

## Spanish Architectural Styles: Spring Event Promises Education & Information • Saturday, May 17th ~ 9am to noon ~ Francis Parker



The 1927 historically designated "Miller House," by Master Builder Richard Requa, located on Orizaba Street, North Mission Hills. Photo by Jennifer Machian.

Join us on Saturday, May 17th, for a morning of learning. We start with a presentation on Spanish Architectural Styles that can be found throughout Mission Hills. You'll learn the differences that make the various styles unique. And, you may find out which houses may be on our Fall Home Tour scheduled for September 27th! There will be a special appearance by the granddaughter of Master Builder Pear Pearson, who built numerous Spanish style homes in Mission Hills in the 1920s.

Next, will be a talk on the challenges facing historic preservation in Mission Hills and other older neighborhoods. This will be an opportunity to get an update on possible changes in policies and regulations that can affect the quality of our neighborhood—so, bring your questions. *Continued on page 3*

## President's Post

By Robert Jassoy, President

Hello Members, Friends, & Neighbors,

My name is Robert Jassoy and I am honored to assume the role of President of Mission Hills Heritage (MHH) from Kirk Burgamy. Kirk did a fantastic job leading our organization through the difficult Covid years and into an exciting new era. Read on to hear about the significant progress MHH is making to further its mission of preserving historic resources and the character of our community.

I first want to thank our members, volunteers, and the Board of Directors for their commitment and exceptional support in time and talent. Our organization would not exist without your continued support. That being said, we can always use help, so please contact us if you are interested in participating. Now onto the news!



Robert Jassoy, President.

MHH has many exciting events planned for 2025, including:

- Member/Guest coffee,
- Spring Lecture Event,
- Fundraising for our historic preservation activities,
- Scrapbook Days, where historic photographs and memories can be shared,

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### Highlights

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- In-house tours of historic homes, and
- Annual Meeting.

**Members and Friends Coffee:** On February 15, 2025, we held a Member/Guest coffee event at the historic home of member Barbara Augustine. A very big Thank You to Barbara for opening her beautiful and well-preserved Mission Revival home for coffee, snacks, and mingling. The turnout was very good, and it was a great way to kick off the year.

**Spring Lecture:** Our Spring Lecture event is just weeks away. The event will take place at Francis Parker Lower School. We express gratitude to Francis Parker for allowing us to hold events at its wonderful campus. Check out all the details in this newsletter.

**Scrapbook Days:** This summer we intend to hold a "Scrapbook Days" event. Longtime MHH members will remember the last Scrapbook Days from almost twenty years ago! This will be an opportunity to share old photographs of your home and stories of the people who lived there. We will also have a photo scanner on hand so that we can develop a database of historic photographs and architecture. The date is to be determined so stay tuned for more information, but right now we are looking at a Saturday in mid-July or early August.

**Fall Home Tour:** Saturday, September 27, 2025, will be this year's in-home tour and it will continue the theme of Spanish architecture. Once again, save the date! We have already begun planning for the tour, which is our largest event every year and always a favorite for members and guests. We are searching for Spanish style homes to include on the tour, so please let us know if you are interested in opening your home for this wonderful event. Also remember, the home tour is our biggest fundraising event, so please let us know if you are interested in advertising opportunities.

**Annual Meeting:** Our Annual Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 18, 2025, at a location to be determined. This is always a great opportunity to catch up with friends and learn more about Mission Hills Heritage.

**Advocacy:** I also want to share information about our efforts in attempting to work with the City of San Diego

to address development in historic neighborhoods. MHH has partnered with Save Our Heritage Organisation to fund an independent third-party study that will provide economic and other data to demonstrate the immense value of historic preservation in San Diego. The comprehensive study will be prepared by PlaceEconomics, a leading firm in the field, to provide hard evidence to counter misinformation and advocate for policies that protect our historic neighborhoods while addressing affordability and sustainability.

**National Districts Program:** As you may be aware, MHH has been successful in adding various districts throughout Mission Hills to the National Register of Historic Places. We view this approach as the best way to bypass local preservation hurdles in order to advance our mission. Our recent accomplishments include national designation of the Inspiration Heights district (99 homes) and the Arnold & Choate's-North Florence Heights district (313 homes). Our current efforts are directed at the Marine View district (340 homes) located in south Mission Hills. We are currently reviewing proposals from firms that specialize in researching the historical nature of different neighborhoods and can guide us through the national designation process. This process requires substantial time and money, so please let us know if you wish to contribute to our efforts.

