

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 1
Spring 2022

NCCSAH Offers Spring Tour of Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island

The NCCSAH has planned an exciting Spring 2022 tour of the architecture of San Francisco's Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island.

Treasure Island was developed initially for the 1939-1940 Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE), hosted by San Francisco to celebrate the completion of the Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge. The tour will be Thursday, May 26 and will include lunch at the Mersea Restaurant, which has stunning views of both the San Francisco skyline and the Golden Gate Bridge.

Our day will begin at 9:30 am at the GGIE Administration Building, originally planned also to serve as the main terminal of a proposed San Francisco Airport on Treasure Island. Its architect was George Kelham, who, until his death in 1936, served as chief architect of the fair—reprising the role he had at the 1915 Panama Pacific Expo. Noteworthy works by Kelham in San Francisco include the Shell Building, the Russ Building and the Main Library.

We will take coffee and pastries and have time to view the building's impressive interior and its Treasure Island Museum. Museum historian Anne Schnoebelen will give a talk about the fair and the island's history.

Next on the tour is the GGIE's monumental Hall of Transportation (also by Kelham) adjacent to the Administration Building. After the Exposition closed in 1940, Pan American World Airways used the building for five



Treasure Island, site of the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition (1938). Three large buildings along right edge of island are the only extant structures from the fair. Baja California and the West Postcard Collection. MSS 235. Special Collections & Archives. UC San Diego

—continued on page 7

Treasure Island Museum Seeks Restoration and Display of Fountain from the GGIE

The Music Concourse in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco's Marina District, and Treasure Island have something in common: each was created for a world's fair and is the site of architectural pieces from those events. Portions of the Japanese Village from the Midwinter Fair (1894) are included in the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park and everyone loves Bernard Maybeck's Palace of Fine Arts from the PPIE (1915). On Treasure Island, three Art Moderne buildings remain from the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939-1940 (GGIE), reflecting a long-ago aspiration for the island to become an airport site. These buildings, located along the southeastern perimeter of the island, were added to the National Register in 2008 and figure prominently in plans for the ongoing redevelopment of Treasure Island.

"The Court of Pacifica," designed by architect Timothy Pflueger, was the site of twenty cast-stone sculptures that conveyed the GGIE's theme, "Pacific Peace and Unity." They represented peoples of the Pacific and were designed by eight local sculp-

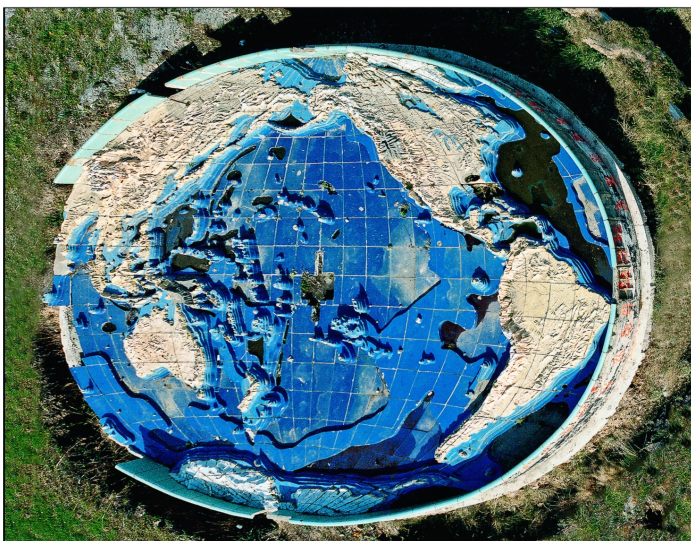


Photo taken from a firetruck's ladder just prior to the dismantling of Sotomayor fountain by the Navy (1991). Photo: Randy Juster <https://www.decopix.com/treasure-island-map/>



Pacific House interior (1939), with Sotomayor fountain and Covarrubias murals. With permission from Environmental Design Library, UC Berkeley.

tors. Four of these sculptures are now located near the entrance to the original Administration Building (now known as "Building One"). The remainder are in storage.

