

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 1
Spring 2023

Berkeley's Christian Science Church Forms Centerpiece of NCCSAH Spring Maybeck Program

The NCCSAH has a special event planned around the iconic Bay Area architect Bernard Maybeck for Thursday, June 8, 2023.

In the morning, we will screen the wonderful documentary *PURSUING BEAUTY: The Architecture of Bernard Maybeck*, in the Maybeck-designed 1902 Faculty Club at the University of California. Maybeck's architecture reveals an original vision, a reverence for nature, a commitment to community, and a deep and abiding love of beauty. Over twenty of Maybeck's important works are featured in *Pursuing Beauty* and commentators about his architecture and life include Kenneth Cardwell, Robert Judson Clark, Allan Temko, Richard Longstreth, and Gray Brechin. After the film, the documentary film maker Paul Bockhorst and Gray Brechin will talk about the film, the Faculty Club and Maybeck's life and architecture.

The event includes lunch in the Great Hall in the Faculty Club. After lunch, we will walk to the 1910 First Church Christ, Scientist, a National Historic Landmark since 1977 and considered by many as Maybeck's greatest building. Gray Brechin and Lynn Bohannon, President of Friends of First Church, will lead us on a tour of the building. Lynn will also discuss the building's current preservation challenges.

The Maybeck program costs \$50 (members) \$80 (non-members) which includes film screening and discussion, lunch in the Faculty Club and the tour of First Church Christ, Scientist. 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!), address and telephone number. Tour schedule appears on page 10.*

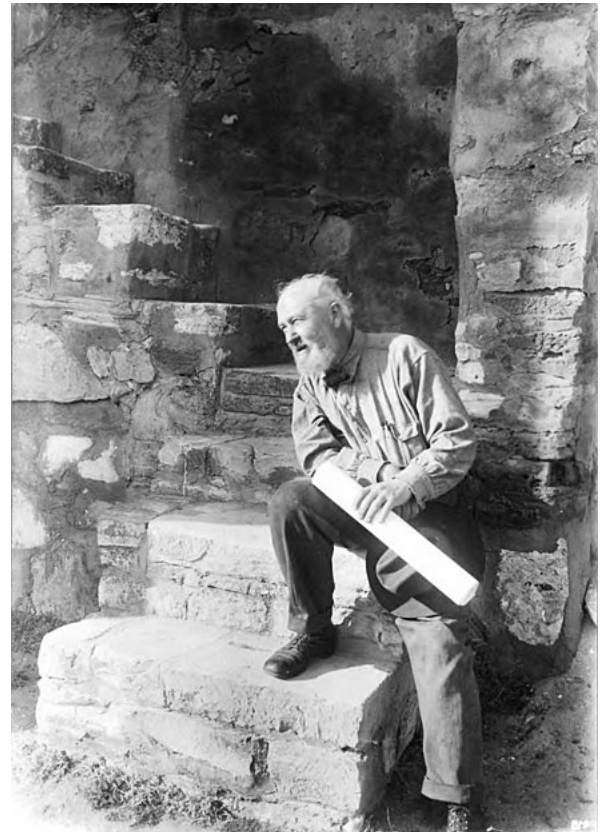


Photo: Maybeck in 1919. Wikipedia

Bernard Maybeck: The P.T. Barnum of the Local Set

Few architects sustain the popular affection that Bernard Maybeck enjoys more than sixty-six years after his death. Arthur Brown, Jr, may have been more tasteful, Frank Lloyd Wright more revolutionary, but Maybeck's eccentric work and personality continue to inspire love. Locally, having "a Maybeck" is equivalent to living in a Monet.

Trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, Maybeck often contorted its precise and rigorous teachings to create effects that teetered on the edge of romantic vulgarity. Shocked, and perhaps a bit envious, his colleagues considered him an errant genius or simply silly. Consequently, he was seldom mentioned in the local professional press; when *Architect and Engineer* ran a feature on new Christian Science churches, it ignored his Berkeley masterpiece of 1910 for comparatively humdrum structures.

Maybeck came to California in the early 1890s after short stints in Florida and Kansas City. Although he lived in bohemian Berkeley, close to the stimulation of the University and the patronage of its faculty and hangers-on, he commuted daily to a long series of offices in San Francisco. With the young Willis Polk, Ernest Coxhead, and A. C. Schweinfurth, he helped create what has become known as the First Bay Tradition of residential architecture.