**Uptown Elections:** Finally, I have good news regarding the recent elections for the Uptown Community Planning Group (UCPG). The UCPG serves as an advisory body to the City of San Diego on development issues impacting Mission Hills and other mid-city communities. A local group known as Uptown for All endorsed candidates for the UCPG election. MHH supports the vision of Uptown for All and I am pleased to report that six of the seven candidates endorsed by Uptown for All won seats on the new planning group. The seventh endorsed candidate ended in a tie and he is headed to a coin-flip to determine the winner – let's all root for "Tails Never Fails!"

This is an exciting time for historic preservation. The headwinds are strong, but MHH will continue its efforts to promote responsible development that is compatible with our neighborhood, with appropriate design, adequate parking, and historic preservation. Take care, stay safe, and God Bless! See you around the neighborhood.

Robert Jassoy

## Our Mission

*To preserve and protect the character, charm, and historic resources of Mission Hills, assuring that development projects harmonize with the established community and provide for community input into these projects.*

## Pear Pearson: Mission Hills Master Builder

By Kari Koskinen

A well-worn fedora, the faint smell of a cigar, black licorice cut in a piece just so, a hint of Swede in his voice, and a Spanish Revival chair from Burlingame with the signature creak: these are some childhood memories of my grandfather Pear Pearson. My mother often spoke of her father's building career. She fondly reminisced about her childhood home on San Marcos Avenue designed and built by him, and the one "down the street." For many years, I was sure my grandfather had built only these two houses, as I heard the story so many times. Indeed, he did build these homes, but my journey researching his life and career has revealed about 75 more. His career spanned over 40 years in the expanding neighborhoods of San Diego, with roots in the historic districts of Mission Hills.

The decade of the 1920s saw a new era of expansion for the developing suburbs of San Diego. The population of San Diego in 1920 was around 75,000 and by 1930 this number had doubled. My grandfather had first come to San Diego in 1914 for a bank project contracted by H. H. Winner, Bank Architects and Engineers of San Francisco. Pear Pearson

was Superintendent of Construction for a number of these projects between the Bay Area and San Diego. A pivotal association for my grandfather around the time of the Panama-California Exposition was crossing paths with G. Aubrey Davidson, both President of Southern California Savings and

Trust and the 1915 Exposition. Pear Pearson completed the renovations for Davidson's bank quarters within the U.S. Grant Hotel downtown. The Spanish Revival movement was launched with the Exposition, and so was Pear Pearson's career.

My grandfather was largely self-taught. He completed a three-year course of study in Architecture and Design via the International Correspondence School before moving to San Diego in 1920. He built 35 homes, two banks, and a business building in the next decade, as San Diego expanded its

reach. Many of these buildings, from modest to magnificent, remain today as a testament to his design skills and his precision in construction. Our family still retains many of Pear Pearson's original contracts, reference books, velums, and a handwritten business ledger from the 1920s. Six of his Mission Hills homes are contained within, detailing building permits, subcontractors, and material costs. The ledger was only one

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*Trias Street home built by Pear Pearson, circa 1925. Private collection of Kari Koskinen.*

### Spanish Architectural Styles Spring Event Continued . . .

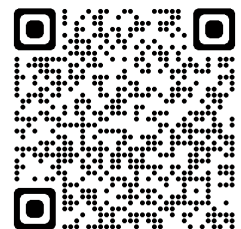
We'll provide an update on historic districts in Mission Hills and discuss what will be our next district effort to research and apply to the National Register for historic designation.

Also, available in the courtyard will be representatives of businesses that provide services for homeowners of historic homes, such as restoration, beautification, remodeling, and historic knowledge. You can visit their display tables for information.

We'll end with the special announcement of the newly created Mission Hills Heritage Foundation 501(c)(3). This will

allow us to accept charitable donations that are tax deductible. We will retain our original Mission Hills Heritage 501(c)(4) to continue our advocacy work to protect the character and charm of Mission Hills.

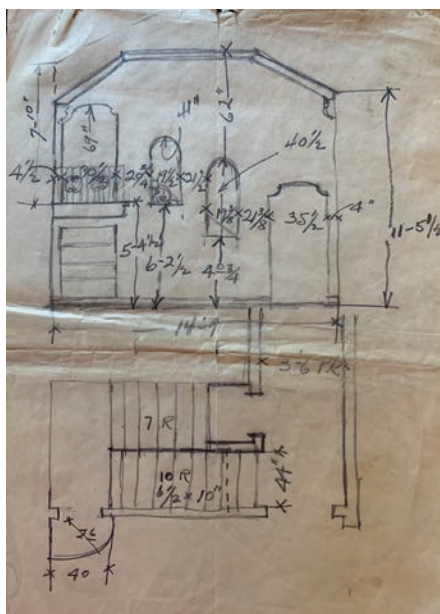
You can register for this event using the QR code or on the Mission Hills Heritage website. Please go to [www.MissionHillsHeritage.org](http://www.MissionHillsHeritage.org).





tool in identifying homes of the era. Colorized period photos, identified by Alexandra and Kiley Wallace, legwork by Donald Covington for his North Park publication, and research by Katherine Hon of the North Park Historical Society, all have assisted in putting the puzzle pieces of Pear Pearson's designing and building career together.

