

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 1

Spring 2021

Proceeding cautiously, we will not offer a spring program this year but anticipate being able to stage a tour in the fall. Meanwhile, in the interest of maintaining communication with the membership, we present this issue of the newsletter featuring an article on “the great house move of 2021”.

Relocation of Historic San Francisco Victorian Draws a Sunday Crowd

After nearly a year of on-again-off-again lockdown in response to the Corona pandemic, folks were eager to join with others for just about any form of diversion. On the morning of Sunday, February 21, an opportunity offered itself, and a rather unique one in our times, at that—the relocation of a grand 1880 San Francisco Italianate house, reportedly the first house move on this scale in nearly 50 years.

It was the perfect spectator activity for plague times. The venue was, naturally, outdoors and spread out over a six-block route, allowing safe distancing among the observers, virtually all of them wearing masks. What's more, it was one of those perfect San Francisco early spring mornings, with sunshine and brilliant blue skies. As it happens, interest was not merely local, or even regional.

A casual scan of on-line media shows that news outlets—newspapers and tv stations—around the globe picked up the item, including the *Tulsa World*, *New York Daily News*, *Times of India* and the UK's *Daily Mail*.

Spotted on the scene was Stewart Morton, among the founding board members of San Francisco Heritage and a veteran of the Heritage Western Addition project to preserve and relocate a dozen Victorians. He re-



Photo: Ian Berke

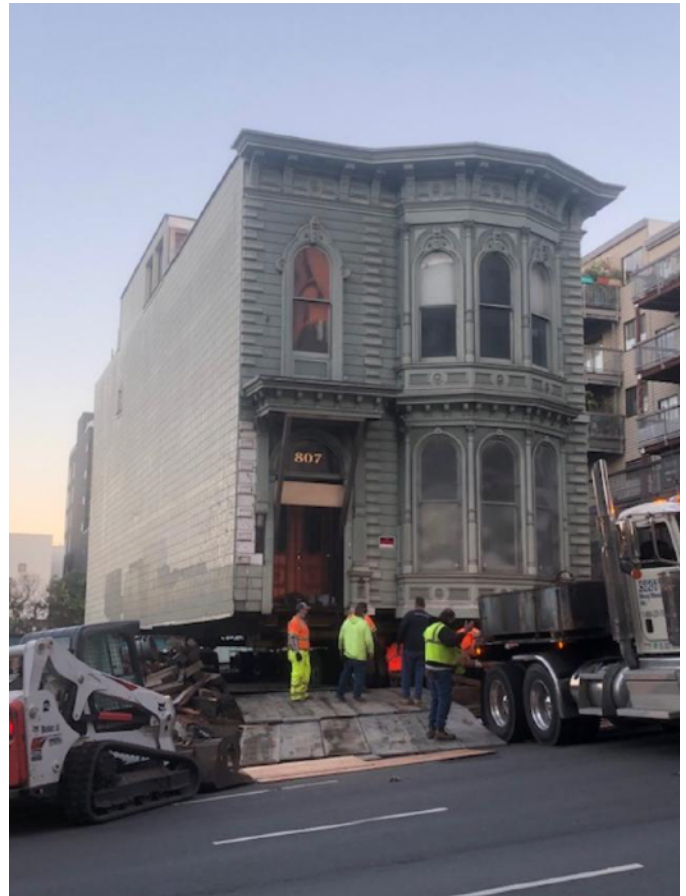
called a very cold weekend night in November 1974, overseeing the project with other Heritage board and staff, sipping brandy against the weather. That effort was probably the last time a house move drew much notice from the public.

By coincidence, our last issue of the newsletter (fall of 2020) carried a feature story by Richard Brandi on the relocation of houses required by the project to widen San Francisco's Portola Drive, in the mid-1950s. On inquiry, Brandi stated that those moves did not attract wide attention, even though many more houses were involved and some were resettled in far-flung neighborhoods. But, then, those homes were not among the city's noteworthy Victorian stock. And, of course, it was the 1950s, and the sentiment for preservation was not yet widely shared locally.