Top and above: First Church of Christ, Scientist, Berkeley.
Photos: Gray Brechin

Maybeck is best known for his frame buildings, particularly houses. Some of his finest are in San Francisco, including the 1909 Roos House at 3500 Jackson Street and the nearby Goslinsky House at 3233 Pacific. Forest Hills has two, at 270 Castaneda and 57 Sotelo, as well as the community-built Forest Hills Association Clubhouse. They all display Maybeck's mastery of eclecticism and his manipulation of scale to suggest oversized dollhouses. What is not visible to the pedestrian are the dramatic interior spaces and lighting, a never-ending source of delight to the occupants and visitors of his houses.

One of the best, and largest, of Maybeck's residential commissions was the Roos House. Unlike the formal and conventional "Stockbroker Tudor" villas nearby, the

Roos House is a whimsical conglomeration of half-timbered volumes riotous with built-in flower boxes and rich Gothic detailing. It looks more like an imploded Bavarian village than a single residence.



Little attention has been given to the effect that the Fair had on Maybeck's later work. Maybeck stated that the PPIE, with its unprecedented color and lighting, lavish gardening, and romantic eclecticism, was an "expression of future California towns." In retrospect, that great fair was a gorgeous anachronism; almost

Inside it is full of Maybeck's spatial surprises. The main axis proceeds from the low-ceilinged intimacy of the dining room to the 30-foot cathedral-vaulted living room, ending in an enormous window that frames the Golden Gate. With walls of redwood and mauve velvet, a walk-in fireplace, and architect-designed "medieval" sofas and tables, Maybeck created a manorial fantasy in Presidio Heights.

alone, Maybeck continued to ignore the unfolding reality of the 20th century. So great had been the acclaim for his Palace that his stubborn idealism is understandable.

Certainly, Maybeck's most popular work was and remains the Palace of Fine Arts, built for the Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915—when Maybeck was 50 years old. The building, meant to evoke ancient Roman ruins redolent of melancholy, was so successful that it was left standing long after the fair's other plaster palaces had been razed, and it was eventually rebuilt in tinted concrete. The Palace was honored several years ago by being chosen to embellish a U.S. postage stamp in a series commemorating American architects.



Throughout the 1920s and beyond, Maybeck produced a series of pastel schemes for the beautification of San Francisco. The finest war memorial he said, would be a vast urban plan "so that when a stranger visits. . .he will have the sense of being in a perpetual world's fair of form, color, and lights." He suggested to the Harbor Commissioners that the pier buildings be painted bright colors so that ship passengers would "receive, a bright and colorful introduction to a city and state so endowed

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Maybeck-designed Kroeber House, Berkeley (top) & UC Berkeley Faculty Club. Photos: Gray Brechin

Berkeley Church Led to Large Midwest Campus Project

The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Berkeley, led to the largest single commission of Bernard Maybeck's career—a campus for Principia College, a Christian Science institution in the Midwest. A major focus of his practice between 1923 and 1940, the project no doubt helped Maybeck to survive the Great Depression, when many colleagues were getting by, designing public housing and other New Deal-funded jobs.

The Berkeley church drew the notice and admiration of Frederic Morgan while on a visit to California, in 1917, the year he and Maybeck first met. It was the start of a long association.

Frederic was the son of Mary Kimball Morgan whose decision, in 1898, to undertake the home schooling of her two sons in their St. Louis home marks the foundation of Principia College. Once favorable word of her work spread, the student body grew, and in 1916, the institution was accredited to offer schooling from kindergarten through junior college.

Intending to expand the college to a four-year institution, Principia's trustees began to plan for a new, larger campus. In 1921, at Maybeck's invitation, Frederic Morgan, by then director of the college, joined the architect for two weeks at the Bohemian Grove, where the two first discussed plans for a new campus. In 1923, on the recommendation of Morgan, the trustees engaged Maybeck, who began to prepare the master plan for a site in Overland, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis.

