

**NORTH PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AUGUST 2021 MEETING SUMMARY**

DATE: AUGUST 19, 2021

TIME: XX PM

These notes summarize information that was planned to be presented at the August 19, 2021 Business Meeting of the North Park Historical Society (NPHS) Board of Directors, and the activities discussion for the organization. These notes include updates as of August 31, 2021. The public meeting was canceled in advance due to concerns about the coronavirus.

All future public meetings scheduled for the third **THURSDAYS of the month starting at 6:30 p.m.** in a second-floor meeting room at Grace Lutheran Church **WILL NOT OCCUR in 2021** until the public health crisis due to COVID-19 has passed. Although we will not resume our public meetings until then, we are still providing information to all who contact us with questions about North Park history and documenting those communications in monthly summaries.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

We hope all our members and friends are staying safe and healthy.

2. AGENDA REVIEW AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pacific Beach Historical Society newsletters will continue to be collected for future viewing.

3. MINUTES ACCEPTANCE

The meeting summary from the canceled July 15, 2021 meeting has been posted on the website.

BUSINESS PORTION OF MEETING

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

The financials for this meeting are for July 17 to August 19, 2021 and were sent to Board members on August 19, 2021. In this time period, three members renewed and provided extra donations (thank you, Steve, Katherine and Sharon!), and we sold one spiral-bound North Park history book retail to a member, for total income of \$373.20. There were no expenses in this time period.

ACTIVITIES PORTION OF MEETING

5. UPDATE ON PLAQUE FOR WATER TOWER

Coordination with City Public Utilities Department staff regarding the feasibility of placing the plaque in a boulder or some kind of low wall next to the two-story building at the Water Tower site is pending return to some kind of normalcy.

6. PLANNING FOR PAULY'S ADDITION WALKING TOUR

The team has developed the route, photo notebook and draft guide notes for the southern part of Pauly's Addition. The current tour starts at Upas and Texas, heads west on Upas, north on Mississippi to Landis, east on Landis to Texas, and south on Texas back to the park. This route is approximately one mile and includes six designated houses and a wide range of ages and architectural styles. We may conduct a few more practice tours this summer, virus crisis permitting.

7. BUNGALOW COURT IDENTIFICATION PROJECT

NPHS provided an updated inventory of local bungalow courts in the North Park area to City staff for the City's historic context statement for a Bungalow Court Multiple Property Listing addressing bungalow courts and garden apartments city-wide. George provided the following summary of the context statement released to the public:

San Diego Planning staff has released a draft "Bungalow Court & Apartment Court Historic Context Statement" that will be discussed at an Historic Resources Board workshop on August 26. While action on the Context Statement will not be taken at the workshop, the project is scheduled for completion in September.

The Context Statement identifies residential courts as groups of dwellings surrounding a shared courtyard that opens onto the street. Bungalow courts are primarily single story; apartment courts are primarily 2-story. Each unit has direct access from the courtyard and there are no interior hallways. Primarily located in streetcar suburb corridors, the period of significance for these resources is 1917-1960. Because of their location near transit and time of construction, off-street parking is usually minimal.

The courtyards in these resources are visible from the street and complexes with enclosed garden courtyards that are not visible from the street are not included. Projects with fully enclosed courtyards usually date from the mid- to later 20th century and their courtyards frequently include a swimming pool. The draft report includes an interesting history of zoning in the City of San Diego Zoning.

The Historic Context Statement concludes that bungalow- and apartment courts have historic interest, recommending five potential future evaluations:

1. A city-wide survey to identify potential historic courts. The inventory that the North Park Historical Society provided earlier this year provided a community-wide inventory of bungalow courts, with some apartment courts noted. Potentially we could assist in an inventory of apartment courts.
2. The identification of San Diego court designers and builders.
3. Research on the residents of courts city-wide.
4. Prepare a city-wide Context Statement for all types of multiple family housing.
5. Identify and evaluate a broad range of potential incentives and policies to encourage the preservation of historic court housing resources.

