

Historical Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission

The regular meeting of the Historic Landmarks & records Commission was held at the Sunnyside Regional Library on January 17, 2008.

Members present: Don Shantz, Nancy Enloe, John Baltierra, Roger Taylor, Jim Kus, Steve Barile, Randy McFarland, Aileen Bos, Penny Raven, Peg Bos, Susan Pappas, Judy Ganulin, Bud Olson, *Bill Secret Jr.*

Others present: David Berkey, Madeline Sheldon, Karen Bosch Cobb, Elida Mendoza, Jill Moffat, Chris Johnson, Sharon Hiigel

AGENDA ITEMS

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Randy McFarland.
2. Adoption of Agenda: The agenda was approved with the order of the items moved to accommodate guests who had to leave early.
3. Comments from the Public: None.
4. Approval of Minutes of November 15, 2007: The minutes were approved with two corrections. Under 9. Landmarks a) 3) – The last sentence should read “Mr. Johnson is the architect who restored the *Santa Fe* train station.” Under 7. Centennial Farms, the third bullet should read: “Thompson grapes *and* Washington navel oranges ~~and almonds~~ were grown on the farm “
5. California History & Genealogy Room Acquisitions: Mr. Bill Secret Jr. shared some of the 550 photos recently acquired by the California History Room. He described them as “positive and negative” photos of the San Joaquin and Eastern Railroad (S, J & E). Some of the photos have never been seen before. The railroad provided service to hydro electric projects in Big Creek. He also brought a stock certificate for 10 shares made out to Henry E. Huntington dated 1916.

Mrs. Bosch Cobb announced that a book by Mr. Secret, Greetings from Fresno, California: Vintage Postcards from the California Heartland was just released by the publisher.

6. Records – None.
7. Landmarks
 - a) Inventory of Historic Sites in Fresno County
 - 1) Suggestions for other applications

a) Arco Garage: Commissioners received new information to add to the application. Commissioner Pappas added a statement based on a discussion with her father who operated the garage. He recalled the social interactions that occurred among the business owners in the area on a daily basis, and the Commissioners commented that a note about social importance would strengthen the application.

The Fresno City and County Historical Society is in the process of transferring ownership of the garage to Mr. Chris Johnson and Mr. Bruce Owdom who are partners in this project. When the property is sold the Society will retain ownership of the façade, that way even if it changes owners in the future the façade will be protected. Mr. Johnson's architectural firm specializes in historic preservation. Their plans are to keep part of the garage open for parking, and they are also going to look at making it more economically feasible by adding offices and retail business on the ground level. Mr. Johnson outlined some of the structural repairs that need to be made to the building. Some of the building's original exterior light fixtures were found at the Fairgrounds and plans are to put them back up on the building. City and county officials, the Historical Society and this Commission will be kept informed of the project's progress.

The application will be forwarded to the Historical Society, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Owdom for their review and approval, and it will be placed back on the agenda in March.

Ms. Moffat announced the development of a new website www.valleypreservation.com Ms. Lauren McDonald is working on the content for the website. Vice-Chairman Roger Taylor is on the website committee, and he said he sees the website as a resource for all preservation organizations. Ms. Moffat added that it will be a place where people can go to look at multiple points of view related to preservation and to see what other groups are doing.

2) Applications Under Review

a) Gefvert Residence: In January the Commission reviewed an application submitted by Mrs. Madeline Sheldon to place the Gefvert residence on the County's List of Historic Places. At that meeting Commissioners agreed that the residence is historically significant, but they recommended that Mrs. Sheldon submit a separate application for the farm operation. The application to place the Gefvert Ranch on the list of Centennial Farms was submitted and reviewed by the Commission. Mrs. Sheldon is concerned that the Highway 180 project will split the property. During discussion it was noted that having both designations may require an agency to do an environmental assessment if the property is being considered for demolition or alteration, but it would still not totally protect the property.

Commissioner Taylor had difficulty identifying the style of the house as it no longer has the original roof. The original roof of wood shingles was replaced by formed metal that looks like clay tile, but the roof line was unchanged. Mr. Taylor will ask Mr. Jim Oakes for his opinion about the style. (Subsequently, Mr. Taylor did further research found that the style of the house is known as Folk Victorian. The elements defining the style include roof shape, wood siding, front porch with railing, and window arrangement.)

It was moved by Commissioner Olson, seconded by Commissioner Barile and carried to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the Gefvert Residence be

placed on the County's List of Historic Places with an addendum that Mr. Taylor contact Mr. Oakes to get a definition about the architectural style of the house.