The most remarkable survivor from the GGIE is the thirty-ton, Gladding-McBean made "Fountain of the Pacific," designed and executed by San Francisco artist Antonio Sotomayor, along with a team that included cartographers, geographers and architects. This 43' x 27' terra cotta map of the Pacific Basin was the brainchild of architect Philip Youtz, who insisted upon its accuracy. Different shades of blue represented the depths of the ocean, rising to the islands and continents in shades of brown, yellow, green, and white. The spaces between the 361 individual sections created the latitude and longitude lines. The map was enclosed by a parapet of plain aqua terra cotta tiles. Other features included compass roses and a small animal relief on the parapet at each compass point (polar bear, penguin, yak, llama). Four teal-colored whales, located just south of Hawaii, sprayed high arcs of water over the surface.

The fountain was originally installed in the GGIE's "Pacific House" (William Merchant, architect). After

—continued on page 5

Some Noteworthy Monuments of Expos Past Live On

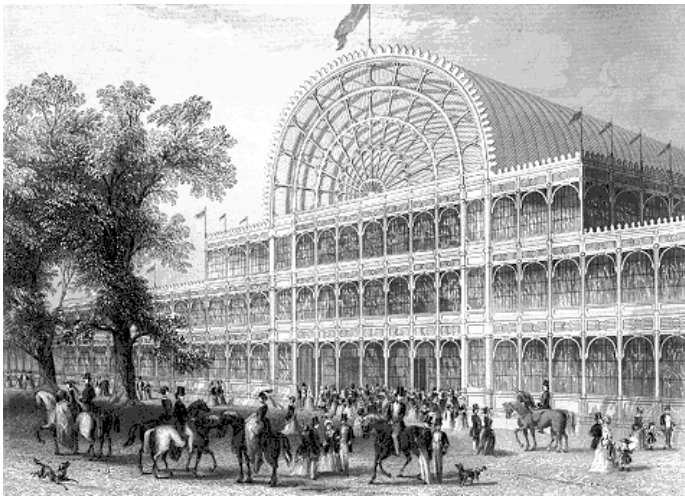


Ruining the Classicism that dominated the Chicago expo, architect Louis Sullivan predicted, "The damage wrought by the World's Fair will last for half a century from its date, if not longer."



Column on left, top to bottom: View of Paris from a balloon: **Eiffel Tower** and buildings of the Exposition Universelle, 1899. Photo: Alphonse Liébert. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. Reconstructed **Palace of Fine Arts**, PPPIE San Francisco. Photo: palaceoffinearts.com. **Museum of Science and Industry** in former Palace of Fine Arts, last remaining structure of Chicago's 1893 Columbian Expo. Photo: Wikipedia. Above: **Habitat 67**, the only intact original structure from Montreal's Expo 67, designed by Moshe Safdie. Photo: Pinterest. 605' **Space Needle** built for Seattle's Century 21 Expo (John Graham & Co., architect: 1962) Photo: Andrea Leopardi, unsplash.com

London Hosted the First International Exhibition, 1851



The design for the Crystal Palace, by architect and botanist Joseph Paxton, began as a “doodle”, in the words of Nikolaus Pevsner, (*A History of Building Types*, 1976), on a bit of paper that is preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The date was June 11, 1850. On a schedule that puts today’s projects in perspective, Paxton showed Prince Albert the final plan on June 24, and published it on July 6. The review committee for the proposed expo accepted the plans on July 15, and contractors began site preparation at Hyde Park in London on the 30th. The framework went up and glazing started in mid-December. Completion date: January 1851!

“What justifies Paxton’s fame as one of the great architectural designers of the nineteenth century,” in Pevsner’s words, “is that in designing his building he virtually created the method of pre-fabrication—i.e. members to standard sizes, production of these on manufacturers’ premises and only assembly on the site. So the Crystal Palace could be built in six months. It was designed on a 24-foot module and used about 3,300 iron columns, 2,150 iron girders, 372 roof beams, 24 miles of gutter, 250 miles of sash bar and 293,635 glass panels.”

