Mirages Solidified: Myth, Beautification, and Tourism in the Creation of Santa Barbara's *El*
Pueblo Viejo Landmark District

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ABSTRACT

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A number of books and articles have been written on the social movement to reimagine Southern California's past in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While many of the pageants, parades, and public displays that defined this regional movement now reside in the pages of history, some architectural examples from this period are still visible today. In many cities, these examples are scattered throughout the community; while in others like Santa Barbara, they represent the centerpiece of the city's architectural distinctiveness.

Santa Barbara's architecture challenges urban scholars to successfully garner an accurate sense of the past. More importantly, such historic spaces divert attention away from the social efforts that led to their inception. This thesis charts the history of Santa Barbara's architectural reinvention and how the stylistic proliferation influenced the way various generations would think about the city's past. The renaissance in a uniform Spanish style not only inspired local beautification efforts but also historic preservation, which ultimately resulted in the creation of the *El Pueblo Viejo* Landmark District in 1960. Additionally, this narrative critically examines the area's history prior to the district's establishment to show how economic profitability guided city planning, beautification, tourism, and preservation toward the ultimate solidification of the town's Spanish image.

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TERMINOLOGY:

This thesis utilizes certain terminology that requires some background explanation.

PSEUDO-SPANISH: An initial dilemma with Santa Barbara's architecture is that in *El Pueblo Viejo* new buildings are carefully blended with old ones to create a seamless effect. The term Pseudo-Spanish used here then, refers to buildings built to mimic structures that would have existed, should have existed, or have been the inspiration of Spanish buildings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Architecturally speaking, there are many styles from several periods that make up *El Pueblo Viejo*'s architecture. For example, some structures are considered Mission Revival while others are quintessentially from the Spanish Colonial Revival, some are labeled Moorish, or Andalusian, etc. The subtlety of these styles is not my focus; yet I am interested in how these styles work together to coordinate an overall theme or idea. These structures should be differentiated from the Mission de Santa Barbara and the handful of historic adobes near the Presidio.

ANGLOS, CALIFORNIOS, AND MEXICANS: Cultural terms like these litter historical accounts, yet seemingly slip away throughout twentieth century. They are used here to express generalized concepts of change. However, after the 1920s these terms evaporate significantly from nearly all literature except that which pertains to pre-twentieth century local history. Beginning in the early twentieth century and beyond, a broader concept like *Spanish Heritage* obscured the aforementioned terms and reformulated cultural differentiation into a more mythically idealized order. Although these terms are inherently obsolete, each requires explanation because they establish difference between specific groups and provide a basis for

cultural interactions. The influx of East Coast Americans signaled an increase in distinctions that remained prevalent in local vernacular for decades to come. First, Anglos are often those of European descent that usually came to Santa Barbara from other areas of the United States. Some are wealthy, others are not, but regardless they are often lumped together in a cultural category that comprises an upper level of the local social hierarchy.

Next is a group called Californios, sometimes referred to as Santa Barbareños, or simply Barbareños. These are interchangeable terms used to differentiate long-term local Hispanic residents from the newly arrived. This group of people is still revered today with some people claiming their 7th, 8th, or 9th generation Santa Barbaran status. This group often has a traceable lineage or relation to the prominent Presidio families encountered by Richard Henry Dana in 1836. Anglos applied Californios with a higher cultural status because they were viewed as the direct descendants of Spain. During the twentieth century, local societies like The Native Sons of the Golden West and The Native Daughters of The Golden West have taken pride in this native Santa Barbaran distinction.

Mexicans on the other hand were viewed much differently than Californios, and were given a lower social status to the degree Mexican or Mexican-Americans became marginalized as second-class citizens. They were differentiated by Anglos as those who were newly arrived from Mexico, lacked Californio cultural pedigree, or were financially destitute laborers. However, these cultural signifiers softened significantly over time, especially with the evolution of the city's annual Fiesta Days celebration that began in 1924. The Fiesta represented a semi-carnival situation; instead of complete role reversals, locals and tourists found ways to include themselves and revel in a mythical Spanish celebration. As modern America touched Southern California, the Spanish-inspired architecture of the 1920s provided a backdrop for the festivities;

and over time the concept of a Spanish past became a nebulous theme where Anglos, Californios, and Mexicans all found a place of privilege.

HISTORIC DISTRICT/LANDMARK DISTRICT: At times throughout the thesis the terms historic district and landmark district are used somewhat interchangeably. *El Pueblo Viejo* was established in 1960, primarily to acknowledge the history and architectural significance of structures around the Presidio. The district later expanded to include areas of architectural significance that aesthetically matched with original structures, yet were not inherently *historic* under the guidelines of the 1966 Preservation Act. The district grew to accommodate State Street (the city's main financial artery) and much of the downtown area all the way to the waterfront. Technically, *El Pueblo Viejo* is considered a Landmark District and not a Historic District because it does not qualify for Historic status under the guidelines outlined by the U.S. Department of Interior. However, various structures in the district are recognized as historic by both the State and Federal Governments. So technically, after the district was expanded in the late 1960s and beyond, it was properly renamed and recognized both on the State and Federal levels. The initial intent of the district was preservation of historic structures, which falls in line with many historic preservation movements throughout the United States.

INTRODUCTION

Every summer, the city of Santa Barbara celebrates its most famous event known as Fiesta Days, or Old Spanish Days. A local tradition, the parade and festivities occur proudly amidst an architectural backdrop that quietly reinforces the city's distinguished lineage of Spanish Dons and extended celebrations. The days of revelry occur in an area of town known as *El Pueblo Viejo* or "Old Town." Although Old Spanish Days lasts less than one week, Spanish lore and exotic ambiance remain attached to the cityscape year round. Amid white walls and red tile roofs, Santa Barbara's *El Pueblo Viejo* Landmark District evokes a history far different from the recent past the buildings actually endured. Many of the downtown structures offer the prevalence of a regional style popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, yet stand as complex interpretations of architecture that could have existed when the area was still a Spanish territory. The buildings express tensions evident of the mythical history common to other instances of California regionalism, yet contrast the pluralism of the modern American city. This means that downtown Santa Barbara appears homogeneously exotic, yet comfortably familiar; and perceivably historic in the midst of modern commercialism found in environs outside the district.

A temptation exists for visitors as well as historians to accept the structures contained therein as they currently stand; the presentation of a generalized history without key circumstances that account for their presence. If we think of the district's buildings in terms of a narrative formula, such structures offer conclusions to the present, and quite possibly a basic introduction; yet lack a significant amount of *plot* or *characters*. The historical friction that *El Pueblo Viejo* presents against the contours of the present begs critical inquiry into the saga of such a place.

Anachronistic Tension: Santa Barbara's Spanish Architecture. Photo by Michael Orth.

This thesis charts how *El Pueblo Viejo* is a product of social pressures; where myth, beautification, and economics all played key roles in the reformulation of Santa Barbara's Old Town. The architecture of a given place can tell a great deal about the processes that lead to its inception. Indeed, the famous architect Le Corbusier once wrote a city's architecture was its most revealing document.¹ Although *El Pueblo Viejo*'s architecture alludes toward a historical narrative bolstered by the perception of a rich Spanish past, it reveals very little about its own "history" and why the place appears to us as it does. As a result, critically framing the area's

¹ Le Corbusier, *Looking at City Planning*, Trans. Eleanor Levieux (New York: Grossman Publishers 1971), 77.

architectural history to include the *El Pueblo Viejo* Landmark District requires a timeline that extends beyond Santa Barbara's architectural zenith of the 1920s.

This narrative of *El Pueblo Viejo* incorporates literature from three distinct avenues: local, regional, and preservationist sources. Local literature is primary or secondary material specific to Santa Barbara, while regional literature includes materials that may or may not specifically cite Santa Barbara, but focus on larger themes, trends, and attitudes relevant to Southern California. Broader yet, preservationist literature, uses basic historic preservation theory and discourse to illuminate common obstacles and criticisms associated with the protection of historic architecture.

First, local literature presents three distinct challenges to crafting a successful narrative of *El Pueblo Viejo*. The first is the limited amount of research on the topic itself. Outside of David Gebhard's *Santa Barbara- The Creation of a New Spain in America*, or his limited introduction in Rebecca Conrad's *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, secondary literature critically examining a history of downtown Santa Barbara beyond 1930 is rather sparse. Gebhard's research on buildings and architects offers an excellent resource that manages gaps in certain primary sources such as newspaper articles, yet exposes critical voids in the role economics and legal measures played in the look of the town. However, David Gebhard's expertise on the area's architecture casts a long shadow not only on the progression of this narrative, but over many other secondary sources used in this piece. In his book, *Santa Barbara: The Creation of a New Spain in America*, Gebhard downplays local legislative involvement and the role revenue played in the city's architectural proliferation. He successfully accounts for the city's reaction to modern architecture, but his evidence leads toward a different conclusion than what I advocate here. Gebhard writes, "When the gradual decline in adherence to the ideology

and visual forms of the Modern [occurred] at the end of the 1960s, Santa Barbara simply let the pendulum swing back to the traditional imagery which had been utilized in the twenties and thirties.”² This thesis charts social agency associated with Santa Barbara’s architecture and contrasts Gebhard’s premise, that the return to Spanish architecture in downtown Santa Barbara was simply the end of a pro-modernist fad. While Gebhard’s evidence seemingly substantiates his conclusion, such a claim discounts efforts of key local figures such as Pearl Chase and W. Edwin Gledhill, who made it a mission to construct and retain the community’s visual character. More importantly his idea negates a deeper economic current that has been inherently tied to the architecture since the end of the nineteenth century.

The second obstacle local literature presents to scholarly inquiry is the inherent perception that architectural history is limited in its scope. In many instances architectural history focuses on beautification without asking why such a process occurred, or strictly focuses on buildings as the effort of architects without substantial historical context. Indeed, the most researched period pertaining to Santa Barbara’s Spanish-styled architecture is the decade of the 1920s. This time span offered not only the most sweeping architectural changes during the height of the Spanish Colonial Revival, but also as the specifics of rebuilding after the local 1925 earthquake. While a lesser degree of research focuses on the area’s architecture prior to the 1920s, it is sparser yet in the decades after. Although a significant amount of primary material exists to formulate a narrative of the post-1920s period, there is a substantial void in secondary material to explain how Santa Barbara’s civic image fared from the 1930s to the 1960s. Initially, one might be tempted to posit the theory that nothing changed in the decades after the 1920s,

² David Gebhard, *Santa Barbara: The Creation of a New Spain in America* (Santa Barbara: University Art Museum, 1982), 27.

hence the lack of architectural research on the area after 1930. However, one question that critically undermines this advance is why would protective legislation be needed to ensure the architectural continuity of the town? Does legislative protection infer change in community sentiment or reveal avenues of social conflict? If one approaches architecture in this way, a current of historical inquiry beyond beautification and architectural specifics slowly emerges.

The third challenge of local literature is that texts pertaining to the history of architectural creation and preservation are presented as static occurrences, rather than dynamic ones. What this means is that the history of the local architecture is often portrayed merely as an action; certain architects designed certain buildings commissioned for whomever, which is why these structures are here or there. Such information can be found in historical documents commissioned by or for the City of Santa Barbara and offers a basic, albeit sanitized, history of the area's architecture. Local histories often overlook or downplay social agency, which is problematic because people beyond the architect possess the capacity to directly influence the city. Architectural history must account for how such spaces signify larger systems of stimulus. One task for this project was to assemble various primary sources that illuminate the social agency not perceived to be present. Moving forward, it is also important to realize that preservationist law and architecture are two things that do not occur in a vacuum; they are in fact dynamic. The *El Pueblo Viejo* legislation was not merely a social action, but a reaction that occurred because of something else. The reaction stemmed from local, regional, and national events that redirected ideas or influence back to Santa Barbara.

When architectural implementation in Santa Barbara is portrayed as dynamic, it is usually associated with the rebuilding efforts that followed the local 1925 earthquake. Several local history essays used in this thesis, as well as an article by Larry Meyer titled, "A Concrete Plan:

Santa Barbara Takes a Natural Opportunity to Perform a Major Face-Lift,” subscribe to this notion. While the earthquake was a time of intense architectural transformation in Santa Barbara, the foundation of such an architectural style occurred years earlier as a part of much more deeply-seated community movement.

Another avenue of literature highlights the idea that interest in Spanish themes was a regional reaction to an idealized, national perception of Southern California. In turn, Santa Barbara dealt with the regional reaction differently and at different times than other California cities. However, one must also be wary of certain dynamic explanations for the area’s architecture. For example the article, “Building California’s Past: Mission Revival Architecture and Regional Identity,” by Roberto Lint Sagarena offers excellent background to explain Santa Barbara’s architectural proliferation in the 1920s. Sagarena approaches Santa Barbara’s architecture and culture from the standpoint that Anglos reinterpreted the environment as a means to deemphasize the Catholic prevalence of such forms and then slowly re-equated them with a Protestant ethos. His research ties regional sentiments and effectively incorporates them with local events. Sagarena’s argument is quite compelling, yet for a broader explanation of the area’s architecture the idea of religious subversion as a driving force for social reformulation seems to unravel after the end of the 1920s. While on one hand, religion may have played a large role in the reformulation of Santa Barbara’s social class and their sentiments toward architecture, it is not a sustainable theme to explain the look of the town beyond that time.

Regional literature on Spanish architecture throughout the Golden State is also critical to understanding how Santa Barbara’s architectural movement compared or contrasted to other cities in Southern California. Kevin Starr, the foremost California historian who has devoted his entire scholarly career to exhaustive research of California, mentions Santa Barbara a few times

in his expansively themed books. In *Material Dreams, Southern California Through The 1920s*, Starr ties Santa Barbara's Hispanicizing in with his overall theme of design and creation that inevitably lead to historical reinterpretation in Southern California. Although his chapter on Santa Barbara ends during the period of 1920s, he shows how Santa Barbara's aestheticizing during that time was both indicative of a larger trend, but in its own way unique. While regionally focused texts, like Phoebe Kropp's *California Vieja* and William Deverell's *Whitewashed Adobe*, do not specifically cite Santa Barbara, they focus on larger regional sentiments for how cultural subversion, Anglo interpretation of Spanish California, and subsequent boosterism impacted California's architecture by altering the perceptions of the region's history.

These themes are also evident to an extent in Santa Barbara. For example, while some research on Santa Barbara's Presidio area engages the topics of the local Chinese and Japanese communities, the most extensive work on how the Anglo reinterpretation subsequently impacted non-Anglos can be found in Albert Camarillo's book on the local Mexican-American population titled, *Chicanos in a Changing Society, From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930*. In the book, Camarillo charts the denigration of Mexican-Americans and how they became marginalized in the midst of rapid change. Although his book raises excellent points such as cultural visibility and the reformulation of the past, he ends his narrative with the repatriation of Chicanos (many of whom were American citizens) back to Mexico. His conclusion signals comparisons to other communities, but also contrasts Chicano unrest in places like Los Angeles' Olvera Street. The point where he concludes infers a social resolution and the end of such a tension. Culturally speaking, the Chicano, Chinese, and Japanese communities were not completely dispatched from the area and reincorporated into the

environs over time. However, the architectural presence of these groups was all but eliminated in *El Pueblo Viejo*. Japanese architecture no longer exists around the Presidio, and the only remaining Chinese-inspired example is Jimmy's Oriental Gardens; a bar across the street from the Presidio.

Although beautification was a critical theme that led to the creation of *El Pueblo Viejo*, W. Edwin Gledhill championed for the creation of a local historic zone in the 1950s. He was greatly inspired by preservation efforts he had learned about in other areas of the United States. For this reason, framing a narrative about *El Pueblo Viejo*'s architecture must include at least basic preservation theory and criticism. Norman Tyler's book, *Historic Preservation, An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*, mentions Santa Barbara's architecture as one of the most significant examples of Eugene Emmanuel Viollet-Le-Duc's now defunct preservation philosophy that called for preserving structures not as they were but how they should have been. Nearly all preservation practiced in the United States dismisses Viollet-Le-Duc's theory in favor of a view more aligned with the thoughts of John Ruskin, where Ruskin believed buildings should be kept to appear authentically untouched by the passage of time. Santa Barbara then is unique in how the city interpreted history and how this translated to "historic" structures within the community. Tyler, like many assume the 1925 earthquake triggered the city's shift, yet local literature suggests the process of Hispanicization occurred well before the tremors. Author Lee M.A. Simpson's book, *Selling The City: Gender, Class, and the California Growth Machine, 1880-1940*, is a regionally centered text with one chapter devoted exclusively to Santa Barbara's Pearl Chase. In the book she successfully articulates that history was not just a preservationist tool, but that it was inherently tied to community

development, and that in Santa Barbara's case, this development began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Connecting With Spain: Exterior Tile Plaques on Casa De La Guerra. Photos by Michael Orth.

Reimagined and romanticized history was used to refashion the built environment. The Spanish Colonial Revival of the early twentieth century, a popular focus of local lore, ultimately translated into a municipal identity that shaped how locals and tourists viewed the city's past. Santa Barbara's architecture is more often than not, portrayed as a product rather than a process. For example, one Santa Barbara city document, *The Guidelines for Archaeological Resources and Historic Structures and Sites*, exemplifies this idea as it lists qualifications and time frames for city eras deemed archeologically or historically significant. Of the final period, 1900-1925, the document states:

During this time period Santa Barbara was becoming progressively more urbanized. A significant impact during this period was the arrival of the automobile, which significantly transformed the downtown area. Important economic and social transitions were also taking place. The terminus for this period is the 1925 earthquake, which eventually resulted in the rebuilding of the City in its present Spanish Revival image.³

The city's *end* for an archeological or historical requirement marks the *beginning* of a more crucial survey into the areas' past. While regional Spanish architecture can be traced back to the seventeenth century, a great deal of *El Pueblo Viejo's* Spanish-styled architecture represents an American reinterpretation of those forms. However, the architecture's Spanish designation raises a glaringly obvious misnomer in a great deal of literature: the buildings are nearly always labeled as Spanish and seldom if ever, referred to as Mexican. Despite Mexico's independence from Spain in 1811 and the relinquishing of California to the United States after the U.S.-Mexican

³ City of Santa Barbara, *Guidelines for Archeological Resources and Historic Structures and Sites* (2002), Appendix A-10.

War of 1848, Pseudo-Spanish architecture reflects larger regional tensions that resulted in the area's acquisition from Mexico.⁴

Concurrently, Santa Barbara's architectural development was deeply rooted in literary portrayals of the nineteenth century. The first Anglo representation of Santa Barbara can be found in Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*. In the book Dana devotes one chapter of his epic coastal journey to the time he and his crew spent in Santa Barbara in 1836. During the stop in Santa Barbara, Dana and his men were invited to a large wedding and subsequent fiesta that united two prominent Californio families. The special occasion was soon transformed in the minds of many outsiders as a typical local occurrence of what many believed to be the native California nobility. However, not until decades later in 1884 did the national fascination with Spanish themed architecture explode with Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona*.⁵ The story's pastoral milieu profoundly impacted how Anglos not only pictured California from afar, but how they reinterpreted California upon arrival. Historian, Roberto Lint Sagarena notes of *Ramona*, "the novel clearly articulated the fact that architecture was to be a crucial component in the American reinvention and appropriation of California."⁶ With *Ramona* fresh in the minds of Anglo-Americans, large numbers poured into California via the railroad to experience the Golden State's temperate weather and assured Spanish ambience.

⁴ William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 11-48.