Maybeck presented the trustees with illustrations of



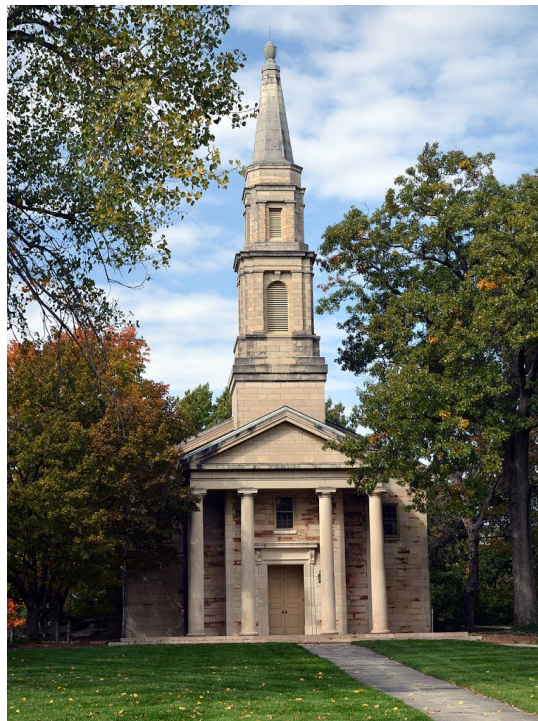
—Aerial view of Principia College campus, overlooking the Mississippi. Photo: Principia College. Below: Google: Principia College Chapel. Photo: Mapio

three styles—Gothic, Georgian and English vernacular; the board expressed a preference for the latter in the form of an English village. Accordingly, Maybeck “framed his campus buildings in modern materials—steel, concrete, gunite and even glass blocks—and then clothed them in historical architectural dress.”

(Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Bernard Maybeck and Principia College: Guidebook* (Elsah, IL: 1998).

By 1927, the Principia board of trustees had accepted Maybeck's first plans. Events, however, overtook the project when, in 1930, Director Morgan, in San Francisco to confer with Maybeck, received a telegram with the news that the State of Missouri was planning to construct a major highway that would cut through the Overland property.

Returning immediately to St. Louis, Morgan led the search for a new site. The quest quickly turned up an alterna-



tive, 2000 acres on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River at Elsah, Illinois, a village 40 miles north of St. Louis. Acquisition was quickly concluded. When Maybeck visited the property in December, 1930, delighted with the choice, he observed, “Only West Point along the Hudson palisades and the University of Heidelberg on the cliffs of the Neckar in Germany can be compared to it.”

Maybeck set to work immediately on a new general plan, which he completed in March, 1931. Groundbreaking for a chapel took place two months later. Taking exception to the English village look, Principia’s students early on made clear their preference that the chapel should be in the American Colonial style. They also wished it to be the first campus building constructed.

Maybeck studied churches in Massachusetts to accommodate their wishes, and designed the chapel accordingly, but in modern materials—steel, concrete and Indiana limestone. He also disrupted the style’s classical symmetry by an uneven spacing of windows. Maybeck often said the chapel was his favorite building at Principia.

Except for a year’s interruption due to a combination of lack of funds and labor disputes, construction of the Maybeck plan proceeded, with most of the founding plan realized by 1935, when the college moved to the new campus.

Two thousand miles separate the Bay Area and Principia’s Illinois campus. In a time before easy and affordable air travel, most of the contact between architect and client was by mail. Maybeck supervised most of the three and one half years of construction from San Francisco, reviewing daily photos and weekly field reports. In that period he made six visits to Elsah totaling 8 months in all. Frederic Morgan, in turn, made many trips to San Francisco, and the two engaged frequently in an exchange of letters.

The Principia archives contain more than 1100 letters over a seventeen-year period, as well as transcripts of taped interviews, numerous working drawings and renderings, field reports and 1,655 photographs that document construction between the winter of 1930 and December 1934.

Maybeck retired from the project in 1940, and turned realization of the plan over to H.H. Gutterson, himself

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“The Mistake House (1931); The first structure built at Elsah by Maybeck was an experimental building originally named the Sample House, and now known as the Mistake House. Between April and June of 1931 Maybeck personally supervised the construction of this reference-point for the new college construction. It was his intention to use the Sample House as a basis for written instructions coming from his San Francisco office to the architects and construction supervisors in Elsah. The little building includes all kinds of construction techniques including half-timbering mixed with brick, concrete, and stone. In order to imitate the effect of thatch in an English village, Maybeck used gunite on the north slope of the Mistake House roof with poured concrete dormers and a concrete chimney.” —*Principia College National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*.

