

640
HERITAGE PRESERVATION
FOUNDATION
The Power of Preservation

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THE 640 REPORT



How 640 Sutter Street came to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places

On November 30, 2004, the 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation sponsored a gala “plaque unveiling” celebration at 640 Sutter Street. The reception took place in the elegant and historic main dining room with tours of the building offered throughout the evening. It was attended by City Supervisor Aaron Peskin, the Executive Director of San Francisco Heritage, the Director of the Western Office of the National Trust, members of the State Historic Resources Commission and San Francisco’s Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, other city officials and local preservationists, as well as members of the Metropolitan Club, successor to the Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco. Emilie Plake, beloved past president of the Metropolitan Club, did the actual unveiling and the plaque was then taken to the street and permanently affixed to the façade.



That same day, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors extended “its highest commendation to the [Metropolitan] Club for its example of Stewardship” and declared November 30, 2004, to be Metropolitan Club Day in San Francisco.

Today, the celebrated plaque is on view to all who walk along Sutter Street, noting 640 as the site of the first woman’s athletic club in the Western United States, founded in 1915.

What were the steps that led to this prestigious nomination?

The 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation had been incorporated in January 2004 in the State of California with the specific charitable and educational purpose of researching the heritage of the woman’s athletic club movement and the particular history of the Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco and providing opportunities for public education about this important piece of women’s history. From the beginning, the Foundation’s mission was grounded in the firm belief (1) that preserving an historic resource of the caliber of 640 Sutter Street is an important public benefit and (2) that the story of how and why the first woman’s athletic club west of the Mississippi came to be, and its role in the influential women’s club movement of the early 20th century, is a story worth sharing.

The incorporation documents named well-known preservation architect Alice Ross Carey, past Metropolitan Club president Olga Dollar and community preservationist Carol Ann Rogers as the founding directors and officers. The Foundation held its first Board meeting on January 28, 2004. Rogers was elected President, Dollar, Vice President, and Carey, Treasurer and Secretary.

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A Message from the President

The women who conceived of and built 640 Sutter Street were inspired and they were the very essence of volunteerism—the practice of giving one’s time or talents for charitable, educational, or other worthwhile activities, especially in one’s community. Many of us start volunteering before we even know what it is called whether it be through church or school or a neighborhood project. We accomplish something together, we make lifelong friends and we hope we contribute to the greater happiness of the world.

Beginning with the initial idea of the 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation in 2002, volunteers have been the very bedrock of our work. Many hours were spent talking about the value, organization and details of starting such an organization. Over the years, countless hours have been devoted to planning and producing highly successful celebratory events that raised significant funds for the preservation of 640 Sutter. We could not thrive without the dedication of board members who tackle issues of governance, long-range planning and continued relevance of the Foundation.

This past year, the Foundation greatly benefitted from an engaged and thoughtful board of directors and the leadership of Gee Gee Platt in producing the 5th Alice Ross Carey Memorial Lecture (see article and pictures page 5). In February, a packed room of women learned about key financial and medical planning documents, thanks to the efforts of Helene Ettelson. We hope you will join us again on February 26, 2019, for another Wine, Women and Financial Wisdom program.

Preservation is a long-term process. It does not happen one time and there are many ways of preserving interest of our heritage. In the foreseeable future, the Foundation will focus on research and education of the public, continuing activities and programs about the historical legacy of women’s athletic clubs in San Francisco, the architecture of 640 Sutter Street and financial planning issues of importance to women.

The Foundation’s 640 Fund will support these activities exclusively in 2019 and no funds will be expended or granted for preservation projects at 640 Sutter. Please do consider making a gift as you consider your year-end charitable donations. You can give online at <https://640hpf.org/giving/ways-to-give/> or mail your check or credit card information to us at our office.

I also hope to see you at our programs in 2019 as we continue to be inspired by the early women volunteers who established this building for the benefit of so many

Barbara Kimport



The mission of the 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation is to preserve and celebrate the history, architecture, and heritage of women’s athletic clubs in San Francisco, with particular reference to the Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, now known as the Metropolitan Club, through research, public education and funding activities.

