SF WEST HISTORY

OCT-DEC 2015
Newsletter of Western Neighborhoods Project VOLUME 11 NUMBER 4





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October-December 2015: Volume 11, Number 4

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Cover

Ron Jones sitting at the wheel of a go-cart, with his friend Bobby Ensign behind him, on 46th Avenue in the Sunset District in 1951. Ron's little brother, Doug, sits on the front, and his father and grandfather stand behind.

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Western Neighborhoods Project started in 1999. The idea of an organization with a mission to preserve and share the history of western San Francisco really came the year before, when David Gallagher and I talked about how towns like Belvedere in Marin County (pop. 2,100) could have a historical society, or even museum, but the Richmond District (pop. 59,000) was often unmentioned in books on the history of San Francisco.

Researching, writing, and reading history is time-travel, of course, but as WNP approaches its 17th anniversary I find myself wishing for a true time machine.

First order of business when I return to 1998—after buying as much Mission District real estate and Apple stock I can—would be to come up with a better name for the organization. We're officially Western Neighborhoods Project, but a lot of people, even decade-long members, call us "Outside Lands," which is obviously a good name as why else would a successful music festival adopt it? We still disagree on the board if we're Western Neighborhoods Project or *the* Western Neighborhoods Project. The WNP or just WNP?

"Project" sounds too limiting anyway. A project is something one plans to complete, with a finish line, an end result, and likely over budget. But we have not finished our work, and truthfully, never can.

Nothing has made this clearer than our acceptance this past year of a massive photo archive, perhaps the largest private collection of San Francisco historical images. The collector, who prefers to remain anonymous to the greater public, is sharing custody of perhaps 100,000 negatives and prints.

Our goal is the same as it has always been, concisely described in the two verbs of our mission statement: to preserve and share the history of the western neighborhoods. With volunteer help from archivists, historians, and smart, enthusiastic newcomers to the world of collection management, we have processed and safely stored some 6,000 images so far. Most of these prints and negatives have been scanned. Some have been shared on our website (outsidelands.org), our social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), at presentations (Balboa Theatre, Internet Archive), and in *SF West History.* Many, many more we are now unveiling in a companion website created for making such private collections public and open. The site is a work in progress. We intend to add tools, filters, and better search functionality. There may be a wrinkle or two to straighten out. The important point is we are sharing (at the time I write this) 3,703 historical images from San Francisco history. Take a look:

opensfhistory.org

You will see that we have moved beyond our western neighborhood borders: photographs of downtown after the earthquake, family snapshots from the Western Addition, views of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in today's Marina District. But there are plenty of west side images: Golden Gate Park, Ocean Beach, and the haunting sand dunes of the Sunset District.

We will keep scanning negatives and prints and adding to the site, but posting images online is just a first step. We're a history organization. Preserving and sharing for us means more than just an archival envelope and online access to a digital photo. Each image is just a starting point so that investigation, interpretation, new research, and story-sharing can follow.

Project, then, doesn't work as a word to describe what we're doing. Even with a thousand scanners, a thousand volunteers, in thirty



years we will not be "finished" with this work. Even with all the images online, the research evolves, the stories to share unravel forever, and the audience grows and changes in one of the most dynamic cities of the world. The best WNP can hope for is a smooth hand-off of this amazing collection to other researchers, librarians, and lovers of San Francisco history. Someday.

Which brings me to my second task upon arriving back in the late 1990s: encourage a WNP community from day one, because that's where the opportunity to make a difference lies.

We were slow engaging with the people who found our website or who happened upon one of our presentations. We shied from hosting our own events, nurturing our membership, truly building a community.

Grants and institutional funding sources for local history are almost nonexistent. The support to do our work really comes from "regular people" who love history and the neighborhood and give a little each year. Because of you we can take on the private collection, and pay for the supplies to store it safely, the computers and scanners and bandwidth to share it.

Most of you donate about $30 a year to the effort and we appreciate that. Some of you give more, and we really appreciate that. We're still trying to do more, do better, and the extent of our success depends heavily on your generosity. Please remember us in your year-end giving!

Where in West S. F.?

Congratulations to Marie Conroy-Salbi, Irwin Herlihy, and David Volansky for identifying our mystery photo from last issue. City Super, shown in the photo on January 24, 1950, stood on the southeast corner of 17th Avenue and Geary Boulevard. Today, there is a bank in its place. Jeannette's Coffee Room has for decades been the site of the Russian Renaissance restaurant, and the cornice decorations remain.

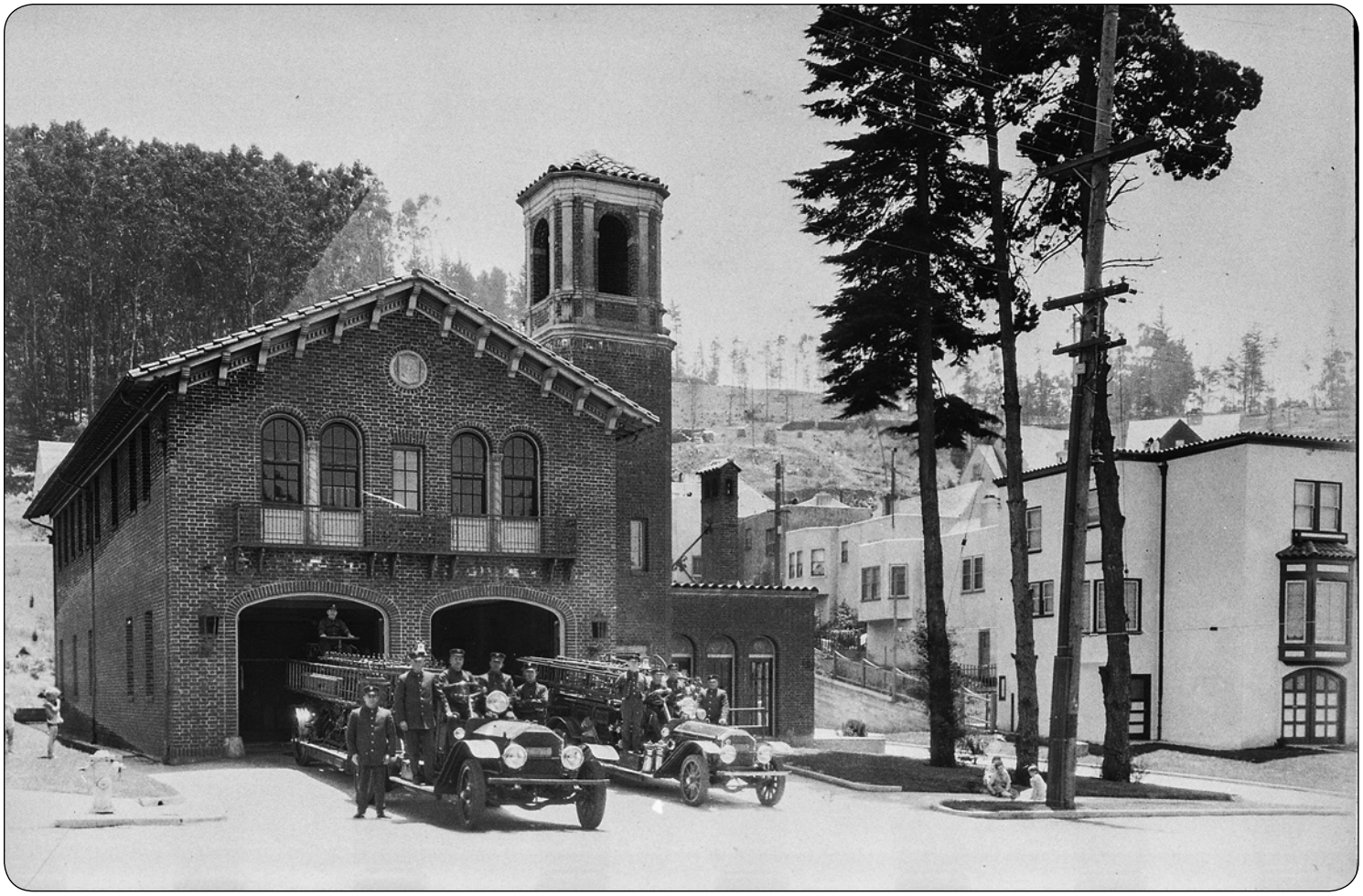
Some memories from Marie: "I lived at 17th and Clement. Didn't like going to Jeannette's. The vegetable was peas and carrots. To me everything on the plate tasted and smelled like peas and carrots. To this day I won't eat peas and carrots. Enjoyed the vanilla ice cream though. The staff at City Super were delightful and so kind to we children who'd pick up items for our families. Gone are the days of free parsley, free bones for making soup. Let alone a cookie or other treat for we children."

Irwin remembered attending Friday night YMCA dances nearby: "After the dance we went to Jeannette's and had a Coke and a Super Duper, a donut with a scoop of ice cream topped with chocolate syrup. Mmm, good. Then we'd walk home on Geary dropping off people on the way. As years went by we would go to Scotty's [Drive-In] after the movie [at] 31st and Geary."

