



Enriching the future by preserving the past.

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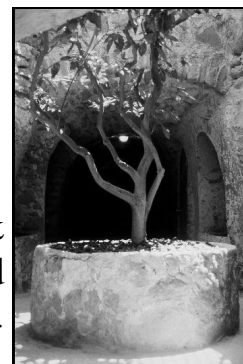
September 2011 • Volume VIII, Number 2

## Forestiere Underground Gardens Tour

Friday, September 16, 2011 - 5:30 pm

5021 West Shaw Avenue (Btn Golden State Blvd & Hwy 99)

Reservations are required • Space is limited • \$12 per person, includes tour & light refreshments • Silvio Manno, author of “The Forestiere Underground Gardens: A Pictorial Journey” will speak on the gardens architectural features. Phone 243-5848 or 243-0303 for reservations & more information.



### In Search of Beauty

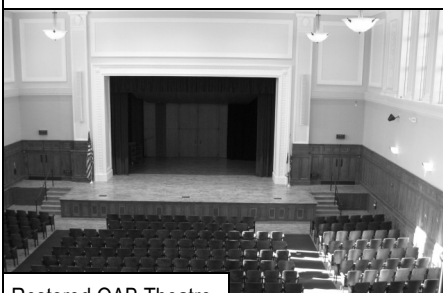
It is a human irony that people frequently overlook the beauty closest to them. Parisians rarely go to the Eiffel Tower while Romans seldom visit the Coliseum. Similarly, Fresnans hardly ever visit the Forestiere Underground Gardens, a world renowned historical landmark. Yet, each year scores of tourists, like restive pilgrims in search of spiritual inspiration, travel from afar to bathe in the earthen beauty that reigns in our own backyard. One of the Central Valley's few national historic treasures, the Gardens astonish, not only the artist's sensibilities, but also architects and engineers from around the world who marvel at Forestiere's remarkable creation.

Baldassare Forestiere, a Sicilian immigrant, spent 40 years and about \$300 for materials to excavate a maze of subterranean gardens, tunnels, rooms and passageways of exquisite beauty and vast complexity. Forestiere's underground world reveals an innovative and delicate use of the earth that stuns the human imagination. Under Forestiere's masterful touch the pickax and the shovel he wielded for 40 years became his brushes and the earth his canvass. Within the blissful serenity of Forestiere's gardens the mind is stilled and one can almost hear the timeless stones of this divine creation whisper the secret wisdom of a solitary prophet.

The Gardens radiate a universal appeal that draws people from the most disparate cultural backgrounds to its earthen midst. People of all nationalities and creeds descend serenely into these earthly gardens on a spiritual quest from which they reemerge renewed in spirit and body. Forestiere's lifelong achievement commands the utmost reverence as a world marvel, one that stirs the deepest of human passions. Propitiously, Fresnans are slowly awakening to the significance of the artistic legacy Forestiere bestowed upon their community, inheritance that distant travelers have long since experienced. Contributed by Silvio Manno

### Mabelle Selland Honored

Heritage Fresno is sponsoring a seat in the Old Administration Building Concert Hall to honor Mabelle Selland for her untiring efforts that led to the restoration of the Old Administration Building. The Theatre is located in the OAB on the former Fresno State College Campus (now Fresno City College). A plaque engraved with Mabelle's name will proudly remind visitors of the work of this tenacious lady to



Restored OAB Theatre



Restored Theatre seat

save this historic building from the wrecking ball. Mabelle, founder of Heritage Fresno, continues her crusade to preserve Fresno's treasured buildings. **Thank you, Mabelle!**

# HERITAGE FRESNO

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### In Memoriam

**Matthew C. Maroot**

### Heritage Fresno Mission Statement

Heritage Fresno is dedicated to preserving historic sites, districts, buildings and objects. We encourage research and education in the field of historic preservation. We help insure that preservation law is upheld.

### Ways to accomplish this goal are by

Research and publication of educational material on history and architecture of historic buildings, historic districts and sites.

Upholding Preservation Law to protect the public's interest in preservation of historic buildings, sites, districts and objects.

**Heritage Fresno**

**2930 N. West Ave.**

**Fresno, CA 93705**

**(559) 243-5848**

**FAX (559) 243-0100**

**www.heritagefresno.org**

**Preservation Watch - L Street** When you next drive in downtown Fresno, I invite you to head the old Packard down L Street, south of Divisadero, and enjoy some of Fresno's hidden architectural gems. At 1705 is the Bean Home. The Newman Home is at 1743. The Helm Home is at 1749, while across the street you will see the Crichton Home at number 1718. A moment's reflection allows you to visualize that stately and prestigious thoroughfare when occupied by Fresno's leading citizens in the past.

These properties and others have been acquired by the Fresno Housing Authority to transfer to a developer for downtown housing. They propose to remove the Crichton Home as part of this process. In our view, however, the demolition of this home is part of a much larger developer project, which requires study of its impact on this historic district, and how the loss of this historic resource can be mitigated.