House moving in San Francisco, however, is a long established practice. For a thoroughly researched and engaging account of the subject, from the earliest known example, in 1851, to the early 20th century, see NCCSAH member Bill Kostura's article "Itinerant Houses: A History of San Francisco's House Moving Industry", in the spring 1999 issue of *The Argonaut*, the journal of the San Francisco Historical Society.

Definitely not out of an 1880 pattern book, the Italianate house at 807 Franklin was custom designed for Bavarian-born Max Englander by German architect Wildrich Winterhalter, known for designing several large breweries for German clients in the city. Englander, with his son Aaron, operated a drayage business, located at Pine and Battery streets. Max died 1891; Aaron continued to live in the house until his death, in 1920.

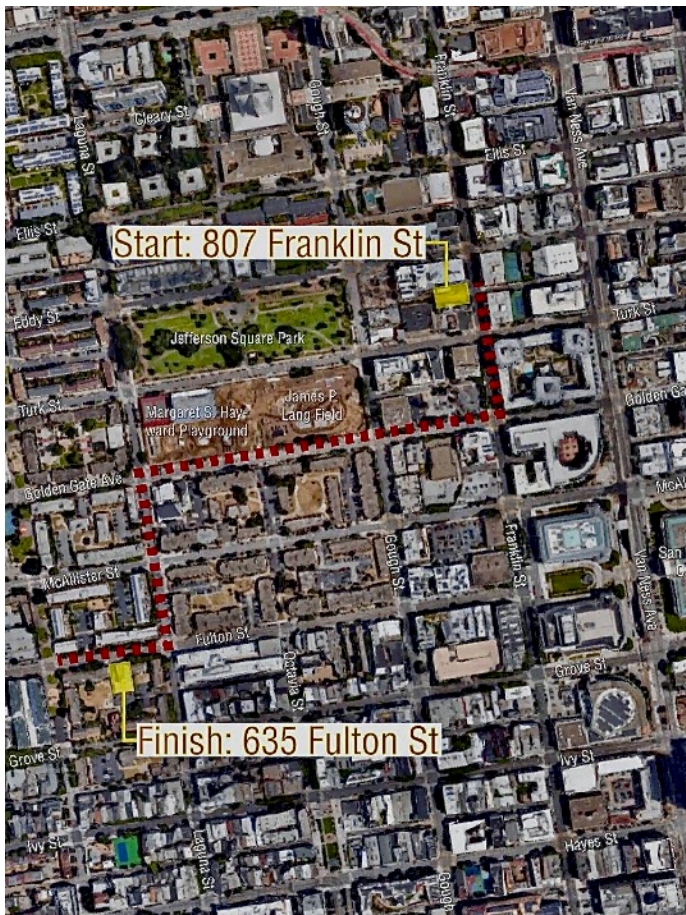
Both the exterior and interior of the Englander house were highly detailed, reflecting the upper class taste of the 1880's. The early San Francisco architecture survey, published in 1968 as *Here Today*, offers this succinct description of the exterior: "One of the most charming sights in the area is the Italianate town house at 807 Franklin Street, with its columned entrance and arched doorway below a balcony and balustrade. . . gently-arched windows in slanted bays, string courses above first and second stories, and small carved medallions. . . ." (p. 119)



*Placed on a rigid steel frame with dollies underneath, the house is ready to move off its lot and turn onto Franklin St.
Photo: Ian Berke*

"The interior was fabulous," in the description by NCCSAH board member and real estate broker, Ian Berke, "with complex ornament and several original painted ceilings, one of the best bannister systems I have ever seen and wonderful wheel cut glass panels in the sliding doors." During the 1990s, the owner occasionally presented Sunday musical programs that gave the public the opportunity to see some of this impressive interior.