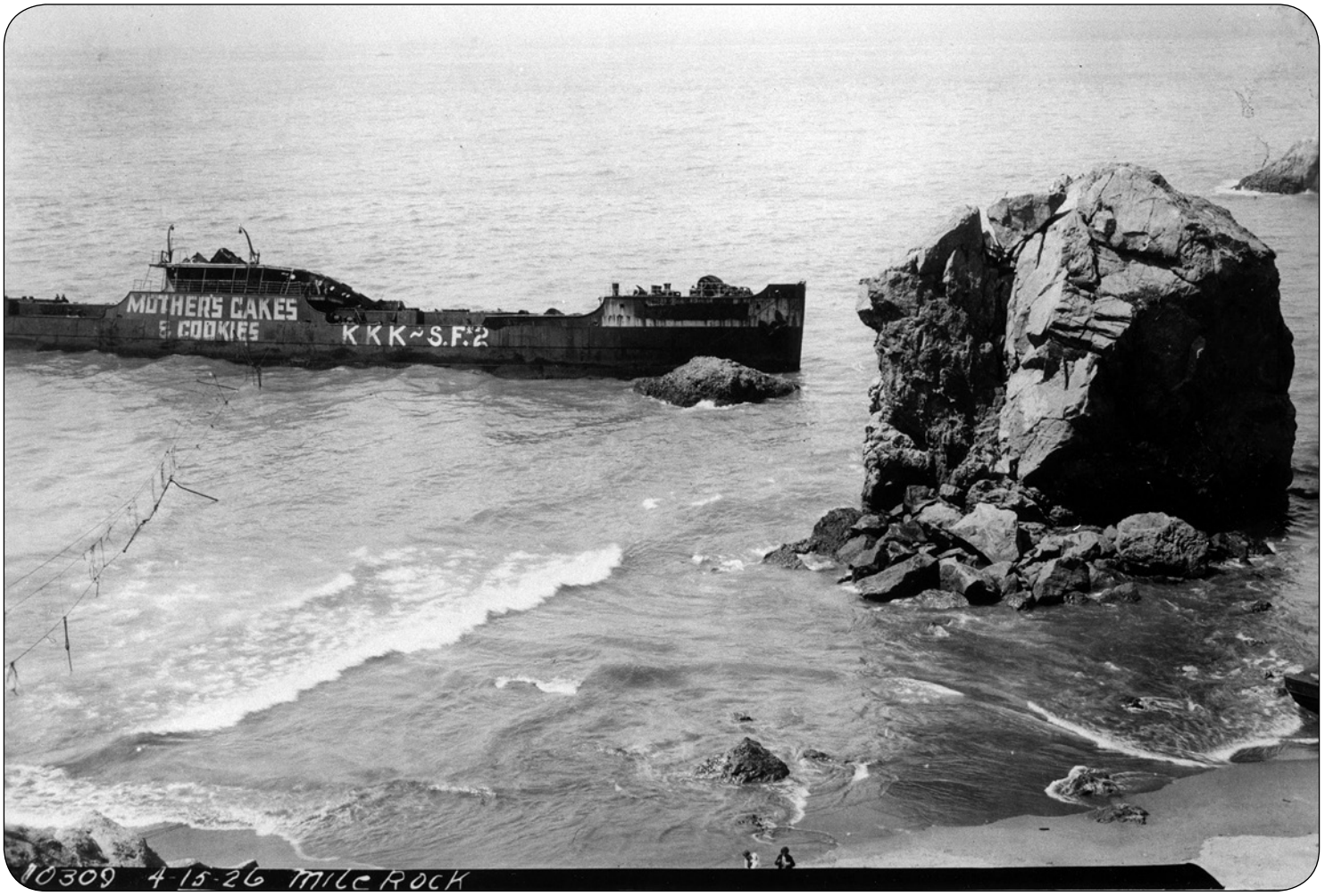


City Super Market and Jeannette's Coffee Room on the corner of 17th Avenue and Geary Boulevard, January 24, 1950.

Take a look at the photograph below and give us your best answer as to where and when. Email your guesses to *woody@outsidelands.org* or send by post to our brick-and-mortar office: Western Neighborhoods Project, 4016 Geary Boulevard, Suite A, San Francisco, CA 94118.



Where and when are these proud fire fighters (and neighborhood kids) posing? Send us your guesses and any memories or stories!



The oil tanker *Lyman Stewart* wrecked beside Helmet Rock at Lands End, April 15, 1926. Print made from a San Francisco Department of Public Works photograph (wnp4.1115, courtesy of a private collector.)

Mother's Cookies and the Klan at Lands End

We continue cataloging, housing, scanning, and sharing the thousands of historical images donated by a private collector who prefers to be anonymous. Visit our website to browse the ever-increasing gallery. Retired National Park Service ranger and WNP member ***John Martini*** *is a volunteer helping us process the collection. Here he shares information on some of the interesting images. John's excellent book on Sutro Baths is available on our website.*

Some historic photos raise many questions while attempting to document a primary subject. The attached photo, taken in 1926 at Lands End, is a wondrous yet chilling example.

At first glance the photo appears to record the wreck of the oil tanker *Lyman Stewart,* stranded beside the stone landmark called Helmet Rock near Lands End Beach. Closer inspection reveals two oddly competing signs painted on the side of the hull: "Mother's Cakes & Cookies," located amidships just beneath the ruins of the ship's bridge, and just forward of that, "KKK-S.F. #2" for "Ku Klux Klan, San Francisco."

So what's the story?

Most of us Outside Lands-types know there are multiple shipwrecks at Lands End, of which the *Stewart* is probably the best known. She came to her resting place on October 7, 1922, after colliding with another freighter in a thick fog. Badly damaged, her captain was able to beach the tanker near Lands End in order to save the ship, crew, and cargo. However, the *Stewart* was so firmly stuck in the sand she thwarted all attempts to refloat her. Her immense hulk, sitting only a few feet offshore, became a mecca for sightseers and photographers during the coming months. Adventurous types could (and did) wade out to her at low tide.

Once it became obvious the ship wasn't going to be refloated, the owners made plans to salvage her where she lay. Other people had other ideas. Just before Christmas 1923, the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran a story under the

headline “Abandoned by Fair Weather Crew, Battered Hulk Still Is Manned by Old Sailors,” describing how aging merchant sailors had taken over the ship. Hikers along the bluffs and passengers on the #1 streetcars could reportedly hear sea shanties wafting from the rust-streaked hulk.

It’s not recorded how long the ship’s owners allowed homeless seamen to occupy the *Stewart,* but by the mid 1920s the ship was literally coming apart at the seams. Waves continually pounded her, and parts of her superstructure began to wash away.

She also became popular as a target for the equivalent of today’s graffiti taggers.

On April 25, 1926, San Francisco Police Department officers spotted five men dangling from ropes and painting “KKK” in big letters on the side of the ship. The cops shouted to them to come down immediately, and in reply were told, “Come out and get us, we’re going to stay here until we finish this job.” Not wanting to climb the sheer steel wall of the ship’s hull, the police allowed the Klansmen to finish and, when they descended, promptly arrested them. The five ended up serving 30-day sentences for violating a city ordinance prohibiting “advertising or signs of any description on private property.” (It’s not recorded if the hateful message had any influence on the court.)

Why their letters on the *Lyman Stewart* also read “SF #2” remains a mystery. Could there have been more than one Klan group active in the city?

Also, why was the Klan in San Francisco? The Ku Klux Klan’s presence was part of a vast upsurge in Klan membership that occurred in the 1920s across the country. Usually associated with its origins in the Deep South, by the mid 1920s the Klan claimed three million members, more than half living in metropolitan areas. A chilling photo taken in August 1925 shows 40,000 white-robed Klansmen marching down Pennsylvania Avenue in the nation’s capital.

San Francisco, it appears, was not immune to the K.K.K. cancer.

The more benign ad for Mother’s Cakes and Cookies is simpler to explain. In the early twentieth century in San Francisco, many buildings ended up slathered with ad hoc advertisements, sometimes in the form of pasted-on broadsides and sometimes painted on the surface. Historic photos show ads painted on rock faces, even dead whales, around Ocean Beach and Lands End. Someone obviously felt the side of the *Stewart* was a ready-made billboard for Mother’s pastries. Whether or not they had permission is unknown.

It took nearly a decade for the *Stewart* to finally succumb to the elements. A brief notice in the *Chronicle* for December 28, 1931 served as the ship’s obituary: “The tanker Lyman K. Stewart, which has clung to the rocks off Land’s End for years, was swept to Davy Jones’ locker […] under the pounding of the gales and the heavy seas.”

The last of the K.K.K.’s boastful sign and the Mother’s Cookies ad disappeared with her.

All that remains visible of the *Stewart* today is the top of her engine block, located in the surf just west of Helmet Rock near Lands End Beach.



Advertising on a beached whale at Ocean Beach, May 1919.
(WNP photo wnp4.0906, courtesy of a private collector.)

A Jewel Restored:

Fernando Nelson's House in Parkway Terrace

by Inge S. Horton

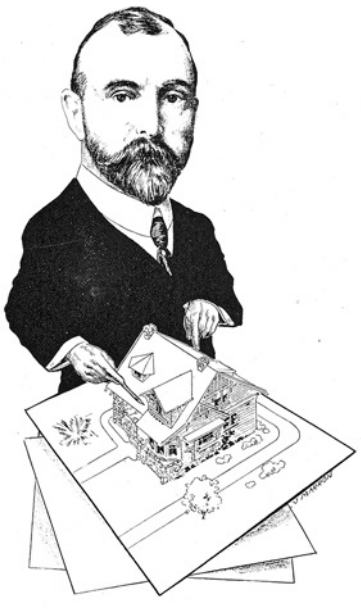
For many years, when driving by the house at 2701 Lincoln Way, I observed with dismay the increasing neglect of the formerly impressive building and garden. At night, there was a bare bulb lit near the entrance, but everything else was dark. Then, in the summer of 2015, scaffolding with black netting went up. Yes, indeed, the property had changed hands and was bought by the San Fran Dhammaram Temple, which already owned other properties in the neighborhood. The director of the Buddhist temple told me that the house will serve as a residence for the nuns of the temple. Necessary repairs and maintenance required hard work by contractors and monks in orange robes. The results are amazing and the house now appears in its old glory, an Italian villa on a large lot at the corner of Lincoln Way and 28th Avenue. Fresh landscaping and the restored ornamental bench at the sidewalk round out the pleasant picture.





Residence at 2701 Lincoln Way in neglected state (left), and renovated in October 2015. (Inge Horton photographs.)