Photos: ifbpartners.com (left) NRHP waymaking.com (right)

a Christian Scientist, who had designed the Sunday school at the Berkeley church (1929). He carried on the work and designed five campus buildings consistent with Maybeck's plans. Maybeck continued as an informal consultant until his death in 1957.

According to the National Register listing, eleven of the thirteen Maybeck-designed buildings, constructed between 1931 and 1946, survive. Two structures demolished (in 1968 and 1982) were originally built as temporary structures. In 1945-6, the college relocated two other Maybeck buildings within the campus. The district includes fourteen buildings that, while not designed by Maybeck, were part of his original plan, including those by Gutterson.

The Principia College campus entered the National Register and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993.



Maybeck rendering Anderson Hall dorm exterior with landscaping. Principia Digital Collections



Middle photo: Howard House, Principia College. Photo: flickr.
Bottom: Anderson Hall, Principia College.
Photo: Metropolitan Build.

Sources:

PRINCIPIA COLLEGE HISTORIC DISTRICT
National Register of Historic Places Registration
Form, United States Department of the Interior,
National Park Service

Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Bernard Maybeck and
Principia College: Guidebook* (Elsah, IL: 1998).

**For a treasure trove of materials,
visit:**

Maybeck and Principia College
<http://content.principia.edu/sites/maybeck/>

Architectural renderings (1923-1937)
<https://principia.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/>

Fall Tour Sampled Julia Morgan's Legacy in the East Bay

We had a terrific day on September 29, celebrating architect Julia Morgan and historian Victoria Kastner, whose recent Morgan biography has received national attention and stellar reviews. The day started with coffee and pastries in the elegant Member's Lounge in the Berkeley City Club, one of Julia Morgan's greatest buildings. Victoria Kastner's opening talk provided an in-depth and moving account of Morgan's life and architecture—a perfect introduction for our afternoon tour of Morgan buildings.

After the opening talk the members of the Berkeley City Club Conservancy provided us with a fascinating tour of this wonderful building. Many thanks to Sarah Cahill and her associates at the Conservancy for the tour and to City Club event planner Annie Johnson for her many hours spent organizing our morning event. We also thank Berkeley's Builder's Booksource for being on hand to sell copies of the Morgan biography.

Later in the morning the group walked to the Hearst Memorial Gym to view the building and its spectacular Julia Morgan designed swimming pool. Thank you to Brent Tom in the UC Berkeley physical education department for providing us access to the pool.

After lunch, our tour (now by charter bus) visited three major Julia Morgan designed buildings in Berkeley and Oakland. First, we toured St. John's Presbyterian Church (now the Berkeley Playhouse), referred to by architecture critic Martin Filler as "an undisputed masterpiece" of Morgan's early buildings. Many thanks to Mary Lins, Berkeley Playhouse Director, for making arrangements for us to see this very special building, and to their Facilities Manager Santiago Hutchins for providing us with his many insights.

Our next stop was a really special treat: the 1908 private home Julia Morgan designed for Louise

Goddard. We appreciate the hospitality of the current owners, Jianne Gimain and Robert Cassidy, who hosted our group in their beautiful home. Mr. Cassidy led a fascinating tour of the house which included his impressive collection of Arts and Crafts period furniture, decorative arts and fine art. They generously provided us with cold refreshments in their lovely garden (it was a warm day!).



*Women's City Club, Berkeley
Photo: Ward Hill*

The tour concluded at one of the Julia Morgan's most sublime buildings: the Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland. We initially met in the lovely Chimes Chapel before touring this visually rich and complex building. A magnificent collection of Julia Morgan's original Chapel of the Chimes drawings and sketches was on display for us to view. Many thanks to docent Lauren McCabe Herpich who provided many fascinating insights about the building during our tour and to General Manager Cary Boisvert who made it possible for us to see this stunning building.

Additional photographs illustrating the day's activities appear on the following page.

