

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 2

Fall 2023

NCCSAH Fall Program Draws Us to the West Coast's “Plymouth Rock”

NCCSAH president, Ward Hill interviewed architectural historian Diane Kane, who created our San Diego program for this fall. What follows is a response to Ward's inquiry about the highlights of the tour she has planned for us.

Known as the “Plymouth Rock” of the West Coast, San Diego is one of America's oldest cities; yet it is also one of its newest cities, with most of its built environment from the last 100 years. Once a health-seekers haven and a Navy town, tourism and real estate are now the biggest industries, with bio-tech and education fast becoming major economic drivers. I focused the tour on neighborhoods with interesting histories that create a dialogue between the past and present.

The tour hotel, Le Pensione, is in Little Italy. Once a mixed-use Italian neighborhood, it was decimated by the construction of the I-5 Freeway. Today it has an energetic, youthful vibe with fabulous eateries, hip boutiques and pedestrian amenities. The LIND block (1999-2002), is a redevelopment project designed by six prominent San Diego Post-Modernists. They combined their talents to create a city block of new and salvaged building parts that provide a sense of “invented history.” The nearby Beaumont Building (Rob Wellington Quigley, 1988) contributes to this fanciful narrative.



After lunch on Tuesday, we'll stroll the Gaslamp National Historic Landmark District (1870-1900). At Padres Stadium, we will learn about the “Ballpark Settlement Agreement.” This landmark legal case resulted in adaptively re-using a significant collection of historic warehouses in East Village (1900-1930), including one that serves as the stadium's left field foul line! Architect Rob Quigley will lead a tour of his splendid design for the Central Library (2013) and his nearby home/office.

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Photo: Aerial view San Diego iStockphoto

Son of San Francisco's Sugar King "Discovers" San Diego

The European discovery of the Bay of San Diego was made by a Portuguese navigator sailing for Spain, in 1542. There is no record of another European visit to the area for 60 years. At that time, 1602, the bay was named San Diego, and the first church was built. Yet another interval of sixty plus years ensued, when rumors spread during the 1760s that Russia was planning expansion from Alaska to the coast of California. At that prospect, King Carlos III of Spain set in motion events that would result in the first colonizing expedition into Upper California. Leading the effort were Gaspar de Portola, military governor, and Father Serra, leader of the effort to establish missions in the territory. The first of what would become a chain of 21 missions, Mission San Diego de Alcalá, was founded in 1769.

Among the earliest non-indigenous Americans to have contact with San Diego, were Boston traders, such as those whose voyage Richard Henry Dana chronicled, in *Two Years Before the Mast*. On a homeward stop, Dana records, "We were always glad to see San Diego. . . a snug little place, and



*View of San Diego in 1887, the year John D. Spreckels "discovered" the small town for which he saw a great future.
Photo: clerkfiles.sandiego.gov*

seeming quite like home, especially to me, who had spent a summer [1835] there."

Twenty-four years later (1859), on a visit to California that he recounts, it's fair to say that Dana was—in modern parlance—blown away by the sight of a full-fledged city as he sailed into San Francisco Bay, and he found signs of growth, though on a much more modest scale, in Los Angeles, as well. But, he reported,

"The little town of San Diego has undergone no change whatever that I can see. It certainly has not grown. It is still, like Santa Barbara, a Mexican town. The four principal houses of the *gente de razon*—of the Bandinis, Estudillos, Argüellos, and Picos are the chief houses now; but all the gentlemen—and their families, too, I believe are gone. . . . I must complete my acts of pious remembrance, so I take a horse and make a run out to the old Mission. . . . All has gone to decay. The buildings are unused and ruinous, and the large gardens show now only wild cactuses, willows, and a few olive-trees."

Of course, by the time of Dana's second sojourn (1859), California had entered the Union, and San Francisco's population had exploded, thanks to its

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Aerial view downtown San Diego, 1935, 10 years after death of J.D. Spreckels Photo: clerk files.sandiego.gov

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A late afternoon tour of Balboa Park will explore the history of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style, first introduced by architect Bertram Goodhue at 1915 Panama California Exhibition. Preservation architect David Marshall will discuss the process of renewing once temporary buildings from 1915 & 1935 exhibitions with more permanent materials, while landscape historian Nancy Carol Carter will identify exotic plants introduced by horticulturalist Kate Sessions.



