

NORTH PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY JANUARY 2022 MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: JANUARY 20, 2022

TIME: XX PM

These notes summarize information that was planned to be presented at the January 20, 2022 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 January 22, 2022. 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 2022** 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 November 18, 2021 meeting has been posted on the website. NPHS does not meet in December, and no meeting summary was prepared.

BUSINESS PORTION OF MEETING

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

The financials for the entire year of 2021 were included in the Annual Report sent to Board Members on January 4, 2022.

The financials for this meeting are for January 1 to January 18, 2022 and were sent to Board members on January 18, 2022. In this time period, one member renewed and gave an additional donation (thank you, Robert!) for total income of \$100.00. Expenses in this time period totaled \$81.88, mainly consisting of our annual renewal fee for our domain names with GoDaddy.

The following state and federal organizational reports for the 2021 fiscal year were filed on the dates indicated below:

- 199N State income tax report was filed online on January 4, 2022.
- State sales tax of \$2.00 was reported and paid online on January 7, 2022.
- 990N federal income tax report was filed online on January 21, 2022.
- California Registry of Charitable Trusts Registration Renewal form RRF-1 was filed online on January 22, 2022.
- Statement of Information with the Secretary of State will be filed online when the State notifies us it is time.

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.

7. SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2021

The following summary of accomplishments was provided to the Board of Directors in the 2021 Annual Report on January 4, 2022:

The accomplishments of NPHS in 2021 grouped by the seven objectives stated in our Bylaws under the primary purpose are summarized below. Activities and product sales were profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and public health mandated limitations on gatherings that began in early 2020 and continued through 2021.

Objective 1. To market and distribute printed and digital publications consistent with our purpose (e.g., *North Park: A San Diego Urban Village, 1896-1946*, our book on the history of North Park's first 50 years).

- Local stores continue to sell the book we prepared in 2014, *Images of America: San Diego's North Park* published by Arcadia Publishing Company. During 2021, we believe it continued to be available for retail sale at various locations including CVS. We did not sell any Arcadia books to individuals in 2021. We received a total of \$75.35 in royalty payments from Arcadia for sales by others in 2021.
- We continue to sell our "original" history book: *North Park: A San Diego Urban Village, 1896-1946* by Donald Covington, which is published and distributed by NPHS. We sold 45 spiral-bound books wholesale to Verbatim Books for their retail in 2021. We sold 3 spiral-bound copies wholesale to The Book Catapult in South Park. We sold one copy retail to an individual in 2021.
- Our past agreement with Amazon was terminated in 2019. Paras Newsstand closed permanently at the end of 2019. The San Diego History Center closed during the pandemic, and will not re-open their gift shop.
- Upon approval of the NPHS Board of Directors, we had 150 spiral-bound copies of the book produced by Repromagic, a printing shop located on Miramar Place in July 2021.
- A total of 0 perfect-bound and 49 spiral-bound North Park history books left our inventory in 2021. Since publishing the book in 2007, we have sold a total of approximately 2,815 copies. We had 120 spiral-bound copies and 16 perfect-bound copies remaining at the end of 2021.



- We sold 3 copies of the book, *Burlingame, the Tract of Character* by Donald Covington wholesale to The Book Catapult in June 2021. We have 91 copies remaining.
- In 2017 we had 100 canvas tote bags with our logo printed at [AKA] Apparel-Supplies-Printing. We did not sell any bags to individuals in 2021. The San Diego History Center paid us for 5 bags sold on consignment in 2020 and returned one unsold bag when they closed the gift shop. We have 23 bags remaining.

Objective 2. To coordinate with other organizations on public historical education and preservation efforts, including designation of historical districts and/or structures.

