the Union in 1850: Southern California was never Americanized. No Gold Rush overwhelmed the Southland with

The population race was over. In the 1920 census, Los Angeles came in at 576,673; San Francisco, 506,676. Yet the bay city continued to hold its own as the West’s financial center and a corporate headquarter-

Top photo: Skyline of Los Angeles. The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project, Library of Congress. Bottom: San Francisco skyline from Treasure Island. Don Andreini

ters city, as well as a kind of western U.S. government capital, with many federal agencies having regional offices in the city. Reflecting this status, the 1920s saw construction of many significant high-rise buildings, including the Russ Building, and offices for Pacific Telephone, Pacific Gas &



Electric, Standard Oil of California, Shell Oil, and Matson Navigation.

Los Angeles, on the other hand, had a 150-foot height limit on buildings until voters repealed the restriction in 1956. Until then, only City Hall was al-

lowed to exceed the restriction, with a height of 32 stories. "As a consequence," notes Spiro Kostof, (*The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*, 1991), "skyscraper construction bypassed Los Angeles which alone among major American cities has nothing to show of the national crop of several generations of highrises. An observer in 1941 noted that the central business district resembled that of a small town."

Today, many fine examples of Beaux-Arts and Art Deco/Moderne buildings on that scale remain, recently rehabbed and repurposed, to give a good sense of a booming mid-20th century downtown, including the largest collection of classic movie palaces anywhere.

Freeways Wrongly Accused?

The common perception is that the freeways first promoted sprawl in the Los Angeles basin. But the first freeway, the Arroyo Seco (aka Pasadena) Freeway opened only in 1940. The pattern of

sprawl began long before then, according to Peter Hall, in the first decade of the 20th century, because of the creation of the Pacific Electric transit system, which operated over 1,000 miles of track connecting the communities of the Los Angeles basin. Population growth followed the transit lines; the freeways accelerated the process, especially after the post-World War II era saw the dismantling of the transit network. The city is now in the midst of a multi-decade, multi-billion dollar effort to recreate that network, and more.

The characterization of Los Angeles as "seventy-two suburbs in search of a city", variously attributed to Dorothy Parker, H.L. Mencken, and Aldous Huxley, would more accurately be restated as, *a city in search of seventy-two suburbs*. Los Angeles grew by a vigorous campaign of annexation of suburban communities.

The city of Los Angeles remained largely within its original 28 square-mile land grant until the 1890s, when annexations began. By 1910, the city's area had reached 90 square miles; in 1915, another 170 s.m. were added. Land area in 1932 was 450 s.m., 469 by 2004. Most of the annexed communities were unincorporated towns, but ten incorporated cities were added between 1909 and 1932, including Hollywood, Venice and Watts.

Confined by water on three sides, San Francisco might have pursued annexation southward, but that avenue was closed off, in 1856, when the state legislature lopped off the southern portion of San Francisco County to create San Mateo County. The city was forced to accommodate population growth by increasing density within its 49 square miles. As of 2010, that density had reached 18,679, making it the most densely populated U.S. city after New York City. The city of Los Angeles has a density of about 7,500.



Photo above: Tower of the Central Library, Los Angeles. The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project, Library of Congress
Right: Catholic Cathedral Los Angeles. Photo: Rich Villacorta for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels



1960 HABS photo: Elevator Cases, Bradbury Building. Jack E. Boucher. Library of Congress

“The Bradbury Building [1893] thus challenged Los Angeles, then passing the 55,000 mark in population, to begin thinking of itself as a big city, a Chicago on the Pacific. Chicagoan as well was the exuberant industrialism of the building—its Art Nouveau cast-iron elevators rising and falling on externalized tracks over the open interior courtyard, like a Jules Verne fantasy of flight, and its steel and iron interior, futuristically functional and streamlined in its staircases and bridge-like crossings, traditionally sculptural in their Corinthian columns and organic imagery—as if to suggest, in all this steel, in its integration of functional forms and aesthetic memories, the poetic possibilities of the industrial technology that would soon transform the economy and cityscape of Los Angeles into a new kind of American city.”

Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (1990)

The Great Depression and World War II caused suspension of large commercial construction in the downtowns of both cities. Post-war, two high-rises appeared in San Francisco: the 26-story Equitable Building at Sutter and Montgomery (1955), which some described as “looking like the box the Crown Zellerbach [now One Bush St.] came in.” The Zellerbach Building (1960) was for the city a bold venture into the International Style.

Expanding Downtowns

Once the height limit was lifted, Los Angeles entered a building phase that gained strength in the late 1960s. The once-fine Victorian residential neighborhood on Bunker Hill fell to redevelopment, to be replaced gradually by high-rise towers. San Francisco lost its downtown Victorian architecture in 1906; only Jackson Square survives as a reminder of the 19th-century business district.