The Great Exhibition of 1851 ran from May 1 through October 15, 1851 with more than 14,000 exhibitors from around the world, and was attended by six million people.

In 1852, the Palace was deconstructed and re-built at Sydenham (about 8.5 miles south of Central London). Completed in 1854, the new building incorporated most of the construction parts of the original but “was so completely different in form [and greatly enlarged] as to be properly considered a quite different structure,” (Pevsner).

In the ensuing years it served as a venue for exhibitions and varied events—a kind of Cow Palace cum Moscone Convention Center. For many years, it hosted Handel festivals. At other times it was home to a circus, the site of events for visiting dignitaries and the Shakespeare Tercentenary Festival.

Through the last third of the 19th century, the variety of events at the “new” Crystal Palace included the world’s first aeronautical exhibition, the world’s first cat show, dog shows, pigeon shows, honey and flower shows, as well as the first national auto show. In 1857, a religious revival event drew more than 23,000 people.

During WW I the Palace served as a naval training center, and after the war it opened as site of the first Imperial War Museum. On the evening of November 30, 1936, a fire of unknown origin destroyed the Palace. *The Crystal Palace*, en.wikipedia.org



Illustrations—Top left: Front entrance of the Crystal Palace, London. Source: Wikimedia Commons. Above: britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

—continued from page 2

the Navy moved onto Treasure Island (1940-41), it relocated the fountain to the Court of Pacifica and demolished Pacific House (1942). The Fountain of the Pacific remained there with the remaining sculptures until approximately 1991. At some yet unknown point, the Navy attached the sections of the fountain together with cement or similar material.

According to Navy sources, for many years the fountain area was a popular recreation spot for sailors and other island residents. In later years (Vietnam and after) it was subjected to vandalism.

In 1991, the Navy had other uses for the Court of Pacifica and moved the sculptures into storage. Since the fountain could no longer be disassembled as per its original design, the Navy had it cut into pieces, and it has been in storage ever since. A parking lot was built on the former site of the fountain.

The Treasure Island Museum has been advocating for the restoration and display of the fountain since 1985. In 2018, the museum received a grant from the Historic Preservation Fund of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, City and County of San Francisco, and used the funds to commission a preliminary study for conservation and display of the fountain on Treasure Island. The study has been presented to the Treasure Island Development Authority, which owns the fountain and has jurisdiction over its future.

—Our thanks to Anne Schnoebelen, a board member and historian for the Treasure Island Museum, for providing this article. She can be reached at anne@treasureislandmuseum.org.

For more information:

<http://treasureisland1939.com/>

<https://www.treasureislandmuseum.org/pacific-unity-sculptures>

<http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/pacific-basin-fountain-on-treasure-island>

Antonio Sotomayor, b. Bolivia, 1902, d. San Francisco, 1985. After initial art studies in his home country, he migrated to San Francisco, in 1923, where he worked briefly as a dishwasher at the Palace Hotel. He resumed his studies at what is now the SF Art



Institute. In the 1930s Sotomayor painted two murals for the Pied Piper Room at the Palace. He taught at Mills College and the California School of Fine Arts (SFAI) during the 1940s. In addition to the Fountain of the Pacific, Sotomayor created murals for the Peruvian Pavilion at the GGIE. He served on the SF Arts Commission. In his final years he painted murals at Grace Cathedral depicting events in the church's history. (Source: Wikipedia. Sotomayor self-portrait; treasureisland1939.com)



*Popular Mechanics, May 1938
Watercolor by Ken Sawyer*

Artist's rendition shows intended post-fair use of Treasure Island as an airport for San Francisco. Appearing on the near edge of the island are the three structures built in permanent materials to serve the airport—a terminal and two hangars—the sole buildings that survive today from the exposition.