It is suggested that the North Park Historical Society support the study recommendations:

- offering to assist in the identification of apartment courts in North Park (#1),
- providing information about court builders in the community (#2) and
- providing information to the North Park community about historic preservation (a portion of #5). This information should include the benefits of Historical Districts.
- Once the Citywide information is available, the City should consider the creation of one or more Courtyard Historical Districts.

After the Zoom HRB meeting, which George attended, he commented that two people pushed hard for a continuance, but the workshop went forward. The workshop lasted 90 minutes with about 20 folks testifying, and testimony was about 50/50 split between those in favor of the project and those against. The context statement will be finished in late September but does not get adopted; it will be used for reviews and it sounds like the City will program a city-wide inventory and additional work on a Apartments Context Statement. The Context Statement will not incorporate the inventories, and it is not yet clear what will be in the appendices of the document.

8. SLIDE AND PHOTO SCANNING PROJECT

We are in the process of scanning slides and notebooks with photos and notes from the Covington Family. Here are some lovely princesses from long ago:



On verso: Maids of Honor to the Queen. Carnival San Diego. Left to right: Miss Barrett, Lifton, Greighton; Mrs. Shirley (Queen); Miss Stockton, Miss Klauber, Wood, Grigoty (Los Angeles), Miss Bergin (Frisco). July 4th, 1901.

9. SIGNS FOR DRYDEN DISTRICT

Ten years ago, on June 23, 2011, the North Park Historical Society (NPHS) achieved designation of the North Park Dryden Historic District. As yet, there are no street signs marking the district as there are for other districts like Burlingame and Melhorn & Son historic districts. The Burlingame Historic district has four signs, and the new Melhorn and Son Historic District has two signs, at Louisiana & Monroe and Texas & Madison. Some signs are on poles by themselves, and some are on poles with other signs.

NPHS is exploring the possibility of the City putting up demarcation signs for the Dryden District. NPHS President Steve Hon has contacted Council District 3 staff, and they are looking into the process and cost. Possible locations for signs installed on existing poles, such as stop signs, streetlight poles, and other signs, are at 28th Street & Landis Street and Pershing Avenue & Landis Street on the north end, and 28th Street & Upas Street and Pershing Avenue & Upas Street on the south end. The virus crisis has complicated staff response, but updates will be presented in these meeting summaries each month.



10. COMMUNITY COORDINATION

In August 2021, we responded to requests for information as summarized below.

1. Tylor asked about the history of his house on 32nd Street and the feasibility to achieve designation. We found that the house is in the NPHS building permit database on our website under “Projects.” A building permit for the house in the Park Villas tract was pulled by John J. Blessing & Son on October 4, 1921, estimated value \$3000. The Blessings built many other houses in the area. Builder John Joseph Blessing was born in Ohio in 1858 to German parents. His son, John Austin Blessing was born in 1887 in Montana. John J.’s family also included wife Catherine, daughter Edith and son Laurence. They first appeared in the San Diego directory in 1923. John J. was a building contractor living at 3528 32nd Street. Laurence, a civil engineer, was also at this address. John A. was at 3218 30th. He was listed as a salesman in this directory, but as a carpenter and building contractor in later directories. The first owner of Tylor’s house appears to be James L. Stuart, a post office superintendent, and his wife Anna. The first year that someone is paying taxes on improvements on the lots was January 1922.
2. Nathalia asked if NPHS had any historical photos of the Art Deco church building at 3090 Polk Avenue. A demolition permit has been approved for the church building to become a multifamily housing project. City Lot Books indicate the lots of the church site were vacant in 1912, when Charles F. O’Neill (San Diego Mayor from 1913 to 1915) sold them to the Seventh Day Adventist Association of Southern California. A building was noted as under construction on two lots in January 1913. The “University Heights Seventh Day Adventist Church, Illinois and Polk streets” was listed in the column “Where to Worship” in the April 13, 1913 *San Diego Union*. The 1913 City Directory listed the church as “Seventh Day Adventist Church, Illinois nw cor Polk, Rev. Silas Davis, pastor.”

