



City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society P.O. Box 875, San Bernardino, CA 92402

LIBRARY NEWS FEBRUARY 2010

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

DONALDSON PHOTOS

In 1989 the City of San Bernardino commissioned a study of its historic districts for the purpose of writing a Historic Preservation Section into the General Plan. The city entered into a contract with San Diego architect Milford Wayne Donaldson, who in turn produced a report entitled “Historic Resources Reconnaissance Survey: San Bernardino, California,” dated April 30, 1991. The field work took place from June to December 1990, and 7,703 photographs of historic resources were taken during that time. A 35mm camera was used and the resulting reels of negatives were cut into strips containing six negatives each. These were placed in plastic sleeves, six to a page, so that each page held 36 negatives. The negatives were then photocopied at their original size (about 1” x 1½”), and stored in a ring binder.

To preserve the integrity of this collection, and to make the photos available for reproduction, Linda and Gerry Brassfield have been scanning each one. The Society’s scanner can handle 12 photographs at a time, but even so, it is a long process. They are being scanned at high resolution so they can be enlarged without distortion, and it takes about four hours to do 200 negatives. We owe our thanks to President Steve Shaw, who scanned the first 1,400 photo negatives, and special kudos go to the Brassfields, who, after working diligently for months, just finished scanning the remaining 6,303 negatives.



551 West Union Street – “Italianate” Architectural Style

An example of the photographs scanned from the negatives in the Donaldson Report. Out of 7,703 sites, Donaldson set aside only 163 as “significant addresses,” and 551 West Union was included in this very select group. Also, the house made his list of potential sites for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

We now can take the scanned photographs and make a file for each of them made up primarily of information from Donaldson. His report has several sections, one of which contains an executive summary and overview, explaining what a reconnaissance survey is. Another section gives a brief history of San Bernardino, followed by architectural styles. For each of the 7,703 historic structures, he collected data in six fields: 1) address, 2) assessor's parcel number, 3). approximate construction date, 4) architectural style, 5) construction type, and 6) contextual theme of historic significance. He also identified "significant addresses" and potential sites for the National Register of Historic Places.

We then add miscellaneous documentation to the file, such as a copy of a historic Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, and property profiles from sources like Zillow.com. After we write a two- or three-page overview of the pertinent section of town, we have a nice individualized historic report. I have prepared four of these for houses on West Union Street (between 8th and 9th, west of E Street) to see how much time is involved. Perhaps we can have a Saturday seminar to show any interested parties how to prepare such a report.



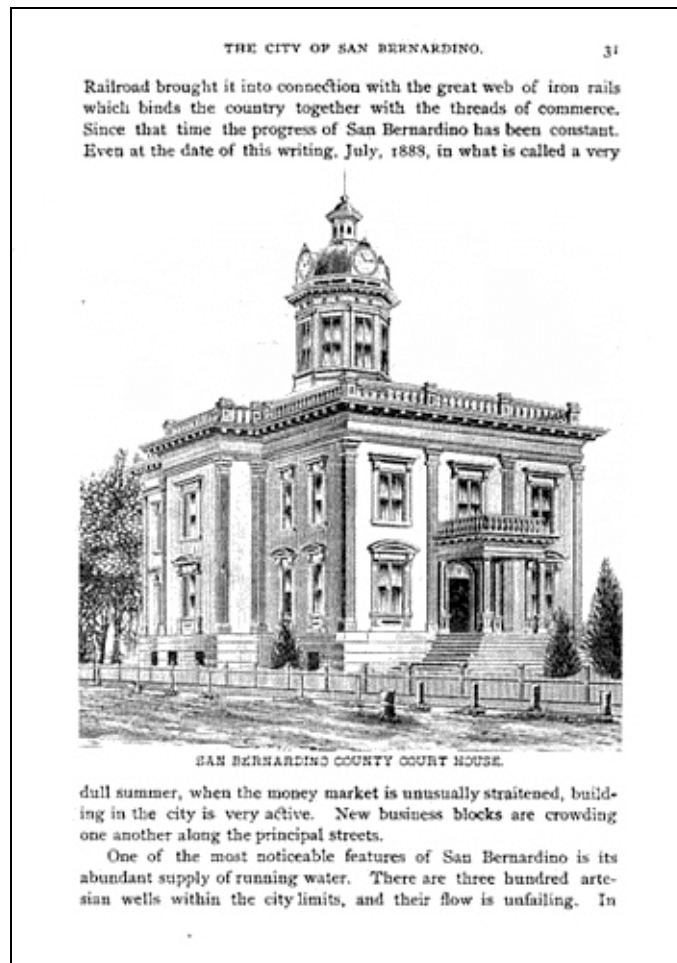
Historic house reports using Donaldson's study data and other documentation