Expo Model Home in El Cerrito: Are Others Out There?



Expo House adjoining Berkeley Country Club, contractor Elmer Freethy. Photo: Roxy Miravalle. El Cerrito Historical Society

The Golden Gate International Exposition offered an unusual look at Bay Area domestic architecture. The Exposition Model Homes Tour came about from a combination of Bay Area boosterism and Depression Era efforts to stimulate construction jobs and promote growth. In announcing the planned tour, the *Chronicle* (June 11, 1938) described it as offering “a marvelous opportunity to get exposition visitors and people from other parts of the country to live here.”

Between May 1 and September 1, 1939, 24 homes, built and fully furnished for the Exposition Tour in connection with real estate developments around the Bay Area, opened to the public. They formed a 200-mile circuit, from Marin through the East Bay to Santa Cruz and the San Francisco Peninsula. All were architect-built and ranged in price from \$4680 to \$45,000.

Among the architects were a number of practitioners in the Bay Area Tradition, including Clarence Mayhew, Carl Gromme and Frederick Confer. William Wurster designed two homes in the tour, one in Kent Woodlands, the other in Belvedere. Landscaping in the Belvedere project was by Thomas Church, who also designed the sites of tour homes by Gardner Dailey in Woodside and Clarence Tantau at Pasatiempo in Santa Cruz.

In an early perception of what would come to national attention ten years later as the “Bay Area Tradition,” Talbot Hamlin wrote (*Pencil Points*, May 1939): “[T]he main impression made by the best of these houses is one of direct simplicity, straightforward planning, and exterior design pleasing in its modesty and its frank expression of the climate and the local conditions.”

By November of 1939, nearly 1.2 million visitors had toured the model homes. Three-quarters of them had been sold, and additional sales in adjoining tracts re-

sulted directly from the Exposition Tour.

—*This item, with minor changes, appeared in the February 1989 issue of Heritage Newsletter, marking the 50th anniversary of the GGIE.*

Model Home Built On T.I. Was A Raffle Prize



Model Home of the Future constructed on the fair grounds, Treasure Island, and moved to San Francisco. Photo: Chronicle, John O'Hara

San Francisco architect Vincent Raney (1905-2001) designed the 1700 square foot house illustrated here and constructed on Treasure Island as a model “home of the future”. With high ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows and easy garden access, it was promoted as “Sunshine House”. Nearly 100,000 visitors viewed the house, and the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce sold raffle tickets at \$1 each. Lucky winners were a San Francisco couple who had to pay the cost of barging the house across the bay and trucking it to their lot near Stern Grove. According to Raney’s obituary, appearing on sfgate.com, he designed 600 service stations, more than 100 movie theaters (including the Marina on Chestnut St. in San Francisco), shopping centers, industrial buildings, churches and schools. He also produced a proposal for a United Nations Capitol in San Francisco, when it still seemed the city might land the role as UN headquarters city.

—*Source for this item: Chronicle Staff Writer Marsha Ginsburg, January 11, 2004*



—Residence of the Commander (1899-1900), aka Nimitz House, Yerba Buena Island, named for Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander of the US Pacific Fleet during World War II. He died in the commander's residence in 1966. Photos: Ward Hill

years as a hangar as part of the Treasure Island Airport. We will car pool to Mersea for lunch. (It is about a 15-20 minute walk.)

After lunch, we will carpool to nearby Yerba Buena Island to view the interior and exterior of the Admiral Chester Nimitz house (aka "Quarters One"), an impressive Neo-Classical house built by the Navy in 1900. The tour will end with a walk around the adja-

cent "Officer's Row" a handsome ensemble of six 1902 houses built for Naval Officers. The tour will end at approximately 3:30 pm.

The tour fee (including lunch at Mersea Restaurant) is \$50 for NCCSAH members and \$80 for non-members (includes \$30 annual NCCSAH membership). The Administration Building has plenty of parking. The building is also accessible by a new ferry service from the Gate B at the Ferry Building (view schedule at [tisf.com](https://www.tisf.com)) and Muni Bus 25 from the Salesforce Transit Center (Mission at Fremont). Clipper Cards accepted on Muni but not on the ferry.