Wednesday morning, the trolley takes us into Old Town State Park, where a mixture of adobe and wooden buildings (c. 1830-1870) surround the rectangular plaza laid out per the Spanish Law of the Indies. At the newly refurbished Serra Museum (Richard Requa, 1930) we'll view a new exhibition on the Presidio. We'll next explore neighborhoods on both sides of the San Diego River, including Craftsman Era Mission Hills (1910-1930), the trendy gay neighborhood Hillcrest, the new SDSU West Campus and Civita Park (2020), site of an abandoned quarry. We'll see how the trolley and restoration of the San Diego River are transforming this narrow corridor into a high-density neighborhood rich with natural amenities.

On Thursday, the trolley will take us north to UCSD, one of the nation's top STEM campuses and innovators in bio-tech, to enjoy its fabulous collection of modern architecture. Highlights include William Pereira's Geisel Library (1970), the Stuart Art Collection and nearby Salk Institute (Louis Kahn, 1965). In La Jolla, we'll visit the historic Irving Gill "Cultural Zone" (1908-1930), anchored by the SD Museum of Contemporary Art, recently renovated by Minimalist New York architect Annabelle Selldorf.

I am excited to share San Diego with you and look forward to a fun and intellectually stimulating visit for NCCSAH members.

For biographical information, go to:
Diane Kane, Architectural Historian - friendsofsdarch.com

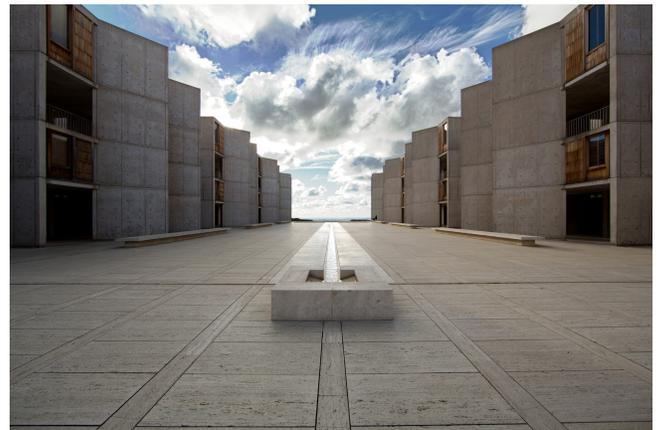
Photo above: Diane Kane



San Diego Geisel Library, UC San Diego. Photo: UCSD



*El Prado Building Balboa Park San Diego
Photo: San Diego Parks & Recreation Dept.*



Salk Institute. Photo: Salk Media Resources Collection

Spring Program Explored Maybeck's Berkeley Works

On June 8th NCCSAH celebrated the great Bay Area architect Bernard Maybeck in an event at the University of California, Berkeley, Faculty Club, a Maybeck design dating from 1902. Our thanks to Christine Berlin, the club's catering manager, for many hours spent organizing our morning event and lunch.

The day started with coffee and pastries in the Hyens Room where we viewed the splendid documentary, *Pursuing Beauty: The Architecture of Bernard Maybeck*, made by award winning film maker Paul Bockhorst. The film features fascinating interviews with many prominent architectural historians such as Richard Longstreth and Robert Judson Clark. The film also has several charming and touching interviews with enthusiastic owners of Maybeck houses.

We deeply regret Paul Bockhorst could not join us for the screening of his film, *Pursuing Beauty*, because of an injury that prevented him from traveling from his home in Southern California. We had many Bockhorst Productions documentaries on DVDs for sale at the event.

Following the film, geographer Gray Brechin (who also appears prominently in the film) discussed Maybeck's architecture and showed many slides of the master's rarely seen drawings. We appreciated having Gray share with us his vast knowledge of the architect and his work. The morning ended with lunch in the Faculty Club "Great Room," one of Maybeck's most magnificent spaces.

After lunch, Gray led the group to the Hearst Memorial Gym, the only Maybeck collaboration with Julia Morgan, to view the beautiful swimming pool and surrounding sculpture. We then continued south to see what many consider to be Maybeck's greatest and most inventive building: The First Church of Christ Scientist, Berkeley. The President of The Friends of First Church, Lynn Bohannon, gave us a tour of this truly spectacular building, providing many insights into its design and construction. Thanks to Ms Bohannon for her fascinating insights into Maybeck's magnum opus and for making it possible for us to see this remarkable building.