After reviewing the application for the ranch, it was moved by Commissioner Olson, seconded by Commissioner Barile and carried to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the Gefvert Ranch be placed on the County's List of Historic Places with the addendum that Mr. Taylor contact Mr. Oakes to get a definition about the architectural style of the house.

b) Velasco House: Mrs. Bosch Cobb reminded the Commission that when they approved sending this application to the Board of Supervisors they asked that more work be done to strengthen the historical significance section. Mr. Secrest did some research and some of the information he found has raised questions about the historical significance of this property. Mr. Barile and Mr. McFarland will meet with Mr. Secrest to review this information, and a recommendation will be brought back to the Commission for further consideration.

c) Hall of Records: Work is continuing on this application. The photographs were redone to meet the state's requirements, and Mr. John Powell has been working on enhancing the narrative portion of the document. The County Public Works Department is working on drawing up a map of the boundaries.

- b) Centennial Farms – See 5 a) 2) a) above.
 - c) Centennial Businesses – None.
 - d) Courthouse Park grounds/markers/memorials and sculptures – None.
 - e) Discussion of threatened buildings in the City of Fresno – Commissioner Taylor mentioned there are five houses in the Armenian Town area that are on blocks. He heard they might be moved from their original site. Commissioner Bos said the owners of the Basque Hotel on F and Mariposa Streets are still concerned about eminent domain. Other buildings mentioned were the fire station on Fresno Street and three houses in the 1700 block of “L” Street.
 - f) Discussion of threatened buildings in the County of Fresno – Mr. Taylor said that tank houses in existence east of Clovis are in danger of being wiped out as new subdivisions are developed.
8. Report from subcommittee to consider establishing a Centennial Cities or Communities Component: Commissioner Pappas has been the primary person working on this project with the assistance of Commissioner McFarland and Mrs. Bosch Cobb. Commissioner's reviewed the list and some corrections and changes were made as people remembered other names some communities were known by. There is solid evidence that these communities are 100 years old. More work will be done to the list and it will be brought back to the Commission for further review. Commissioner Taylor said information about some of these cities/communities

can be found in the Fresno County Centennial Book (1956). Karen Bosch Cobb was asked to revise the certificates for all four programs.

9. Reports and Administrative Action Items

a) Chairman's report

1) Field Trips

a) Fresno County – Commissioner Baltierra and Mrs. Bosch Cobb are organizing a trip to the Firebaugh area, and they distributed a draft itinerary. During the discussion, the Commission set March 8 as the date for this trip. Details will be finalized. There was discussion about assembling at Chandler Airport at 8:45 a.m. and leaving at 9 a.m. Mrs. Bosch Cobb and Mr. Baltierra will continued to work on the details, and information will be distributed once the plans are finalized.

b) Leland Stanford Museum: Commissioners agreed to schedule this trip on Thursday, February 21 leaving Fresno at 8 a.m. Commissioner Raven is finalizing the itinerary.

b) Vice-Chairman's Report: Commissioner Taylor announced the Vernacular Architecture Forum will be held in Fresno May 7 to 10. One of the local places this group is interested in is the Forestiere Underground Gardens which will be available for them to tour.

c) Secretary's Report:

1) Status of Vacancies

Mr. David Berkey's application was forwarded to the County Counsel's office to determine if he is eligible to serve on the Commission since he lives in Fresno County, but his legal residence is in San Mateo County. He is an assistant professor at CSU Fresno. It was moved by Commissioner Barile, seconded by Commissioner Baltierra, and carried to recommend Mr. Berkey's appointment pending a favorable recommendation from the County Counsel's office.

Ms. Elizabeth Laval also submitted an application to the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors. It was moved by Commissioner Raven, seconded by Commissioner Ganulin and carried to recommend Ms. Laval for appointment to the Commission.

Ms. Sharon Hiigel is also interested in serving on the Commission. Mrs. Bosch Cobb said she raised a question about whether the Historical Society had a special position on the Commission.

Chairman McFarland explained the previous practice where representation on the Commission was composed of members of various historic organizations, but the bylaws were changed because the Commission was having trouble filling vacancies. Ms. Hiigel will follow up with submitting an application.

Mrs. Bosch Cobb explained the procedure for requesting a waiver of absences under the County Ordinance Code. Commissioner Olson sent a waiver request to the Board of Supervisors, and he is waiting for the Board to take action on his request.

d) Commissioners' Reports:

Commissioner Raven is still working on gathering information to place the first Bonadelle house on the County's List of Historic Places. She shared some information about her conversation with Mrs. Bonadelle. She also mentioned an article she wrote for Fresno Magazine about a house in Old Fig Garden.

Commissioner Kus briefly reported on a December Archeological Society program about an archeological site north of Coalinga in Joaquin Rocks. A field trip to that area will be scheduled sometime in the future. Mike Moratto is going to do a talk in February on climate change in the Sierra. Dr. Kus also announced the Peru tours scheduled in May and June.

10. Announcements

The next meeting will be held on March 13. The date was changed because of Easter. The location will depend on meeting room availability. Commissioners want to go to Sanger or Selma in the spring.