This house is of special importance to the surrounding neighborhood. It was the private home of Fernando Nelson (1860–1953), the owner and builder of five blocks between Lincoln Way and Irving Street and 27th Avenue and 33rd Avenue called Parkway Terrace. The residence was rather lavish with a pergola on the roof with a view of the Pacific Ocean.[1] The main floor included a reception hall, living room, library, dining room, kitchen, and maid's room and was finished in solid mahogany. Fernando Nelson may not have experienced the happiest time of his life in this house, as his wife, Julia, mother of his five mostly grown children, suddenly died after surgery on October 26, 1916—shortly after they had moved in. A few months later he married the widowed Mary Henderson, 40, and lived in this house until about 1942, always actively involved in his building company with his sons. He spent the last years of his life in a more modest house at 201 Westgate Drive in the Mt. Davidson Manor neighborhood, where he died at age 93 in 1953. His obituary not only recounted his achievement of having built about 4,000 high quality homes in his more than sixty years as a builder, but also his enthusiasm for automobiles.[2] Historic newspaper articles show that he owned one of the first automobiles in San Francisco, bought several more high-powered autos, and held many records in long distance car racing.[3]



Caricature of Fernando Nelson by newspaper artist J. Marron.

Fernando Nelson and the creation of Parkway Terrace

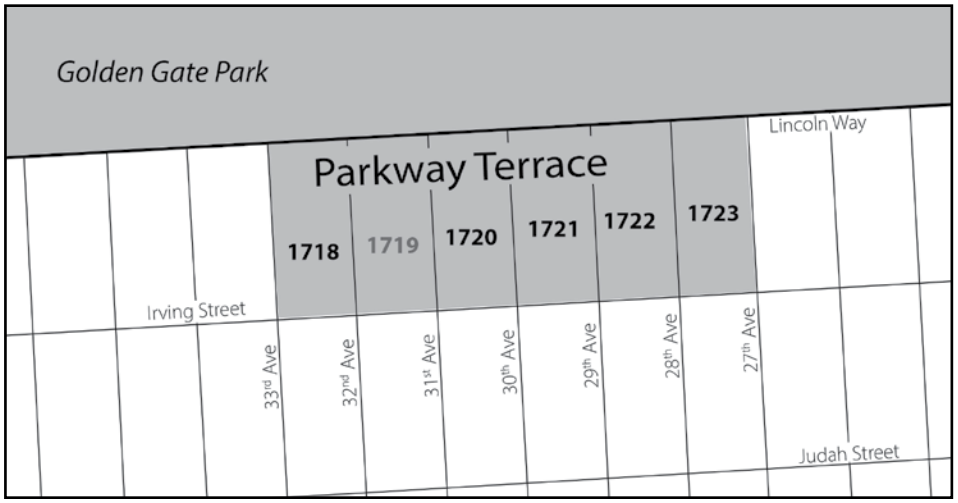
On February 27, 1913, an article appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* announcing a remarkable real estate transaction in the Sunset District, "the largest deal of its kind in the history of San Francisco".[4] Fernando Nelson, a well-known builder in the city due to his high productivity of building about fifty houses per year in many parts of the city such as the Haight, Castro, Noe Valley, Eureka Valley, Richmond, and other neighborhoods, had bought four blocks of land between Lincoln Way and Irving Street from 27th Avenue to 33rd Avenue (city blocks 1718, 1721, 1722, 1723, using current numbering).

The seller of the four blocks was Michael H. de Young who had acquired the property from Adolph Sutro in 1897, but kept the blocks unimproved.[5] At the same time, Nelson purchased one of the two intervening blocks (1720) from the Boston Investment Company (owned by Lyon & Hoag).[6]

Nelson—actually it was the company Fernando Nelson & Sons—spent nearly $45,000 for each block for the purchase, and intended to spend about $15,000 to $20,000 per block for grading, installing sewers, and paving sidewalks in the dune lands, before building modern residences on wide lots. One of the major advantages of these blocks was that the streetcar line along Lincoln Way provided

convenient public transit to downtown. After the construction of the Sunset Tunnel in 1928, the line on Lincoln was augmented with the N-Judah line, still close to Parkway Terrace.

A newspaper article in May 1913, titled "Rapid Strides are made along Lincoln Way,"[7] emphasized that Nelson did not lose time and had let a contract for the grading of the five blocks.[8] This was important publicity because the blocks, while owned by de Young, were perceived as "one unsightly stretch of land along Lincoln Way." The next steps were announced as the installation of utilities and the paving of the streets and sidewalks. The article also mentioned the effect of the improvements of these blocks on the surrounding neighborhood and the increased demand for lots on the adjoining blocks along Lincoln Way between 25th and 26th Avenues and 33rd to 36th Avenues. Nelson's plans reportedly resulted in the sale of about ninety surrounding lots to private parties.



Map of Parkway Terrace in the Sunset District. In 1913, Fernando Nelson bought city blocks 1718, 1721, 1722, and 1723 from Michael de Young, and block 1720 from the real estate firm of Lyon & Hoag. Block 1719, now considered part of Parkway Terrace, was not owned by Nelson and was developed outside his control.

Grading sand dunes for streets and home sites was not unusual in the early twentieth century, but the process was rather intricate. The Parkway Terrace land gently slopes downward from Irving Street to Lincoln Way, and the road surface of the numbered avenues follows the slope. However, the build-able areas of the lots, which are generously set back from the sidewalk, are on a horizontal berm, or elevated platform, that does not follow the slope. The berm is higher for lots near Lincoln Way than those closer to Irving Street. Several steps lead to the first-floor living area of the detached houses, while the garages are at street level and dug into the berm.

Nelson paid special attention to the design of the streets and sidewalks of Parkway Terrace because he was competing with fashionable residence parks, and included building and occupancy restrictions similar to the exclusive master-planned developments.[9] While Nelson was bound by the rectangular layout of the blocks, he added visual interest by placing rounded stone benches at each intersection of the avenues with Lincoln Way. The tree-lined avenues were broadened in the middle of each block by about three feet, but this subtle design feature is hardly reflected in the facades of the houses.[10] With the electrical and telephone lines placed in the rear yards, visual clutter was avoided, appealing to potential buyers. The covers of the sewer connections in the sidewalk still show Nelson's name and are helpful in identifying his houses.

In general, the most lavish residences were villas—large detached houses—located on 28th and 29th Avenues, with more modest houses, often one-story-over-garage bungalows, from 30th to 32nd Avenues. The west side of 27th and east side of 33rd Avenues contain large attached houses with two stories over garages. An analysis of property data (building permits, contracts in the *Daily Pacific Builder* and similar trade publications, and sales records available in the San Francisco Office







Left: This house on 29th Avenue shows how the garage is cut into the berm and stairs lead to the main floor. *Center:* a cover of a sewer connection shows Fernando Nelson's name. *Right:* Rounded bench at an intersection of an avenue with Lincoln Way. (Inge Horton photographs.)

of the Assessor-Recorder) shows that the three eastern blocks (Blocks 1723, 1722 and 1721) between 27th Avenue and 30th Avenue and Lincoln Way and Irving Street were developed first, from 1915 through 1917. Strained economic conditions and restrictions on building materials during World War I halted most non-war related construction from 1918 to 1920. The three western blocks—1720, 1719 (owned by Alice Hastings and not developed by Nelson), and 1718—were built out mainly in the years 1922 to 1924. These post-war houses are more modest and smaller in size than the pre-war residences. There is no evidence that Nelson sold partial blocks to finance other land purchases.

Overall, Parkway Terrace has 257 properties including those which were subdivided after Nelson's purchase in 1913. Of the 257 lots, forty-four lots on Block 1719 belonged to Alice Hastings, who used her own builders: James Arnott & Son and R. N. Swift. The adjacent Block 1720, between 30th and 31st Avenues, was also mostly built by Arnott, but sold by Nelson to individual home owners. Nelson built houses on 147 lots: seventy-six residences from 1915 to 1918, fifty-eight houses from 1922 to 1925, and a few in between. Most of the remaining lots developed after 1925 in Parkway Terrace were executed by other builders, as Nelson had moved on to larger developments such as West Portal Park.

Nelson's Business Practice

In the 1880s, Fernando Nelson first established his career by working as a carpenter for other builders. He started his own business together with his brother-in-law William Hamerton in 1889, building two- and three-unit buildings in the Haight. In 1891, the two amicably dissolved their partnership because Nelson wanted to specialize in single-family homes for sale, while Hamerton preferred multi-unit rental properties which he also managed.[11] At the beginning of his career as a builder Nelson is said to have carried a card in his pocket which had differing floor plans on either side from which his clients could choose.[12] The exteriors of the houses were copied from pattern books and, again, the clients could select what they liked.

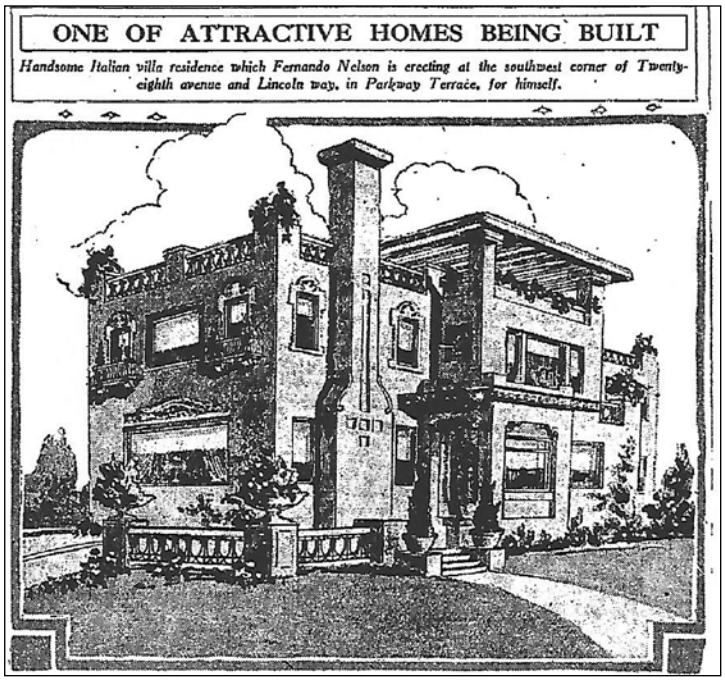
By the time Fernando Nelson & Sons took on Parkway Terrace, Fernando's son Frank had taken correspondence classes in drafting and architectural design. He was able

Analysis of Building Permits, Contracts, or Sales of Properties of Parkway Terrace
By number of transactions per year

Block	Total Number of lots[1]	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925 and later
1723 btw 27th & 28th Avenues	44	13	14	3	2			1	1	2	3	5 *
1722 btw 28th & 29th Avenues[2]	38	12	10	3 1*	1			1 1*	1	3	3*	
1721 btw 29th & 30th Avenues	40	2	10	5	1	3	1	1*		8	2 2*	1 4*
1720 btw 30th & 31st Avenues	44									39*	3 2*	
1719 btw 31st & 32nd Avenues (owned by A. Hastings)[3]	44								14*	5*	3*	22*
1718 btw 32nd & 33rd Avenues	47						4	2 4*	1 4*	11	20	1
Total lots developed by Nelson[2]	147	27	34	11	4	3	5	3	3	22	31	2
Lots developed by other Builders	110			1				5	19	44	7	34
Total lots in Parkway Terrace	257	27	34	12	4	3	5	8	22	66	38	36

1. As shown on Assessor's Block Books.
2. Two lots are vacant and owned by original clients of Nelson.
3. None of the properties were developed by Nelson.

* Not developed by F. Nelson & Sons.


ONE OF ATTRACTIVE HOMES BEING BUILT

Handsome Italian villa residence which Fernando Nelson is erecting at the southwest corner of Twenty-eighth avenue and Lincoln way, in Parkway Terrace, for himself.

The design of Fernando Nelson's house at 2701 Lincoln Way, depicted probably by Frank Nelson, in *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 12, 1916.

to design houses for lots sold by his father, not any longer in Victorian styles, but stuccoed Mediterranean styles. The designs were not pure styles, but adapted and catered to the owners' wishes. Client satisfaction was important to the Nelsons. The lots, varying in width from 25 feet to 40 feet, and mostly 120 feet in depth, were sold under the condition that construction would have to commence within a year. Nelson did not develop whole rows at once but individually designed houses for specific clients. He allowed that they could either be designed by his son or other architects/designers, or be built by other contractors than Fernando Nelson & Sons.

Fernando Nelson offered his potential clients a financial plan in order to increase sales during the economic difficult times before and after World War I, advertising, for example, "This Home $500 Cash and the balance like rent."[13] He is said to have made monthly rounds to collect mortgage payments from his clients, as he often personally loaned customers money without involving a bank.

Numerous advertisings in the *San Francisco Call* and *Chronicle* show the details of the homes in Parkway Terrace. Since Nelson & Sons developed Parkwood Heights at Arguello Boulevard and Parnassus Avenue at the same time as Parkway Terrace, the ads often included both neighborhoods. Ads included a picture of a recently-completed home and described both the property size, "Large lots, 33 x 120 feet," and the equipment of the houses: "All Modern, with Solid Mahogany Living-Room, Open Fireplace, Hardwood Floors throughout, Cabinet Kitchen, Latest Coolers, Sanitary Sink and Drains, Cement Finishing on All Sides; Combination, Sun, Guest and Living Room; Garage entrance, etc."[14]

Among the very first houses built in Parkway Terrace was one for Frank Nelson, Fernando's son, at 2755 Lincoln Way.[15] It was on the same block where, two years later, his father's home was erected at 2701 Lincoln Way. A construction yard is said to have been between the two houses, allowing the builders to easily allocate materials for the surrounding construction sites. It was typical for the Nelsons to live in the neighborhood where they were building and have a construction yard right next to their homes. After Frank's divorce around 1926, the large lot on which his house stood was subdivided and an additional house built.

The company Fernando Nelson & Sons appears for the first time in Polk's Crocker-Langley San Francisco Directory commencing with the year of 1918, but actually already existed in 1913. Listed are "Nelson F" for Fernando, "F F" for Frank Fernando, "G R" for George R., and "W A" for William A. Also listed is the sales manager, A F Lang Jr. The office was located in the Mills Building downtown with additional offices on West Portal and Ulloa Avenues.

The listings in the city directories changed over time, and the 1930 listing also includes the positions held by members of the family; the company is now an incorporated real estate firm with Fernando Nelson as President, William A. as Vice President, George R. as Secretary, Joseph W. as Assistant Secretary, and Mrs. Adelia Wesenberg as Treasurer. Not everybody remained in the family enterprise. In 1930, Frank was no longer part of Fernando Nelson & Sons, but listed as a carpenter living with his new wife, Ramona, at 2 Edgehill Way.



Frank Nelson house at 2755 Lincoln Way, one of the first houses in Parkway Terrace, still showing many Victorian style elements such as the alcove, gables, and porch. (Inge Horton photograph.)

In 1942, Fernando Nelson still appeared in the city directory at the helm of the company, now located at 801 Bay Shore Boulevard. This was a difficult time for the construction business with World War II looming. Nelson still lived at the marvelous house at 2701 Lincoln Way, but soon after moved with his wife, Mary, to a smaller house at 201 Westgate Avenue. One would assume that he retired, but after the war he continued as the president of his company, still improving the housing situation of his beloved San Francisco.

The Future of Parkway Terrace

In walking through Parkway Terrace these days one cannot avoid wondering what will happen to this well designed "residence park." Will the property owners be able to withstand the development pressure so prevalent in San Francisco in 2015? Here and there, one sees a scaffolding going up for the addition of a story. At 30th Avenue and Lincoln Way, both corner houses have been enlarged, but still preserve the overall scale of the neighboring properties. With no active property owners or neighborhood association, who will look out for the preservation of the neighborhood character?

There are also the decorative benches at the intersections of the avenues with Lincoln Way. While most of them are well kept, others seem to be in need of maintenance and a fresh paint job. Even worse, some benches have been removed or buried under soil. Perhaps the example set by the members of the Buddhist temple, who carefully maintain the two corner properties east and west of 28th Avenue, will inspire and stimulate the community spirit of Parkway Terrace.

The author would like to sincerely thank Gary Goss for sharing the results of his research of contracts for buildings of Parkway Terrace and providing her with many copies of articles about Nelson and Parkway Terrace. She would also like to thank Richard Brandi for his comments, especially those on residence parks. Woody LaBounty deserves a heartfelt thank you for editing the article and creating the map.

Inge S. Horton is a retired City Planner and author of *Early Women Architects of the San Francisco Bay Area—The Lives and Work of 50 Professionals, 1890–1951.*

Notes:

1. The view of the ocean is now obscured by tall trees and buildings.

2. "Fernando Nelson Rites Set," *San Francisco Chronicle,* November 22, 1953, p. 24.

3. Fernando Nelson, "The Terrible Strain of the Los Angeles Race," *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 17, 1907, p. 35; other articles in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of June 12, 1907, p. 7; and September 29, 1907, p. A49; also in *Sunset Magazine,* 1907, vol. 18, p. 276; among many others.



2645 Lincoln Way. (Inge Horton photograph.)

4. "Builder Acquires Tract for Homes – Largest Deal of its Kind is Closed in Sunset Blocks, Fronting the Park," *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 27, 1913, p. 12. See also: 4-16-1913, Meichel or M. H. De Young and wife Kate to Fernando Nelson, *Edwards Abstract of Records,* 4-23-1913 (Blocks 641 [now 1718], Block 644 [now 1721], Block 645 [now 1722], and Block 646 [now 1723].

5. "Real Estate Transactions," *San Francisco Call,* December 3, 1897.

6. 4-16-1913 Boston Investment Company to Fernando Nelson, *Edwards Abstract of Records,* 4-22-1913 (Block 643 [now 1720]).

7. "Rapid Strides are made along Lincoln Way. Home builders buy land and build Houses and Grade many Blocks," *San Francisco Chronicle,* May 10, 1913, p. 13.

8. Nelson owned five blocks after having added a block between 30th and 31st Avenue bought from the Boston Investment Co. that acquired it from Stephen Potter, who had purchased the property from Alice Hastings in 1897, according to a notice in the *San Francisco Call* of July 25, 1897. The sixth block (Block 1719) was owned by Alice Hastings, who had inherited it in 1893 from her sister, and does not appear to have ever been owned by Nelson.

9. Residence parks were a special type of subdivision in which the developer comprehensively planned land use through deed restrictions. The restrictions usually limited buildings to detached, single-family residences; encouraged custom house designs that were reviewed by the developer; required front, rear, and side setbacks; and banned racial minorities. Public sculptures were constructed to define a sense of place and the developers tried to create a feeling of living in a park through landscaping and curvilinear streets when possible. Many residence parks were begun across the nation during the early twentieth century. Nelson lived in the city's first residence park, Presidio Terrace, before moving to Parkway Terrace. More than twenty residence parks were launched in San Francisco

between 1912 and 1916, including St. Francis Wood, Forest Hill, Ingleside Terraces, and Sea Cliff, to mention just the larger ones.

10. The design was prescribed in Ordinance No. 2661, passed by the Board of Supervisors on March 9, 1914, and approved by Mayor James Rolph, Jr. on March 11, 1914.

11. For further reading of contemporary books and articles about Fernando Nelson and his career, please refer to:

Waldhorn, Judith Lynch and Sally B. Woodbridge, *Victoria's Legacy,* 101 Productions, San Francisco, 1978; with many examples of houses by Nelson built before 1910.