San Francisco removed its old produce district and, between 1967 and 1981, extended office towers and residential development into that area (Golden Gateway/Embarcadero Center), east of the financial district. Demolition of a neighborhood of scores of South of Market single-room-occupancy hotels, by 1970, made way for a convention center and Yerba Buena Gardens (1980s). Legal action by residents resulted in construction of some 1400

affordable housing units. Lesson learned, pro-tenant activists negotiated a downzoning of the Tenderloin (1985), to hold off expansion of the Union Square retail/tourist hotel district westward.

A recent visit to the website of the LA Conservancy reveals growing concern over the pressure of a new wave of development that challenges the integrity of the historic downtown core in terms of scale, massing, materials and proportion. Noting that the Conservancy has not generally, in the past, commented on proposed new construction, the organization is now



Photo: Julius Shulman for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels

“increasingly stepping into this arena because of the cumulative effects these developments have on historic places. For instance, after more than a century as a remarkably cohesive neighborhood of mid-rise buildings, the Historic Core is being littered with high-rise towers of twenty to thirty stories that will dwarf their neighbors, introduce entirely new proportions, block iconic views, and create looming shadows.”

The Conservancy’s San Francisco counterpart, San Francisco Heritage, has been commenting on new downtown construction since the adoption of the Downtown Plan, in 1985. Planning staff have routinely directed developers of downtown projects to meet with Heritage, before going through the city review process, to monitor compliance with guidelines for treatment of historic buildings. While the Downtown Plan and Heritage’s role have not always had optimal results, the downtown core has retained its most historic structures while accommodating new development. However, the tendency to façade-dism as a preservation “solution” for development of sites with significant buildings, has become a greater problem, today, as opportunities to develop sites with less significant resources have diminished.

San Francisco’s Planning Department has, meanwhile, directed new development into the less historically sensitive South of Market area, reducing pressure on the historic core and directing development away from the historically significant Chinatown and North Beach districts. In the Transbay Terminal/Rincon Hill district, today, high-rise development proceeds apace, and the “Manhattanization” of San Francisco, so feared by a grassroots movement beginning in the 1970s, appears to have carried the day.



*Recently completed Salesforce Building reaches for the sun amid dense cluster of South of Market towers.
Photo: Don Andreini*



After its moment in the sun, the Salesforce Tower yielded its place as the tallest building in the West to L.A.’s Grand Wilshire Center. Photo: en.wikipedia.com

Photo at left: Julius Shulman for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels



Two Years Before the Mast and Twenty-four Years Later

Twenty-year-old Richard Henry Dana, Jr., shipped out from Boston, in 1834, as a crew member on a ship engaged in the trade of leather hides from California. In 1840, he published the account of his experiences in Two Years Before the Mast. Twenty-four years after he first saw San Francisco Bay (winter of 1835), he returned as a traveler and wrote an account of his impressions from that return visit of 1859.

Recalling his first entry into the bay, in 1835, he wrote, "All around us was the stillness of nature." At anchor off Yerba Buena Island, looking to the west, he observed "dreary sand-hills, with little grass to be seen, and few trees, and beyond them gullied by the rains." He remarked on the Mission Dolores. "Not only the neighborhood of the great bay, was a solitude." shanty of rough boards" erected by "an Richardson], where he carried on a hide ships and the Indians."

There was just one other vessel at anchor during their stay of nearly one month. Yet, in the 1840 account of his first visit, he offered the opinion, "If California ever becomes a prosperous country, this bay will be the centre of its

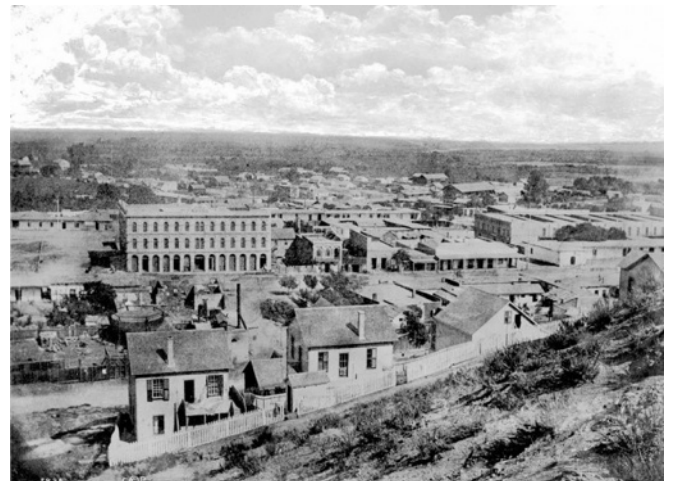


served "dreary sand-hills, with little grass to be higher hills, steep and barren, their sides "ruinous" state of the Presidio and of hood of our anchorage, but the entire He recalls seeing just one structure, "a enterprising Yankee [William very small retail trade between the

chorage, in 1835, and no other ap-month. Yet, in the 1840 account of his prosperity."