As we were about to go to press, we received the following news, and photo, from Jeff Gunderson, Librarian and Archivist at the San Francisco Art Institute, who hosted our fall visit:

"We're celebrating the wonderful news that SFAI has been given a \$200K grant from the Mellon Foundation to support public programs, conservation, scholarship, and

preservation of the school's Diego Rivera mural, *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*. The photo shows Rivera pausing in his work in the company of SFAI Board Chair William Gerstle and architect Arthur Brown, shown just below their images in the mural.

Safety Protocols

Everyone on the tour will need to be fully vaccinated and wear a mask. Proof of vaccination (second shot at least two weeks before the event) will be checked before we have access to the Treasure Island Administration Building.

Fall 2021 Program Explored San Francisco's Rich Trove of New Deal Murals



*Professor Cherny in action.
Photo: Ward Hill*



The fall of 2021 brought NCCSAH back onto the tour circuit with a rich and colorful program that featured San Francisco's remarkable trove of New Deal murals. Balancing the need for safety with the expected level of interest in the program, we offered the identical tour on two dates, September 23 and October 14. They sold out reaching total capacity in three days. In a small bus for each tour group and requiring masks and proof of vaccination against the corona virus, we

traveled from the Presidio Chapel to the Art Institute on Russian Hill, and on to the Maritime Museum at Aquatic Park with a lunch stop outdoors at the nearby Hotel Argonaut. The afternoon concluded with stops at the Museum of Modern Art and the former Rincon Annex Post Office.

We are grateful to Professor Robert Cherny, widely recognized scholar of New Deal murals, for leading both tours and adding to the experience with informative aesthetic and historical commentary at each site. Perhaps the highlight of the tour for most was the opportunity to see Diego Rivera's remarkable work, *Pan Pacific Unity*, on view in a temporary installation at SFMOMA that probably for the first time since its creation on Treasure Island in 1940 permits the fullest experience of its richness and complexity. —continued on page 10



Top: Rivera Mural at SFMOMA. Photo: Bill Kostura. Middle and bottom photos, murals at Rincon Annex Post Office, by Paul Turner

Treasure Island/Yerba Buena Island Program

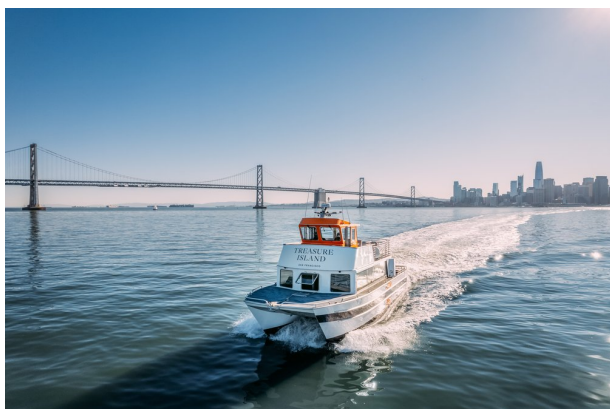
9:30 -10:00 am we meet in Building I, explore building's interior and view the museum exhibit. Coffee, tea and pastries

10:00-10:45 introductory power point on the GGIE and the preservation plan for the Sotomayor fountain

10:45-11:45 Walk to Hall of Transportation Building (aka Hangar One) to tour the interior.