- The City of San Diego received a grant from the California Office of Historic Preservation to prepare a historic context statement addressing bungalow courts and garden apartments city-wide. NPHS Vice-President George Franck coordinated an effort to review the list of bungalow courts included in the Community Plan and add courts to the City's list. Allendale Court at 3777 Park Boulevard is one of many bungalow courts identified by NPHS for inclusion in the City's context statement project.
- Channel 8 KFMB News, the oldest TV station in San Diego, contacted North Park Main Street and NPHS for part of a "Then and Now" series the station presented on various San Diego communities for which they have historical footage. NPHS Secretary Katherine Hon answered the reporter's questions about how North Park got started and why the state street names seem to be in such a crazy order, and some of that video was included. A link to the piece is below. If you follow the text down, you can click on video from similar stories the channel did in 1986 and 1978.
<https://www.cbs8.com/article/news/local/throwback/north-park-1980s-san-diego-neighborhood/509-67c60dfb-4d8d-4ff3-8353-169d86a650c7>
- NPHS Board Member Paul Spears and a small group of other Board members continued a free advice service helping to inform people on the potential for their house to be designated as a significant historic resource. NPHS received and responded to a total of 11 requests in 2021.
- NPHS provided historical information about six other houses, a church, and the buildings on University Avenue hosting North Park Optometry and North Park Rug and Carpet.
- Paul provided input on whether a full historical report should be required for 158 building permit applications to the City of San Diego for changes to buildings more than 45 years old.



- NPHS wrote a letter to the City HRB staff opposing demolition of 4349-4355 Arizona Street, a bungalow court that we believe is historic and would contribute to the Bungalow Court Multiple Property Listing the City is preparing.
- NPHS bought a paver to benefit the Mini-Park under construction behind the North Park Theater. The Mini-Park is supposed to open in January 2022. (See pages 9 and 10 of this meeting summary for an update on the park opening and our paver.)
- Due to the City limiting our access to the “canvas” of the fencing on top of the concrete reservoir facing Howard Avenue, the NPHS Board voted to terminate the project of developing an art installation to celebrate the Water Tower in April 2019. We refunded the remaining unspent County Grant funds for the project to the County. We did not request grant funds in 2020 or 2021 due to the pandemic limiting our activities and ability to meet.
- NPHS remains committed to installing the bronze plaque that NPHS paid to create in 2015 recognizing the Water Tower as a Local Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, but communication with the City has been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

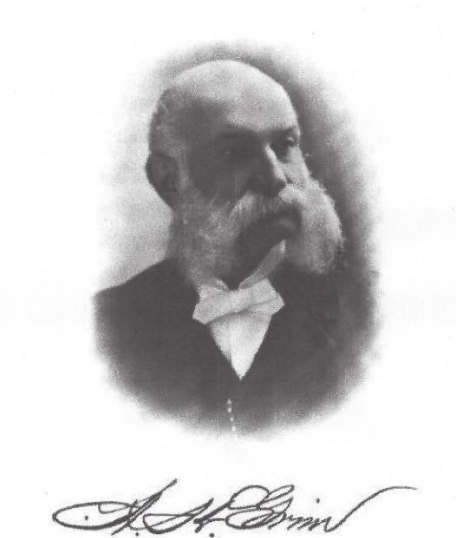


Objective 3. To develop and conduct walking tours relating educational information about the history of various areas in North Park.

- NPHS continued to develop a tour of Pauly’s Addition. A group of NPHS board members developed a route for the southern third of the neighborhood focusing on Mississippi and Texas streets from Upas to Landis streets. George developed text for the tour guide, Paul compiled interior photos for the assistant photo book, and Katherine organized the list of houses with construction date and style based on information compiled by others, including Paul and Hilda. We look forward to conducting this tour when normalcy returns.
- At the request of North Park Main Street, George Franck led a tour of the 30th Street and University Avenue commercial area for two visiting magazine writers. George's tour focused on the North Park Theatre (now the Observatory) and included a quick peek inside. The central area tour was followed by visits to about a half dozen bars/craft breweries. Among them was The Original 40 at 3117 University Avenue.

Objective 4. To research and write objective articles about the history of North Park’s people, landmarks, architecture, homes, commercial buildings, tracts, and other topics for publications.

- Press coverage this year in the *Uptown News* consisted of six articles written by NPHS Secretary Katherine Hon in her monthly column "PastMatters" continuing her series on the people behind street names in North Park. Streets included were Grim Avenue and Herman Avenue, which have held their original names from the early 1870s mapping of the Park Villas subdivision by merchant and real estate entrepreneur Joseph Nash.



Although Abraham K. Grim never lived in San Diego, he was a prominent businessman in San Francisco, and may be the namesake for North Park's Grim Avenue.



Alexander Herman, a young merchant from Germany who operated a general store on Fifth Avenue in 1871 San Diego, may be the namesake for Herman Avenue.

- More than 550 people like and follow our North Park History Facebook page. We posted 8 items throughout the year, including information about the Uptown News articles.

Objective 5. To make and sponsor presentations of information useful to helping the public understand the origin and significance of historical resources in the community, including buildings, landmarks, and other structures.

- NPHS Secretary Katherine Hon presented a lecture via Zoom to the University Heights Community Association about the history of the Lafayette Hotel. An interesting historical finding is that several townhouse buildings that were part of the hotel complex were removed in 1958 and relocated to Florida Street/Cypress Avenue where they form a quiet oasis set back from another apartment complex on Florida Street to this day.



- NPHS participated in the first North Park Book Fair on July 17, 2021. At the invitation of the organizers, Katherine spoke briefly about the historic reasons North Park streets are so inconsistent in design and alignment. She encouraged attendees to buy the North Park History book to read all about it. The book was prominently displayed at Verbatim Books. This was the only event we participated in due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



- The NPHS Board met in-person once on the Grace Lutheran Church patio on June 17, 2021, but then the Delta variant surge prevented further meetings in 2021. The Secretary emailed a “meeting summary” to all NPHS members each month containing information we would have shared from January to November.

Objective 6. To organize, convert to digital format (when possible) and provide the following materials for research and other purposes: documents, slides, data, notes, photos, and various ephemera and records related to history donated to the North Park Historical Society, and to establish a North Park collection for eventual donation to the San Diego Historical Society for preservation.

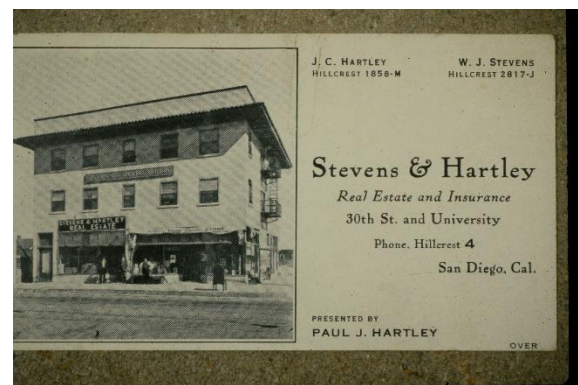
- NPHS provided several photos for an artist installation prepared by Kaori Fukuyama, artist-in-residence with Art Produce. These included a 1949 photo of a streetcar going under the Georgia Street Bridge and the photo of North Park historians Don and Karon Covington that is on the back of our 2007 North Park history book. The completed installation was quite interesting and evocative.



- NPHS is scanning slides and notebooks with photos and notes from the Covington Family. Eight pictures were shared in the monthly meeting summaries distributed to NPHS members through the year. This postcard of the Lafayette Hotel is from when the hotel was named the “Hotel Manor” from 1950 to about 1955. The front of the building complex along El Cajon Boulevard is on the right side of the postcard.



- NPHS had six slide carousels with a total of about 350 slides from Don Covington scanned by George’s Camera. A few of the slides are shown below.



Objective 7. To conduct outreach to schools regarding North Park history consistent with our purpose.

- NPHS did not conduct any formal projects with schools in 2021.

END OF SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2021

8. SLIDE AND PHOTO SCANNING PROJECT

We are in the process of scanning slides and notebooks with photos and notes from the Covington Family. In addition to scanning notebooks and individual slides, in November 2021, NPHS had about 350 slides in six slide carousels scanned in bulk by George’s Camera. We are now organizing the photos as digital files so we can put photos on our website and use them in future walking tours and presentations.

9. SIGNS FOR DRYDEN DISTRICT

There are no street signs marking the North Park Dryden Historic District as there are for other districts like Burlingame. NPHS is exploring the possibility of the City putting up demarcation signs for the Dryden District, but we have not heard back yet from Council District 3 staff.



10. COMMUNITY COORDINATION

In January 2022, we responded to requests for information as summarized below.

1. An interior designer working on a commercial project asked for some vintage North Park photos. We provided photos from our 2014 book, "Images of America: San Diego's North Park" that we have the rights to share, including the classic 1953 picture of what is now the Western Dental building, below, courtesy of the Hartley Family.



2. A home owner asked for information about her house on Polk Avenue just east of the North Park Community Park in University Heights. We found the house was constructed during 1923, and may qualify for designation as an individually significant historical resource. The first owner listed for the house was Elizabeth Cotton, widow of C.L. Cotton. Elizabeth owned the house until 1932, when Paul Engwall was the listed owner. The next year, Walter Sloan and his wife Susie were the listed owners. This family owned the house from 1933 to 1978, when Susie died at age 86. Walter died in 1954 at age 60. He was in the Navy and served in World War I and World War II. Walter and Susie were both buried at Fort Rosecrans. We thought it was very interesting that one family owned the little bungalow for at least 45 years.
3. NPHS did not have any input on a January 8, 2022 article in the Union Tribune by columnist Diane Bell, but we found it inspiring that a neighbor bought a dilapidated and unoccupied Craftsman house on Granada Avenue and Landis Street and is in the process of restoring it. Thank you, Kevin Piechota, for helping to preserve North Park's historical character!

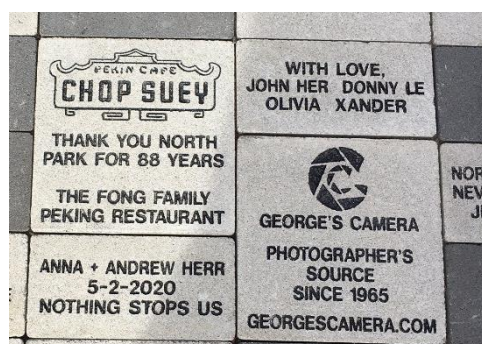
See the last page of this meeting summary for a scan of the article by Diane Bell.



The classic porch of this house is being restored.

11. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

NPHS members attended the January 16, 2022 opening of the North Park Mini-Park, which was a well-attended event. We found the brick paver the North Park Historical Society purchased to support operation of this new community resource. We also saw bricks memorializing the Peking Restaurant, George's Camera, and Lions Club members who have passed on, including Joe Schloss of A&B Sporting Goods.





A partial overview of the bricks illustrates the popularity of the fund-raising endeavor.

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

12. FUTURE MEETINGS

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 2022** 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.

Prepared by

Katherine Hon

Katherine Hon
Secretary, North Park Historical Society



DIANE BELL
Columnist

Man buys vacant home to preserve his neighborhood

For years, a once charming 1916 craftsman-style house on a manicured North Park street remained vacant.

A unit above the detached garage was rented, but the property's elderly owner, Diane Bliss, had moved out of the main house about 10 years earlier to move in with a friend, leaving it furnished, but unoccupied.

She returned only occasionally to check on it and do some yardwork.

Located at Granada Avenue and Landis Street, it began to be referred to by locals as "that house on the corner." Neighborhood homeowners, for years, have gathered for potluck dinners on the first Friday of every month. They're a close-knit community.

Worries grew about the fading condition of "that house on the corner." Its owner was a wonderful woman, beloved by her neighbors. But, as her age advanced, she had become a hoarder.

"You could walk by and see piles of garbage 4 feet high," relates Kevin Piechota, who lives diagonally across the street on Granada.

The unoccupied house, dark at night except for a single dim interior light, took on a spooky appearance, especially when people passing by heard rustling and other noises coming from behind a 10-foot-wide juniper bush shielding one facade — an attractive hiding place for transients.

Piechota is one of the younger and newer homeowners. He and his wife, Marie, moved there in 2016. He periodically surveyed the abandoned house and contemplated its future.

As a real estate agent, he is sympathetic with San Diego's critical need for more housing. But as a

SEE DIANE BELL • B6

DIANE BELL

FROM B1
resident, he is eager to preserve the fabric and integrity of his neighborhood.

Relaxed city building codes and lowered fees have made single-family home lots much more attractive to developers, but the Piechotas didn't want the house across the street scrapped to make way for a multi-unit apartment complex with too little parking.

Neither did others, such as Steve Burke, who lives with his wife, Marjorie, directly across the street on Granada. "Our concern was that somebody would come along and tear it down to put up a four-unit building or build a big mansion there," Steve says.

Piechota retrieved the homeowner's contact information from property tax records and determined to someday contact her. Then something eerie happened.

He was standing on his front door stoop one day in November surveying the vacant house, when a call came in with a Portland, Ore., area code. The caller explained that she had done a Google search for real estate agents active in North Park to talk about the sale of a house. Piechota's name had popped up.

When she told him the address was 3705 Granada Ave., Piechota was shocked. "I live across the street," he informed her. "There are 30,000 licensed Realtors in



KEVIN PIECHOTA

It took six days and six giant trash bins to empty this North Park house, the new owner said.

San Diego. What are the odds that you called one who is looking at the house right now?"

"You just made my hair stand up," exclaimed the woman, a Portland real estate agent representing Caprice Rose, the niece and trustee of the homeowner, who passed away in October at age 82.

He gave her information about property values in the neighborhood and offered to go in and check out the condition of the two-bedroom, one-bath house for her.

With her blessing, he crawled through a window and slogged through a chest-high mountain of trash and abandoned belongings. "It was nasty," he says, "but I saw the potential." The house contained crafted built-ins, including a foldout desk, common in

homes of that era, a fireplace and hardwood floors.

While there, he heard a rustling noise and encountered a homeless woman who claimed she knew the owner. She told him she sometimes camped in the bushes outside and entered occasionally to use the facilities.

Piechota didn't end up listing the house. He bought it. His offer to the listing agent, made in conjunction with a friend who does remodels, was one of several received on the property before it even hit the open market. Some of those offers were from developers.

His plan was to declutter the house, renovate it and sell it to a couple or family. His offer included a promise not to scrape the lot to build an apartment complex but to maintain the structure of the original craftsman

home.

He also forfeited the buyer's real estate commission and offered to make a donation to the San Diego Unified School District in the name of Rose, a retired teacher.

Rose was on the same page. "I didn't want it to go to developers who would mow it down and put up a four-plex," she says. "Through this whole process I've gotten to know some of the neighbors, and they expressed the idea that they wanted it to stay as a home."

A bidding war ensued but, in the end, the Piechotas and their partner submitted the highest bid, Rose said. She accepted their offer of just under \$1 million to buy the house "as is."

It took six days and six giant trash bins to empty the house of its accumulated rubbish, Piechota says. Marie, his wife, agreed to serve as interior designer.

"We're very excited about what these guys are doing," Steve Burke says. He reports that others in the neighborhood, too, are pleased that the home will be refurbished on its original footprint.

"This was a passion project," Piechota says. "I would, 100 percent, do it again. ... I get to determine what the house will look like and who buys it."

He also gets to play a role in preserving his neighborhood's charm.

diane.bell@suniontribune.com

From the Union Tribune, January 8, 2022