And, indeed, in August 1859, on his return, he found a "great center of a world-wide commerce." It was night-time on his arrival, and as the ship came round the point to the place of the anchorage of 1835, this is what he saw: "[C]overing the sand-hills and the valleys, stretching from water's edge to the base of the great hills, and from the old Presidio to the Mission, flickering all over with the lamps of its streets and houses, lay a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants." [Dana's estimate is about double the actual census figure of 1860.]

After a week in San Francisco, he sailed down the coast: "The Pueblo de los Angeles I found a large and flourishing town of about 20,000 inhabitants, with brick sidewalks, and blocks of stone or brick houses." [1860 census was 4,385; the entire county was under 12,000] "Every year new square miles of ground are laid down to vineyards, and the Pueblo promises to be the center of one of the largest wine-producing regions in the world. . .and I found an abundance of figs, olives, peaches, pears, and melons."



Left: The San Francisco Dana saw when he revisited the bay, in 1859. (1860 photo: yesteryearsnews.wordpress.com)
Right: About a decade later, Los Angeles was still a small town, but poised for growth.

Reflections on Jonee Levy By Harvey Hacker

Spouses who join NCCSAH members on tours sometimes have little to say, but Jonee Levy's avid interest proved you need not be an architectural historian—or even an architect—to participate fully and productively. In the years before her death from lung cancer on February 18th, Jonee—a paid-up member—had accompanied me with well-informed curiosity and opinions to eleven such NCCSAH outings. And sometimes her response went beyond interest to epiphany; the folded undulating window wall of the Bazett-Frank house in Hillsborough remained in her mind a frequently mentioned touchstone of architectural magic from the day she saw it.

Jonee came to architecture with a strong preference for historic structures over 20C modernism, possibly influenced, if not determined, by her upbringing in Tennessee, but she was open to new influences and, finally, was so moved by a visit to Rudolph Schindler's 1922 house in West Hollywood that she involuntarily plunked down on the concrete slab and wept. That strong emotional response to an authentically expressive building was repeated twice more, once at the orphanage designed by Aldo van Eyck in Amsterdam and, most recently, on her first visit to Le Corbusier's Ronchamp Chapel.

It is a challenge for an architect, with opinions and ambitions of his own, to share space with someone



who feels its symbolic as well as its practical effects so deeply. Although we agreed (with caveats) that it makes some sense to remodel a 1908 interior for today's patterns of living employing details that plausibly pass as original, the actual design decisions involved in realization could be the subject of fiercely argued disagreement. Finally, however, we negotiated a procedure that worked: I could design and implement any change to the place as long as I agreed to remove and restore it to former condition if, after living with it for six months, Jonee disapproved.

Our thanks to Harvey Hacker for providing this memorial tribute to Jonee.



Window wall of the Bazett-Frank house, by Frank Lloyd Wright, "a touchstone of architectural magic" for Jonee. Photos courtesy of Harvey Hacker

Memorial gathering, 2:00 pm, Sunday, March 18th at the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center, 555 Chestnut Street, San Francisco.

Two Programs Kick Off NCCSAH Fall 2017 Season

NCCSAH offered two programs in the fall of 2017. The morning of Monday, September 25, began with a visit to the Fleishhacker summer estate, Green Gables, in Woodside. Estate manager Hilary Grenier provided an intimate and detailed experience of this unique property, designed by Greene and Greene. Thank you, Hilary!

Next on the itinerary was Filoli, the estate of William Bourn, where we received quite special tours of the house and its gardens. As the property is closed to the general public on Mondays, we had the place pretty much to ourselves. Our thanks to Jim Salyards, director of horticulture, who gave us an in-depth tour of the gardens, and architect Greg Mellberg, who led us through the house. We are grateful also to the National Trust, owner of Filoli, and to the Fleishhacker family for opening their properties to us.

The program on September 27 was planned to accommodate members who were unable to participate in the fall 2016 tour because it booked up so quickly. Two highlights from that tour, the Carolands and the Villa Delizia were included. We are especially grateful to the Carolands Foundation and to Ms. Willy Werby, ever gracious host at Villa Delizia, for welcoming our members yet again.

New to the fall 2017 program was La Dolphine, designed by Lewis Hobart for George A. Newhall and later acquired by an heir of the Spreckels family. Our thanks to the current owners, Barbara Bissell and Lincoln Howell, for giving us a tour of their lovely house and gardens.