11:45 - 1:30 carpool to Mersea Restaurant for lunch

1:30 - 3:30 pm travel to view Nimitz House and Officer's Row



San Francisco to Treasure Island Ferry

Ferries now operate between the San Francisco Ferry Building and the Treasure Island ferry terminal seven days a week. For schedules and fares visit tief.com

Other Events Of Interest

California Historical Society

Exhibitions: *Chinese Pioneers: Power and Politics in Exclusion Era Photographs*. On view through August 13, 2022

678 Mission St., San Francisco

<https://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org>

Society for Industrial Archeology

50th Annual Conference, Portland, Oregon. June 9 - 12.

sia-web.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation

PastForward National Preservation Conference. Online November 1-4, 2022. Denver

<http://www.pastforwardconference.org/pastforward19/>

DOCOMOMO US

2022 National Symposium: Yo! Modernism: The View from Philadelphia. May 31 - June 5, 2022. Philadelphia, PA

docomomo-us.org/events

San Francisco Heritage

May 18, 2022, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Special evening audio tours to celebrate International Museum Day.

June 11, 2022. A special free day at the Haas-Lilienthal House in conjunction with CPF's *Doors Open California*.

haas-lilienthalhouse.org

California Preservation Foundation

Opening Doors. 2022 California Preservation Conference (virtual), June 7 - 12. *Doors Open California*, both on-site and virtual access to California's hidden histories and unknown pasts, June 11 - 12, 2022. Annual California Preservation Awards nominations due May 23, 2022.

<https://californiapreservation.org>

Berkeley Historical Society

Live and virtual events, through October 8, 2022: *African Americans in Berkeley: Art, Entertainment, Literature, Sports, 1940-2010*. berkeleyhistoricalsociety.org

Registration: Treasure Island/Yerba Buena Island

[please print]

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email address _____

Registration:

May 26, 2022

Number in my party:

Members \$50 per person _____

Non-members \$80 _____

(includes one-year membership in NCCSAH)

Prices includes lunch
and all tour fees

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Please make checks payable to NCCSAH and mail to:

Ward Hill
NCCSAH Treasure Island
3124 Octavia Street, #102
San Francisco, CA 94123

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

Membership Dues

Is your membership current?

At \$30 per year,

NCCSAH membership is still a great deal.

Please see the coupon on the last
page for details.

—continued from page 6

In 2023, the Rivera mural will return to the main City College campus, its home since 1961, to be housed, with a more favorable setting than it previously enjoyed at the college, in a new Diego Rivera Theater.

Much gratitude to the following people who helped make the fall mural tour such a success:

Candy Cam, Avalon Tours, made the arrangements for our tour bus.

Mary Zamboukos with the Interfaith Center of the Presidio arranged our tour of the Presidio Chapel.

Jeff Gunderson, SFAI Librarian and archivist, arranged our visit to the Art Institute and led the tour of recently restored murals.

Ed Meissner, NPS Guide, talked about the history of the Aquatic Park Bathhouse (now the Maritime Museum).

Diem Tran, Catering Manager at the Argonaut Hotel organized our lunch.

Nicole Mishak, Visitor Services Manager, SFMOMA arranged our visit to see Pan Pacific Unity mural.



Viewing frescoes in lunettes at SF Art Institute
Photo: Paul Turner

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

The mission of the NCCSAH is to 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 historic built environment. Membership is open to anyone interested in architectural history and its related fields.

NCCCSAH Officers

President, Richard Brandi
Vice President, Paul Turner
Treasurer, Ward Hill
Secretary, Don Andreini
Membership, Ian Berke

**Remember, you do not have to be
a member of the National SAH to
become a member of NCCSAH
Join or Renew Now!!
Individual \$30.00
Make checks payable to NCCSAH**

Please send your ideas or comments
concerning The Newsletter to:
Don Andreini
NCCSAH Newsletter Editor
dandreini@sbcglobal.net

**To become a member of the Northern California
Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians**
or to renew your membership return this form
and your dues check for \$30 made out to NCCSAH
to

Ian Berke, NCCSAH
Ian Berke Real Estate
2824 Clay Street
San Francisco, CA 94115

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Occupation _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Cell Phone _____

Home Phone _____

E-mail address _____

NCCSAH is a 501(c)(3) organization

NCCSAH Web Site

To view back issues of the newsletter, go to
nccsah.org