The church buildings constructed during the early 1900s were likely removed in 1940 for construction of the church currently on the site. The August 25, 1940 *San Diego Union* noted permits for a “frame stucco church” at 3090 Polk were pulled by the “Seventh Day Adventist Church per Hays & Jackson.” The estimated cost was \$21,250. Various additional permits by Hays & Jackson for 3090 Polk were pulled through November 1940. The building firm of Hays & Jackson was a partnership of Carl B. Hays and Richard M. Jackson that operated from 1936 to 1942, when Jackson retired. Carl B. Hays (1884-1965) is a designated Master Builder by the City of San Diego. His biography in the “Biographies of Established Masters” by the City of San Diego Historical Resources Board noted he moved to San Diego in the early 1920s and was “one of the influential builders in Kensington Heights.” The company was listed in the 1940 City Directory as “Hays & Jackson, Building Contractors, Complete Building Services” located at 3829 30th Street.



The church building currently at 3090 Polk Avenue was identified in the North Park Community Plan Area 2016 Historic Resources Survey as a Potential Individual Resource, and was described as follows: “Good example of Art Deco architecture; good example of early-20th century institutional development in North Park; significant under the *Civic & Institutional Development* theme within the *Influence of the Great Depression*

& World War II in North Park: 1930-1945 context. This property also appears eligible for listing in the National Register and the California Register.” We were very sad to learn the building will be demolished and is currently behind construction fencing.

3. A homeowner asked about the historical integrity of her house on 33rd Street. We found the house exemplifies the Spanish Colonial Revival style with high integrity. The home is listed as a contributing resource within the potential Altadena Historic District. Assuming the district is approved and the house is confirmed to be Contributing, we told the owner that she can apply for the Mills Act if she wants a property tax reduction when the district processing is completed. The designation should protect the house from the wrecking ball in the future, which she noted was her goal.

Based on research in available online resources, we learned this address first appeared in the 1938 City Directory, indicating the house was built in 1937. The first owner was Irving Passarino and his wife Mary. He owned the house until about 1963, so for about 25 years. Irving was born in 1909 in Santa Cruz, California to Italian parents. In 1928, Irving was a clerk with the Bank of Italy. For the rest of his career, he worked for various investment, securities and banking companies. Irving and Mary and daughter Bette Jean moved to La Mesa around 1963. Irving died December 21, 2000 and was interred at Holy Cross.

4. Brian contacted us, saying, “We recently purchased (April 2021) a house on Hamilton St. in North Park that was built in 1920. We would really love to find out more history on the property and especially old pictures of the house... I am hoping the NPHS can help us find out more information on the home as we are in love with the home and that it has such a long history.”

We found the lots were vacant in January 1913 when owned by Stephen Bjarnson. His company, Barnson Realty Co., advertised enthusiastically in the *San Diego Union* and *Evening Tribune* as “Barnson for Bargains” in the early 1900s. The first time there was a value of improvements on the lots was January 1914, so the house was likely built during 1913, seven years before Brian thought it was.

San Diego, Cal., Wednesday, July 19

BARNSON FOR BARGAINS

ARE YOU HERE FOR THE SUMMER? **SAVE RENT!**

\$500 cash, balance like rent; strictly modern 5-room, cut-newer State Normal School; 5-minute car service. Price Reduced to \$2300.00. We can sell for you this fall for \$2500. **SAVE RENT.**

SEVERAL MILLION DOLLARS will be spent to make **Balboa Park** **THE MOST POPULAR AND UNIQUE PLAYGROUND IN THE WORLD.**

Buy Lots bordering on and adjacent to BALBOA PARK, and make money every day for the next four years.