The current owner, a developer, acquired 807 Franklin Street in 2013, originally with the intention of restoring the house and building condominiums on the north side of the property (the house occupied just forty percent of the lot). In the planning process, an alternative was considered that would allow more intensive development of the Franklin Street site. The historic context for the house had long since been demolished, and relocation seemed a reasonable approach. Planning for the project, and the long search for a suitable site, began in 2019. It con-



Map shows route of Victorian residence from 807 Franklin St. to 636 Fulton St. Kerman Morris Architects

cluded with the selection of 635 Fulton Street, a Victorian-era building, formerly a mortuary, on a double lot, half of which was not built upon.

At about 5100 square feet on two floors with a small penthouse, the Englander house is much larger than most houses that have been moved in San Francisco. Weighing in at some 80 tons, it is 84 ft long and 25 ft wide (30 at the side bay).

In preparation for the move, on Saturday, February 20, crews led by Phil Joy Housemoving & Leveling, of Benicia, inserted steel beams under the Englander House, thus creating a rigid frame that rested on 4 pairs of dollies, each dolly with a hydraulic lift and electric power. The move itself began with the house shifted to the north side of its large lot, reducing the elevation difference between the house and Franklin Street. The next day, Sunday, at about 6:30 am, the movers laid planking from the lot to the street and began to pull the house with a “bob-tail”, that is, a tractor without trailer. It took about

half an hour but the house was moved and turned at the same time, ending up in the middle of Franklin St. (closed to traffic, of course), and headed south.

A tree trimmer in a cherry picker led the way to remove some substantial limbs that were blocking the house (photo below). The city had previously removed several traffic signs and muni wires along the route and assigned traffic control officers. The developer bore the cost of these, in addition to the direct moving costs of \$200,000.


Some twelve hours after beginning the trip from its perch uphill from a service station at Franklin and Turk, the Englander House slid into its new slot on Fulton Street where it, with the adjacent Victorian-era mortuary building—moved a mere 25 feet laterally onto a new foundation—will be rehabbed and converted to a total of seventeen apartments (See *photos on page 4*). A new eight-story structure at 807 Franklin will offer 48 rental housing units. Architect for both projects is the San Francisco firm of Kerman and Morris. (Visit kermanmorris.com and click on “Featured Work, 635 Fulton”). 



Photo: Ian Berke

On the Road, Arrival at New Home and Proposed New Life for Englander House



Photo: Don Andreini



Photo: Ian Berke

For a time-lapse video of the entire move, with musical accompaniment, go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ty034isPqqc&feature=youtu.be>



*Rendering of proposed rehab of the Englander House
and former mortuary at 635 Fulton St.
Kerman Morris Architects*

Thank you to Ian Berke for his contribution to this article on the Englander House move, and to Cynthia Servetnick and Mark Paez for the memorial tribute to Vincent Marsh on page 6.

Two Unique Moving Experiences from San Francisco's Past




Photo: DPW Horace Chaffee (SF Department of Public Works / Courtesy of a Private Collector. OpenSFHistory / wnp36.00315jpg



Photo: San Francisco Bay Area Photo Blog/San Francisco then & now, part four: December 2017. <https://www.mishalov.net/2017/12/san-francisco-then-now-part-four.html>

For sheer size and structural character of the building, the relocation of Commercial High School, in 1913, has to take the prize. The 1906 disaster destroyed the San Francisco school's building on Market near Fifth. The City authorized a replacement structure in 1909 for construction on Grove Street between Polk and Larkin. City Architect Newton J. Tharp designed the new building, although he would not live even to see the start of construction. One year after laying of the cornerstone (January 1910), the three-and-1/2 story steel frame brick structure was ready for occupancy. By 1912, however, the City had finalized plans for a new Civic Center whose realization would require removal of the recently built school. The school district decided to relocate the structure to the NE corner of Fell and Franklin onto a site the City had reserved for a library. The move began May 8, 1913, with arrival at the new location mid-October. It took an additional month to set the structure on its new foundation. Construction of a modern new building in 1926, designed by City Architect John Reid, Jr., greatly enlarged the Commerce High campus. In 1952, the district closed the school because of falling enrollment, and administrative offices occupied the buildings. Damage from the 1989 earthquake resulted in closing the "old" Commerce High building. Plans for converting the campus for the Ruth Asawa School of the Arts do not include the brick building. Though protected, with the rest of the campus, as a city landmark, its future is uncertain at this time. —Content adapted from OpenSFHistory, a program of Western Neighborhoods Project. (opensfhistory.org)