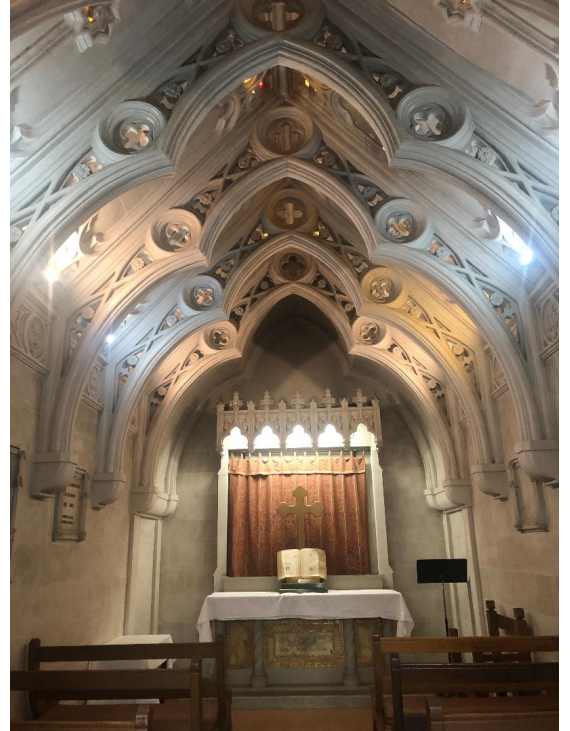


*Victoria Kastner lectures at
Berkeley City Club
Photo: Jane Shabaker*

East Bay Julia Morgan Tour Photo Gallery



*Bob Cassidy and NCCSAH members in his dining room.
Photo: Paul Turner*



Chapel of the Chimes, adjacent to Mountain View Cemetery. Photo: Ward Hill



Viewing Morgan's drawings at Chapel of the Chimes, adjacent to Mountain View Cemetery. Photo: Paul Turner



*Women's City Club, Berkeley
Photo: Phil Bellman*



*Women's City Club, Berkeley
Photo: Jane Shabaker*

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with these qualities,” and that the new bridges be painted with graduated tones to suggest a Western sunset. He proposed a classical acropolis for the summit of Twin Peaks with the city’s water supply cascading to the head of Market Street, as well as boulevards, triumphal arches, and a monumental train station in the Civic Center. Asked, late in his life, if he didn’t think these plans impractical, he responded that he did them to please his wife, who thought them beautiful.

One of the best expressions of Maybeck’s late grandiloquence is the old Packard showroom (now British Motors) on Van Ness, which he designed for his friend, Earle C. Anthony. Anthony, whose sense of irreverent showmanship was commensurate with his wealth, was the perfect patron for Maybeck. Irving Morrow, soon to be supervising architect of the Golden Gate Bridge, wrote that the sophisticated Maybeck had “turned to the sacred books with, oh, what deliberately irreverent intent! I can imagine him with his Bible religiously transcribing pious texts to be put to the most shocking uses.” Maybeck himself remarked “that the building was uniquely San Franciscan, though Morrow felt it would be better accepted in Los Angeles.

The building is rife with jokes on classicism, such as the great columns that become progressively stubbier as the grade rises, and the plate glass windows that interrupt the lush plaster frieze in the center. Its most controversial features, and those which most explicitly tied it to the PPIE, were buried under cream paint and travertine when the British Motor Company acquired the building and, “restored” it as a tasteful repository



Color photos from the glory days of the Packard dealership seem hard to come by. This image shows a building beyond its best days but gives some sense of its splendor. Photo: Collection of Gray Brechin

of Rolls Royces and Jaguars. Originally, it, featured, red “Numidian marble” columns against black tile and supported two enormous radio towers. It was’ bathed with indirect lighting which simulated the passage of the day at 20-minute intervals. Maybeck even suggested to Anthony that the frieze, should be painted iridescent, “like the Raphaels in the Vatican,” but this

was too much even for the showman. Unfortunately, in its remodeling, the building lost in whimsey what it gained in dignity.

Maybeck’s irreverent and whimsical use of tradition leapt over the modern movement (which he despised) and foretold the current fashion of post-modern irony. Buildings like the Packard showroom are only now being understood and appreciated by a young generation of designers, justifying Morrow’s contention that “Mr. Maybeck’s creation is really a courageous performance, and it cannot fail to ease the way for future architectural adventurers.”

—This article originally appeared in the Fall 1981 issue of the Heritage Newsletter. We are grateful to its author, Gray Brechin, for permission to reprint the item. Dr. Brechin is the founder and Project Scholar of the Living New Deal and the author of Imperial San Fran-

Gray Brechin will be joined by Paul Bockhorst at our upcoming Berkeley event in a discussion of the Maybeck film produced by his company, Paul Bockhorst Productions. Mr. Bockhorst has made dozens of films that have appeared on various media, including PBS and commercial TV outlets. Among many awards, he has received five Emmys. bockhorstproductions.com



Photo: Alchetron, *The Free Social Encyclopedia*

“That Maybeck enjoyed playing the role of a carefree bohemian was evident in his life-style, his clothing, and his delight in all forms of theater and pageantry. His family celebrated holidays and birthdays in costumes that he designed, and he would transform the house into a make-believe world with backdrops of colored paper. The amateur theatrical productions at the Hillside Club (a mainstay of the Maybeck’s social life) and at the Bohemian Club (to which he belonged for over fifty years) provided slightly more public occasions for him to create sets and costumes. Maybeck also designed clothing for his wife, Annie White Maybeck, and himself, drawing the patterns on blueprint paper. For Annie he favored subdued earth tones in simple cuts; for his own everyday wear he designed high-waisted trousers that did away with the need for a vest. After he grew bald in middle age, he wore a beret or tam-o-shanter to ward off colds, and at home he donned a flowing red-velvet robe.”

—Sally Byrne Woodbridge
Bernhard Maybeck: Visionary Architect
 (1992)

Schedule for Berkeley Maybeck Tour June 8, 2023



- 9:30 - 10:00 Coffee, tea and pastries in the Faculty Club
- 10:00 - 11:30 Film screening, *Pursuing Beauty: The Architecture of Bernard Maybeck*, in the Heyns Room
- 11:30 - 12:30 Paul Bockhorst and Gray Brechin discuss the film, the Faculty Club Building and Maybeck’s life and architecture; audience questions and discussion
- 12:30 - 1:30 Lunch in the Faculty Club and tour of the building
- 1:30 - 1:45 Walk to the First Church, Christ Scientist, at Bowditch and Dwight Streets
- 1:45 - 3:00 Tour of the church

Above: *First Church of Christ, Scientist, Berkeley.*
 Photo: Gray Brechin

Safety Protocols: At this time, we encourage but will not require the wearing of masks by participants in this program.

Registration: Berkeley Maybeck Tour

[please print]

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email address _____

Telephone number _____

Number of places on the tour:

_____ Members @ \$50 \$_____

_____ Non-members @ \$80 \$_____

Price for non-members includes one-year
NCCSAH membership

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Please make checks payable to NCCSAH and
mail to:

Ward Hill—Berkeley Maybeck Tour
3124 Octavia Street, #102
San Francisco, CA 94123

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.

Events Calendar

San Francisco Heritage

Haas-Lilienthal House audio tours, in observance of International Museum Day, May 18, 2023, 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Admission free. haas-lilienthalhouse.org

Filoli

Dragtopia. June 2, 2023, 5:30-8:00 pm “Come as you are to join this camp night at Filoli. Drag optional, joy required.” filoli.org

DOCOMOMO

2023 National Symposium New Haven: Complexities of the Modern American City. June 21-24, 2023.

docomomo-us.org/events

Berkeley Historical Society

Exhibit: *Touching Ground, Putting Down Roots: Chinese in Berkeley*. Through September 30, 2023.

berkhistory.org

20th Annual Architecture + the City Festival,

September 8-30, 2023, presented by the Center for Architecture + Design, in collaboration with AIA San Francisco. Enjoy events celebrating San Francisco’s historic and emerging architecture. aiasf.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation

PastForward National Preservation Conference. November 8-10, 2023. Washington, DC

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

California Historical Society

Upcoming Exhibition: *Rare, Historical, and Curious: Selections from the CHS Collections*.

678 Mission St., San Francisco

<https://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org>

Society for Industrial Archeology

51st Annual Conference, June 8-11, 2023. Highlights the rich industrial legacy of the coast of Lake Michigan. Grand Rapids, Michigan. sia-web.org

Planning is underway to offer a fall tour to San Diego, October 17 - 19, 2023. It'll be a winner! Stay tuned.

**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.

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concerning The Newsletter to:
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and your dues check for \$30 made out to NCCSAH

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

Name _____

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NCCSAH Web Site

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