Brandi, Richard, "Fernando Nelson (1860-1953)," *Western Neighborhoods Project Member Newsletter,* Spring 2002 (with a focus on West Portal);

LaBounty, Stephen "Woody," "Parkway Terrace," *Western Neighborhoods Project* website: outsidelands.org, July 1, 2002;

Freeman, John T., "Fernando Nelson: Master Builder," *Heritage News,* Vol. XXXI, No. 5 (September 2003), and "San Francisco Master Builder II," *Heritage News,* Vol. XXXI, No. 6 (November/December 2003), with focus on the Richmond District);

Freeman, John, "Fernando Nelson: Father of the Richmond District," *Western Neighborhoods Project Member Newsletter,* Summer 2007.

12. Draft Transcript of an Interview with George R. Nelson, Penny de Paoli, Judith Waldhorn, Gary Kray, Mrs. George Nelson, Victorian Architectural Collection compiled by Judith Lynch Waldhorn, Ephemera Collection, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, August 31, 1974.

13. "Parkway Terrace," Advertisement in *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 19, 1916, p. 9.

14. Ibid. See also, "350 Homes 350," Advertisement in the *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 5, 1916, p. 9.

15. Building contract published in the *Daily Pacific Builder,* March 29, 1915.



Corner of Lincoln Way and possibly 32nd Avenue, circa 1915, with Sunset District sand dunes in the background. (Emiliano Echeverria collection.)

Halloween Member Walk

Our great thanks to John Martini for leading our Western Neighborhoods Project member walk at Lincoln Park on October 31, 2015. John shared the history of San Francisco's Golden Gate Cemetery, sometimes called City Cemetery, which occupied the grounds of the park into the early twentieth century.

The first stop was a Chinese funerary monument, situated in the middle of a golf course fairway. John recounted the traditional methods used to prepare the remains of those who passed away far from home for eventual re-internment in China. The walk then moved up the hill to the fifteen-foot Seaman's Memorial, erected in the 1890s as a remembrance of the many indigent merchant sailors buried on the bluff. The event concluded at the Legion of Honor, where John told the story of the unearthing of many thousands of bodies during the construction of the museum in the 1920s and again when it underwent a renovation in the 1990s.

We had over forty participants for the walk, and the weather certainly did its part in contributing to the spirit of the Halloween evening. Heavy fog poured through the trees and over the fairways, making for an atmosphere of mystery and reflection.

In January, John Martini will give a talk with Woody LaBounty on the historical relationship of the Richmond District and the Presidio of San Francisco. Read more on page 21.



Martini shares photos of the graves unearthed during the Legion of Honor renovation. (Nicole Meldahl photo.)

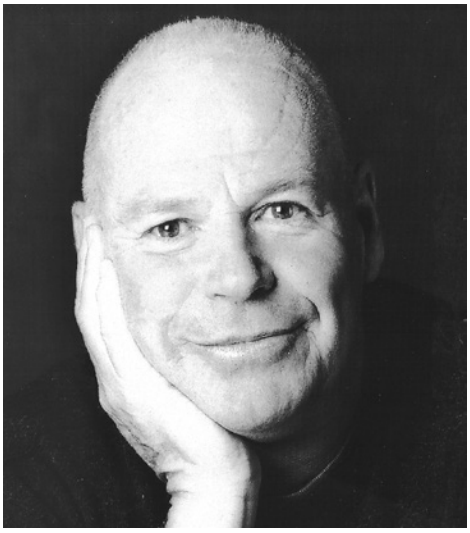


At the Seaman's Memorial, with fog rolling across the hill. (Nicole Meldahl photo.)

MEMORIES

Ron Jones

The following is an excerpt from *Life in the Sunset,* a memoir by Ron Jones about his childhood in the Sunset District in the 1950s. He describes it as "a story about trying to fit in." Jones is a Pulitzer Prize nominee best known for his high school classroom experiment on Fascism, a story retold in a novel, a television special, a film, and on stages around the world as "The Wave." *Life in the Sunset* is available for purchase on the WNP website.



Ron Jones

The Sunset

Whereas my mother being Jewish wanted to put curtains on the world and make it a safe and fair place for all—my father was simply content to listen to the melodies in his head and play his horn. He would drive to the beach to serenade a sunset. Everyday he polished his shoes and practiced his horn. Every meal he proclaimed as "this is the very best meal I've ever eaten!" My mother once confessed to me, "You know I married your father because he was the kindest man I'd ever met." Everyday in the Sunset was perfect, or was it?

The Sunset from my earliest memories was a place of wonder. On 46th Avenue there were still homes being constructed. They sprang from the sand dunes like wooden skeletons smelling of pine and providing great places to climb around and jump from. Driven by the wind, sand would pile up against the unfinished structures and be like waves you could jump into. Wooden street cars clanked up Judah Street to the tunnel leading to the heart of the city. These green and orange streetcars had cow catchers in the front and back that you could ride on. And wooden chairs with brass handles that could be flipped to accommodate the direction of the streetcar.

Great sand dunes still existed west of Sunset Boulevard where Giannini Junior High School and Saint Ignatius High School now hold the sand in place. These dunes were home to mountainous sand and snake-like patterns carved by the wind. Sometimes you could be in these canyons of sand and all you could see was the sky. Usually shrouded in a summer fog—a white curtain that would wait for the day's end before lifting to expose the promise of light in a glorious sunset.

At the southern end of 46th Avenue there was Fleishhacker Pool—the world's largest salt-water pool, where Hawaiian lifeguards used rowboats and every morning pan-fried freshly-caught abalone. Next to the pool the SF Zoo awaited visitors with the fabled monkey island and a whistling steam train. On the corner of 48th Avenue and Sloat Boulevard, a horse stable and paddock provided horseback riding on English saddles for proper trotting down the Great Highway and into Golden Gate Park. Around the corner from my grandmother's there was an ice skating rink and up on Noriega Street the Baghdad bowling alley.

In the Sunset of my youth there were three lumberyards providing the building materials to fill in vacant sand lots with new homes for the sale price of fourteen thousand dollars. Judah, Noriega, and Taraval were corridors of neon signs welcoming you to bars, restaurants, grocery, pharmacy, hardware, and variety stores. Local plumbing, glass, and radio/TV repair shops along with auto garages and gas stations provided services to keep everything running. Everything you needed was close by. Everything could be fixed. Shopping locally you received S&H Green Stamps for redemption and a discount on household purchases. Gas was 19 cents a gallon and included service along with a token plate or memorial glass. Big-ticket items like appliances or Easter clothing could be purchased downtown. You had to dress up to go downtown to shop at the Emporium or City of Paris. Women wore gloves and men wore large brimmed hats, suits and ties.

Doctor Tucker did house calls and sewed up my bleeding dog bites on the dining room table, then helped canvas the avenues to find the white terrier and determine if I needed a series of painful shots. A friend of my mother, Alvin Nadler, went door to door

in the Sunset selling insurance policies and savings plans for one dollar a month. Mom cashed in these insurance plans to trade in the Packard and buy the first "which way were you going in the Sunset" Studebaker automobile.

I suspect the future is evident in our everyday events. It's hiding but it's there. The people and things that surround you. Let me take you into my world of growing up as a child in the Sunset of the 1950's.

On the corner of 46th and Judah was Karl's Grocery Store. Karl kept a tab so I could run there to pick up a pack of Grandma's Chesterfields, a can of creamed corn, and jellyrolls. Karl was our local banker where you could cash checks for free and get a loan if you needed to get by. Across the street from Karl's there was a pharmacy. And down the street on Judah a 5 & 10-cent store where you could buy ten cent classic comics and Pee-Chees with life-saving multiplication tables. Across the street and up from Karl's were two bakeries with an early morning smell of baked bread and cinnamon rolls. All these stores were owned by people living in the neighborhood. The owners of the 5 & 10 store had a son attending West Point. Karl and the butcher Vince knew everyone on a "good morning" basis and "I'm here if you need anything."

Karl was a hypnotist and my mother convinced him to hypnotize me to conquer my inadequacy in mathematics. I pretended this deep sleep worked and maybe it did. As for the butcher, he hired me to deliver and pick up packages. Not fish that everyone purchased on Fridays, but envelopes filled with numbered sheets and sometimes bundles of cash.

We knew most of the people living on 46th Avenue. For the most part, the families were Catholic with children attending Holy Name. My mother hosted parties, particularly around the Christmas holidays, where all the shopkeepers and neighbors would crowd into our living room to share a Manhattan or Old Fashioned and gossip about the changing times. And the yearly holiday event when T. C. would try to eat one of the ceramic elves thinking it was made of chocolate. Our home, like so many, had a liquor cabinet displaying bottles of booze, a row of glasses and colorful toothpicks with olive helmets. My parents didn't smoke, although everyone else seemed to enjoy a Camel cigarette or in the case of my grandfather, a Cuban cigar.

As kids in the neighborhood, the street was ours. There was no television to bring us inside. So our parents let us play outside until it got dark. One foot off the gutter. Kick the can. Racing back and forth across the street that was free of cars and traffic. My favorite game was throwing a tennis ball against the stairs with everyone trying to catch a crazy bounce or line drive. Hating for it to get dark and our parents calling from the front door—"It's time to come in, I'm not calling again!"

Our house on 46th Avenue was a replica of the house next door and down the street. In fact, row upon row of what would be called ticky-tacky. Oh, there was the occasional beach house moved to the Sunset after the earthquake, but these older homes huddled in the fog as if not to be compared with the newer homes built by Doelger. All the newer homes looked the same from the outside. A picket row of beige homes with fingers of grass reaching curbside. Some had tunnel entrances and internal patios, but all had two bedrooms in the back, a hallway connecting the kitchen, bathroom, and living/dining rooms. Off the kitchen was a breakfast nook and backstairs leading to the street and the tradesman entrance.



Ron and younger brother Douglas.



Ron and Doug reading in their bedroom.



Dancing in the knotty-pine-panelled basement.

Milkmen delivered milk and tradesmen still plied the Sunset selling fresh vegetables from their truck bed and icemen delivering huge blocks of ice. Men with black leather capes and calipers pinching blocks of ice for the icebox sitting on the back porch next to the kitchen. An event that would vanish overnight with the delivery of the first refrigerator.

Our house was my mother's greatest pride. The knotty pine room in the basement had built-in bunk beds hidden by a movable mirror that became her and Glenna's dance studio during the day and bedroom for Glenna and her children at night. The walls of this room were covered with black-and-white photos of the vaudeville stars my mother and T. C. worked with. Elegant and stylish women and men in tuxedos starring down upon us like gods of a glittering era.

My brother and I shared the upstairs bedroom with wallpaper of Hopalong Cassidy and our own radio. Every night we listened to "I Love a Mystery," and later the jazz of Al "Jazzbeaux" Collins in the Purple Grotto. Plastic and balsa wood models of airplanes hung suspended above our beds. P-38s and Flying Tigers to remind us of the glory of the war. Comic books were stashed beneath our beds to be read over and over. The Classic Comics of Treasure Island and the Man in the Iron Mask. Three Musketeers, Archie, and Superman to fill out our fantasies and tell us how to live. Tales of loyalty and courage. Good night prayers led by my mother or T. C. Then flashlights under the covers to read and become Prince Valiant.

The Fun House

Elementary school was a three block walk up Judah Street to Francis Scott Key Annex. An immediate curiosity to a child. Why was I assigned to the Annex? It was a Frankenstein-like building next to a block-long pit surrounded by a chain link fence. Nothing like the modern Francis Scott Key Elementary School just one block away. It's interesting that I have a vivid memory of early childhood classmates, but nothing to remind me of college days. Maybe it's because I was with the same group of children from third grade to graduation into junior high school. And we had the same teacher, Mrs. Dawson.

With her white hair, shoulder-padded dresses, and beak-like nose, she looked like an American eagle. She introduced us to folk dancing, Standard School Broadcast, and each other. Under her tutelage we used pen and inkwells to scratch out a weekly "this is a sample of my best handwriting." She also conducted her every Friday "We are going to die" Atomic Bomb drill. She would pull the curtains of the room and order us to "Take Cover!" Under our desks, on our hands and knees, we just looked at each other. Sometimes you could see girls' underwear. The room was bathed in sepia and sweaty as we waited for the blast of white light, which meant we weren't going home early. Our last vision would be Mrs. Dawson's shoes and the American flag she held at her side.

Of course Bobby Ensign who lived on 45th Avenue would break the pending doom by asking Betty Jane Myers, "Could you move a little closer, over this way?" Bobby Ensign was a goofus. Big and clumsy for his age, with a constant stream of ideas to save the western world. It was his idea to make up membership cards to the Communist Party and solicit membership in our secret club. It would drive Mrs. Dawson crazy if she found one, and she definitely would find one! After all, this was her fifth grade class and we were all going into her sixth grade or else.

We almost let Elaine Marsh join our secret party. Almost. She was rather tomboyish and could kick a ball to the fence at the pit. Not quite like Mike Hancock. Powerhouse! Powerhouse was the only one in our class that could kick a ball over the fence. Our only chance of beating the sixth grade at Francis Scott Key main building in kickball. But Elaine did have something we all cared about. In her basement on 43rd Avenue she had a ping-pong table. And her parents let her have friends over after it got dark. Bobby relented and decided to let everyone in Mrs. Dawson's fifth grade class join the Communist Party—if and only if—they passed the initiation test. This meant everyone was invited into his conspiracy. Even Stinky Weinstein and Winifred Lum.

The initiation was quite simple. Everything starts out very simple with Bobby Ensign. We would assemble in the Fun House at Playland on Ocean Beach. Sneak into the building when Laughing Sal was silent and

the building was about to close. Then slide down the great wooden slide. Surely a great initiation for those wanting to join Bobby's Communist Party. Well, like everything Bobby proposed, it almost worked.

Just as the building was about to close, Bobby and I followed the worn footpath that allowed us to navigate the mirror maze entrance to the main floor of the Fun House. Once inside, we hid in the bathroom. We could hear the building clicking to close. We had done it. But where were Elaine and Betty Jane Myers? How come Powerhouse isn't here? And Stinky Weinstein. And Winifred Lum and everyone else. It was getting dark but we still had time to grab a burlap sack and climb the 138 stairs to the top of the slide. The air and burlap sacks smelt musty. Sitting on the sacks—down we went—the only two Communists in Mrs. Dawson's fifth grade class at Francis Scott Key Annex division!

That's when Bobby had an idea. Turn on all the lights and rides inside the Fun House. Of course he didn't ask my thoughts about this, no, no, he just climbed into the control booth that hovered over the main floor and started pushing every button in sight! Air busted from beneath the traveling bridge to lift up the skirts of girls, if there were any girls. The giant barrel began to tumble. The spinning disc below us picked up centrifugal speed to throw off would-be riders. "No, no, Bobby, don't do that!" He didn't listen. Just smiled and pushed the Laughing Sal button. "OK, OK, Bobby, now this clown-like Laughing Sal is all lit up and roaring in laughter, just listen! Do you think, Bobby, this might draw attention to what we are doing, do you?"

We didn't wait long for an answer. There was a loud banging at the door. "Bobby, I doubt it's Powerhouse trying to get in, OK, OK, Bobby, take a look—that's the police Bobby"—actually one Irish cop. "Well there now my boys, what you be doin' here after closin' time, turnin' on the laughing lady, scarin' the neighbors?" Bobby tried to explain. "We are members of the Communist Party, sir!" "Well now can you be doin' me a favor and turn off all this mischief?" Bobby clicked everything off. Sudden and awful silence. Just a flashlight shining in our faces.

"You look a little bit young to be communists, maybe I should be takin' you home so's you can explain this party of yours, to your parents and breakin' into the Fun House makin' a ruckus." Upon police delivery to my house on 46th Avenue, my father just laughed. "Your Uncle Frank is going to love this—a communist in the family at last—Ronnie, it's a good thing your mother's not home. Let's just keep this a secret." "Good idea Dad!" Bobby's father, who was a San Francisco fireman, took the event a little more seriously.

He banned Bobby for three weeks from their basement and our radio project. This was serious! The radio project in Bobby's basement was our science project for Mrs. Dawson and it wasn't a volcano or electric potato but a radio to talk to the world. Remember I told you Willie Acker who lived in Grandma's knotty pine room gave me a special gift. It was a RCA Victor International Radio. You could turn the master dial and listen to international broadcasts. It came with two antennas. One that telescoped out the top and another embedded in the cover.

Well, Bobby figured we could wire his basement to increase our listening and broadcast potential. Every basement in the Sunset was a shop of some kind—auto, wood, general fix-up with bottles filled with nuts and bolts. Tools waiting for use. Drawers filled with wire, clips and hangers, everything needed for a science project. Our radio project was our attempt to listen in on the world and broadcast our opinions like the DJs of the time. So Bobby's basement became a spider web of wires and microphones in a tangle of fifth grade great expectations. It was Bobby's plan to talk directly to the Russians. Tell them to stop scarin' us, that we were all brothers and sisters with common interests. "This is Radio Free Bobby, a member of the Francis Scott Key Communist Party, can anybody hear us, come in, come in anybody!"



Ron as a teenager on 46th Avenue.

The Mansion:

There are some famous homes of rock and roll musicians. Elvis' Graceland, The Dakota on the Upper East Side of New York where John Lennon lived, and the Grateful Dead house in the Haight-Ashbury come to mind. Few addresses in rock and roll lore are more famous, however, than 2400 Fulton Street, across the street from the northeast corner of Golden Gate Park. "The Mansion," as it came to be known, gained renown when the Jefferson Airplane purchased the house the year after the Summer of Love. The address became famous when it was used as the title of a Jefferson Airplane compilation album.

The home had a significant history before the Jefferson Airplane came into the picture. The story of 2400 Fulton Street begins in Humboldt County, some 270 miles north of San Francisco. The Vance family was doing business in Eureka, which included sawmills, a private railroad, and banking.[1] In 1904, R. A. Vance designed and built the house at 2400 Fulton Street. This was not your usual Victorian style San Francisco home. San Francisco architectural historian and historic preservationist Christopher VerPlanck describes it as a three-story-over-basement, wood-frame, Neoclassical Revival style dwelling.

Among the many special features of Vance's building, VerPlanck notes a two-story portico supported by fluted Ionic columns at the front entrance, a large porch enclosed behind a Neoclassical balustrade (a railing supported by balusters), windows with elaborate "eared" casings, two-story fluted pilasters (a type of column) capped by composite capitals, a wide frieze (decoration) composed of an abstract vegetal motif on the pilasters, and egg-and-dart molding and cornice molding above the frieze.

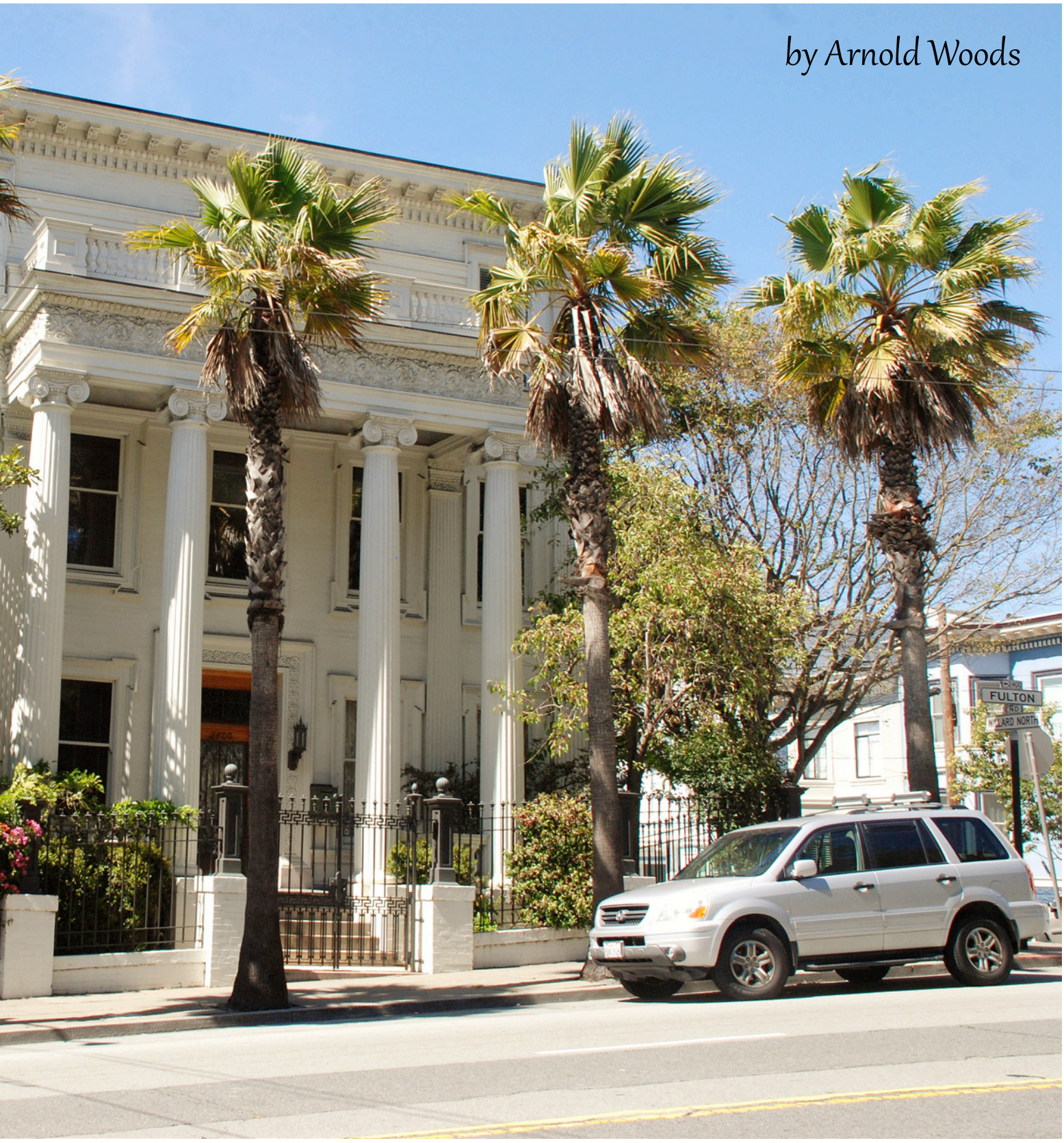
Inside, the Vance home was lavish. Vance brought in mahogany wood paneling from India, wooden furniture from the Dominican Republic, crystal chandeliers, lace curtains, the finest carpeting, a stained glass window, tapestry wallpaper, and ornate scrollwork.[2] The mansion had seventeen rooms, eight



2400 Fulton Street at the corner of Willard North Street, June 2015. (Arnold Woods photograph.)

The Inner Richmond's Psychedelic Shack

by Arnold Woods



fireplaces, three separate gardens, and a fresco on the ceiling of the second-floor master bedroom that depicted reclining, semi-nude women. Clearly, Vance spared no expense when building his home.

The mansion was sturdy as well. Two years after it was built, the great earthquake of 1906 hit San Francisco, but Vance's home survived with little damage. There is an apocryphal story that the great tenor, Enrico Caruso, fled the Palace Hotel after the earthquake and spent the night at Vance's mansion.[3] However, Caruso himself claimed that he was in the eastern part of the city before paying a large sum of money to a ferryman to take him to Oakland. Caruso was a friend of Vance's, which is likely where the story gained currency.

The mansion remained in the Vance family for over sixty years, passing through the hands of several relatives. In 1968, the house went on the market. At the time, the rising stars of the San Francisco rock scene, the Jefferson Airplane, were working out of their manager's home and looking to find a bigger space. A sort of harmonic convergence resulted. Bill Thompson, the band's manager remembered it this way: "[W]e went to 2400 Fulton Street, and we met this lecherous old guy who lived there. He liked Jacky, [the band's clerical assistant] right away. So he sold it to us for $70,000. And it was the greatest investment we ever made."[4] In May 1968, title to the house was taken in the names of five of the six members of the band and their manager as tenants in common, which meant that the six owners each held an undivided one-sixth ownership interest in the property. It is unclear why Jefferson Airplane drummer Spencer Dryden's name does not appear on the deed giving ownership of the house to the band.

The Jefferson Airplane converted the house to meet their own needs. A rehearsal space and recording studio were built in the basement and the entire house was wired for sound by the Grateful Dead's soundman (and LSD cook), Owsley Stanley. The Airplane hired a carpenter, who doubled as a martial arts trainer and coke dealer and who kept a small office/bedroom in the basement. He built a contraption in the basement that could deliver nitrous oxide to six people at once.[5] The band members would sit in a circle on the basement floor and inhale the laughing gas until they passed out.

The first floor dining room accommodated their pool table, a dining table/wooden torture rack that vocalist Grace Slick had specially commissioned, and an unplugged electric chair.[6] David Crosby, who often visited, was once placed, presumably voluntarily, on the medieval torture rack/dining room table. Slick had not realized how well the torture rack was designed until Crosby's laughter turned to screams.

The second floor contained the band's offices and some bedrooms. On the third floor there was a large master bedroom and several smaller rooms around a central area. Although the original idea was for the house to be the band's office and rehearsal space, rhythm guitarist and vocalist Paul Kantner immediately moved into the master bedroom.[7] Other band members also lived at the mansion at various times.

The most prominent change that the Jefferson Airplane made to the mansion was to paint it black. Not as a tribute to the Rolling Stones song, but to bring a "dark flavor" to the neighborhood. Slick thought it made the property look like the Addams Family mansion.[8] The kitchen was painted with purple and orange Day-Glo paint.[9]

After returning from a European tour in September 1968, the Jefferson Airplane held a belated housewarming feast at the mansion. Banquet tables ran throughout the first-floor rooms, each place setting had a cigar-sized joint and the event was catered by the Grateful Dead's former cook and featured a suckling pig with an apple in its mouth.[10] The punch bowl was spiked with LSD, unbeknownst to some guests. Owsley played DJ for the party, which largely consisted of playing the Beatles record "Hey Jude" over and over.

Thereafter, the mansion was party central and the hang-out spot for rock stars, both local and out-of-towners. The Airplane were so accommodating that Al Kooper once showed up unannounced after missing a flight, knowing that the Airplane would have a room for him.[11]

In a video made years later, guitarist-vocalist Marty Balin recalled the atmosphere fondly. "Yup, 2400 Fulton Street. This was the Airplane mansion. This was our office and at one point, we all lived there. It was quite a party pad. We had the Dead, Big Brother, Janis, and anybody else in town would come over.[12] Long-time *San Francisco Chronicle* music critic Joel Selvin remembers first visiting there at age 19 in the summer of 1969—to pick up documents for the Wild West Festival that occurred in Kezar Stadium in August—and being given the Jefferson Airplane's own brand of rolling papers while there.

Selvin visited the mansion numerous times over the years for parties, events, and interviews. There were usually kids hanging out across the street, hoping to catch sight of the band. 2400 Fulton "became a magnet for all manner of visiting fans, musicians, groupies, dope dealers, snake oil salesmen, oddballs, and those simply curious about what the house and its occupants might offer them."[13]

A fan broke in the house once and trashed the place. Apparently he was upset about the Airplane not responding to his desire to join the band. When Slick arrived at the mansion and saw the mess, she went to Kantner's room to retrieve his gun, fearful that whoever had done it was still around. After grabbing the gun, she heard footsteps and "almost blew [David Crosby's] head off."[14]

After the Winterland Ballroom held its final show on New Year's Eve 1978, there was a legendary party at the mansion which included many members of

the San Francisco rock scene and John Belushi. At the party, Selvin saw the largest pile of cocaine he had ever seen. This party was near the end of the mansion's heyday. The Jefferson Airplane had spun off into Jefferson Starship and Hot Tuna. Relationships among band members were fracturing.

In the 1980s, the house was painted white again and no longer stuck out so clearly from the rest of the neighborhood. At one of his final visits to the mansion, Selvin came for a photo shoot for a music magazine. Members of Starship, Journey, and Huey Lewis and the News were there. According to Selvin, Mayor Diane Feinstein visited during the photo shoot and, after seeing all the bands there, joked that they were her drug task force.

With the Jefferson Airplane completely broken up by that time, the band members did not need the house anymore, but some of them needed money. So 2400 Fulton was sold to a spiritual organization called the Emissaries of Divine Light in the mid 1980s. In 1986, the organization submitted a planning application seeking to convert the house into a community center with childcare and counseling, but it appears that application was never approved. The Emissaries of Divine Light then sold the mansion in November 1994 and the property has been in private hands ever since.

The City of San Francisco has recognized the unique and historic nature of 2400 Fulton Street. In 1976, the mansion was designated a potential historic resource. San Francisco later changed the designation to "Historic Resource Present," which means it may one day be designated a registered landmark.

After selling the mansion, the members of Jefferson Airplane memorialized it by naming their 1987 compilation album *2400 Fulton Street.* The address was already well-known among rock fans, but the album cemented it in rock lore. So if you're seeking a whiff of rock and roll nostalgia, walk on by 2400 Fulton Street, the Inner Richmond's former psychedelic shack.

Arnold Woods is a Bay Area attorney, and Western Neighborhoods Project Board Member, who has resided in the Outer Richmond District since 1996.

Notes:

1. "Biography of John M. Vance," Leigh H. Irving, *History of Humboldt County, California with Biographical Sketches,* Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1915. Accessed at http://www.onlinebiographies.info/ca/humb/vance-jm.htm

2. Jeff Tamarkin, *Got A Revolution: The Turbulent Flight of Jefferson Airplane,* New York: Atria Books, 2003. Excerpt accessed at http://www.gotarevolution.com/fulton.htm

3. "Jefferson Airplane's House Hits Market," *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 4, 1986.