Photos by Ward Hill: Top members pause for a group photo at La Dolphine with owner Lincoln Howell (seated in front row); Middle: Greg Mellberg points out detail at Filoli; bottom left, La Dolphine; bottom right photo by Jane Shabaker, Jim Salyards gathers group for tour of Filoli gardens.

More photos on page 10



Top to bottom: La Dolphine, photo by Ward Hill; Filoli gardens; Filoli dining room, photos by Jane Shabaker

Other Events Of Interest

Vernacular Architecture Forum

Conference, *A Shared Heritage: Urban and Rural Experience on the Banks of the Potomac*. Alexandria, VA, May 2 - May 5, 2018.

<http://vernaculararchitectureforum.org/conference>

Berkeley Architectural Heritage

Spring House Tour, Sunday, May 6, 2018

<http://berkeleyheritage.com/calendar.html>

California Preservation Foundation

Annual Conference. *Deep Roots in Dynamic Times*. May 17 - 20, 2018. Sheraton Palo Alto.

<https://californiapreservation.org/education/conference/>

Society for Industrial Architecture

47th Annual Conference, May 31 - June 3, 2018, Richmond, Virginia

<http://www.sia-web.org/sia-47th-annual-conference/>

Theatre Historical Society of America

Annual Conclave. Detroit, MI, June 18 - 23, 2018

<https://www.historictheatres.org/conclave-theatre-tour/>

California Historical Society

Exhibition: *California Boomtowns: Photographs of San Francisco and Los Angeles*. August - December 2018
678 Mission St., San Francisco

https://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/exhibitions/upcoming_exhibitions.html

AIA San Francisco

15th Annual Architecture and the City Festival: September 1 - 30, 2018.

<https://aiasf.site-ym.com/?page=ArchandCity>

DOCOMOMO

US National Symposium: *Design, Community, and Progressive Preservation*. September 26 - 29, 2018, Columbus, Indiana.

<https://docomomo-us.org/events/national-symposium>

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Conference: *PastForward*. November 13 - 16, 2018, San Francisco

<https://pastforwardconference.org/pastforward2018/>

Registration: NCCSAH Goes to Los Angeles

[please print]

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email address _____

Registration:

For two-day program, May 26 & 27, 2018

Number in my party _____

@ \$80 per person _____

Optional L.A. Philharmonic concert

Number of tickets* _____

@ \$60 per person _____

Cost includes lunch at the cathedral
on the 25th and all tour fees

Total enclosed: \$ _____

*Group rate concert tickets not refundable after
April 13, 2018

Please make checks payable to NCCSAH and mail to:
Ward Hill
NCCSAH LA Tour
3124 Octavia Street, #102
San Francisco, CA 94123

For more information please contact
Ward Hill at whill@pacbell.net.

Do you have the time?

Members are reminded that spring is the time for membership renewals. At \$20 per year/\$10 for students, NCCSAH membership is still a great deal. Please see the coupon on the last page for details.



Photo: Courtesy of Millennium Biltmore

Registration Information

Tour cost per person:

\$80 for two days of tours (including lunch May 26 and all tour fees); Total cost for the two-day program plus \$60 for the Disney Hall concert Saturday, May 26 (optional): \$140.

To take advantage of the greatly discounted price of concert tickets, you must send in your check for the tour and concert by April 13. After that date, regular ticket prices will apply.

Send your check made out to NCCSAH to

Ward Hill

3124 Octavia Street #102,

San Francisco, CA 94123.

Please include your name, email (very important!), and telephone number. No cancellations after May 1, 2018 unless we can sell your position.

Transportation & Lodging

Please make your own transportation arrangements. You can reserve rooms at a group rate of \$185 per day for a Deluxe Room (single or double occupancy, king or two queen beds) at the historic Biltmore Hotel, 506 South Grand Avenue. Room rates will be honored for attendees two days before the May 25 arrival date and two days after the departure date (May 27). Indicate if you wish to stay at the Biltmore. **Note: Once your payment for the program is received, you will receive the information necessary to obtain the special room rate for our group.**



UTILITAS • FIRMITAS • VENUSTAS

The mission of the NCCSAH is to further the objectives of the Society of Architectural Historians of which the Northern California Chapter is an affiliate; promote the study and discussion of our region's architectural history and its related fields; visit significant works of architecture; and increase public awareness and appreciation of our architectural heritage. Membership is open to anyone interested in architectural history and its related fields who agrees to pay the annual dues and subscribe to the bylaws of the organization.

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a member of the National SAH to
become a member of NCCSAH**

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or to renew your dues return this form
and your dues check for \$20 made out to NCCSAH
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