Among the Advantages Are:

- 1st-Convenient to 2 car lines.
- 2nd-All streets being graded.
- 3rd-Building restrictions.
- 4th-Unobstructible view of city, Coronado, the bay, the park, and surroundings for miles.
- 5th-One-fourth the price asked for lots farther out.

OWNERS CAN'T RAISE the PRICE ON LOTS WE ARE OFFERING THIS MONTH.

REFERENCES— Southern Trust and Savings Bank; Union Title and Trust Co.

WE HAVE LOTS FOR SALE BELOW THE MARKET IN ALL PARTS OF THE CITY

OUR LIST OF HOMES IS LARGE AND VARIED

SEE OTHERS IF YOU WILL BUT SEE

BARNSON For Bargains

Acquire **"THAT PROFITABLE HABIT"**

Acquire **"THAT PROFITABLE HABIT"**

2nd Floor in the SKY. SCRAPER—Corner 5th and D Streets.

2nd Floor in the SKY. SCRAPER, Corner 5th and D Streets.

REFERENCES— Southern Trust and Savings Bank; Union Title and Trust Co.

The owner listed in January 1914 was Frank Knight. In 1915, the owner changed to Mary E. Knight, and she owned the property until about 1938, or for about 24 years. Mary was listed in the City Directory as “wid [widow] Francis.” A death notice for Francis Knight appeared in the April 22, 1914 *San Diego Union*. Francis and Mary Knight both immigrated from England about 1885, and they lived in Colorado, where Francis was a farmer, before coming to San Diego.

Another long-time owner of Brian’s house was Joseph Leonard Ascitutto and his wife, Anna, who bought the house in 1952. At this time, he was a commercial fisherman.

Joseph and Anna owned the house at least until 1980, or about 28 years. The 1980 City Directory is the last scanned directory available online through Ancestry.com.

Joseph Ascitutto was born October 2, 1915 in Illinois to Guy and Teresa Ascitutto, who immigrated from Italy in 1905 and 1906, respectively. Joseph and several of his brothers worked as commercial fishermen; Joseph later became a pipefitter with National Steel. He died December 30, 1999 and was buried at Greenwood Memorial Park. Anna, who was born August 26, 1912, died May 26, 2007. Her obituary in the May 30, 2007 *San Diego Union-Tribune* read, in part: "She is survived by her two children, Joseph Ascitutto and Theresa Huckins, her sisters, brother, granddaughter and great-grandchildren. Mom wanted everyone to know that she had a good life, that she loved her family and friends and wanted to thank everybody for the cards and prayers. She completed her journey in the flesh with the same charm, dignity and grace with which she lived. She will be deeply missed by all who knew her."

Some fun family facts we discovered included that daughter Theresa's parakeet, Skipper, won third place at the 1957 North Park Mutt and Pet Show. Also, Theresa, a Hoover High School graduate, won an essay contest in 1967 and was pictured receiving her award in the June 18, 1967 *San Diego Union*. Son Joseph became a firefighter with the City Fire Department. A September 13, 1994 *San Diego Union-Tribune* article noted he was granted a patent for a device that helps people fill a gas can, motorcycle, boat or antique car not equipped for modern vapor-recovery nozzles.



—Staff Photo
WINS ESSAY CONTEST: Theresa Ascitutto, graduate this spring of Hoover High School, accepts plaque from Clyde V. Smith, left, real estate and building editor of The San Diego Union, for a winning essay in a contest named in honor of Smith. Hank Dieckhoff, president of San Diego Board of Realtors, which sponsored the contest, also presented Miss Ascitutto with \$100 bond.

Brian was very excited to receive the information about the house. He told us, "You've found a treasure trove and can't thank you enough. I called my mom shortly after your email came through and she mentioned I should print it all up and have it out on display for our guests when they come to the house for the post-wedding day brunch in just over a week."

11. UPCOMING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

NPBS participation in future events will have to wait until a return to some kind of normalcy.

12. FUTURE MEETINGS

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Prepared by

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