A Mission Hills Spanish Colonial Revival home on Torrance Street was built from 1924-25. Views of Point Loma and San Diego Bay are seen through the classic, arched living-room window. Grading costs for the lot are found in the ledger, as well as entries for Western Metal Supply and Berger Hardware. Perhaps my mother "helped" hold the measuring tape here, as she recalled going to job sites with her father as a young girl. Hermosa Way also has a Pear Pearson home, built in 1924, which is one of numerous homes that have been historically designated. Known as the "Councilman Fred Heilbron House," it is a Spanish/Eclectic Revival with Mediterranean/Italian Renaissance influences. Construction cost was \$10,000 for Heilbron, whose plumbing and heating business appears many times in the business ledger as a subcontractor.



*Original concept sketch Ampudia Street. Private collection of Kari Koskinen.*

Three homes on Trias Street, with adjoining lots, were designed and built by Pear Pearson in 1925, 1926, and 1928. All Spanish Revival homes, the corner lot home is historically designated. An extensive report for the Historical Resources Board (HRB), compiled by Ron May of Legacy 106, profiled its historical significance

and Pear Pearson's complete knowledge of his craft and attention to detail. Art windows, painting and decorating, ornamental iron, hardwood floors, tile from Thurnell Tile Co., and lawn and shrubs were all detailed by my grandfather.

1928 saw design and construction of another Spanish Revival home on Ampudia Street. This home appeared in the ledger and was documented by Covington. Small



*Pear & Helen Pearson, circa 1925, Trias Street. Private collection of Kari Koskinen.*

renderings found in the Pearson papers also remain. These scraps of paper, perhaps doodled at a coffee shop or on a break, show concepts of exterior elevations and interior features. Balconies, scalloped door frames, and intricate iron work designs went from a dream to a plan. This house has extensive stenciling throughout and retains a wonderful authentic charm. I recently located, through the San Diego Union/Tribune archives, another petite Pearson Spanish Colonial Revival on Juan Street. On the steep hill overlooking Old Town, this home was built in 1929 and retains all the appeal of that era.

The last home designed and built by Pear Pearson in Mission Hills was not in the 1920s but jumped ahead to post-war 1948. This historically designated home on Arista Street, with the HRB report also completed by Ron May, was the second home my grandfather built for family friends, Leo and Florence Hoffman. This home is a grand Colonial Revival, reflecting a shift in tastes of the American public at that time. Pear Pearson moved easily forward with changes in economy, materials, and design as the building industry and his career progressed.

I had no inkling that a Master Builder was within the kind and humorous grandfather I knew. I was simply the lucky girl who played with wood scraps that had become toy blocks, all sanded perfectly smooth; a handmade cradle was a bed for dolls; and, an inlaid wood sewing box was a gift made in his workshop. The people of the San Diego region, and particularly for those in Mission Hills, have received the true gifts of Pear Pearson's designs and dedication to his profession—beautiful homes, each a work of art, that are a lasting part of the fabric of your historic districts.

# Historic Preservation Under Attack in San Diego

By Barry Hager, Advisory Director

Under pressure from the development industry, the City of San Diego is proposing to dramatically alter its historic preservation program. Last year, the city launched its "Preservation and Progress Initiative," which is billed as a comprehensive update of the city's historic preservation regulations to "streamline processes for new homes and other uses while protecting places of historic architectural and cultural significance[.]" Collectively, these changes could dramatically reduce protections for historic resources in San Diego's older neighborhoods, including Mission Hills.

The misconception persists that historic preservation and development are inherently conflicting. In reality, historic preservation impacts only a small fraction of development projects and, more importantly, plays a vital role in maintaining the unique identity of our city and its neighborhoods. Historic districts protect the existing stock of smaller, more affordable homes in older neighborhoods, while still allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to be added.

The city has released a memorandum outlining the proposed changes, many of which would loosen rules protecting historic buildings, including by broadening the authority of the City Council to overturn historic designations and districts, by further restricting the Mills Act property tax relief program for owners of historic resources, and by eliminating protections for historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Here are some of the more troubling proposals:

**Historic Designation Appeals Process.** Currently, the city's Historical Resources Board (HRB), whose members include experts in architecture and history, decide whether a property is historic, while the City Council can review the HRB's decision for procedural errors. The proposed change would allow the City Council to make the final decision, injecting politics into the process.