⁵ Roberto Lint Sagarena, "Building California's Past, Mission Revival Architecture and Regional Identity," from *Faith in the Market, Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture*, ed. John M. Giggie and Diane Winston (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 94-95.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

Visitors' romantic visions of California were dashed at the sight of adobes and missions in various states of disrepair. Coupled with California's architectural veracity, the wealthy ranchero families portrayed in *Two Years Before the Mast* were replaced with the reality of poor, Mexican laborers. To offset the cultural discrepancy and downplay American resentment from the Mexican-American war, regional promoters called boosters, touted California as a land that possessed not a Mexican past, but a vibrant Spanish one. A Spanish past translated into a profitable cultural vernacular, as boosters went so far as to justify the presence of the poor Mexicans as those inherently responsible for the ruination of the Spanish pastoral landscape. California's past became a commodity, and was subsequently displayed in city pageants, parades, artwork, and eventually architecture.⁷ Anne Margaret Petersen mentions in her work "Adobe Days, Lost and Found" how public displays in Santa Barbara became alternative ways of remembering the past, and alludes to how architecture was the next logical progression of this remembering. Although Petersen did not definitively explore architecture as a mode of remembering, the history of Santa Barbara's architecture is to a certain degree is inherently tied to this idea. Yet, for reasons such as beautification, tourism, and civic identity mentioned throughout this piece, the buildings in *El Pueblo Viejo* are not mere representations of remembering, as they are also a part of the process of construction and reinvention of the town's history. Between 1910 and 1930, Pseudo-Spanish architecture sprang up in Santa Barbara and recaptured swaths of space once covered with ramshackle buildings in order to harmonize the natural and built environments. By the 1930s, a good portion of downtown Santa Barbara looked more unrecognizably exotic than the cityscape had ever appeared before. Over time, Santa

⁷ Anne Margaret Petersen, "Adobe Days, Lost and Found: Imagining Southern California History in San Juan Capistrano and Santa Barbara, 1870-1940" (PhD Diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2008).

Barbara's reconfigured Spanish image slowly became the town's principle export; ultimately shaping the town's tourist potential and solely responsible for a great deal of municipal revenue. The city's reimagined identity was so profitable that by 1960, Santa Barbara government agencies, individuals, and commercial businesses had invested millions of dollars in buildings carefully designed to harmonize with the old adobes to emphasize and develop the Spanish-California tradition.⁸ *El Pueblo Viejo* then, is not just a district engineered to accentuate the town's historic past, but rather it's a financial investment fostered by a community and fully achieved in 1960.

Each chapter of this thesis follows a linear path from the early twentieth century to the early 1960s. While the temptation exists to assume concepts like Hispanicization, beautification, and preservation can be assigned neatly to one period, the literature suggests these ideas are interconnected to various degrees throughout the area's history. For example, there was no watershed moment that signaled a shift from beautification to preservation as history has always played a role in controlling the city's built space. Those associated with creating and sustaining Santa Barbara's architecture must also be conceptualized in the same interconnected way. Although each chapter introduces and focuses on a key individual, their efforts should not be limited to specific time frames or ideas. A unified architectural theme can best be described as an effort that started with the sentiment of a few prominent individuals and gained more community support throughout the twentieth century.

Chapter 1 charts Santa Barbara's architectural transformation from a ramshackle western town into the period of its Spanish Colonial Revival. Initially, wood-framed structures replaced

⁸ California Department of Natural Resources, Division of Beaches and Parks, *The Santa Barbara Presidio*, by Glenn W. Price (January 1959).

original adobes but within the span of a few decades, exotic revival styles took precedence over the landscape offering the architectural fulfillment that economically spurred and sustained tourism. During the 1920s, local advocates Bernhard Hoffmann and Pearl Chase of The Community Arts Association, pushed for Spanish architectural styles through beautification campaigns and community education that emphasized the need for effective city planning. The architectural style of the Spanish structures provided a link that supposedly reshaped the way both locals and tourists viewed the city. Although the 1925 earthquake is often credited as the catalyst for intense urban transformation, the push for Santa Barbara's Spanish theme began nearly a decade prior. The initial willingness to Hispanicize the city by a group of motivated citizens explains how the city's architecture quickly transformed after the earthquake. Despite Santa Barbara's increased revenue and publicity, the legality of strict architectural conformity presented problems with a unified Spanish theme that slowly strained the viability of Santa Barbara's image.

Chapter 2 develops the period that challenged Santa Barbara's Spanish architecture. During the early 1930s through World War II, city growth diminished and Spanish architecture from past years yielded to modern-styled architecture projects around the city. Spanish-styled architecture experienced strain not just from economic factors associated with the Great Depression; but slowly faltered regionally under the weight of social unrest from Mexican-American population, and locally from architects who claimed the style illusory. The end of World War II tested Santa Barbara's architecture as the creation of the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration resulted in new home tracts being built and a significant population increase. While the Great Depression threatened the city's tourist revenue, the population growth after World War II strained the city's ability to control and maintain its

distinctive architectural character. Advocates of modern architecture promised efficiency and cost effectiveness, yet a growing number of Santa Barbarans adamantly refused to compromise the town's signature look. Pearl Chase, by that time the city's foremost civic advocate, believed modern architecture would jeopardize the visual theme of the downtown area and endanger the city's heritage the Spanish-styled architecture supposedly represented. Her commitment to Santa Barbara's beautification through Spanish architecture can be found in her communitywide efforts to repulse billboards, neon signs, and what were commonly referred to locally as *ugly* modern designs.

Chapter 3 focuses on Santa Barbara's preservation effort and how a consolidated interest in the local past urged community groups to consider the protection of Santa Barbara's architectural history. Prior to and during the Great Depression, a historical renaissance was underway in the city that led to the founding of the Santa Barbara Historical Society in 1932. Many social groups coalesced into a much larger movement that no longer viewed history as something produced or reimagined, but rather that which could be rediscovered and preserved. The most influential historical advocate in Santa Barbara during the time was W. Edwin Gledhill. Gledhill pushed for the creation of a local museum, though his ultimate desire was to create an historic district to protect significant local buildings; many of which were carefully incorporated with newly designed Spanish structures to create a harmonious effect. Santa Barbara's preservation effort drew inspiration from similar movements in Charleston and New Orleans, yet appears uncharted even in similar regional movements. Gledhill's community influence eventually led to the creation of the *El Pueblo Viejo* District in 1960. The profit motive for a historic designation was not lost on community leaders, which ultimately led to the district's expansion to areas of the town like State Street and the waterfront. The district's expansion

meant that while it protected some important landmarks, it also created an artificial sense of history as some buildings required modifications to meet *El Pueblo Viejo*'s strict architectural guidelines. Santa Barbara's Spanish image ultimately became part of the city's General Plan, and influenced all structures therein ever since.⁹

⁹ David Gebhard, "Introduction" in Rebecca Conrad and Christopher H. Nelson's, *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Capra Press, 1986.), 20.

Chapter 1: Santa Barbara, Reimagined

Before Santa Barbara's Pseudo-Spanish architecture materialized in the 1920s, newly arrived Anglo-Americans in the late nineteenth century reimagined the town not as a Spanish dream city, but as a typical western settlement with a high proportion of wood-frame structures. Historian Albert Camarillo explains that by 1874 the Spanish-Mexican settlement was a seven-block area around the Presidio and that the Anglos had razed most of the adobe structures outside of the city's core.¹⁰ This area of old adobes, which would later become the target area for the *El Pueblo Viejo* legislation, was initially considered undesirable by the Anglos and relegated to Santa Barbara's poorest citizens. The undesirability of the local architecture, coupled with the cultural disdain for the poor Mexican and Chinese communities that occupied these structures translated into a sequestered section of the city where few visitors and locals wanted to go. Meanwhile, wood-frame and brick buildings sprang up outside of the Presidio area as Santa Barbara appeared more westernized. Progressive architectural expansion transformed the city into a small, bustling metropolis that signaled an interest in commercial desire. Yet, despite a sizable portion of Anglos that called the city home by the end of the nineteenth century, the number of wealthy vacationers and transplants from the East Coast increased considerably around that time.

The increase in vacationers slowly changed the function of Santa Barbara from a basic commercial economy to a tourist town. This initial shift prompted locals to host wealthy tourists

¹⁰Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society, From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 54

and vacationers wanting to relax in an environment far away from the industrial cityscape of the Eastern Seaboard. Books like Charles Nordhoff's *California: For Health, Pleasure, and Residence*, hailed California as an exotic destination without the penalties of disease, barbarism, and lawlessness travelers would likely encounter abroad. After describing a multitude of sites and destinations, Nordhoff praised Santa Barbara as "the pleasantest of all the places I have named."¹¹ Although Nordhoff spoke specifically of Santa Barbara's natural beauty, he did not mention Santa Barbara's Spanish architecture. The remaining adobes located in the city's barrio area did not effectively translate to a tourist destination amidst the picturesque California landscape. However, the increase in tourism to the area created the market for an exotic architecture that reflected the area's idealized past.

Although the influx of Anglos was similar to other parts of Southern California, in Santa Barbara a blending of cultures occurred in a way that would later impact the future of Santa Barbara's architecture. Boosterism and the regional popularity of Spanish nostalgia at the end of the nineteenth century, coupled with what historian Albert Camarillo once called the "continued trend of marriage of California daughters to wealthy Anglos," created a unique cultural element in Santa Barbara.¹² The prominent Presidio families thought of as descendants of Spanish gentry, became unified through marriage with newly relocated Anglos. The small segment of wealthy Californio families became associated as the historical element of Santa Barbara, and would be called upon to verify history sought by their new Anglo family members and others throughout the community.

¹¹ Charles Nordhoff, *California: For Health, Pleasure, and Residence* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1874), 111.

¹² Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society*, 68-70.

While boosters throughout Southern California effectively used pageants and parades to display an idealized version of the region's past, the idea of a more permanent display that conveyed similar ideas started to take shape. Charles Fletcher Lummis, a prominent booster, tried for many years to sell Los Angeles on the idea of a unified Spanish architectural image with lackluster results. In the 1920s, toward the end of his life, Lummis shifted his attention north to Santa Barbara as conditions promised a more receptive audience.¹³ The mythical hype of Santa Barbara's unique cultural connection and desire to display such lineage, inspired locals to seek a regional architectural style that culturally coupled California to the idea of a Mediterranean littoral.

Juxtaposed to views of the elite cultural group in the city, some community members were at odds about Santa Barbara's future image after the turn of the twentieth century. The impact that city planning and zoning efforts evoked throughout the United States slowly drove a wedge between Santa Barbara business owners and the cultural elite. Some local business owners not easily sold on the idea of a unified Spanish architecture, invested in popular Victorian and Beaux Arts styles for their storefronts. City streets changed to accommodate increased automobile traffic and new homes sprang up from the Riviera to the coast. A portion of the community's business owners felt Santa Barbara's industrial potential lie in growth and economic expansion, similar to the progression that was then occurring in Los Angeles. However, historian Anne Margaret Petersen expresses in her work "Adobe Days Lost and Found," the elite in Santa Barbara believed city's destiny could be fulfilled through the marketability of a

¹³ Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 276

historical Spanish influence and the area's impressionable aesthetic appeal.¹⁴ The initial tension of reinterpreting the area's past gave way to the tension of city planning and the town's economic future. Opinions differed between the two groups over Santa Barbara's civic image and how this would influence matters of economic sustainability.

Proper city planning implored citizens to consider the quality of life for the community and mold the type of environment the city would eventually become. In 1909, city planner Charles Mulford Robinson, submitted a proposal to the city that not only urged the proliferation of town's resort potential, but also discouraged industrialization.¹⁵ Despite the city's rejection of the proposal, a small group of elite citizens clung to the thought that Santa Barbara could be something other than an ordinary city. Santa Barbara's resort potential, coupled with the Spanish mystique provided the perfect economic vehicle for the town's future image.

A domestic Riviera promised profit potential not only as an exotic tourist destination within the United States, but also as a lucrative real estate market. Historian Lee M.A. Simpson notes in her book *Selling The City*, how Santa Barbara was among a handful of cities that used history and preservation as a method to exploit aspects of city growth.¹⁶ Growth and history played an interconnected role that not only established a civic identity through architecture, but served to motivate preservation efforts later in the twentieth century. More concisely, Santa Barbara's architectural past reveals how history initially developed the city's function; but how later function and appearance validated the city's history.

¹⁴Anne Margaret Petersen, "Adobe days, Lost and Found," 157.

¹⁵ Lee M.A. Simpson, *Selling the City: Gender, Class, and the California Growth Machine, 1880-1940* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 138.

¹⁶ Ibid., 137.

Spanish traditions, revived during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, were expressed by a small prevailing group of individuals who eventually formed the Community Arts Association (CAA) in 1920. The CAA was a private organization that encouraged art, history, and civic renewal through, what historian David Gebhard once called, “a thoughtful, but low-keyed planned program.”¹⁷ Although the CAA shared similar interests and incorporated elements of the nationally acclaimed City Beautiful Movement, it was more narrowly attuned to a wide range of local endeavors. The CAA’s interest in city planning and architecture eventually spawned both the Plans and Planting Committee and the Architectural Advisory Committee in 1922. Bernhard Hoffmann and Pearl Chase, the CAA’s most notable advocates, worked in conjunction with local architects to propose beautification ideas for the downtown area. Hoffmann and Chase vigilantly educated the public to the needs of architectural control because they believed the community would only positively expand if citizens took a vested interest in the town’s future. The Plans and Planting Committee, a subgroup of the CAA, instituted the help of Charles H. Cheney, who at the time was one of America’s foremost planners and champion of architectural controls as an essential planning device.¹⁸ In Santa Barbara, architectural controls provided the perfect opportunity to keep one eye fixed on the future and the other focused on the past. Since the city possessed a few remaining historical structures, developers thought it within their rights to disseminate this particular interpretation of Santa Barbara’s past.¹⁹ The interpretation of the town’s past not only offered the community a sense of historical continuity, but also the geographical perpetuation of a visually appealing environment. The interpretation

¹⁷David Gebhard, “Introduction,” *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Capra Press, 1986), 13.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kathryn Masson, *Santa Barbara Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 2001), 12.

and planning eventually translated to a strikingly exotic cityscape able to capture both the tourist's imagination and the contents of their pocketbook.

In the chronological expropriation of *El Pueblo Viejo*'s history, Bernhard Hoffmann's role was paramount in planning Santa Barbara's new look. Walker Tompkins, a local Santa Barbara historian, once went so far as to claim the unified Spanish theme was an idea "first born in the brilliant mind of a transient visitor, Bernhard Hoffmann."²⁰ A Massachusetts native, Hoffmann saw Santa Barbara's beautification potential in a style that he thought reflected the town's traditions and history. Thus, beautification, planning, and history could be employed simultaneously to shape Santa Barbara's future. While Hoffmann was the most prominent figure, several local architects including, James Osborne Craig, George Washington Smith, and Lutha Maria Riggs were also notable figures in designing Santa Barbara's new look.²¹

One of the earliest and most significant contributions to the Santa Barbara's cityscape was James Osborne Craig's *El Paseo* of 1921. *El Paseo*, a downscaled Spanish-inspired space, effectively blended Casa De La Guerra and the Oreña adobe with new construction to reflect a sense of continuity envisioned by Hoffmann and the CAA.²² Although some citizens were cautiously optimistic about the economic viability Spanish-styled architecture could present to the city's future, the architectural continuity Craig employed with the historic adobes effectively demonstrated an example of blending that could not have been conveyed any other way.²³ *El*

²⁰ Walker Tompkins, *Santa Barbara History Makers* (Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin Publishers, 1983), 349.

²¹ Kathleen Brewster, "Braille Institute Speech," (speech, Braille Institute, Santa Barbara, CA, March 21, 2000).

²² David Gebhard, "Introduction," *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, 15.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15-16

Paseo's visual appeal and architectural success only bolstered the CAA's beautification message, which subsequently spurred political change in the city to the extent that the City Planning Commission was formed in 1923. The Plans and Planting Committee urged the city

Strategic Blending: Restored Casa De La Guerra c. 1827 (left), James Osborne Craig's *El Paseo* c. 1921 (foreground), and the five story *El Paseo* Building facing State Street c. 1965 (background). Photo by Michael Orth.

to enact control measures that ensured successful zoning and beautification with tourist revenue in mind. Santa Barbara's image slowly solidified through community involvement and bureaucratic oversight to the point that a building zone ordinance and a stringent building code were implemented to ensure a *City in Spain* future.

On the morning of June 29th 1925, Santa Barbara awoke to the rumbling of a large earthquake. The quake is one of the most documented events in the city's history and offered not

only the prophetic answer for the poorly built structures in the downtown area, but also the opportunity to successfully create a seamless Hispanicized town. Author Norman Tyler briefly mentions Santa Barbara's post-quake rebuilding efforts in, *Historic Preservation, An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*, as one of very few examples of Eugene Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc's now antiquated preservation philosophy. Viollet-le-Duc's philosophy, according to Tyler, was to build or rebuild structures not as they once stood, but how they should have appeared.²⁴ Santa Barbara then, is the *exception* to the modern American preservation mindset rather than the *rule*, because modern preservationists restore structures to a point of historical authenticity (however contested that may be), rather than construct idealized forms. Prior to the earthquake, the city implemented an Architectural Board of Review (ABR) to oversee building efforts and aid in matters of city planning. Despite the ABR being untested, the earthquake provided the opportunity to officially implement the program on a large scale. Prominent city officials Mayor Charles M. Andera and city manager Herbert Nunn were receptive to Hoffmann's belief that poorly planned structures were detrimental to the future of the town, and could only be remedied through appropriate planning and materials. The ABR, believed to be the first of its kind in the United States, oversaw all proposed plans to rebuild damaged portions of the city.²⁵ The ABR's official focus was safety through proper construction, but Board members were also extremely concerned with the visual qualities of all proposed plans. The ABR's aesthetic bias toward Spanish-inspired styles placed Santa Barbara squarely at an architectural crossroads when rebuilding. Despite the tension of competing architectural

²⁴ Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation, An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 19-20. Similar explanations of preservation philosophies of Morris, Ruskin, and Viollet-Le-Duc can be found in William J. Murtagh's *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (Pittstown NJ: The Main Street Press, 1988), 16.

²⁵ "Santa Barbara," *The Architectural Forum*, July 1933.

identities prior to the quake, the disaster afforded both the opportunity to rebuild quickly and effectively, as well as expand the few Spanish projects constructed years before. While the earthquake offered the most promising potential to visually reshape the town, the destruction did not permanently resolve the community's identity crisis.

Power over the built environment grew increasingly consolidated under Hoffmann and the ABR, which slowly strained total acceptability of Pseudo-Spanish architecture. The newly established building code allowed the ABR to control inspections and operate as the municipal authority for (re)building permits. Buildings valued at \$2500 or more were required to have permits, and if structures were not up to code or suffered damages from the quake they could be razed. The ABR urged business owners to plan new buildings that were not just physically sound, but also in ways that visually considered the architecture of surrounding structures. With prominent examples of Pseudo-Spanish architecture already in the community, and many willing to rebuild in that vein, any naysayers were suggested to follow suit.

Although many accounts of the earthquake period discuss the end of the ABR, few delve into the real reasons for its dissolution. Less than a year after the disaster, the ABR's subjective nature was called into question in 1926. Thomas Storke, owner of the Santa Barbara News Press and the city's most powerful businessman, cried foul against the ABR and threatened legal action against the city. Storke believed the ABR's influence and preference for a specific style pressed too much against business owner's individual freedoms. With no legislative backing to support the ABR's constitutionality, Storke's threat caused the city to repeal the Board that same year.

Permanent Fixtures: Tile Plaques at El Paseo. Photos by Michael Orth.

Oddly enough, years later Storke switched sides on the issue of Spanish architecture as local business owners realized the profitability of a unified Spanish theme.²⁶ During the 1930s, the Depression had bankrupted the other prominent local newspaper; Storke bought out the competition and subsequently merged both papers in 1937. Storke's editorial section acted as a sounding board for his personal positions on civic matters, and because of his newspaper monopoly, he took a dominant role in local affairs for decades to come.²⁷ Although opposed to Spanish architecture in the 1920s, Storke later saw the financial benefits for the style as his newspaper ran editorials that urged both beautification and historic preservation for the betterment of the town. Before an overwhelming majority of local businessmen could agree that a unified Spanish theme was the best option for Santa Barbara in the 1920s, the issue of legality caused many to reevaluate the ABR's motive during post-quake rebuilding efforts.

The ABR's authority and suggestive influence created a quagmire that took over two decades to fully rectify. One source explains that some businessmen complained the ABR's "aesthetic censorship," reflected, "the views of the small upper class element of the city."²⁸ The ABR's insistence on Spanish architecture left shop owners feeling that their storefronts deemphasized the business nature of their buildings, which stifled opportunities for individual economic progress. The belief existed that Spanish architecture restricted businesses from standing out against their competitors due to visual homogeneity and increased insistence on subtle signage. Bruce Klobucher, a local historian, reflected on the ABR's role years later. He

²⁶ Walker Tompkins, *Santa Barbara History Makers*, 410

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Raymond D. Tracy Jr., "The Reconstruction of State Street" (Local History Essays, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections, 1970), 34.

believed strict planning measures “had no place being imposed upon an unwilling community” and “the only reason that the planning worked at all, in the brief case of the Architectural Board of Review, was because of the common emergency felt by progressives and businessmen alike in the wake of the devastating earthquake.”²⁹ One can infer that some businessmen were opposed because they strictly thought about how architectural controls impacted their individual storefronts, instead of the gross profits that could be generated by a beautified community. The ABR’s subjective nature is not as important as the dichotomy Spanish architecture created between members of the community. The conflict over business and revenue not only highlights the economic role Spanish architecture assumed in the city, but also how architecture was an economic vehicle that reshaped community sentiment in subsequent decades.

²⁹ Bruce Klobucher, “Santa Barbara: The Effect of the 1925 Earthquake on City Planning in the 1920’s” (Local History Essays, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections, 1979), 14.

CHAPTER 2: Santa Barbara's Architecture And Community Retrogression

The city's economic potential became more apparent in the period following the ABR's repeal as a glaring need for revenue stemmed from a changing demographic in the area. Santa Barbara experienced a decrease in wealthy residents and a steady increase in middle-class vacationers arriving by way of automobile. A quintessential text on *El Pueblo Viejo*, Rebecca Conrad and Christopher H. Nelson's, *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, offers a compelling view of Santa Barbara's economic status in the early 1930s. They assert that a threat emerged due to the loss of economic support from many wealthy East Coast residents. This loss of potential revenue prompted Santa Barbara leaders not to encourage industrialism, but motivated citizens to develop a city that could appeal to a new type of tourist produced by increased automobile travel.³⁰ Despite occasional sentiments from business owners that clung to industrial potential for areas like the waterfront, Santa Barbara's future after the early 1930s exclusively relied on the ability for the community to appeal to motorists en route from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The marketability of a small town with Spanish traditions was not a new idea, but the economic destitution of the Great Depression, coupled with the growing tourist economy of the previous decades made such an option practically necessary. Because a great deal of the downtown area was architecturally Hispanicized after the earthquake, community leaders not only possessed a sizeable head-start to continue beautification, but could slowly market the town's historic value in a modernized America.

³⁰Rebecca Conrad and Christopher H. Nelson, *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, Santa Barbara (Capra Press, 1986), 30.

In 1927, Pearl Chase succeeded Bernhard Hoffmann in the Plans and Planting Committee; a move that would ultimately establish her as the most prominent civic leader in Santa Barbara's history. At the helm of the purely non-profit Plans and Planting Committee, Chase was at the forefront of Santa Barbara's landscaping and zoning efforts for nearly five decades. Her determination and direct influence over the community cannot be understated in the refiguring of Santa Barbara's image. Historian Walker Tompkins provides a compelling look at Chase in his book, *Santa Barbara History Makers*. Although Chase was born in Massachusetts, Tompkins shows how Chase always considered Santa Barbara home. Even more intriguing than her lengthy list of accomplishments and recognitions, was her motivation throughout her career. Although Chase did more to beautify Santa Barbara than any other individual in the city's history, she did so for the betterment of the community and not for wealth or personal power; attesting to the fact that she never held any political office.³¹ After graduating from U.C. Berkeley in 1909 with a certificate in home economics, Chase returned to Santa Barbara and became involved in a project to secure low-income housing. Her involvement with housing also interconnected with the fledgling planning and beautification effort that occurred prior to the 1920s. While Chase spent a majority of her energy on civic beautification and community development, she was not directly associated with preservation in ways historical groups might have been. However, it has already been established that history played various roles in the development of the community and *El Pueblo Viejo* as a space. In certain cases, Chase used history or preservation as a vehicle to accomplish her much larger beautification goals.

With the local government kept temporarily in-check by business owners, downtown establishments were essentially free to look anyway they wanted. This troubled Chase because

³¹ Tompkins, *Santa Barbara History Makers*, 415.

the potential existed for the downtown area to look like a disorderly and unharmonious urban mess. Yet, since the repeal of the ABR, there was little anyone could legally do about the exterior of buildings, as no law could strictly control architecture or zoning. In light of this, Chase and members of the CAA ramped up beautification efforts through community education. Instead of idle threats or strong-arming businessmen to conform to some beautification mantra, Chase opted to let the economic benefits of a beautiful community speak for themselves. Her method suggests that she let local business owners buy into the idea of a unified Spanish theme, while she continuously rallied for increased community support.

Pearl Chase's efforts are one of the key factors that helped perpetuate Santa Barbara's Spanish appearance. She was the leading figure in many community-wide endeavors, from establishing Mission Park to the Santa Barbara Better Homes program. Various committees under her influence advocated everything from exquisite landscaping to the riddance of billboards. Chase was once quoted as saying, "the secret of building a better community through citizens' committees is to get the right citizens on the right committees."³² Committees allowed citizens to publicly express areas of personal interest as they simultaneously empowered individuals through consolidated community sentiment. Chase's effort to beautify Santa Barbara and keep the architecture as harmonious as possible garnered widespread national acclaim.³³ The city reveled in the attention, and locally republished any mention of Santa Barbara in regional and national periodicals. One national review reprinted locally praised Santa Barbara's beauty

³² Frank J. Taylor "Santa Barbara's Pearl" (Local History Essays, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections). Also, for various roles on women in the community and civic organizations see Santa Barbara News Press Special, July 26, 1942 titled "Women of Santa Barbara: Clubs, Lodges, Organizations."

³³ "Santa Barbara" *The Architectural Forum*, July 1933.

for appearing “untouched by the passage of time.”³⁴ Chase’s tireless efforts bolstered Santa Barbara’s community potential with its citizens, helped manufacture and sustain a viable image that appealed to tourists, and later legitimized the city’s architecture in the eyes of the State and Federal agencies. However, Santa Barbara’s Spanish appearance faced incalculable socio-economic threats in the decades that followed the 1920s, which not only tested the concept of a unified Spanish architecture, but also the community determination to protect it.

Spanish-styled architecture declined regionally in the 1930s for a number of reasons. Initially, ethnic tensions and the skeptical view from certain architects throughout the region slowly discounted the style.³⁵ In Santa Barbara specifically, the Presidio area’s demography changed to the point that the city’s history was slowly reevaluated against the idea of a marketable image. The buildings today leave little historical trace to account for the cultural diversity that once existed there. With the exception of Jimmy’s Oriental Gardens, a bar across from the Presidio, one would never guess a Chinese community was ever present in the downtown area. Initially, local pressure on the Chinese-American population from locals before the 1930s caused a majority of them to relocate out of the area.³⁶ New Chinese immigrants did not arrive en masse in Santa Barbara until the 1960s, but by then were unable to create a collective neighborhood similar to one that once existed in the Presidio area. The Presidio neighborhood also lost a great deal of Mexican-Americans during the 1930s. Albert Camarillo

³⁴ Clipping, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections. More than likely Santa Barbara News Press. Clipping marked “(N) 1-8-31.”

³⁵ Elizabeth McMillan, *Casa California: Spanish Style Houses from Santa Barbara to San Clemente* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. 1996). Also, see Mike Davis’ *City of Quartz*, (London: Verso, 2006), 37-38.

³⁶ Richard Piedmonte, “The Chinese Presidio Community,” in *Santa Barbara Presidio Area, 1840 to the Present*, (Santa Barbara, Calif.: University of California, Santa Barbara Public Historical Stories and Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, 1993), 125-128.

ends his book, *Chicanos in A Changing Society*, with the state and federal sanctions that repatriated a sizable portion of the remaining Mexican population out of the city's barrio area during the first years of the Great Depression. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans that remained in Santa Barbara moved to other areas of the city out of the downtown vicinity and the Presidio area. The final change in the downtown region affected Santa Barbara's Japanese community. By 1942, members of the Japanese-Americans living near the Presidio area were relocated completely; many of whom did not return after World War II. In Steven Seifert's article "The Japanese Presidio Community," he confidently asserts, "Although no structural landmarks exist of the Japanese presence exist in the Presidio area today, buildings tell only a part of the story."³⁷ The problem with Seifert's claim is that while buildings only tell part of the story, in the historic area like the Presidio that would later become part of the *El Pueblo Viejo* District, buildings signify the responsibility to tell the *whole* story. Although the Japanese were not necessarily subject to local racial tensions, the deportation of many Japanese-American's during World War II marked the end of a sizable ethnic population in the Presidio area.³⁸ The area's history was essentially free to be portrayed and interpreted without any significant ethnic upheaval from that moment on.

The regional decline in Spanish architecture meant that other cities like Los Angeles became symbols of modern forms and progress, while Santa Barbara was free to be the region's premier symbol for the Pseudo-Spanish style. In a way, Santa Barbara's Spanish architecture

³⁷ Steven Seifert, "The Japanese Presidio Community," *Santa Barbara Presidio Area, 1840 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: University of California, Santa Barbara Public Historical Stories and Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, 1993), 129-134.

³⁸ Michael J. Daley, "Study of the Japanese that Had Been Evacuated Out of the Santa Barbara County During World War II," (Local History Essays, CDCC UCSB Special Collections).

from the previous decade became antiquated, or actually historic in an architectural sense compared to modern designs exhibited elsewhere. One characteristic or criticism of historic districts is that they visually appear to bypass progress. Prior to the *El Pueblo Viejo* District, this bypass occurred for a short period of time to an extent in the late 1920s. The Great Depression systematically inhibited progress which allowed Santa Barbara to retain a fair amount of its architectural charm. Yet, despite continued publicity in national periodicals for beautification and allure, the city suffered through the Great Depression like many other areas of the country. Spanish themed projects and renovations nearly ceased in Santa Barbara around the same time. Economic growth in the area stalled and businessmen grew increasingly receptive for ways to weather the economic storm. By the end of 1932, the Great Depression had reached such a critical point in Santa Barbara that according to one document, “there was a constant demand to cut government costs, and the Taxpayers association felt that the Planning Commission should be eliminated.”³⁹ A measure to cut city planning never made it to the ballot because Santa Barbara received a timely assist of federal money, which contracted the city to supervise and conduct various work projects. Sparing the planning commission meant sensible planning could continue in subsequent decades and kept Santa Barbara’s Spanish theme somewhat intact.

Although initially Santa Barbara successfully resisted extreme architectural change, the city slowly succumbed to the trends of modernity. New construction was limited through the 1930s and early 1940s, yet after World War II architecture’s role in Santa Barbara significantly transformed.⁴⁰ The volume of building projects before World War II, according to David Gebhard, “was reasonably controllable” through community involvement, however, “aggressive

³⁹ “Fifteen Years of Planning in Santa Barbara,” 1942, Plans and Planting Papers, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections.

⁴⁰ Rebecca Conrad and Christopher Nelson, *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, 62-63.

advocates of the ‘Modern’ were beginning to question the validity of Santa Barbara’s cultivated Hispanic tradition.”⁴¹ Just as shop owners in the 1920s felt the Spanish style stifled business, local architects increasingly felt stymied when it came to new building or home tract designs. According to David Gebhard, in nearly all occurrences Chase and her constituents effectively mellowed “the belligerent Modernism to the point where these new street level facades turned out to be mild background designs.”⁴² While Chase’s efforts quelled blatant designs, she was unable to change the creative sentiments of certain architects in the community.

Chase knew the best way to promote Santa Barbara’s beautiful image was through community support and involvement. After all, even before the 1920s, architectural issues in the city were matters taken up by private entities rather than government oversight.⁴³ The more people Chase could convince throughout the community, the greater leverage her constituents possessed to keep Santa Barbara beautiful. In 1940, Chase said, “We believe that volunteer committees should control the policies of private agencies and be ready to consult and advise public administrators. We know that it is better to bring about results voluntarily and by reason rather than by force of law, though the latter is often necessary.”⁴⁴ This sentiment was not far from the CAA’s subtle mission during the early 1920s, yet seemed to gather increased fervor. Chase reified her position as the spokeswoman for an ever-present community desire to control the appearance of Santa Barbara.

⁴¹ David Gebhard, “Introduction,” *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, 18.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁴ Frank J. Taylor, “Blue Ribbon Citizen,” *Survey Graphic* (March 1940), 180; as quoted in Lee M.A. Simpson, *Selling The City*, 154.

Looking the Part: Blatantly Modern Architectural Examples Within *El Pueblo Viejo*. Bank Building, 900 State Street (above), County Administration Building, 105 E. Anapamu Street (top next page), Christian Science Reading Room, 1301 State Street, (bottom next page). Photos by Michael Orth.

In an article on the movement to maintain Spanish architecture and inhibit modernism, Pearl Chase wrote, “very few realize how much thought, money, and effort has been necessary to guide this ‘voluntary effort.’”⁴⁵ Indeed, the community effort to keep Santa Barbara beautiful consisted of tax-deductible private donations by wealthy civic benefactors to the Plans and Planting Committee. While the effort to maintain the city’s architectural continuity was not without its support or funding, some modernist architects staunchly opposed the community activism. Proponents of modern architecture believed that new styles and materials then in vogue were cutting edge and creative, offered firm precision, functionality, and cost effectiveness in relation to the city’s Spanish-styled forms. However, the quickly built, ad hoc style starkly contrasted Chase’s vision that the cityscape would provide the community with a lasting investment for the future.

Chase’s battle to maintain Santa Barbara’s beauty not only contended with architects, but after 1945, an unprecedented amount of population growth in Santa Barbara. The end of World War II signaled national reforms that called for new growth and development throughout America. In Santa Barbara, the surge in residents meant an increase in planned facilities necessary to accommodate them. Local citrus groves were replaced by housing developments and the population explosion in Los Angeles amplified the fear unlimited growth could have in Santa Barbara.⁴⁶ However, citizens were not just concerned with growth, but also with how growth translated to increased construction projects that utilized modern architecture and quickly

⁴⁵ Pearl Chase, Santa Barbara News Press, February 5, 1950.

⁴⁶ Polly Sturtevant and Ricki Vinyard, “Is Bigger Better? An Analysis of the Limited Growth Issue,” (Local History Essays, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections, 1979), 18.

El Pueblo Viejo's Visual Continuity. Photos by Michael Orth.

compromised the remaining visual character of the city.⁴⁷ Modernism and uncontrolled growth became synonymous with ugliness at nearly the same time Spanish-styled architecture reaffirmed its association with beautification and harmony. So much so that by the end of the 1940s the concepts were vehemently opposed to one another in an epic matchup of good versus evil. Chase's constituents worked tirelessly to pitch both a beautiful Santa Barbara and denigrate architectural modernism, in a level of determination not seen since the Hispanicization of the city in the 1920s.⁴⁸

Unintelligent planning symptomatic of mixed-use and industrialized cities crept into Santa Barbara during the 1930s-40s. In 1947, Santa Barbara's city planning engineer used the word "hodgepodge" to describe the result of city planning during the previous decade.⁴⁹ The lack of able foresight threatened all local interests, and placed the blame squarely on both elected officials and the voting public. If Santa Barbara's troubles were squarely political, then politics provided the vehicle in which to combat and remedy planning issues. No matter the blame, clever planning presented a glaring need in the city. However, city planning translated to more than intelligently designed urban areas. It had as much to with Santa Barbara's visual style and its history as it did with function. In a Santa Barbara News Press article, advocates for city planning urged "the 30-year-old program of Santa Barbara Planners must be carried through in order that the city's chief industry, chief life-giver, will continue to grow."⁵⁰ The program in

⁴⁷ David Gebhard, "Introduction" in *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, 19.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Also see David Gebhard's *The Creation of a New Spain in America*, 26.

⁴⁹ Santa Barbara News Press, July 4, 1947.

⁵⁰ Santa Barbara News Press, February 2, 1950.

question was the original plan implemented by the CAA in the early 1920s, to promote the architectural homogeneity of a Spanish style.

The most striking response to combat growth through city planning was proposed by members of the Chamber of Commerce in 1947. A campaign was launched to reinstate the Architectural Board of Review, which was ultimately written into law after a two-decade repeal.⁵¹ A Plans and Planting document recalls, despite the lack of official efforts during the 1930s and 1940s, “the influence of the first Architectural Board of Review continued through the intervening period,” primarily as a result of Chase and the Plans and Planting Committee.⁵² The reinstatement of the ABR in 1947 signaled a change that would ultimately ensure Santa Barbara’s architectural future. The ABR returned in an advisory capacity much like the role it supposedly assumed after the 1925 earthquake. Yet this time the Board was given nowhere near the level of control or authority as ABR possessed under Hoffmann. Initially the ABR only had the capacity to suggest designs, but gradually broadened its influence to guide downtown construction and building proposals toward a Spanish style.⁵³

The second ABR was seen as a planning tool that would guide the preservation of architectural values and avoid confusion many faced during the building permit process. Furthermore, the ABR was recreated to promote general public welfare, and according to the

⁵¹ Jane Mason, “The Architecture of Santa Barbara: Yesterday, Today, & Tomorrow,” (Local History Essays, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections, 1966).

⁵² “Architectural Harmony in Santa Barbara, Its Origin Nature and Future,” Plans and Planting Papers, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections.

⁵³ “Good Architecture is Good Business” Architectural Board of Review Papers, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections.

ordinance, “protect and preserve the natural charm of the city.”⁵⁴ All of the Spanish-style buildings constructed since 1926 had been the product of private funds and public support, mixed with a great deal of publicity by the Plans and Planting Committee of the Community Arts Association. Throughout the decades the architectural control issue had always been the same, yet encountered a variety of socio-economic tensions. The underlying thread found in both those that rallied behind or adamantly opposed the Spanish architectural style, always connected to municipal revenue. Santa Barbara’s Spanish look proved profitable for many local merchants who relied on, as one News Press Article stated, “the Spanish flavor of the town for steady business through the years.”⁵⁵ Conversely the growth after World War II provided architects, planners, and speculators with the profit potential of an expanding city. Chase’s desired control over Santa Barbara’s look contrasted the growing belief of many to shed the weary, war-torn past in favor of the promising potential of the future. Though customary for American cities to make their business by projecting the architectural promises of future, a small group of Santa Barbarans truly believed the city’s future would be the uniqueness of its reimagined past.

⁵⁴ Santa Barbara City Ordinance, 2121.

⁵⁵ Santa Barbara News Press, February 2, 1949

Chapter 3: Protecting Santa Barbara's Spanish Identity

Racial tensions, community identity, and economics all contributed in some way to the development of Santa Barbara's downtown. However, one cannot discount the role historical interest played in compounding social issues like civic identity and planning, which ultimately led to the community's Spanish reinvention. Beyond boosterism and the reinvention of tradition, the community's fascination with local history fostered ideas of historical awareness and the need for preservation that slowly changed how *El Pueblo Viejo* was viewed. In 1924, Santa Barbara held its first Fiesta Days celebration which not only sparked historical interest in the events that led to the town's inception, but also deserves credit for directing attention to the city's past.⁵⁶ Fiesta organizers carefully portrayed seventeenth century Santa Barbara amidst the new outcropping of Spanish Colonial storefronts and arcades. Following the 1925 earthquake and subsequent rebuilding, Santa Barbara's Spanish identity transformed further to reflect a nearly seamless Hispanicized backdrop. Locals and visitors admired the town's ambiance during the celebration, which not only translated into increased tourist activity, but also local interest in the town's history.

During the early years of the Depression, Santa Barbarans took stock of themselves and their history in light of recent technological progress. A renewed sense of historical interest emerged which captured the community's desire to preserve some semblance of the past, and led

⁵⁶ Paul Sweetser, "History of The Santa Barbara Historical Society," *Noticias* VOL. VIII, No. 1, Spring 1962, 3.

to the founding of the Historical Society in 1932.⁵⁷ Many organizations claimed historical interest, yet operated loosely in relation to one another. Initially, the Historical Society could not garner a large membership on its own so articles of association were signed by various representatives of local groups and institutions. This allowed the historical society to act as a central institution that not only directed issues of local historical interest, but also expanded itself as the principle authority on historical matters in the city. The organization commanded confidence in the community, urging citizens to discover materials from the past and pushed for a local repository to safely house them.⁵⁸ Local groups like The Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West comprised members that claimed lineage to the wealthy Californio families of the eighteenth century. Citizens with a stake in Santa Barbara's past became some of the strongest advocates for greater historical awareness in Santa Barbara during the 1930s.

The most important figure in the creation of *El Pueblo Viejo* as a protected district was W. Edwin Gledhill. If Bernhard Hoffmann is credited with the idea of continuous Spanish architecture, and Pearl Chase as the community leader of beautification and perpetuation of the Spanish style, then Gledhill's role as the figurehead for the local historic preservation movement helped permanently solidify the city's architectural theme. A photographer by trade, Gledhill moved to Santa Barbara in 1903 from Canada and became involved with historic preservation later in life.⁵⁹ His interest in history grew after marrying Andriette Bowen in 1936, as both fostered a mutual passion for the city's history. W. Edwin Gledhill first worked at the local

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁹ Walker Tompkins, *Santa Barbara History Makers*, 385.

history museum, and later became the Director of the Historical Society. Chase's beautification efforts and Gledhill's historical awareness are difficult to clearly separate because the two movements were interconnected in the planning revival that followed World War II. Gledhill grew increasingly concerned with the deterioration of historical spaces, and his particular angle in the planning debate made him wonder if the city would be able to withstand the attacks of developers and young architects who ambitiously wanted to employ avant-garde designs.⁶⁰ Despite influence from community advocates and increased memberships in local historical organizations, Gledhill believed nothing could be done about the city's landmarks without the help of the city council.⁶¹ The historic nature of some buildings was insufficient without larger measures in place that ensured their preservation. Local historian Walker Tompkins clearly articulates, Gledhill's personal mission became to create an ordinance that would "protect and preserve historic buildings and places in Santa Barbara's Pueblo Viejo, or Old Town."⁶² Gledhill and Chase both drew on inspiration from outside Santa Barbara, utilizing examples of civic planning, beautification, and preservation efforts from elsewhere in America. They often used poor examples of city planning in larger cities like Los Angeles to show why their vision for the community would produce the best possible environment in which to live.

Architectural issues outside of Santa Barbara greatly influenced the city's built environment in the 1950s. Despite guidance from the ABR and community sentiment to repel modernist architecture, the legal enforceability issue loomed over the ability to protect truly historic structures in Old Town. In 1953, City attorney Harry W. Brelsford alerted the ABR,

⁶⁰ W. Edwin Gledhill, as quoted in Walker Tompkins, *Santa Barbara History Makers*, 388.

⁶¹ Santa Barbara News Press, Sept. 9, 1958.

⁶² Walker Tompkins, *Santa Barbara History Makers*, 388.

“there is a distinct possibility that an ordinance requiring a specified type of architecture within a specified area may be legally enforced.”⁶³ The basis of his claim stemmed from a legal result of the Louisiana Case: *City of New Orleans v. Levy*. In the case, a business owner was charged with altering the appearance of his business in the Vieux Carré section of New Orleans, which had been protected by city ordinance since 1935. The claim started when the Vieux Carré Commission (VCC) attempted to defend the architectural continuity of the area against what Brelsford called “iconoclasm or vandalism.”⁶⁴ The ruling favored the VCC and is important because Santa Barbara patterned similar control mechanisms to protect its architecture from modern designs. Brelsford ends the correspondence by stating: “such an ordinance should not be long delayed if it is ever to employ distinctive architectural control in the future. If the area mentioned continues to be diluted with obviously different types of architecture, it will lose its distinctive nature and there will be no legal basis for an enforceable ordinance.”⁶⁵ This exchange may have well been the earliest instance to solve Santa Barbara’s architectural debate through the creation of a district. The goal was to create a local law and submit requests to the state for historical recognition, which would not have been difficult to do given the age of the Presidio and its surrounding adobes. National influence continued the following year when in 1954, the United States Supreme Court case of *Berman v. Parker* resolved any skepticism about laws concerning aesthetics.⁶⁶ The ruling determined a city had the right to be beautiful and healthy,

⁶³ Brelsford to ABR, November 13, 1953, Architectural Board of Review Papers, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *El Pueblo Viejo Design Guidelines*, (City of Santa Barbara: Community Development Department, 2009), 8.

and for those like Gledhill, if the city possessed historic character then even better. *Berman v. Parker* dealt with urban blight and how it could be cured through well-planned and modernized landscapes. However, Santa Barbarans loosely interpreted the ruling opting to focus on urban

El Pueblo Viejo today. The red box is the approximate boundary the *El Pueblo Viejo* District in 1960. This map shows the current boundaries in white that include State Street, the city's waterfront area, East Beach, as well as the Mission in "Part II." The shaded border areas around the white boundaries are also subject to architectural controls. City of Santa Barbara, *El Pueblo Viejo Design Guidelines* (City of Santa Barbara: Community Development Department, 2009), 2.

decay and municipal powers of imminent domain, rather than the modern *means* in which to solve such dilemmas.

The recognition of local historical landmarks was an issue Pearl Chase had been involved with since the late 1930s, but the district concept closely associated with modern preservation movements did not appear in her correspondence until the mid-1950s. In a Plans and Planting memo, she mentioned the need for municipal zoning and urged the city, “to pass special ordinances covering historic zones of preservation,” citing “examples of Williamsburg, New Orleans, Richmond, Georgetown, and others.”⁶⁷ The Plans and Planting Committee, the ABR, Planning Commission, and the Historical Society were aware historic districts offered both protection for specific buildings and increased profit potential for the community. Knowledge of other preservation efforts clearly influenced community decisions and established a framework that Santa Barbara used to create *El Pueblo Viejo*.

Local ordinances and overwhelming consent were not yet in place for such a district, so the ABR continued to guide building plans in the downtown area. In 1958, the city of Santa Barbara and the ABR adopted a policy for architectural control that sought to simplify the

⁶⁷ Pearl Chase, “Plans and Planting Outline,” July 31, 1956, Plans and Planting Papers, Gledhill Library, Santa Barbara, CA.

planning process and shore up visual control over the area. The policy was distributed en masse in pamphlet form to avoid confusion, expense, and delays of construction to any portions of the city considered historically significant.⁶⁸ More importantly, the architectural control ordinance tested community sentiment toward the policy, but also extended the ABR's guidance into areas of historic potential. The possibility of creating the *El Pueblo Viejo* district came into sharper focus in 1958. That year Gledhill traveled to the National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference, on behalf of Santa Barbara's Historical Society. After the trip Gledhill wrote, "we learned there is a fast growing movement, all over the United States, in zoning for preservation of historic buildings and sites and to prevent in those areas buildings which, on the outside at least, do not conform architecturally."⁶⁹ This specific intersection of preservation and planning marked an unusual position because a building necessarily needn't be historic to be a part of such a district, but only appear to be congruous with the surrounding structures.

Due to the few truly historic structures carefully blended with newer Spanish styled buildings, the borders of the historic section of the city became the subject of local debate. The area initially proposed was a sixteen-block square encompassing the Presidio area and little else, but thought was also given to include many of the downtown area's landmark structures from the 1920s. During one particular correspondence on the matter, Wallace W. Arendt, of the local American Institute of Architects chapter (A.I.A.) responded to a question of whether the district could be enlarged according to the original 1853 map of Santa Barbara. Arendt replied by saying, "...our community has changed so much in the past 105 years that there is little historical

⁶⁸ ABR Pamphlet, "Policy for Architectural Control," August 4, 1958, Architectural Board of Review Papers, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections.

⁶⁹ W. Edwin Gledhill, "Report on New Orleans Conference," *Noticias* Vol. IV., No. 4, December 1958.

significance to the expanded area. Also...it would be most difficult to control an area unless it is kept reasonably small and already has buildings of some note. The larger area does not meet these requirements.”⁷⁰ Although Arendt was not an historian, his assumptions reflect the ability to read the city as a textual document from an empirical standpoint. Despite Arendt’s objections on the layout of the historic zone, Gledhill continued to push the need to save Santa Barbara’s historic structures. In a speech before the Second Southern Historical Symposium at the Los Angeles County Museum Gledhill said,

This population growth, its ruthless destruction of aesthetic values and historic character of communities is felt everywhere in Southern California...Santa Barbara is in grave danger of having her historic houses destroyed and swept away by this uncontrolled wave of population growth and speculation in real estate.⁷¹

Despite *El Pueblo Viejo*’s inexact geography, Gledhill’s motivation prompted the city to continue its creation of an architecturally protected area; a permanent environment for the Spanish Colonial Revival. Gledhill learned from a member of the Historical Society that California’s recent Enabling Act gave cities the authority to control exterior appearances of buildings for the first time. In 1959, the first hurdle was cleared as the city of Santa Barbara passed resolution 3902, designating an area in the historic center of town as ‘*Pueblo Viejo*.’ This specific resolution established that any planning and development in Santa Barbara consider the preservation of the city’s historic California Spanish heritage.⁷² Although the non-binding resolution passed the city council, it had not been signed into law by the mayor. This changed on

⁷⁰ Wallace W. Arendt to the ABR, May 1, 1958, Architectural Board of Review Papers, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections.

⁷¹*Noticias*, Vol. VI, No. 1, Spring 1960.

⁷² *Noticias*, Vol. V, No. 4, Winter 1959.

March 9, 1960, when Ordinance 2758 was officially signed into law establishing *El Pueblo Viejo*. The area was now subject to police power and legal enforceability similar to other such areas in the United States. While the ordinance established *El Pueblo Viejo*, it also provided specific regulations for architectural protection and enhancement. Part three of the ordinance states, “No present existing building of adobe structure or of special historic or aesthetic interest or value situated within the area...shall be torn down, demolished or otherwise destroyed.”⁷³ Bernhard Hoffmann’s idea, Pearl Chase’s determination, and Gledhill’s dream for historic preservation had coalesced into the creation of an area of town that would remain architecturally homogenous. Despite the district’s establishment, conjecture lay ahead for the community and its new financial centerpiece. Although *El Pueblo Viejo* was subject to the strictest architectural controls, the city found it necessary to create the Advisory Landmarks Committee (ALC) to uphold architectural oversight in area in 1961. Recommended by Gledhill and ultimately appointed by the mayor, the committee featured prominent figures Paul Sweetser, Lulah Riggs, Robert Ingle Hoyt, Pearl Chase, and W. Edwin Gledhill himself.⁷⁴ Gledhill’s recommendations comprised members he thought were vitally interested in making *El Pueblo Viejo* a successful historic attraction for visitors to Santa Barbara.⁷⁵ *El Pueblo Viejo* offered tourists an area in which to experience Santa Barbara’s history through the built environment. The ALC supplemented the ABR to further strengthen architectural legality in regards to alterations or additions within the zone.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *Noticias* Vol. VI, No. 2, Summer, 1960.

⁷⁵ W. Edwin Gledhill to Frank Arguelles, May 27, 1963, Architectural Board of Review Papers, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections.

The creation of *El Pueblo Viejo* also led to increased local interest in Hispanicized architecture which resulted in the district's subsequent expansion. The boundaries from the original ordinance were amended to include other portions of town; which first expanded to include the Mission, and later to encompass portions of the downtown area. In 1962, the Retail Merchants Association pushed for *El Pueblo Viejo* to envelop State Street and extend from the waterfront to Mission Street.⁷⁶ This expansion of the original *El Pueblo Viejo* area was intended to bolster the city's main financial artery. Oddly enough, many State Street structures fit in perfectly with the architecture guidelines drawn out in the *El Pueblo Viejo* Ordinance, while other modern examples needed some modification to conform. Nearly forty years after the 1925 earthquake, businessmen now saw the financial potential the area would bring if they merely changed the appearance of their storefronts. The ABR's Russell Bell noted, "If the rest of State Street could have changes of that character we'd be very happy."⁷⁷ Both businessmen and city officials knew that coupling *El Pueblo Viejo* to State Street would not only benefit sightseers but shoppers as well. In early 1963, the city went so far as to propose cordoning off the enlarged *El Pueblo Viejo* district to automobile traffic in order to revitalize the mercantile industry.⁷⁸ Although the plan never transpired, the proposal represents a deeper economic current absent from the popular perception of *El Pueblo Viejo* as a purely historical site.

El Pueblo Viejo is a place where architecture and history intertwine to expose an economic cord. All other social tensions, from racial issues to architectural freedom, stem from

⁷⁶ Santa Barbara News Press, July, 31 1962

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Santa Barbara News Press, January 20-29, 1963. Articles reprinted and redistributed by the Citizens Planning Association of Santa Barbara County, Architectural Board of Review Papers, CDCC, UCSB Special Collections.

local history being commodified in one way or another. Santa Barbara history has been produced and consumed, bought and sold, invariably marked-up and at times heavily discounted. Yet, this commodification is overlooked because many choose to focus on aspects of history rather than how ideas of history affect the community. In Santa Barbara's *General Plan for the City* created in 1964 by Simon Eisner, he wrote: "The '*El Pueblo Viejo*' ordinance represents a start toward the full statement in legislative terms of the desire of Santa Barbara to preserve its reputation as one of the nation's most attractive historic cities."⁷⁹ No matter what changes the city faced from that point on, *El Pueblo Viejo*'s historic status was inextricably linked to the future. The idealized past was permanently fused to architecture in a way that no longer needed to be advocated for or defended against; mirages of a place, became history solidified.

⁷⁹ Eisner-Stewart and Associates, *Santa Barbara, California: The General Plan* (South Pasadena: Eisner-Stewart and Associates, 1964), 10.

EPILOGUE: Beyond *El Pueblo Viejo*'s History.

In *El Pueblo Viejo*, one block from State Street running parallel to it, is *Anacapa* Street. While many of Santa Barbara's roads bear Spanish designations that recall local historical figures, oddly enough *anacapa* is not one of them. *Anacapa* is derived from the Chumash Indian word which roughly translates to mirage or deception.⁸⁰ While Santa Barbara's architecture visually appeals to both locals and tourists, the buildings reflect a history *other* than the temporal passage of time that accounts for them. The architecture is both authentic and imaginary, tangible and mythical, real yet pseudo. The more the past recedes from the present, the easier it becomes to interpret many of the buildings as evidence for the city's Spanish past. The blended architecture around the city's historic landmarks creates a visually appealing effect, yet distorts and oversimplifies the perception of local history.

In the attempt to explore why Santa Barbara looks the way that it does, every explanation points in some way to revenue and fiscal prosperity. In order to gain a clearer insight for how the city's architecture became legally controlled in *El Pueblo Viejo*, this thesis has highlighted the theme of economic motivation, and how it has driven the creation and ultimate solidification of Santa Barbara's architectural image. Initially, boosterism touted an idealized past that spurred a

⁸⁰ Mary Louise Days, "Street Name Glossary," *Santa Barbara: A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, 192.

wave of immigrants and vacationers to California. As a result, the population influx helped promote the growth of the local real estate market. Santa Barbara's desire to adopt civic planning measures spawned two competing visions for city's future. The 1925 earthquake provided the timely opportunity to convert a portion the downtown area to the Spanish Colonial theme.

Generations Apart: The Covarrubias Adobe, c. 1817 (left); dismantled and moved to current location in 1924 next the Historic Adobe c. 1836 (center), adjacent to The Santa Barbara Historical Museum c. 1965 (right). Photo by Michael Orth.

Subsequently, the Great Depression produced a change in demographics that altered the visitor base, from long-term vacationers to transitory tourists. Architectural continuity strained under the weight of social groups and architects who claimed the marketed style hampered both true historic understanding and creative expression. Beautification was touted by Pearl Chase as

being in the best fiscal interest of the community and local property holders. Finally, the creation of an historic zone preserved the city's trademark architecture and created a boom in real estate in parts of town guaranteed to never become a slum. This architectural legislation expanded the Spanish theme to encompass parts of town with the highest ratio of businesses.

Since the 1960s, *El Pueblo Viejo*'s expanding architectural controls have been further tightened on issues of building height, plant material, and even public art that can be displayed. No changes on any building can be made in the area without proper approval from the city. The stringent controls have finely tuned the constructed product on display. Today, the simple explanation for the area's appearance is that it is a reflection of the city's Spanish heritage. However, this thesis has attempted to uncover how social influence and historical perceptions have shaped Santa Barbara's *El Pueblo Viejo* in the midst of a nearly unperceivable economic thread. A dominant historical perspective provided the foundation for planning, beautification, tourism, and historic preservation which all inherently possess an economic variable that drove the city's image into the product we see today.

A renewed interest to solidify Santa Barbara's historic image parallels not just district legislation that occurred elsewhere in America, but also federally funded restoration and urban renewal in the late 1960s. Nearly a century before the *El Pueblo Viejo* ordinance, an overwhelming majority of original historic structures were destroyed because westernizing Anglos thought them and their occupants social eyesores. A reinterpreted past, coupled with a rearticulated architectural style, offered economic potential for Santa Barbara's future. Although the buildings have always been tied to the city's growth and many are not necessarily historical in nature, they represent structures architecturally significant to the original period when they first became popular. The district's buildings don't reflect the eighteenth century Presidio period,

but rather showcase a subdued history for how a specific facet of the local community chose to recall the area's past and sustain it through a reinterpreted landscape.

The Artifact and The Museum: The Covarrubias & Historic Adobe courtyard (top) and adjacent Santa Barbara Historical Museum courtyard (bottom). Photos by Michael Orth.

Bernhard Hoffmann, Pearl Chase, and W. Edwin Gledhill all represent specific angles in which to consider Santa Barbara's history. One must remember that although they were indicative of different movements or periods, they were only the prominent figures in a growing community effort to reimagine and preserve. This is not to say the entire community supported their ideas. Opposition occurred, but it was either downplayed or overhyped through local accounts, which again indicates another social dimension the buildings cannot effectively convey. David Gebhard sums up the mutual and complex effort to create *El Pueblo Viejo* by saying: "This common agreement or goal may be expressed through elected or appointed political bodies, but ultimately remains as an affair outside of government itself. The Santa Barbara experience poignantly illustrates how elitism (the activity of the few) and democracy (popular consensus) can emerge as one."⁸¹ A strong social element pressed its will on the community so that either

⁸¹ David Gebhard, "Introduction," *Santa Barbara, A Guide to El Pueblo Viejo*, 21.

through conversion or subduction, a dominant sentiment for Spanish architecture became both desirable and necessary. *El Pueblo Viejo's* history then, is a subject that chronicles both Santa Barbara's issues with its own architectural future as well as the reimagination of its architectural past.

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