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Priorities Moving Forward

Research and education of the public will be the primary focus in 2019, continuing vital activities and programs about the historical legacy of women's athletic clubs in San Francisco in particular, the architecture of 640 Sutter Street, and financial and medical planning issues of importance to women. Specifically, this will include:

- the Alice Ross Carey Memorial Lectures, in partnership with San Francisco Heritage, covering a variety of historical topics relating to the architecture of 640 Sutter Street and the early 20th Century era when the building was designed and built;
- Wine, Women & Financial Wisdom programs covering critical financial, legal and medical planning issues;
- grants for a comprehensive research and writing project about Bliss & Faville, the architects of 640 Sutter Street and numerous residences and commercial buildings in Northern California. This project is expected to result in an academically published manuscript in the near future.

These activities are firmly within our mission to preserve and celebrate the history, architecture, and heritage of women's athletic clubs, with particular reference to the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, now known as the Metropolitan Club, through research, public education and funding activities.



For YOU and Your Favorite Cause

Long-time Foundation supporter Donna Krupp extolls the advantages of Charitable Gift Annuities! What are they? As explained by Fidelity Charitable, “as a donor, you make a sizable gift to charity using cash, securities or possibly other assets. In return, you become eligible to take a partial tax deduction for your donation, plus you receive a fixed stream of income from the charity for the rest of your life.” At the end of your life, the charity receives the remainder of the gift.

Universities and medical organizations have been offering charitable gift annuities for years. Now financial institutions and community foundations are also offering them with donors having the opportunity to designate a specific charitable beneficiary that does not offer this option.

The income paid to you varies depending on the age at which you make the charitable gift and the interest rates are published periodically by the American Council on Gift Annuities. For example, the rates in effect as of July 1, 2018, are as follows:

Rate, effective 7/1/18	
Age 60	4.7%
Age 70	5.6%
Age 80	7.3%
Age 90	9.5%

A charitable gift annuity is a legal contract. Please be sure to check with your financial advisor and legal counsel for exact details and information.

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National Register of Historic Places, cont'd.

cont'd. from page 1

They then quickly moved to preparation of the National Register nomination.

Prominent architectural historian Michael Corbett was engaged to conduct the necessary research and to write the nomination documents. A review of San Francisco's inventory and ratings of historic buildings quickly verified that an historic resource worthy of nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) was present at 640 Sutter Street for at least its architectural significance. Corbett recommended that it might also qualify for one of the other potential listing criteria under its social history as the first women's athletic club west of the Mississippi. The Foundation authorized the additional research needed to nominate the Woman's Athletic Club under this additional criterion.

Once written, the nomination needed local and state approvals. First stop was the San Francisco's Landmarks Board (now the Historic Preservation Commission) that not only approved the nomination but voted to add to the staff's recommended wording that they 'applauded' our inclusion of the social heritage and history of the Club, as well as the architecture, and that our actions were an outstanding example of good stewardship. Foundation Director Alice Ross Carey was well-known to the Board and her presence at the

hearing helped ensure success. With local approval in hand, the Foundation moved forward to secure state approval.

"It was my great privilege to attend the April 21, 2004 meeting of the California State Historic Resources Commission where one of the commissioners singled out our nomination as 'one of the most beautifully written and researched nominations' she had ever seen," recalls Rogers. "She went on to say that it was an example of what a nomination should look like, and hoped that she would one day see it in print [other than on the government nomination forms]. The excellent research was done by historian Michael Corbett [whom the Foundation had] engaged to prepare the National Register nomination describes a rich and proud history and is full of wonderful anecdotes."

In September, the Foundation received word that the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco nomination had been signed by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places on September 17, 2004. In early 2005, the Foundation learned that the Woman's Athletic Club would be featured on the NRHP website that March to celebrate women's history month.

You can view the listing online at <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/wom/2005/club.htm>

THE ALICE ROSS CAREY
MEMORIAL LECTURE



San Francisco Heritage Executive Director Mike Buhler & author Denise Clifton.