**Mills Act Program.** The Mills Act program is one of the few existing incentive programs that makes homeownership more affordable. The city is considering restrictions and could severely cut back the program and available tax incentives.

**Historic Reviews.** The city is proposing to eliminate the screening process that flags potentially historic properties when applications for construction and demolition permits are filed. The city has already determined that the existing historic review process only flags a small percentage of homes seeking permits and does not significantly delay most projects. However, the process could be streamlined if the city performs a comprehensive citywide survey of potential historical resources.

**Individual Site Designations.** The city proposes to revise the eligibility thresholds for individual designations, making such designations more difficult to obtain.

**Historic Districts.** Over the years, the city has identified dozens of potential historic districts in Mission Hills and other older neighborhoods of San Diego through community plan updates. However, the city has not adopted a new historic district in over seven years. To fill this gap, Mission Hills Heritage (MHH) and other organizations have successfully nominated several potential historic districts to the National Register. The city is proposing to strip existing

protections from National Register districts and make it more difficult to locally designate such districts.

The proposal does include several changes that could be beneficial, such as developing educational materials on the benefits of preservation, streamlining the process for adaptive reuse of historic buildings, strengthening the penalties for demolition by neglect and unpermitted alterations, and developing objective design standards for improvements to historic resources, including for the addition of ADUs in historic districts. Details have not yet been released, so it is not yet possible to review and comment on these proposed changes.

MHH and other groups have requested that the city perform an analysis of the economic benefits of historic preservation and the impact of such regulations on affordable housing before pushing forward with the reforms. Last year the Neighborhood Historic Preservation Coalition, of which MHH is part, urged the city to perform such an analysis, stating in a letter, "Without a rigorous, data-driven study focused on the real impacts of the city's historic regulations necessary to guide the city in its overhaul, we fear that any revisions would

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# Allen Canyon: The Little Watershed that Prevailed

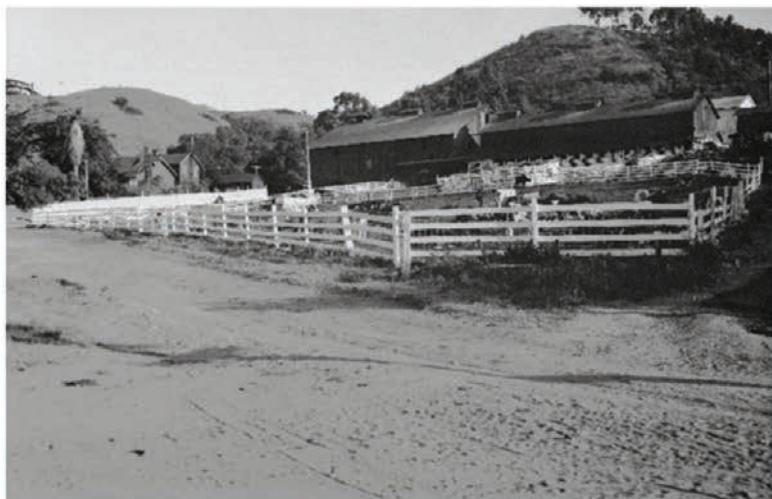
By A. Becker

San Diego has over 150 canyons. One of them, Allen Canyon, has played an unsung role in the development of a community. And the community fought to save it.

**Natural Bounty.** Allen Canyon currently spans from the Mission Hills Fort Stockton residential historic district to Hotel Circle. Prior to European settlement, this canyon was a watershed into the San Diego River. Close to the river and ocean, indigenous peoples such as the Kumeyaay, would have foraged the area. Prickly pear cactus, toyon, and lemonade berry thrived on the hillsides.

**Moo-ving Origins.** The canyon's current name originated from farmer Sereno Allen, who started a dairy farm in Mission Valley in 1885. They operated in that location until 1957 to make way for the new Interstate 8. The milk was eventually trucked up a nearby canyon to Mission Hills and Hillcrest. The local community called this dirt road "Allen's Dairy Road." Conveniently, a family member built a house at the top of the hill on the canyon entrance, where it remains today.

**Enlisted in WWII.** As the only road up the hill west of Hillcrest, this canyon dirt road played a role in protecting the country during WWII. Naval bases to the south, an Army encampment to the east at Balboa Park, and Consolidated Aircraft assembly plant to the west, made Mission Hills a strategic location for Anti-Aircraft mitigation. At the south end of the canyon, the US Army installed an Anti-Aircraft gun, nestled amongst the houses. The canyon road that enabled the farmer to truck his milk up the hill, also provided access for ammunition and military personnel. After WWII, the gun was removed, but the support structure remains.