4. Tamarkin

5. Grace Slick with Andrea Cagan, *Somebody to Love?: A Rock-and-Roll Memoir,* New York: Warner Books, 1998, 169.

6. Ibid, 170.

7. Joel Selvin, *Summer of Love: The Inside Story of LSD, Rock & Roll, Free Love and High Times in the Wild West,* New York: Dutton, 1994, 186.

8. Slick, 171.

9. "Jefferson Airplane Home," City Walking Guide website, http://www.citywalkingguide.com/sanfrancisco/jeffersonairplanehouse

10. Selvin, 186.

11. Selvin, 213.

12. Laura Vecsey, "Famous Homes Where American Music History Was Made," Zillow website, February 2, 2012: http://www.zillow.com/blog/famous-homes-where-american-music-history-was-made-35315/

13. Tamarkin

14. Slick, 174.



Historical Happenings

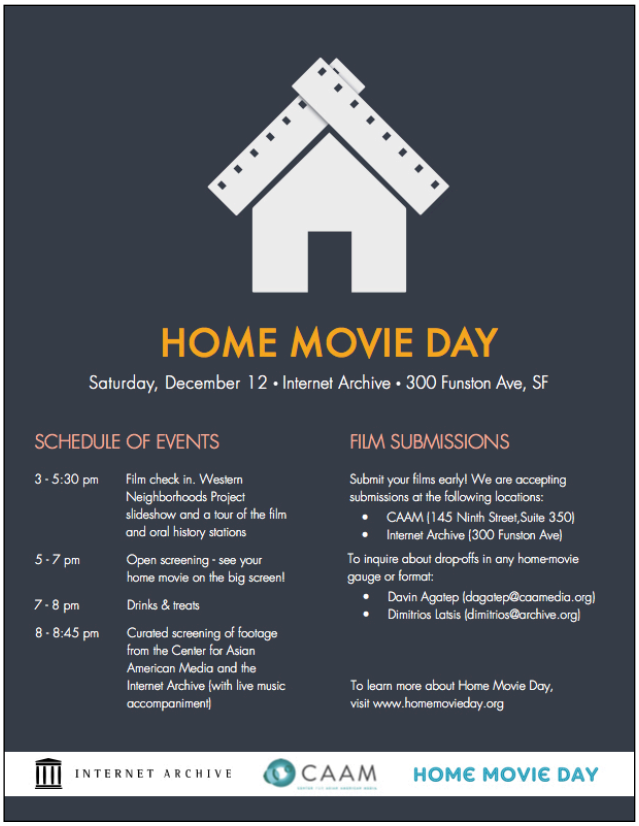
Home Movie Day

December 12, 2015 (Saturday) 3:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.

Your home movies are likely a lot more interesting than you remember. Home Movie Day is a celebration of amateur films and film making that provides the opportunity for individuals and families to see and share home movies with the community. It's a chance to discover why to care about these films and how best to preserve them. Among the festivities will be a slideshow presentation of amateur photos from WNP's OpenSFHistory images. Hosted by the Internet Archive, 300 Funston Avenue.

Schedule:
3:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m. Film check-in and inspection; WNP slideshow, and tour of Internet Archive's film scanning.
5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m. Open screening: see your home movies on the big screen!
7:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. Party-food-drinks
8:00 p.m. Curated screening of footage from Center for Asian America Media (CAAM) and the Internet Archive (with live music)

For more information, visit **homemovieday.org** or contact Pamela Jean Vadakan at pamelajean@berkeley.edu



Early Twentieth Century Residence Parks in San Francisco

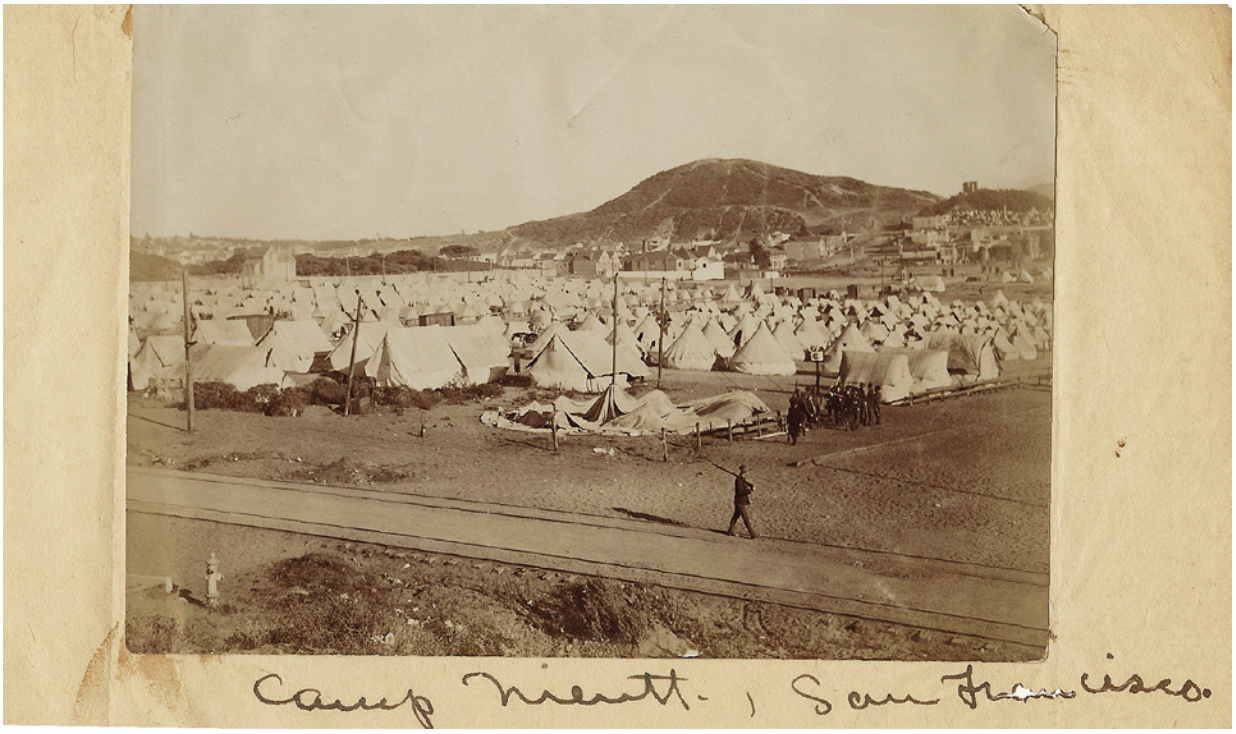
January 12, 2016 (Tuesday) 12:30 p.m.–1:30 p.m.

Residence parks promised to turn empty land into model communities of quality houses with gardens and quiet tree-lined streets. At a time before comprehensive zoning, numerous restrictions were written into the deeds covering lots to convince buyers they would get what they paid for. The restrictions limited what was built, how the land was used, who could buy, and taxed buyers for the upkeep of the grounds via a home owners association. Join Richard Brandi for a discussion of eight garden enclaves launched from 1910 to 1918: West Clay Park, Sea Cliff, Lincoln Manor, Jordan Park, St. Francis Wood, Forest Hill, Balboa Terrace, and Ingleside Terraces. In spite of depressions, wars, inflation, and other economic pressures during the twentieth century, these eight parks have maintained their coordinated land use planning to this day. Hosted by SPUR, 654 Mission Street, San Francisco.

Admission is free to SPUR members, $10 to the public. More information at **www.spur.org/events/**



70 Santa Monica Way in St. Francis Wood, 1910s.



Looking across California Street to Lone Mountain in 1898. The tents are an extension of Camp Merritt, a two-month-long Richmond District encampment of volunteers awaiting transport to the Philippines during the Spanish-American War.

Back-Fence Neighbors: The Richmond District and the Presidio's First 150 Years

January 21, 2016 (Thursday) 7:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.

Eighty years after the founding of the Presidio, an Act of Congress added the "Outside Lands" to the official map of the City of San Francisco in 1866. Over the next century, the open sand dunes and scrub south of the U.S. Army base evolved from racetracks and dairy ranches into the vibrant Richmond District neighborhood. Woody LaBounty and retired National Park Service ranger John Martini will present historical images and stories on the long relationship between the Richmond and the Presidio through changing, and sometimes challenging times.

Hosted as part of "Presidio Dialogues" at the Presidio Officers Club, 50 Moraga Avenue at the Presidio Main Post. Admission is Free.

One Hundred Years of West Portal and West Portal Avenue

February 6, 2016 (Saturday) 3:30–4:30 p.m.

In 1916, in anticipation of the opening of the Twin Peaks streetcar tunnel, developer Fernando Nelson built the first house in what he named "West Portal Park." A community of high-end houses, the new development also became the commercial hub for surrounding West of Twin Peaks neighborhoods, such as St. Francis Wood and Forest Hill.

Woody LaBounty will show early images of West Portal Avenue's creation, highlight notable houses, residents, and merchants, and commemorate the first 100 years of an iconic San Francisco neighborhood.

Free to the public at the West Portal branch of the San Francisco Public Library, 190 Lenox Way at Ulloa Street.



West Portal Avenue from 14th Avenue, October 1946.
Courtesy of California Historical Society, FN-32595

The Last Word



(WNP photo wnp15.690, courtesy of a private collector.)

A Foggy Day in West Portal
Even around 1921, when the West Portal neighborhood had more empty lots than houses, and no cars parked along the sidewalks, and no traffic, two cars collided at the foggy intersection of Claremont Boulevard and Ulloa Street. One gets a tow up the hill, while the other waits in the brush for its turn.

The corners where the boys with bicycles watch the scene have had gas stations on them since at least the 1950s. The triangular corner in the center, with the broken billboard advertising Forest Hill and Claremont Court lots for sale, today has an L-shaped office structure built in 1960. While much has changed, the fog is still a frequent visitor.

Western Neighborhoods Project
outsidelands.org

Not a WNP Member?

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