One of two survivors of perhaps half a dozen octagon houses built in the city, the 1861 McElroy House was the subject of a move in 1952. At that time, the house sat at a slight elevation on the east side of Gough Street near Union. Vacant since 1949, the house was on a large parcel owned by PG&E, which was interested in developing the site. The Society of Colonial Dames was seeking a California headquarters at the time and was able to acquire the octagon for \$1, in 1952, with the proviso that the organization would have to move it. As it happens, two Society members, the Allyne sisters, owned the west side of Gough from Green to Union, and donated land sufficient to relocate the house in a landscaped setting. This was accomplished, and Warren Perry, former chair of the UC, Berkeley, School of Architecture, undertook the restoration and adaptation of the house for the Society as a headquarters and museum, open to the public. Octagon House is a City Landmark and listed on the National Register. 

In Memoriam Vincent Marsh, March 27, 1948 - February 20, 2021

“Vincent lent his considerable talents to everything I launched within City government on behalf of San Francisco’s 1906 Earthquake Refugee Shacks. Without his wisdom and diplomacy my effort would have been diminished.”

—Email tribute by Jane Cryan, Our Lady of Refugee Shacks, from her home in Wisconsin

Architectural historian and NCCSAH member of long standing, Vincent Marsh died peacefully at his home in Palm Springs, on February 20.

Vincent served the people of San Francisco as preservation director in the Planning Department, through the 1990s under mayoral administrations whose support of preservation was often equivocal. He was preservation director for the City of Sacramento in the early 2000s.

Unwavering advocate for historic preservation and mentor to many, Vincent served on the boards of Alliance of Preservation Commissions, California Preservation Foundation, Friends of 1800 and the SF Preservation Consortium. After retiring to Palm Springs in 2005, he maintained a consulting practice and served on the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board.

Marsh held an undergraduate degree from SUNY Buffalo and master’s degrees from the University of Connecticut and Cornell, with a specialization in historic preservation. He also attended the MIT Urban Studies Program.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors adjourned its February 23 meeting in Vincent’s memory, and the Historic Preservation Commission honored his memory in adjourning its meeting of March 3. A private memorial service and inurnment took place at the historic San Francisco Columbarium on April 14, 2021. With precautionary measures in place, attendance was limited, and the places allowed were quickly filled by reservation. With so many people touched by Vincent in his personal and professional life, the historic space would surely, in normal times, have been filled to overflowing. Many shared memories of friendships and professional relationships with Vincent, paying tribute to his patience, his readiness to help and to share his knowledge, wisdom and experience.

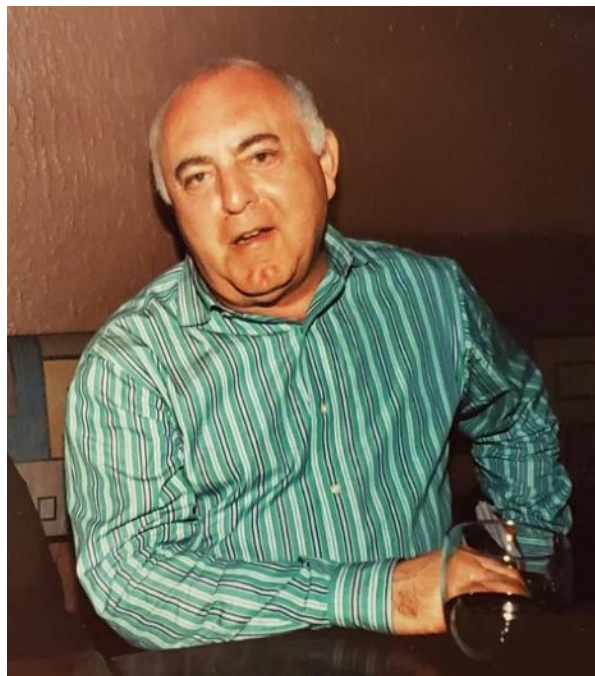



Photo: Joan Franciosa August

In the course of his career, Vincent authored many reports, historic evaluations and nominations. A list of documents is on view on his website: www.vincentmarsh.com

Two notable National Register nominations Vincent worked on while consulting in San Francisco are the former SF State Teachers College/UC Extension Campus at 55 Laguna Street and the Doolan/Larson Storefronts and Residence at Ashbury and Haight. Vincent planned to amend the Doolan/Larson listing to include the significance of the Summer of Love context when it recently became age eligible to honor the wishes of the late owner Norm Larson. Due to health challenges Vincent was unable to complete this project. 

Donations in Vincent’s memory may be made to the California Preservation Foundation: californiapreservation.org/support/donate or to San Francisco Heritage: sfheritage.org/legacy-circle. To share memories of Vincent and offer condolences, go to <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sfgate/obituary.aspx?pid=198204462>

The Trocadero: Historic Parkside District Roadhouse En Route to Landmark Recognition


Last year, San Francisco Heritage, as reported in our previous issue, launched *Heritage in the Neighborhoods*, a program intended to heighten the awareness of historic preservation throughout the city and to cultivate an active constituency to advocate for recognition of historic resources in the city's neighborhoods.

To inaugurate this effort, Heritage selected three neighborhoods whose historic resources have received little or no recognition: the Excelsior, the Marina and the Parkside. The effort in the Parkside quickly bore fruit. Residents and other interested parties, in a virtual meeting, opted for a sure-fire win: designation of what would be the district's first San Francisco landmark: the 1892 roadhouse, Trocadero Inn at Stern Grove.

Supervisor Gordon Mar, whose District Four includes the Trocadero, gave his enthusiastic support to the proposal and initiated the nomination with Supervisor Myrna Melgar, who represents neighboring District Seven. On March 9, the full Board added its unanimous endorsement.

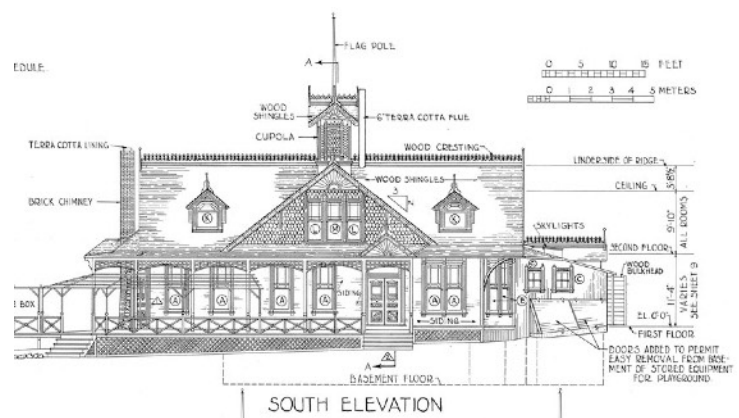
The resolution initiating the nomination cited a number of reasons the Trocadero merits landmark status. Among them were the distinctive Stick-Eastlake architectural style and the role of Bernard Maybeck, who oversaw a renovation in 1931-32. Historic significance noted include an association with political boss Abe Ruef and the roadhouse's role in its neighborhood as the site of political and social gatherings and celebrations.

Reflecting on the diverse communities of the Parkside today and over its history, Supervisor Mar said, “It is important that we look at historic landmarking through the lens of different experiences, and I hope landmarking helps us feel more connected to our history, highlighting that we share more in common than we think.”

The resolution directs the Planning Department to prepare a Landmark Designation Report and review by Historic Preservation Commission to be completed within 180 days. 



Matt Biddulph photograph, licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 2.0 Generic](#)



*HABS. Robert W. Kerrigan Photographer, August 18, 1936.
Drawing of Trocadero south elevation in 1936, N. Yolgulkin,
Library of Congress HABS CA-119*

Other Events Of Interest

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, usual programs and activities of sister organizations have been cancelled, rescheduled or offered online. As conditions remain in flux, please visit websites for updated information.

California Preservation Foundation

2021 Preservation Design Awards call for nominations. Held annually since 1983, the awards program recognizes organizations and individuals for outstanding work to preserve California's historic buildings and sites.

Deadline for submitting nominations: Monday, June 21, 2021. For more information contact CPF at 415-495-0349; californiapreservation.org

Winners will receive recognition at the Annual California Preservation Awards event, to be held **online** in October 2021.

2021 California Preservation Conference

Radical Conservation: Leading from the Left Coast, **online**, June 8 - 10, 2021

DOCOMOMO US National Symposium, **a virtual event**. Chicago: Crossroads of Modern America, Rescheduled to May 25-28, 2021

Full schedule and session speakers now available. If you registered for this event, originally scheduled for June of 2020, your registration will be carried over to the new dates with no changes to the announced benefits. Each day will feature moderated panels and individual presentations divided among four thematic sessions and concludes with a virtual tour of four essential crossroads of Chicago's architectural time and space.

16th International Docomomo Conference Tokyo Japan 2020+1 Inheritable Resilience: Sharing Values of Global Modernities, **a virtual event**.

August 29-September 02, 2021. For updates on both events: docomomo-us.org/events

National Trust for Historic Preservation

National Preservation Conference: *PastForward 2021*. November 2 - 5, 2021. Sign up for conference updates: support.savingplaces.org

California Historical Society

Reopened to in-person visits as of April 15.
Reserve tickets on line.

Exhibit: *San Francisco Photographs by Minor White. & Tell Your Story - California during the time of COVID-19.* As California's official historical society, CHS invites you to help document this time. Go to: <https://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org>

San Francisco Heritage

Tours: Haas-Lilienthal House now **reopened for self-guided audio tours**, every Saturday and Sunday from 12 noon until 3:00 pm. Advance reservations preferred; rsvp to plarson@sfheritage.org. More information: sfheritage.org. *Living in the Past*, an artist residency project with Jeremy Fish, April 17 - June 6 @ 215 Haight St. More information: haightart.org/livinginthepast

Hybrid **Soirée** celebrating Heritage's 50th anniversary, in person and in your car at Fort Mason or from home, virtually, on your favorite device. Saturday, June 12, 2021, 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm. For updated information: <https://www.sfheritage.org/soiree>

Berkeley Historical Society

Expected return to regular Thursday - Saturday hours beginning May 15, with a new exhibit: *African Americans in Berkeley's History and Legacy*. berkeleyhistoricalsociety.org

Oakland Heritage Alliance

Online lectures: May 20, 7:00 pm. *Life & Legacy of F. M. "Borax" Smith*. June 17, 7:00 pm. *Confections of Oakland*. To register go to oaklandheritage.org

Society for Industrial Archeology

2020 Fall Tour: Central & Mid-Coast Maine. **Rescheduled** to September 23-26, 2021. Annual Lehigh Valley Conference, **Rescheduled** for August 24-27, 2021. sia-web.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.

NCCSAH 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

Membership Dues

Is your membership current?
At \$30 per year,
NCCSAH membership is still a great deal.

NCCSAH Web Site

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