*Allen Dairy, circa 1925. Photo courtesy of SDSU archives.*



*Allen residence at the top of Allen Canyon. Photo by Judith Machian.*

## Development Pressures.

After the war, the city grew. Highway 80 was replaced with interstate 8 in 1964. Hotels and commerce started dotting both sides of the easy access to the beach. Wouldn't it be nifty if our hotel guests could bop up the hill to Hillcrest and Mission Hills with ease? Let's lobby to have Allen Road paved over! "Heck no!" responded Mission Hills residents, who fought the city for decades to prevent paving over the watershed. They won! Now, no vehicles are allowed.

Had they not prevailed, the canyon would no longer have been a wildlife corridor. The watershed would have become a storm drain runoff, dumping polluted water into the sewer system and ocean.

**Allen Canyon Today.** Allen Road remains a city street to this day - on maps only. Don't believe your GPS! This canyon is for foot travel only. Nature has been taking back the road. Although the canyon struggles with invasive species, it hosts an abundance of wildlife. Birding enthusiasts consider it one of the better urban birding locations in the city. Allen Canyon is now a hidden gem nature trail. Few people in the area know it exists. The canyon remains a watershed, supporting lush vegetation, and both native and migratory species. Because local people cared, Allen Canyon lives to clean our water and our air.

## Winter 2024 -2025 Historic Designations in Mission Hills



Photo courtesy of SOHO.

### 1115 Alberta Place

The Garret and Esther Bradt/William B. Melhorn Spec House #1 (1928), designed in the Spanish Eclectic style, was designated under Historic Resources Board (HRB) criteria Criteria C, for architecture, and D, for the quality work of its master builder, William B. Melhorn. Designated at the October 2024 HRB meeting, the home is an example of Melhorn's "moderate and affordable" single-family residences in Mission Hills. Notable features include the flat parapet roof, arched wood front entry door, entry porch with a square wood support post, and mission barrel tile shed roof.



Photo courtesy of SOHO.

### 1214 Sutter Street

The Alberta Security Company/Martin V. Melhorn House Spec House #9 (1924) was designated under criteria C (architecture) and D (master builder), and is a notable work of Martin V. Melhorn. The home retains characteristics and integrity of its Spanish Eclectic style in its asymmetrical primary facade, projecting front gable with a focal window, varied roof forms covered in tile, little eave overhang, and its concrete front porch with a stucco wall. This house brings the total to at least 14 Melhorn houses listed on San Diego's historic register.

## Historic Preservation Under Attack Continued...

be misguided and fail to effectively remedy the regulations' perceived defects." The city has failed to perform such an analysis, so MHH is helping to fund an upcoming study by PlaceEconomics to analyze the economic, cultural, and social benefits of historic preservation in the city. The study will be performed later this year. We are asking the city not to move forward with its reforms until this important information becomes available.

Meanwhile, MHH has submitted comments on the initiative to the city and will continue to advocate for protecting and strengthening the city's historic preservation regulations.

We also ask our members to weigh in and submit their comments to the city. Go to [www.missionhillsheritage.org](http://www.missionhillsheritage.org) and click on "Projects" to find instructions for submitting comments to the city. Let the city know that you care about protecting our historic neighborhoods.

MISSION HILLS  
HERITAGE



## Call for Volunteers!

### Interested In Joining Us?

If you're passionate about historic preservation, we'd love to have you join our team!

For more information, send us an email at [info@missionhillsheritage.org](mailto:info@missionhillsheritage.org)

### We Need Help With:

Events Committee  
Graphic Design  
Newsletter Editor  
Public Relations  
Social Media

[www.missionhillsheritage.org](http://www.missionhillsheritage.org)

# MISSION HILLS HERITAGE

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**We're on Facebook & Instagram!**

## 2025 MHH Upcoming Events

**May 17 • 9 am- noon • Spring Lecture Series**

**September 27 • 10 am-4 pm • 18th Annual Home Tour**

**October 18 • 4-6 pm • Annual Membership Meeting**  
(members only)

**To Be Determined • Scrapbook Days**

**To Join MHH, visit our website to complete an application**  
[www.MissionHillsHeritage.org](http://www.MissionHillsHeritage.org)

**Individual..... 1 year \$50**

**Household (up to 4 people) ..... 1 year \$90**

**Professional (for business individual).....1 year \$150**

**To access our annual financial report, visit us at**  
[www.MissionHillsHeritage.org](http://www.MissionHillsHeritage.org)



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