Heritage Fresno exists to do all things necessary and proper to preserve historic structures, districts and objects. We argue for mitigation measures that will retain the authentic community that is Fresno.

Tearing down the Crichton Home will soon be before the city council. We expect to furnish expert testimony to establish that this proposed demolition would result in significant impacts to the L Street Residential Historic District. L Street was surveyed in 2007 by Urbana Planning Inc. That survey identified the Crichton Home as a contributing resource. Tearing it down impacts this historic district. We argue that the developer must at least plan to restore or to work around this structure.

Please let your City Council representative know that our historic downtown neighborhoods should be saved. Together, we can be a voice for preserving Fresno's history.

Contributed by Charles Barrett, Heritage Fresno Co-Chair

### Old Administration Building Tour

More than 100 people were delighted by the May 26th tours of the Library and Old Administration Building on the Fresno City College campus. The exterior and interior architectural tour of the circa 1931 Library was followed by a tour of the restored Old Administration Building, circa 1916. The OAB tour, led by FCC Vice Chancellor Brian Spees, began in the meticulously restored theatre. The earthquake retrofitted OAB, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, is currently used for classrooms and office space.



Heritage Fresno co-chairs Midge and Charles Barrett on the OAB steps



### Heritage Fresno Helps Water Tower Reopen

The Fresno Water Tower will soon welcome visitors, thanks to a coalition of local organizations and unanimous approval by the Fresno City Council on August 25, 2011. The Water Tower closed during the spring of 2011 after Fresno Area Express (FAX) moved their office to another location, leaving no one to finance the utility and maintenance bills. Hands On Central California stepped up to coordinate funding to reopen the tower to tourists. The utility costs will be shared by local artists whose work will be on display. Heritage Fresno, along with Fresno Coin Gallery, Guarantee Good Will Network, OSHER Institute, Applied Earth Works, Jim and April Kaufmann, Central Valley Community Bank, and Alarm It made contributions to make it possible.

Art by Hand will display local art for sale in the water tower along with Fresno tourism volunteers from RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program), a part of Hands On California. The water tower will be open 10:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Saturday beginning September 1st.

The Water Tower is on the National Register of Historic Places. It was renovated in 2000 as a tourism information center for Fresno. Heritage Fresno board members Roger Taylor and Herb Arden, who volunteer as docents, are eager to resume greeting and educating tower visitors. If you would like to help fund the Water Tower project, please send your donation to Hands On Central California, 732 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno, CA 93728-3424. Please indicate on your check that your donation is for the Water Tower Fund.

## HERITAGE FRESNO DONORS - August 1, 2010—August 31, 2011

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### In Memory of Matthew Maroot

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### In Memory of Tom Siebert

Mabelle M. Selland

### Water Tower Fund

Linda Hamilton

**Heritage Fresno is appreciative of the generosity of those who contributed to the cause of historic preservation. Contributors to the Armenian Library, Museum & Cultural Center may make checks payable to and mail directly to: Fresno Regional Foundation, 5260 N. Palm Ave., Suite 228, Fresno, CA 93704. All contributions are tax deductible as Heritage Fresno is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization registered with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the California State Franchise Tax Board. All donations will be gratefully acknowledged in our newsletter.**



### Armenian Town Project Delayed

Relocation of the five remaining Armenian Town homes was delayed when the Fresno Redevelopment Agency rejected the only bid submitted for the project. RDA staff is re-advertising the project; bids will be accepted from August 26 - September 23, 2011. Relocation of the five homes to the southwest corner of M and Santa Clara streets has been re-scheduled for November 2011. Exterior restoration of the homes and landscape replication completion is scheduled for the end of December 2012. Initially, the old Armenian homes were scheduled to be moved this summer with exterior restoration completed by the end of 2011.

From a Report to the Historic Preservation Commission, July 25, 2011

Presented by Terry Cox, Project Manager, Redevelopment Agency, City of Fresno

**Pop Laval Foundation's 2011-12 Fund Drive** is underway. Your past generosity has enabled us to save more than 10,000 of Pop's 100,000 historical archive. Over 2,300 are now posted at [www.poplavalfoundation.com](http://www.poplavalfoundation.com). Saving 50 negatives costs \$1,000; any donation is welcome and can be accepted on the website or sent to: Pop Laval Foundation, 9303 N. Maple #107, Fresno CA 93720. Credit cards can also be phoned into 559-217-2956 if this is more convenient. Thank you for your support.

**Email Addresses Wanted** To get up-to-date event and preservation news, Heritage Fresno would like your e-mail address so that we can reach you quickly. We promise we will not share your e-mail address with anyone.



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*What we are about—Heritage Fresno is dedicated to preserving historic sites, districts, buildings and objects. We encourage research and education in the field of historic preservation. We help insure that preservation law is upheld.*

*If you support our goals, we would appreciate your active interest and financial support. We thank you for your participation in the cause of preservation in Fresno!*

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Thank-you for your contribution to  
**Heritage Fresno**

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All donations are tax-deductible.  
§

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