Right after the 1906 Earthquake, the head of the local American Red Cross chapter called on restauranteurs, chefs and cooks to open whatever they could to start feeding San Franciscans. Because the American Red Cross had a commissary, before anyone knew it, chefs were making sandwiches and offering coffee in lean-tos and shacks in Golden Gate Park. Over the next ten years, restaurants we still know and love, like Swan Oyster Depot, Liguria Bakery and the Comstock Saloon, bounced back with energy to reestablish San Francisco's restaurant prominence. On September 21st, the 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation co-sponsored the fifth Alice Ross Carey Memorial Lecture with San Francisco Heritage. It featured author Denise Clifton discussing this rich culinary and cultural history and her book, *Tables from the Rubble: How the Restaurants That Arose After the Great Quake of 1906 Still Feed San Francisco Today*.



640 Heritage Preservation Foundation Board President Barbara Kimport, San Francisco Heritage Executive Director Mike Buhler, Event Chair Gee Gee Platt & Bill Sugaya.



Laurence Kornfield, Catherine Bauman, Roy Leggitt & Courtney S. Clarkson.



Vicki Koenig, Ken Monk, Bill Diefenbach, & 640 Foundation Director Misty Tyree.



640 Foundation Director Carol Ann Rogers, Courtney Damkroger, David Kimport, Barbara Kimport, Mike Buhler, Denise Clifton & Nielsen Rogers.



Paul Arrighi, Crista Lucey, J.R. Neurge & Barbara Johnson.

The Women's Club Movement and its Historic Buildings

If you grew up in the United States, it is likely that your city or town included a building that housed a women's club. And it is also likely it was built during the first two decades of the 20th century. In most cases, these structures were residential in style, but in some of the larger cities, including the Women's Athletic Clubs of Chicago and San Francisco, they were prominently placed in the heart of the cities' business districts and purposely designed to be grand in scale.

The Beginning of the Women's Club Movement

According to historian Michael Corbett, author of the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, the women's movement was begun in the 1860s and 1870s by women who had been active in social causes such as better education, women's rights, human rights, and emancipation. In her book, *The History of the Woman's Movement in America* (1898), Jane C. Croly predicted, "When the history of the nineteenth century comes to be written, women will appear as organizers and leaders of great organized movements among their own sex for the first time in history."

The strength of the movement continued to grow into the 1930s. Eventually, there were thousands of women's clubs and millions of members. In their 1942 *Handbook for Clubwomen*, Irene and Winthrop Munro put the figure at well over three million.

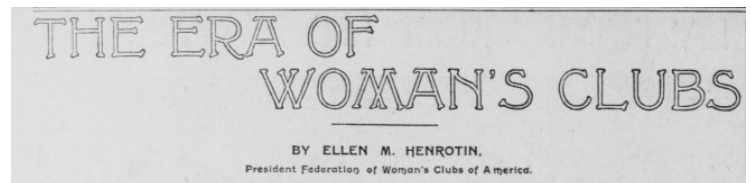
In 1925, Alice Ames Winter wrote *The Business of Being a Club Woman* in which she shared her thoughts about the impetus for the women's club movement. "Clubs come into being because from a group something comes into our lives greater than anyone can get alone, that something that blends companionship, friendship, the wisdom that comes from many minds rubbing against each other, the inspiration that springs from such contact of mind with mind, and the efficiency that results from the combined effort."

She goes on: "We want communities that are extensions of the home, where we shall be friends with each other, we people of all races and creeds" working toward such things as good schools, public health, recreation, and beauty. "There is no community so small that it cannot realize these ambitions. And when you put them in your

hometown, you have helped make your nation one hundred percent American."

The first woman's club in the United States is generally agreed to have been the New England Woman's Club in Boston, founded in 1868 (although the Sorosis Club of New York was founded the same year) by Caroline Severance, Harriet Hanson Robinson and Julia Ward Howe, all suffragists. Severance went on to found the Friday Morning Club of Los Angeles and has been given the title of "Mother of Clubs" by many biographers. The purpose of the New England Woman's Club was to "provide a suitable place of meeting in Boston for the convenience of its members, and to promote social enjoyment and general improvement." Activities included frequent lectures by both members and invited speakers. San Francisco's Century Club, for example, required its members to attend study groups and present papers. It also allowed itself to engage in "reform" by a majority vote, under which provision it provided the leadership and funding for the 1888 school board campaign in which three Club members were candidates.