Photos: top to bottom: Gray Brechin and Jan Berckfeldt, ED the Maybeck Foundation, at portrait of Maybeck; photo: Paul Turner. Pause for lunch in the Great Hall, UC Faculty Club; photo: Paul Turner. Sunday School Addition, Christian Science Church; photo: Phil Bellman.

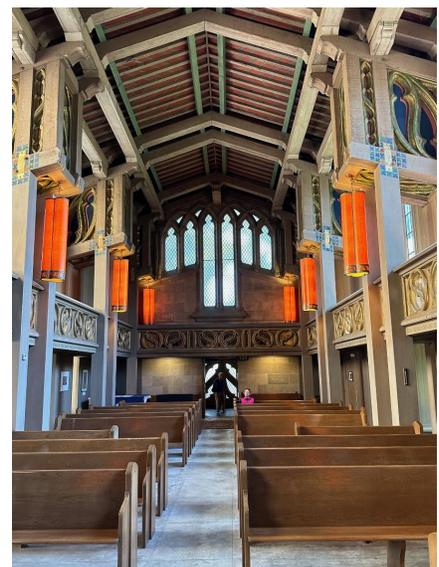
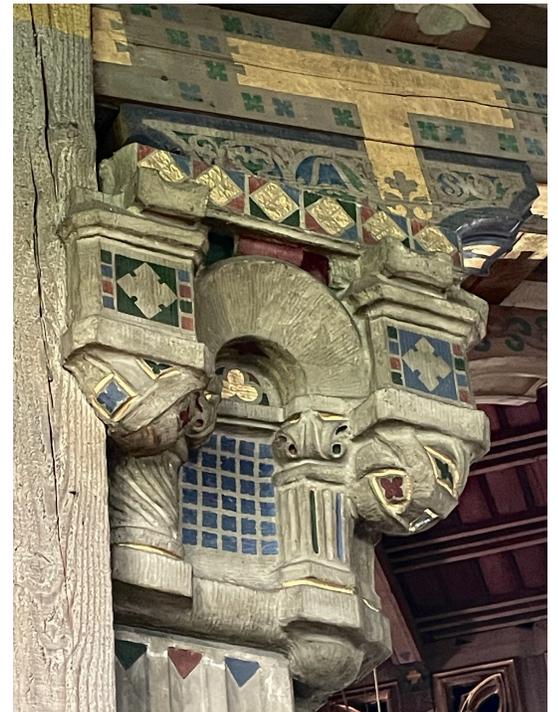


Photo Gallery: NCCSAH Berkeley Maybeck Tour



Photos: top left, Great Hall, UC Faculty Club; photo: Bill Kostura. Top right, Lynn Bohannon addresses our group at Berkeley's First Church Christ, Scientist; photo: Paul Turner. Bottom left, Hearst Memorial Gym, UC; photo: Paul Turner. Bottom right, detail Christian Science Church; photo: Jane Shabaker



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proximity to gold country. Census figures show that San Diego's population about the time of Dana's second visit stood at 731. Its population grew only modestly, until the 1890 census recorded 16,159 residents, a striking 512.8 percent increase over 1880. The arrival of a long-awaited transcontinental rail link in 1885 contributed to the increase but did not bring the hoped-for prosperity.

It was just two years after the arrival of the railroad that John D. Spreckels, scion of the wealthy San Francisco family, first visited San Diego (1887). He dropped anchor there in his yacht to restock supplies. He saw great potential and moved quickly to profit from that potential. He was not the first.

Spreckels biographer, Sandra E. Bonura, writes (*Empire Builder: John D. Spreckels and the Making of San Diego*. U. of Nebraska Press, 2020), "'Modern' San Diego's history began in 1867, when. . . Alonzo Erastus Horton arrived from San Francisco and saw potential in the 'little old remnant of a Spanish town'." He quickly began to acquire tracts of land near the waterfront and sold off lots for potential development, encouraged by the hope of a transcontinental rail link. The Panic of 1871 put an end to the possibility of a rail connection to San Diego any time soon, and with it, an end to Horton's dreams.

If, in Bonura's words, Horton was, "The Father of San Diego", then John D. Spreckels was, she writes, "The Foster Father of San Diego."



Gaslamp Quarter, Old City Hall, San Diego. Photo: Wikipedia



5th Avenue Streetcar, in 1912. Spreckels acquired San Diego's horsecar lines and converted them to electric service. Photo: Digital Archives City of San Diego. sandedo.gov

John Diedrich Spreckels (1853-1926), son of German immigrant parents, Claus and Anna Christina Spreckels, was born in Charleston South Carolina. In 1856, after a brief residence in New York City, the family moved to San Francisco, where Claus ran a brewery. By the mid-1860s, he settled on the business that would bring him great wealth and earn him recognition as California's "Sugar King."

John joined the family business after 1872. He oversaw various operations, including the company's interests in the Kingdom of Hawaii, where he lived for a time, before settling in San Francisco. He was a San Francisco resident at the time of his "discovery" of San Diego, and though his financial interests increasingly focused on the Southern California town, he remained a San Franciscan until he relocated with his family to San Diego following the 1906 earthquake.

From San Francisco, Spreckels oversaw his San Diego interests, developing vital infrastructure, including the securing of a source of water, purchasing the street railway and replacing the horse-drawn transit service with an electric streetcar system (1892). He also acquired two newspapers, *The San Diego Union*, in 1890, and the *San Diego Evening Tribune*, in 1901.

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John Spreckels bought out developers of the Hotel del Coronado when the project had financial difficulties. His heirs retained ownership until 1948. Photo: San Diego History Center

Early on in his focus on San Diego, Spreckels had a hand in development of the famed Hotel Del Coronado (opened 1888). It was under construction when an economic slump threw the project into crisis. John D. provided financial assistance to keep the work going. In the end he bought out the developers and retained ownership until his death, in 1926. His heirs continued to hold the property until 1948 (unusual, since the Spreckels heirs, as historian Bonura points out, divested themselves of John’s assets fairly quickly).

Although he claimed he was “not a philanthropist”, Spreckels did contribute much to the public good. He provided substantial support for the founding of the now-famous San Diego Zoo, and he built theaters and a library. He was a booster and financial supporter of the Panama-California Exposition, to “showcase” San Diego, the first American port en route from the Panama Canal. The expo’s built legacy is still very much on view.

John D. typically did not seek publicity for acts of generosity. Years ago, baseball’s Ted Williams told of growing up in a San Diego suburb with a single mom. With the family in straitened circumstances, and threatened with the loss of their home, John Spreckels quietly paid off the mortgage.

Spreckels became a multi-millionaire and, far and away, the wealthiest man in San Diego. As a partial listing of his assets (taken from Bonura) illustrates, his interests were widespread. “At various

times, he owned all of North Island, the San Diego and Coronado Ferry Company, the Union-Tribune Publishing Co., the San Diego Electric Railway Company, the San Diego & Arizona Railway, and the Mission Beach Amusement Center, which became Belmont Amusement Park. He had built several downtown buildings. . .including the Union Building, the Spreckels Theater and office building, the Hotel San Diego, and the Golden West Hotel and much more.”

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Spreckels Theatre. Photo: c. James Seggie/themadeshutter.com.jpg

San Francisco: Is It The City that Used to Know How?

October 14, 1911, at the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Panama Pacific International Exposition (held in Golden Gate Park, since the fair grounds had not yet been chosen), President Taft declared San Francisco to be “The city that knows how.” When that fair opened in February of 1915, among its wonders was a massive pipe organ, reportedly the seventh largest organ in the world at that time.

After the fair, the company formed by civic and business leaders to finance and manage the exposition gave the organ to the City. It was installed in Civic Auditorium, which was also a gift of the expo company. An official city organist performed regular concerts for several years, and the opera and symphony made occasional use of the instrument until the Opera House opened, in 1932. Summer pops programs, offered from about 1950 until the opening of Davies Symphony Hall, occasionally included a work that featured the organ.

In San Diego, John D. Spreckels and his brother Adolph commissioned Austin Organs, Inc., the same company that built the Exposition instrument for the PPIE, to build an organ for their city. The brothers donated the instrument and commissioned the Spreckels Organ Pavilion, built 1914, in Balboa Park for the Panama-California Exposition. It is said to be the world’s largest pipe organ in a “fully outdoor venue”.

A project to renovate and restore the San Francisco instrument began in the mid-1980s. It was nearly completed when the 1989 earthquake damaged the organ. In late 1991, the City returned it to Austin Organs, Inc., in Hartford, Connecticut (where it had been built, 75 years earlier) for repairs. Meanwhile, several months after the project to restore the organ began, the city made other plans for Civic Auditorium and, deciding not to continue with the instrument’s restoration, ordered its return to San Francisco, where it went into storage beneath Civic Center Plaza. It languishes there to this day.

Over time, proposals to bring the great Exposition organ back have surfaced. In 1998, San Francisco proposed installing the instrument in an organ pavilion at the plaza in front of the Ferry Building, now freed from the blight of the Embarcadero Freeway. However, a 2004 bond measure that would have included funding for the pavilion failed at the ballot box.

Meanwhile, these days, although there are citizen advocates who still hope to bring the organ back to life in a new home, locally, it sounds like the City of San Francisco may be looking for someone—anyone, anywhere—to take the Exposition organ off its hands. (See Peter Hartlaub, “A 40-ton organ sits under City Hall. San Francisco is trying to give it away,” *S.F. Chronicle*, August 18, 2023) In San Diego. . .the City offers Sunday organ concerts on its exposition instrument year-round, as well as special concerts, free of charge.



Photos: Festival Hall PPIE, expositionorgan.org; Spreckels Organ Pavilion: spreckelsorgan.org

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Over time, Spreckels was president of several companies, including the Oceanic Steamship Company, the Coronado Water Company, the San Diego and Coronado Ferry Company, the San Diego and Coronado Transfer Company, the San Diego Electric Railway, and the San Diego & Arizona Railway Company.

On a final visit to San Francisco, a cold day in January 1925, John Spreckels dedicated a pipe organ, at San Francisco’s Palace of the Legion of Honor. He commissioned the instrument as a memorial for his recently deceased brother, Adolph, who with his wife, Alma, had funded the museum’s construction.

John D. Spreckels died, in Coronado, on June 7, 1926. His ashes were interred in the family mausoleum at Cypress Lawn, Colma.

Two months later, the City of San Diego held a memorial service at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion. In his address to the more than 2000 people in attendance, the mayor reminded San Diegans of John’s importance to the city: “. . . everywhere you turn, transportation systems, great buildings, banks, parks, beach construction, water development, everything that touches our city life has been advanced by his work. . . .”

San Diego Population

1850	650	1860	731
1870	2,300	1880	2,637
1890	16,159	(512.8% over 1880)	
1900	17,700	1910	39,578
1920	74,361	1930	147,995
1940	203,341	1950	333,865
1960	573,224		
2020	1,386,960		

For a detailed account of the San Francisco organ: Google “Pulling Out All the Stops to Save a 40-Ton, 100-Year-Old World’s Fair Pipe Organ,” by Ben Marks, January 17, 2014. See also Friends of the Exposition Organ San Francisco.



John D. Spreckels: In His Own Words

“The San Diego bug got me!”

“I was out to find a big opportunity to do big constructive work on a big scale—and in San Diego I thought I foresaw just such a chance. So I started to buy real estate, to erect buildings, to finance enterprise, and to develop our local resources. In short, I began to lay foundations deep and wide enough to carry the big ideas I had of helping to turn a bankrupt village into a city.”

While one of every fifteen San Diegans worked for Spreckels by 1910, and he paid 10% of the property taxes in the county, not everyone lauded him. He responded to his critics: “How long do you progressive men mean to stand for this sort of small town stuff? It paralyzes progress, it punctures prosperity; in short, it hurts San Diego, not me. Think it over, gentlemen, and see if you do not think it is about time to make up. I do”

He could be impatient: “What is the matter with San Diego? Why is it not the metropolis and seaport that its geographical and other unique advantages entitle it to be? Why does San Diego always just miss the train, somehow?”

“Gentlemen, I love San Diego.”

—Sandra E. Bonura, *Empire Builder: John D. Spreckels and the Making of San Diego.*

Schedule for San Diego Tour October 17-19

Tuesday, October 17, 2023

SD Airport to Le Pensione, 660 West Date Street, Little Italy

- 12:00 -12:45 pm Gather for lunch at Little Italy Food Hall (550 West Date Street near the hotel)
- 12:45 - 1:00 Walk to Blue Line Trolley (West Cedar/Kettner two blocks from Hotel) travel to 5th Ave.
- 1:00 - 2:15 walking tour of Gaslamp Quarter (Gaslamp Quarter Association)
- 2:30 - 3:45 Tour Petco Park, Library, East Village
- 3:45 - 4:00 Gaslamp Quarter/Convention Center (Petco Park) Green Line Trolley (return to hotel)
- 4:45 - 5:00 Taxi/Uber or Charter Bus to Balboa Park
- 5:00 - 6:30 Balboa Park Tour, including Botanical Garden, Organ Pavilion, Alcazar Garden
- 6:30 - 8:00 Prado Building and Gardens. Dinner El Prado restaurant .
- 8:00 - 8:15 Taxi/Uber or bus back to hotel

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

- 9:00 - 9:30 Meet in hotel lobby, walk to the Blue Line, Little Italy/County Center stop (two blocks from hotel)
- 9:30 - 10:00 travel Blue Line Trolley to Old Town State Park
- 10:00 - 12:00 Old Town State Park tour
- 12:00 - 1:00 pm lunch at Fiesta de Reyes in Old Town
- 1:00 - 4:30 Charter Bus to Presidio Park & Serra Museum, Civita Park and San Diego River Restoration
- 4:30 - 5:00 return to Hotel. Dinner on your own in Little Italy.

Thursday, October 19, 2023

- 9:00 Meet in hotel lobby walk to the Blue Line station Little Italy/County Center stop (near West Cedar/Kettner two blocks from hotel)
- 9:30 - 10:00 travel to UCSD
- 10:00 - 12:00 UC San Diego Central Campus Tour (Design & Innovation Building, Epstein Amphitheater, Geisel Library, Stuart Art Collection, Engineering Complex, Ridge Walk, Torrey Pines & Learning Center)
- 12:00 - 1:00 pm buffet lunch at UCSD Faculty Club
- 1:00 - 1:30 travel by Charter Bus from Faculty Club to Salk Institute
- 1:30 - 2:30 tour of the Salk Institute
- 2:30 - 3:00 Travel to La Jolla Cultural District and Museum of Contemporary Art
- 3:00 - 4:00 Tour MOCA (Kathryn Kanjo, museum curator)
- 4:00 - 5:30 Tour Cultural District in La Jolla
- 5:30-6:00 Charter Bus back to the Hotel/Dinner on your own or return to Bay Area (last flights c. 9:00 pm)

Registration: San Diego Tour

[please print]

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email address _____

Telephone number _____

Number of places on the tour:

_____ Members @ \$250 \$_____

_____ Non-members @ \$280 \$_____

Price for non-members includes one-year
NCCSAH membership

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Please make checks payable to NCCSAH and
mail to:

Ward Hill—San Diego 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

Heritage Happy Hour: no-host gathering, 5-7 pm, 2nd Thursday each month, at a registered Legacy Bar or Restaurant. See schedule: sfheritage.org

DOCOMOMO

Walking tour: *Revisiting Urban Renewal in Western Addition*. Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption, 1111 Gough St., San Francisco. October 14, 2023, 10:00 am - 12 noon. docomomo-us.org/events

Berkeley Historical Society

Walking tours: September 23 & 24, October 7 & 14, November 11. berkhistory.org

20th Annual Architecture + the City Festival,

Through September 30, 2023, presented by the Center for Architecture + Design with AIA San Francisco. Events celebrating San Francisco's historic and emerging architecture. centersf.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation

PastForward National Preservation Conference. November 8-10, 2023. Washington, DC
<http://www.pastforwardconference.org/pastforward19/>

California Historical Society

Exhibition: *Rare, Historical, and Curious: Selections from the CHS Collections*, presented in the street-level windows at 678 Mission St., San Francisco
<https://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org>

Oakland Heritage Alliance

Lecture: *Sam'l of Posen Comes to Oakland!* Richard Schwartz. September 21, 2023, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. Chapel of the Chimes, Oakland. oaklandheritage.org

Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association

Annual House Tour: September 17, 2023: Marking 100th anniversary of the Berkeley Fire. Virtual lecture: *Wildfires in Berkeley: Where Are We Today?*
berkeleyheritage.com

California Preservation Foundation

Soliciting ideas for CPF conference, in Los Angeles, spring of 2024. Proposals due August 31, 2023.
californiapreservation.org

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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3124 Octavia Street
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nccsah.org*