SAN BERNARDINO HISTORY BOOK

The Heritage House Library does not have Edson D. Hale's book, *The County of San Bernardino, California, and its Principal City: A Descriptive and Historical Sketch*, published in San Bernardino by the Board of Trade, 1888. Recently I discovered that Google Books has digitized Hale's work, and it can be found here:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=gmFIAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=edson+hale+san+bernardino&ei=dp9HS6KtLonCIASpsOmCDg&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

I suggest you bookmark the site, or even better, download and save the text to your hard drive. If you go to the URL linked above, you will find a box on the left, next to the “Go” button, that says “Search in this book.” I had been reading the book and remembered that the author had spoken of Bartlett pears, so I typed in “Bartlett” and did a search to see how it worked. Why don’t you try it yourself?



Sample page from Edson D. Hale's book

EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE



With all of the scanning and accumulation of data that the Society has done in the past year, protecting that information became a concern. Accordingly, our president Steve Shaw installed a high-quality external hard drive that serves both for storage and as a backup for all our files and photographs. This is the 1.5 TB ioSafe external hard drive. It roughly approximates the size and appearance of a toaster, and is waterproof, fireproof, shockproof and crushproof.

UPDATE ON OUR WEBSITE

Last month a temporary URL address was given for our new Society web page, which is still under construction. We now have a permanent URL, and the new address is www.sbhistoricalsociety.com. Bookmark this site so you can watch for periodic updates added by our gracious webmaster Joe Fondy.

PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS

Paul Williams is the architect famous for designing homes for Hollywood stars, business moguls, plus other wealthy Southern Californians, and is mainly recognized in San Bernardino for his 1939 design of the Arrowhead Springs Hotel. While predecessor hotels had burned in an area known for spectacular conflagrations, Williams' structure still stands after seven decades, thanks to his concrete fire-resistant design. Fires have spread to the site on more than one occasion since 1939, proving that Williams design was not only beautiful, but also practical.

— Arrowhead Lanes

Twenty years later, in 1959, Williams designed the Arrowhead Lanes bowling center at 299 West Orange Show Road, where Arrowhead Avenue dead-ends. A July 19, 1959, article in the *Los Angeles Times* described the decor as Early American. I remember the building, and it always seemed to me that it was situated way off by itself, at least it was when West Orange Show Road ended at Arrowhead Avenue.

On a recent Saturday I went to have a closer look. It is a fairly large place (37,000 square feet with 32 alleys), so taking a picture of the entire building would not show any detail; therefore, the photos below are a compromise, showing two views. Another photographic problem was that the January sun does not light up the north side of the building, which is where Williams added architectural details to keep it from looking like a big box. There are sections of brick walls under the Arrowhead Lanes sign, and the bricks have been placed so that a number of them protrude from the others. The technique gives some dimension to the walls and the effect can be seen in the first photograph below if you look closely at that part of the building immediately to the right of the window.

As you can see in the second photograph, the entrance is covered in shadow, but I expect that during the summer months this would be a dark, cool, inviting entrance. Inside the building, west of the bowling lanes is a soundproof wall and a 1,000-square-foot room originally planned as an area for children's activities, including an adjacent outdoor space for them to play in, both of which areas would be supervised. The day I was there, a traffic class was underway in the room.

There are banquet and dining rooms, plus a coffee shop, pool hall and pro shop. In the large entrance lobby is an arcade housing many electronic video games. If this was a game room in the 1960s, all the games would have been mechanical rather than electronic, and in my memory the machines back then produced sounds pretty much like the electronic acoustics I heard when I visited that day.



Paul Revere Williams, 1894–1980



— Bank of America

In 1965 Williams designed the Bank of America building at Third and D Streets. The October 10, 1965, issue of the Los Angeles *Times* has the architect's sketch of the building with a caption stating that the second floor "will house executives for entire San Bernardino area." I went to the bank and asked if there were still executives on the second floor and found out that there were four floors altogether. This is not readily apparent from either the outside or inside of the building. One employee told me that the second and third floors had been abandoned and gutted several years ago, and the executive operations had moved to an Orange County facility. In the late 1990s NationsBank acquired Bank of America, but the deal was structured as a merger so that the name "Bank of America" could still be utilized.



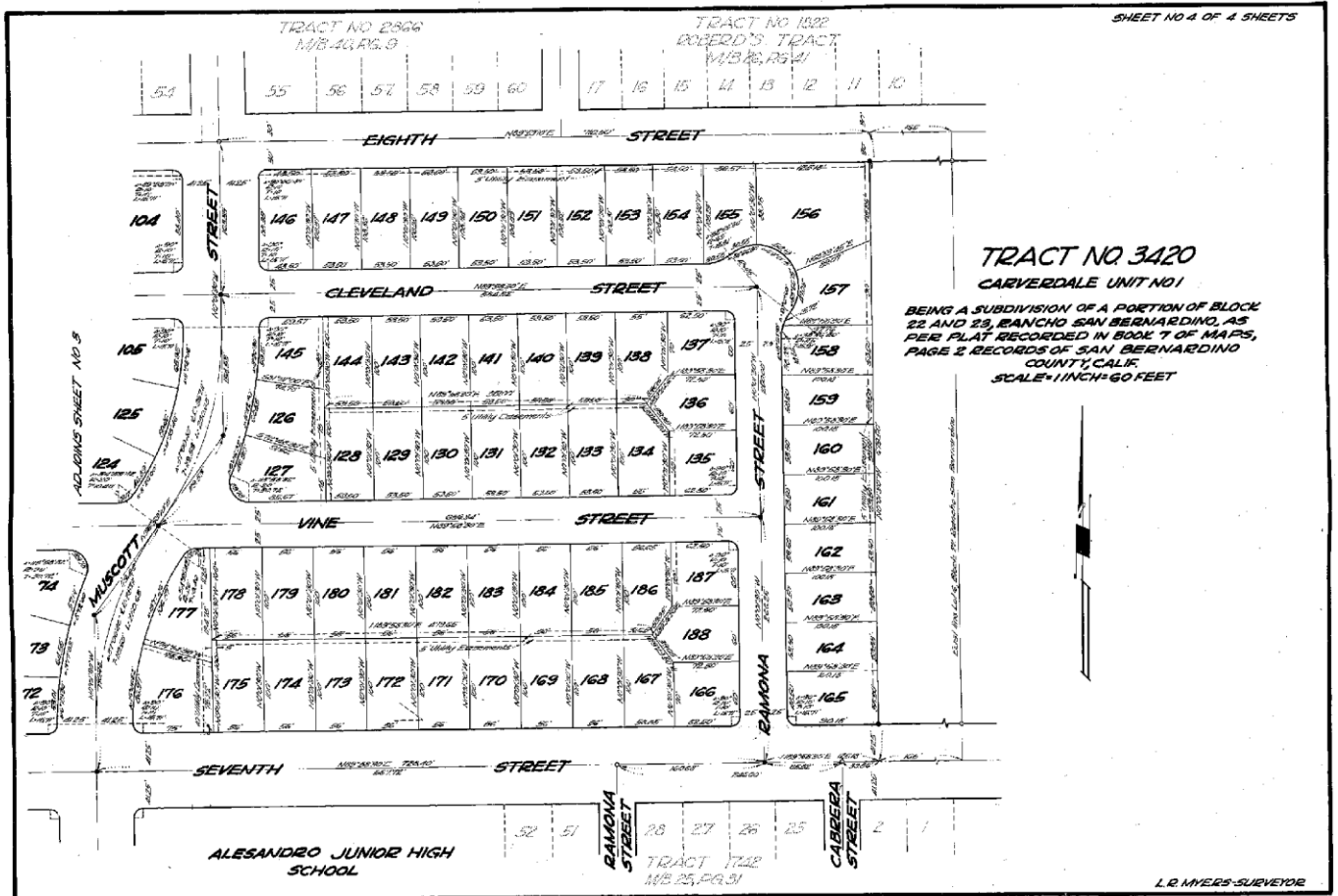
Paul Williams designed the Bank of America at 303 N. D Street

— Carverdale Housing Project

The July 25, 1949, issue of *Time* magazine carried a story about a new tract of homes in the west end of San Bernardino, located "just past the tight ranks of eucalyptus trees which shelter the city from desert-bound winds." Mayor James E. Cunningham, the article states, was on hand to help unload the first lumber for the new project. This tract was intended for African-Americans and was planned by Velma Grant, a Los Angeles real estate woman.

Mrs. Grant had finished a development for black home buyers in Los Angeles, called "Carver Manor," after George Washington Carver. Her San Bernardino project, according to the October 23, 1949, Los Angeles *Times* newspaper, would be named "Carverdale," and was to have two- and three-bedroom houses starting at \$6,450 for the two-bedroom model.

Carverdale Unit No. 1 (there was never a Carverdale Unit No. 2), consisting of 188 lots, was recorded in the Office of the Recorder in September of 1949. The recorded map had four sheets. The map below is sheet No. 4, showing that section of the tract located between 7th and 8th Streets, extending from Muscott Street (now Medical Center Drive) to about a block east. (Muscott runs north and south on the left side of the map.) Another section (map not shown), also located between 7th and 8th Streets, extended a block to the west of Muscott. A third section (map not shown) was located south of 7th Street and west of Muscott.



Mrs. Grant convinced Paul Williams to design the floor plans of the tract, as revealed in the *Time* magazine article:

Mrs. Grant cornered Los Angeles' widely sought Negro architect, Paul Williams (TIME, Jan. 26, 1948), who was buried under plans for \$12 million worth of construction work. She talked him into shelving them long enough to design floor plans for her houses. To the surprise of her bankers, who know that Williams' work comes high, he charged her only \$3,200.

I checked Zillow.com, and it appears the homes have one bath, and are from 712 square feet to about 1,000. I recently visited the tract, and directly across the street from Ramona-Alessandro Elementary School I met a man who had lived in the neighborhood off and on since the 1950s. He said the house payments for these structures originally were only \$40 per month.

I wonder how many of the current residents of "Carverdale" know that the same architect who designed the floor plans for their houses also designed the Arrowhead Springs Hotel and the homes of such

famous movie stars as Lucille Ball/Desi Arnaz, Tyrone Power, Zasu Pitts, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Barbara Stanwyck, and Johnny Weissmuller, among others.



Carverdale tract: two-bedroom, one-car garage home on Vine Street – Jan. 2010



Carverdale tract: three-bedroom, two-car garage home, corner of 7th and Medical Center Dr. – Jan. 2010

Saving The Past For The Future Since 1888