Women's Clubhouses



Article by Ellen M. Henrotin, President of the Federation of Woman's Clubs of America. (1897, December 19). *The San Francisco Call*, p. 22. Retrieved from chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

In the 1890s, Club women began building their own buildings. An article in Harper's Bazaar reported 70 women's clubhouses in the U.S., including 11 in California, according to author Gayle Gullett.

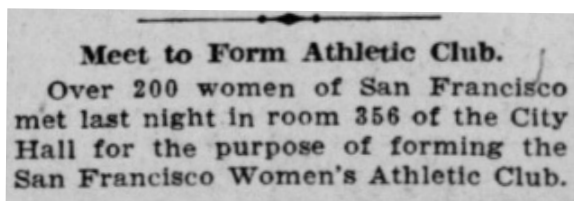
Gullett's book *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-1911*, explains, "The women's clubhouses provided a protected interior social space that facilitated the objectives of its members, whether study, reform, sociability, or all three. Clubhouses also represented much more. . . Club members proudly emphasized that the clubhouses demonstrated women's business acumen; the cost of the buildings underlined that they exercised their financial skills in an environment of wealth. The buildings were expensive because the women used them to make an aesthetic statement – the buildings were what would be ex-

cont'd. on page 7

The Women's Club Movement, cont'd.

pected of ladies of culture – and because they provided spaces for libraries, auditoriums, meeting rooms, and banquet halls, places of women's work.”

Women's Clubs in San Francisco



Notice. (1905, January 15). *The San Francisco Call*, p. 36.
Retrieved from chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

Women's clubs began to appear in San Francisco in 1885. The Century Club (1888), The Town and Country Club (1893), the California Club (1897), the Francisca Club (1903) and the Woman's Athletic Club (1915 – now the Metropolitan Club) remain today with their own buildings. The last major women's club to be built before World War II was the San Francisco Women's Building (1927 – now the Marines' Memorial Club, (609 Sutter Street.) When it opened, the latter was described as “a civic center for women” and was not so much a single club as a center for clubs and clubwomen (Corbett.)

These San Francisco clubs had various purposes. The Century Club (located at 1355 Franklin Street) had the “vision of uniting professional and upper-class women and training them to serve as patrician leaders in community betterment,” according to Gayle Gullett (*Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of California's Women's Movement*.) The Town and Country Club (218 Stockton

Street) began as the Woman's Book Club but was predominantly a social club. The Francisca Club (595 Sutter) was also primarily a social club. The California Club (1750 Clay Street) was an active suffragist organization and featured a Civic Department, Social Science Department, Educational Department, and the Outdoor Art League.

Women's Clubs Achieve Historic Designation

The Woman's Athletic Club of Chicago was the model and inspiration for the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco. Both offered the large range of athletic and sports activities common to the men's athletic clubs of the day. The Chicago club was named a local landmark in 1991.

Over the years, many of women's club buildings have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. About 120 NRHP-listed women's club buildings are included on a Wikipedia list from Arizona to Wyoming to New York. If you are interested in looking up a specific NRHP-listed building, here is the link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_women%27s_club_buildings

With the growing recognition of the importance of the women's club movement, a number of architecturally and socially significant women's club buildings are benefitting from the creation of charitable foundations whose missions are to preserve for public benefit these worthy historic resources. The 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation is one of these.

by Carol Ann Rogers

Tribute Program: January 2018 to October 2018

In memory of Dr. Margaret “Peg” Kaplan

Virginia Formichi
Lynn Thompson

In honor of Gee Gee Platt
Carol Ann Rogers

In honor of Marie Berggren
Ruthann Conway

In memory of Patricia Caspersen
Eve Wertsch

In honor of Barbara Kimport
Carol Ann Rogers

In memory of Ruth Hale Roe
Molly Brant

In memory of Ruth Diefenbach
Eve Wertsch

In honor of Donna Krupp
Carol Ann Rogers

In honor of Camilla Smith
Carol Ann Rogers

In honor of Virginia Formichi
Carol Ann Rogers

In honor of Miss Lucy Li's Birthday
Helene Ettelson

In memory of Lee Tyree
Lynn Thompson

In memory of Dean Johnson
Lynn Thompson

In honor of Gladys K. Mitchell
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Checks should be made payable and mailed to 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation.