

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

VOLUME 27, NUMBER 2

Fall 2024

Autumn Tour Takes Us to Mission San Juan Bautista and Salinas

The NCCSAH has organized a spectacular tour of the rich architectural heritage of San Juan Bautista and Salinas for the weekend of November 1-3. The program will include historic architecture spanning an impressive range of styles and time periods from early 19th century Spanish California to WPA Moderne and Art Deco of the 1930s (see itinerary on page 10). We will have lunch in the beautiful gardens of the *Jardine de San Juan* in San Juan Bautista and, in Salinas, at the family home of author John Steinbeck, who made the Salinas Valley world famous in his many novels. This tour will involve walking for several blocks or more each day but over easy terrain.

Construction on the Mission San Juan Bautista Church began in 1803 and was completed in 1813. Considered the largest Church in the Mission system, San Juan Bautista is the only one with central nave and side aisles (damaged in 1906 quake, later rebuilt). Also, the setting is the only authentic Mission period plaza in the state.

The town of San Juan Bautista first developed near the Mission Church in 1813. Our tour will focus on the Native Mutsun culture, Spanish colonization, and early San Juan Bautista as a crossroads for travelers. It will feature the arrival of the early Americans and the Italian immigrant hotel owner, Angelo Zanetta, and, in the 20th century, the filming, at Mission San Juan Bautista, of *Vertigo*—one of the all-time greatest films—by Alfred Hitchcock (who lived nearby in Scotts Valley).

Saturday finds us in Salinas. Our first stop will be the California Welcome Center which features an extensive exhibit on the history of the Central Coast. Highlights on this day include the 1868 *First Mayor's House*;



South Main Street, downtown Salinas (2021) Photo: Daniel Dreyfus

the *Railroad Museum*, in the old Freight Depot; and *The Grain Tower*, an adaptive use project by Kasavan Architects. Peter Kasavan will lead a tour of the building and speak of its history.

We will lunch in the dining room of the 1897 Queen Anne Style Steinbeck Family home. Author John Steinbeck was born in the house in 1902 and grew up there. Our stop here includes a tour of the house, followed by a short walk that takes us to the Steinbeck Center, one of the largest literary museums in the United States dedicated to a single author. It began as an initiative by local community and civic leaders to create a forum for Steinbeck's writings that would inspire and launch successful literacy and educational programs.

Sunday morning we turn to downtown Salinas for a walking tour. Salinas has an impressive collection of Art Moderne and Streamlined Moderne architecture from the 1930s. The Art Moderne Monterey County Courthouse was a 1937 WPA project with a famous group of relief sculptures by the Uruguayan artist Jo Mora.

Downtown Salinas also has many wonderful Art Deco and Neo-Classical commercial buildings. We will take a tour of the Art Deco El Rey Theater (1935) led by the building's owner, Kurt Mayer, after which we will have a catered lunch nearby.

Following lunch we continue our program with a visit to the Boronda Adobe. Jose Eusebio Boronda, born in Monterey in 1810, received a 6700-acre grant in the grasslands of the lower Salinas Valley from Mexican Governor Alvarado, in 1831. Between 1844 and 1848, Boronda, with his wife, Maria Josefa, built the adobe house, where they raised their family, farmed the land and raised livestock. Members of the Boronda family lived in the house up to the 1920s.

In 1972, the Monterey County Historical Society (MCHS) acquired the Boronda Adobe and five acres. It was dedicated as a museum in 1974. Considered the best preserved of the Salinas Valley adobes, it is listed as a California Historical Landmark and on the National Register of Historic Places.

In addition to viewing the historic Boronda Adobe, the tour will include the 1897 one-room Lagunita School, two archival vaults containing documents and artifacts dating to the 1770s, as well as the Monterey County Historical Society library, finished with Eastlake Style walnut woodwork from an 1880s Salinas house, demolished in 1964. MCHS Executive Director James Perry will lead the tour, concluding our program.



1897 Queen Anne Style Steinbeck Family home, Salinas. Photo: The Steinbeck House
Historic Boronda Adobe (1844-1848). Photo: Monterey County Historical Society

Steinbeck Evokes the Salinas River



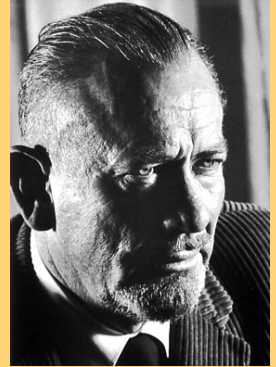
Salinas River. Photo: Monterey County Weekly

A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan Mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees—willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter's flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of 'coons, and with the spread pads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split-wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark.

John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck Recalls San Francisco

When I was a child growing up in Salinas we called San Francisco "the City". Of course it was the only city we knew, but I still think of it as the City, and so does everyone else who has ever associated with it. A strange and exclusive work is "city". Besides San Francisco, only small sections of London and Rome stay in the mind as the City. New Yorkers say they are going to town. Paris has no title but Paris. Mexico City is the Capital.



Once I knew the City very well, spent my attic days there, while others were being a lost generation in Paris. I fledged in San Francisco, climbed its hills, slept in its parks, worked on its docks, marched and shouted in its revolts. In a way I felt I owned the City as much as it owned me.

San Francisco put on a show for me. I saw her across the bay, from the great road that bypasses Sausalito and enters the Golden Gate Bridge. The afternoon sun painted her white and gold—rising on her hills like a noble city in a happy dream. A city on hills has it over flat-land places. New York makes its own hills with craning buildings, but this gold and white acropolis rising wave on wave against the blue of the Pacific sky was a stunning thing, a painted thing like a picture of a medieval Italian city which can never have existed. I stopped in a parking place to look at her and the necklace bridge over the entrance from the sea that led to her. Over the green higher hills to the south, the evening fog rolled like herds of sheep coming to cote in the golden city. I've never seen her more lovely. When I was a child and we were going to the City, I couldn't sleep for several nights before, out of busting excitement. She leaves a mark.

Photo of John Steinbeck.: Wikipedia

Setting Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* at San Juan Bautista

The kaleidoscopic hallucinatory haze that is movie director Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) tells the tale of a retired San Francisco police detective. He suffers from acrophobia and investigates the strange activities of an old friend's wife, all the while becoming obsessed with her. It starred Kim Novak and Jimmy Stewart.

The psychological thriller is a shot-on-location geek's dream movie – or is it nightmare? Primarily shot in San Francisco, the focus here is our tour of the region around Monterey County that will include the historic town of San Juan Bautista. Located physically and emotionally far away from San Francisco, master director Hitchcock chose the small town to set the scene of someplace way back in time redolent of California's mission life.

Hitchcock and his accomplice wife, Alma, owned a residence in the Santa Cruz Mountain town of Scott's Valley to the north, so he was familiar with the region. Still frozen in time today, just as it was shown in the 1958 movie, is the old-world setting of the mission, church, hotel, meeting hall, stables, and cemetery all surrounding a plaza. Keen for authentic details, the director used the plaza to set a background of placid charm – to portray the scenes of a diabolical story. Its unchanging character is no accident as it is a state historic park.

Poster: IMDB, Paramount Pictures. Photo: Mission San Juan Bautista (1895). California State Archives



Scenes from the movie involving the mission church are misleading. The crux of the movie takes place in the church's bell tower. But the truth is, there was no tower when the movie was filmed. What happened?

Hitchcock knew of the church from years earlier with its very tall bell tower, located to the right of the church, but the tower was torn down in 1949 due to the ravages of time. Upon considering the great location, Hitchcock was disappointed to find that the tower was now missing. But that did not stop him. What is known as a matte painting was inserted and the magic of trick photography was used to combine the film footage with the painting showing

a bell tower seemingly much higher even than the original. Today a three-bell campanario, or bell wall, is in place and located on the right side of the church. It is much smaller than the original and was constructed in 1976.



For more information see: Jeff Kraft and Aaron Leventhal's *Footsteps in the Fog*, a book published in 2002, and *Vertigo: The Making of a Classic*, by Dan Auiler, published in 2000.

—Our thanks to Chris Pollock, a member of NCCSAH, for providing this item for publication in our newsletter. Chris is Historian in Residence with the San Francisco Recreation and Parks De-

partment and author of several books, including *Reel San Francisco Stories: An Annotated Filmography of the Bay Area* (2013).

John Steinbeck, “Always Something to Do in Salinas” (1955)



Postcard: Salinas 1950s. Kytherian Society of California

“Salinas was never a pretty town. It took a darkness from the swamps. The high gray fog hung over it and the ceaseless wind blew up the valley, cold and with a kind of desolate monotony. The mountains on both sides of the valley were beautiful, but Salinas was not and we knew it. Perhaps that is why a kind of violent assertiveness, an energy like the compensation for sin grew up in the town. The town motto, given by a reporter ahead of his time, was: ‘Salinas is.’ I don’t know what that means, but there is no doubt of its compelling tone.”

.....

“People wanted wealth and got it and sat on it and it seemed to me that when they had it, and had bought the best automobile and had taken the hated but necessary trip to Europe, they were disappointed and sad that it was over. There was nothing left but to make more money. Theater came to Monterey and even opera. Writers and painters and poets rioted in Carmel, but none of these things came to Salinas. For pure culture we had Chautauqua in the summer—William Jennings Bryan, Billy Sunday, The World of Art, with slides in a big tent with wooden benches. Everyone bought tickets for the whole course, but Billy Sunday in boxing gloves fighting the devil in the squared ring was easily the most popular.”

“Lights, Camera. . .” Missions in the Movies



Legendary director D. W. Griffith was the first to use one of California’s historic missions as the setting for a motion picture. The year was 1910, the movie was *Two Brothers*, starring Mary Pickford, and the scene was Mission San Juan Capistrano. Griffith took up this project when periods of rain delayed filming his classic, *Birth of a Nation*. *Two Brothers* ran just 17 minutes.

Griffith turned to the missions once again, for *Ramona*, a short silent film also with Mary Pickford in the starring role. Dolores del Rio took the lead in a 1928 take on the *Ramona* story, and in the sound era, a remake (1936) starred Don Ameche and Loretta Young.

A pulp fiction tale entitled *The Curse of Capistrano*, serialized in a magazine in 1919, and featur-

—continued on page 6

Salinas Comes of Age in the 1920s



Salinas Street Scene (1929). Photo: Monterey County Historical Society

ing Don Diego de la Vega as the hero, was the basis for a now-famous movie, *The Mark of Zorro*. Star of that film was Douglas Fairbanks, who was encouraged to take the role by his new bride, Mary Pickford. Its opening in New York City (1920) racked up the largest single-day gross in movie history up to that time. A 1940 remake starred Tyrone Power in the title role.

The success of *Zorro* spawned a rash of swash-buckling films, and Fairbanks himself appeared in a sequel, *Don Q, the Son of Zorro* (1925), as both father and son. A serial, *Zorro Rides Again*, appeared in 1937.

The television age produced a spinoff, a series with Guy Williams in the starring role (1957-59). While these often featured padres and were sometimes filmed on location, more often than not, the setting was recreated on Hollywood soundstages.

“The role of California’s missions featured in movies faded in the last half of the 20th century as the old missions were restored and most became active Catholic churches again.”

— Source: David J. McLaughlin, *California Stories: Movies and the Missions*, missionscalifornia.com

Ramona poster (above) art.com

Mark of Zorro poster (see p. 5): etsy.com

“The population of the City of Salinas as it entered the ‘Roaring Twenties’ was 4,304. Architect Ralph Wycoff completed the new Spanish Revival style Salinas Union High School on South Main Street in 1921 to accommodate the growing population. A portion of the high school’s south wing was dedicated to the newly established Salinas Junior College. By 1924, Salinas was the wealthiest per capita city in America. Other municipal activities included the extension of telephone service between Salinas and Monterey, the passage of a city bond issue for a complete sewage system, the construction of a new firehouse and a new grandstand and stable for the California Rodeo. Of particular importance was the Planning Commission’s preparation of a zoning system for the city. By 1928, the city had its first airport.

“A major change in agriculture occurred during the decade: sugar beets and beans gave way to the ‘green gold’ of lettuce. The development of ice bunkered railroad cars made it possible to ship fresh produce nationwide, and lettuce replaced the sugar beet as the Salinas Valley mainstay, although other row crops began to make their appearance as well, including the artichoke.”

—Excerpt, with some minor editing, taken from 1989 Historical and Architectural Resources Survey and Preservation Plan, City of Salinas.

Thanks for a Lovely Day on the Bay!



Liam O'Donohue. Photos (above and below): Paul Turner



We extend our deepest gratitude and appreciation to Liam O'Donohue with the East Bay Yesterday podcast for leading his scintillating and informative East Bay harbor tours on May 19 and 22. We had beautiful weather both days and everyone had a fun time. The two tours sold out in three days and drew a combined total of 54 people, a record for NCCSAH programs.

Thank you, Liam! We would also like to thank the following people who made our tour and lunch at Trader Vic's Emeryville possible:

Aaron Luna, Director of Private Events & Restaurant Manager, Trader Vic's Emeryville, for organizing our wonderful lunches on May 19 and 22. Everyone had a great time socializing with old friends in Trader Vic's charming Tiki Modern interior.



Top: Passing under the "new" double-span of the Bay Bridge. Photo: Ward Hill. Below: Ward describes the big one that got away. Photo: Paul Turner.

Our thanks to Fish Emeryville for arranging the rental of our tour boat, the *Pacific Pearl*, for both tour dates. We especially want to thank the *Pacific Pearl* skipper Jim Holloway for safely navigating the boat during our two tour days.

Additional photographs appear on the following page.

San Francisco Bay Tour Photo Gallery



Photos: (top): pre-launch lunch at Trader Vic's; ready to cast off; viewing Yerba Buena Island; Wednesday's tour group. All photos by Paul Turner, except for the Wednesday group, by Alex Laidley

A Selection from “California Missions: 50 Interesting Facts” by Damian Bacich

There were 21 missions founded in Baja California before missions were established in Alta California.

December 8, 1812, a powerful earthquake in Southern California damaged several missions and destroyed the church at San Juan Capistrano, killing 40 people.

Mission San Rafael Arcangel started as a hospital for sick members of the Native American community at Mission Dolores.

Each year in the springtime, swallows migrate thousands of miles to Mission San Juan Capistrano to make their nests.

Most of the missions are made of adobe, but six incorporated square bricks: San Antonio de Padua, Santa Ines, San Luis Rey, Mission San Diego de Alcalá, San Buenaventura and San Juan Bautista.



San Juan Bautista sits right on top of the San Andreas fault.

Mission San Jose is located in Fremont, not San Jose.

The Serra Chapel at San Juan Capistrano is considered the oldest surviving building in California.

Mission San Fernando houses a Russian bell cast in 1796 on Kodiak Island, Alaska. It bears an inscription in Old Slavonic. How the bell arrived in California is unknown.

Mission Santa Clara changed locations three times because of flooding. The present church, on the campus of Santa Clara University, was built after fire, in 1926, destroyed the previous church in.

In 1849, Mission Dolores housed a brewery, two taverns, a dancing room, a saloon and a hospital.

In 1865, President Lincoln returned the California mission buildings to the care of the Catholic Church.

The California Missions: 50 Interesting Facts. www.californiafrontier.net
San Juan Capistrano Swallows Day 2003 Poster shop.gavinarts.com
Map: *Missions, Presidios & Pueblos of California*, c.2012 Pentacle Press.



San Juan Bautista & Salinas Tour November 1 - 3, 2024

Registration

Tour and Lunch cost: \$200 members (\$230 non-members includes \$30 annual membership dues) includes three lunches (November 1-3) and tour fees in San Juan Bautista and Salinas.

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.

Transportation

We will carpool to San Juan Bautista and Salinas. San Juan Bautista is 20 miles north of Salinas.

Amtrak provides service to Salinas (once a day) from Emeryville/Oakland on the Coast Starlight but not to San Juan Bautista.

Lodging

Salinas has many reasonably priced motels (Marriott Courtyard and Residence Inn; Best Western; Holiday Inn, etc.). If you want more up-scale lodging check out Chateau Coralini, an 1891 Queen Anne Style mansion in Salinas (www.chateau-coralini.com).

The San Juan Bautista & Salinas program is fully booked. Contact Ward Hill (whill@pacbell.net) if you wish to be placed on a waiting list, in the event of cancellations.

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



Salinas Valley. See Monterey; Steve Zmak Photo

Schedule for San Juan Bautista & Salinas Tour

Friday November 1 San Juan Bautista

12:00 pm Lunch at *Jardines de San Juan* restaurant.

1:30-2:30 pm Tour of Mission San Juan Bautista Church

2:30 - 4:00 pm Tour the San Juan Bautista historic town with California State Parks

Saturday November 2 Salinas

10:00–12:00 Salinas Heritage Park

12:00 – 2:00 Tour and lunch at the John Steinbeck House

2:30 – 3:30 National Steinbeck Center Tour

Sunday November 3 Salinas

10:00am -12:00pm Walking tour of Down town Salinas, including the Art Deco El Rey Theater

12:00-1:00 Catered Buffet Lunch near the El Rey Theater

1:30-3:30 Tour of the MCHS Boronda Adobe History Center

Registration: Mission San Juan Bautista and Salinas Program

[please print]

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email address _____

Telephone number _____

Number of places on the tour:

_____ Members @ \$200 \$_____

_____ Non-members @ \$230 \$_____

Price for non-members includes one-year
NCCSAH membership

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Please make checks payable to NCCSAH and
mail to:

Ward Hill—S. Juan Bautista/Salinas 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

Nightmare House on Franklin Street. Creators of *Unhinged* at Winchester Mystery House and *The Speakeasy* present 45-minute Halloween Tours of the **Haas-Lillienthal House**, October 18, 19, 25, 26 and November 1. Tickets on sale now. More information at nightmaresf.com

DOCOMOMO

Tour: Exploring Lawrence Halprin's Landscape Design for Levi's Plaza, San Francisco. October 26, 2024, 10:00-11:30 AM. docomomo-us.org/events

Filoli

Orchard Days. Saturdays & Sundays, now through October 27. For information and reservations: filoli.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation

PastForward 2024 National Preservation Conference. October 28-30. New Orleans
<http://www.pastforwardconference.org/pastforward19/>

Oakland Heritage Alliance

Tours of Posey Tube Oakland Portal. October 11, 9:00-10:30 and 10:30-12:00. Tours limited to 10 persons. October 29, 7:00 - 8:00 pm, Lecture: *Two Bars: A History of Black Attorneys in Oakland and the Bay Area.* November 21, 7:00 - 8:00 pm, *pub crawl: Watering Holes of Olde Oaklande.* For information and reservations: oaklandheritage.org

Berkeley Historical Society & Museum

Exhibit: *Roots, Removal, and Resistance: Japanese Americans in Berkeley.* October 13, 2024 - March 25, 2025. For upcoming Fall tours, go to berkhistory.org

San Francisco Historical Society

Lawrence Ferlinghetti: An Exhibit in 6 Vignettes. Draws from Ferlinghetti's personal effects, his personal library, his paintings and other artifacts from his life and times. On now. www.sfhhistory.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.

NCCCSAH Officers

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

**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
nccsah@gmail.com

**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

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

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Occupation _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Cell Phone _____

Home Phone _____

E-mail address _____

NCCSAH Web Site

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