Especially sweet music will rise up into the freshly repainted and retrofitted dome atop Congregation Sherith Israel’s historic home at California and Webster on June 9 at a special Shabbat service celebrating the end of a long-running renovation.

“We did it!” exclaimed David Newman, co-chair of the seismic retrofit campaign. “The Sherith Israel community has risen to the occasion.”

“We are in compliance with all of the city’s seismic requirements,” said former congregation board member Ellen Schumm, who has been involved with the project since its inception.

“This building is so stable, it’s awesome.”

The $16 million project to strengthen the 1905 building — which survived the earthquake and fire the next year and served as a temporary courthouse during the rebuilding — was spurred by new standards established after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

The first phase of the project, completed in 2011, included an innovative engineering plan to reinforce the exterior walls of the sanctuary without affecting the elaborately painted interior walls. It also stripped away the salmon-colored paint that had been unwisely applied to the sandstone walls half a century earlier.

The second phase, just completed, involved reroofing, repainting and waterproofing the dome, removing the last vestiges of salmon paint and returning the dome to the color of the sandstone on the base. It also added solar panels on the roof and included work on nearly every other part of the building.

“Our beautiful sanctuary will be here — and be strong — for generations to come,” said senior rabbi Jessica Graf.
FLOWERS FOR PROM

Every year in the late spring, we florists at Bloomers, over on Washington Street near Broderick, get to share in the time-honored, all-American ritual of prom. For 40 years, Bloomers has been providing flowers for families in the neighborhood and beyond. The mother who got her wedding flowers may call for her son’s corsage, the same son whose mom received a sweet bouquet the day he was born. Her daughter, who needs a boutonniere for her date, probably got a charming little nosegay for her ballet recital not that long ago. Or so it sometimes seems.

Now the son and daughter are ordering flowers, perhaps for the first time, to honor this special occasion in their own lives. Some of these high-schoolers are nervous about ordering wristlets and boutonnieres. Others are so self-assured that we marvel at their sophistication.

Making the boutonnieres and especially the wristlet corsages is labor intensive and time consuming, but the results are beautiful. And the parade of young women and young men — many with proud moms and dads — who come to pick up the prom flowers is endearing and great fun.

Flowers for prom — a sweet tradition that endures.

— text & photographs by Barbara Wyeth
At long last, Blue Bottle opens
Neighbors eager for the special brew from BLUE BOTTLE COFFEE — and for new life on the corner of Fillmore & Jackson — will get to see what they’ve been so patiently awaiting for the past two years. The grand opening is set for Tuesday, June 6. But first they’ll host a Friends & Family Day on Sunday, June 4, and they’re inviting the neighbors to stop by from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for a cup of coffee on the house. Pastries and Blue Bottle merchandise will be available for sale, with proceeds going to the WOMEN’S COMMUNITY CLINIC on Fillmore.

WHETHER YOSHI’S: Five potential new groups have reportedly submitted proposals to take ownership of the FILLMORE HERITAGE CENTER and operate the spaces that once housed Yoshi’s restaurant and jazz club and an adjacent gallery and theater. The groups met in mid-May with city staffers and a community review panel headed by Rev. Amos Brown. “We are continuing the review and selection process and anticipate entering into negotiations with a finalist in the coming weeks,” said a city spokesman. A final decision will be made by the board of supervisors, probably in the fall.

NEARLY THERE: After a total rebuild down to the underground gas tanks, the SHELL station at California and Steiner will soon reopen with a new Loop Marketplace store.

Cottage Row Zen Garden Moving Forward
A plan to create a Japanese Zen rock garden at the foot of Cottage Row has been green-lighted by the Planning Department and is scheduled for a go-ahead vote this month.

The garden would honor the first generation of Japanese residents in San Francisco, the Issei, who established Japantown in its current location 110 years ago after the 1906 earthquake and fire. The memorial was proposed last year by leaders and supporters of the nearby Japanese Cultural and Community Center, who enlisted renowned gardeners Shigeru Namba and Isao Ogura to create a garden on the Sutter Street side of Cottage Row that would honor the Issei generation. “Cottage Row is the only place in Japantown they would recognize,” said Paul Osaki, director of the center, because the rest of the neighborhood was torn down and remade during redevelopment in the 1960s. Osaki presented the proposal last year at a series of five sometimes raucous neighborhood meetings. Some neighbors disputed the Japanese heritage of Cottage Row and insisted that any memorial should honor everyone who had lived in the area.

A subsequent review of census records showed that Cottage Row was in fact occupied almost entirely by Japanese-Americans until they and the other residents of Japantown were interned during World War II. After committee review on June 1, the Cottage Row proposal is slated to come before the city’s Recreation and Park Commission on June 15. The commission agenda describes the plan as “an in-kind grant valued at approximately $56,000.” A staff report notes that the garden plan is supported by 100 nearby residents, 23 community organizations and 463 people who signed petitions, in addition to supervisors London Breed and Aaron Peskin. Five nearby residents and one other person oppose the plan.
Delaying a Police Investigation
Geary and 3rd
April 26, 12:50 a.m.
Officers received a report that a large crowd of people were involved in a street fight. When they arrived at the scene, a woman approached them to report that her purse had been stolen. She pointed toward the milling people and said the suspect was among them.

While the officers were searching for the suspect, they encountered a man who appeared to be starting a second street fight a block away. The officers were breaking up that fight when suddenly the belligerent man became physically aggressive, fac- ing them in a fighting stance and refusing orders to cooperate. Eventually the officers used pepper spray to de-escalate the situa- tion and detained the suspect.

Later it was discovered that the man who was sprayed was the same person who had attempted to help the woman recover her purse. He proved instead to be a hin- drance to the police investigation, as the purse snatcher was not apprehended. The man was treated for pepper spray injuries, then cited and released for delaying a police investigation.

The Friendship Line
Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Crisis intervention
- Elder abuse counseling
- Emotional support
- Well-Being check-ins
- Information and referrals

1.800.971.0016
Volunteer Opportunities: 415.750.4136

CRIME WATCH

THEFT FROM LOCKED VEHICLE
Laurel and Fell
May 6, 7:30 p.m.
Officers received reports of an auto boost. A suspect had smashed the rear- right passenger window of a car and stolen personal belongings from the vehicle. Responding officers observed 12 indenta- tions on the right front passenger window of the vehicle, which they believed were caused by an attempt to gain entry through that window. The car’s surface was unsuit- able for fingerprinting. Police have no sus- pects at this time.

BATTERY
Masonic and Oak
May 8, 9:11 p.m.
A woman found a group of people congregating in front of her residence and asked them to leave. When they refused to go, she picked up her garden hose and sprayed the ground near the group. One of the men got to his feet and approached her. Fearing for her safety, she sprayed the man with her hose. The man then grabbed her by the neck and pushed her against the exterior wall of the house, holding her there for a few seconds. The woman stated that she could not breathe while she was in his grip. She wanted to press criminal charges, but officers failed to find the suspect.

BATTERY
Stanyan and Oak
May 10, 7:16 p.m.
A woman was approached on the sidewalk by a man who, without warning or provocation, punched her in the face, knocking her to her knees. She managed to get up and run from her attacker.

She called the police. When officers arrived, they met with a witness who indi- cated a Hispanic man lying on the ground next to a muni stop. He matched the description of the battery suspect given out by dispatch. The suspect was missing two front teeth, bleeding from his mouth and screaming incoherently. When the officer attempted to get more information about the incident, the suspect opened a stream of profanities. He had bloodshot eyes and appeared to be under the influence of alco- hol. The man was placed in handcuffs and the police called an ambulance.

The victim had bruises around her right eye but refused medical treatment; however, she did press charges against her assailant. The man was transported to SF General, where he was treated for injuries.

ROBBERY WITH A KNIFE
Geary and Palm
May 11, 8:40 p.m.
An employee of a local pharmacy heard the sounds of merchandise dropping on the floor. He went to investigate and came upon a man stuffing bottles of body wash into a paper bag.

Believing the man intended to leave the store without paying, the store employee tackled him, struggling to get the bottles away from him. The robber announced that he was going to take the items, and turned to leave the store. The employee grabbed the bag from him then, and bag and mer- chandise fell on the floor. The suspect fled.

A short time later, the same individual returned to the pharmacy. The bottles of body wash had been left at the checkout counter and the suspect made a second try for them, grabbing them and walking out. The employee intercepted him, but once again he ran off.

When the would-be robber was gone, the employee found a knife on the ground near the store’s entrance. Then he reviewed the video surveillance footage and saw that the suspect had been holding the knife when he entered the store the second time and called the police.

The suspect was described as a black male between 30 and 40 years of age, approximately 6 ft. 2 in. tall, and weighing about 220 lbs. The incident is still under investigation.

EDITOR’S NOTE: All information in this month’s Crime Watch comes from Richmond Station, which serves the neighborhood west of Divisadero Street. Again this month no information was released from Northern Station, which serves the area east of Divisadero.
A Facelift in Pacific Heights

By Chris Barnett

Built in 1903 by a gaggle of well-heeled businessmen as a hideaway for their mistresses, the discreet, elegant 48-room HOTEL DRISCO at 2901 Pacific is getting a costly facelift. Known locally as the guest house for Pacific Heights, its longtime general manager JOHN SPEAR promises many amenities after it reopens on July 1 — including daily breakfast, wine and hors d’oeuvres, a fitness center and passes to the Presidio YMCA.

Also shaking it up: The PAYNE MANSION HOTEL, a 10-roomer in a magnificently restored 17,000 square foot Victorian home circa 1881 at 1409 Sutter, is planning to add a cafe, private meeting rooms and even a co-working space. Husband and wife owners YANAN SUN and WILLY CHANG let their rooms and suites out starting at $200 a night. WiFi’s free.

Craying carne asada, or crazy for a camaron taco, but hate standing in line? Go online. TACOBAR impresario JACK SCHWARTZ — a brand new proud papa, by the way — has gone high tech and added digital ordering and catering. Click on 415tacobar.com, choose, then grab and go — or sit, schmooze and sip a fresh lime agave margarita on the high-visibility corner of Fillmore and California.

Sayonara to THE GROVE manager WENDY KWONG, who transfers to its Yerba Buena outpost. And so long to Harry’s super-server MICHELLE PIERSON, who has departed to become a registered nurse — and a shout-out to her compadre, KERRY WILEY, who has this gift of remembering exactly what you drink and how it’s made before you order. HARRY’S BAR is celebrating its 30th on Fillmore. HARRY DENTON, the jolly founder famed for dancing on his bar, is living up in Washington these days.

Hello Dali. That’s what SUSAN VAN BEEN thought when a customer left a Salvador Dali litho to be framed at her WALTER ADAMS framery at 2019 Fillmore and vamoosed. There’s also a Jasper Johns waiting to be memorialized, but the owner’s not far away. Susan and husband Nicolas say their small Fillmore Street shop has the city’s biggest collection of handmade photo frames — from Romania, Italy, France — many with museum glass.

Shoppers are not flocking to the new self-checkout stations at MOLLIE STONE’S, though they would seem to be timesavers. Many locals prefer a chat with the familiar faces running the registers. And some sleuthing reveals another reason. SAHAR SEDIDOU, a chef at the hot ticket eatery State Bird Provisions, doesn’t mind checking herself out, but had a six-pack of fine craft beers in her full basket. BRIAN DLUHY, a technology chap, is indeed a do-it-yourselfer, but he had a single bottle of imported Weihenstephan beer along with some vittles, so he also had to wait. HENRI GJULIAN, visiting from Brussels, was buying a bottle of Belgian ale and although he rebo-checks out at home, not here. Why? California law does not allow alcohol through those scan-it and bag-it-yourself lines. But here’s an inside tip: The checker standing by to help with the new-fangled machines will ring up your spirits separately, if you ask.

Another boulevard thirst parlor has gone retro. THE ELITE CAFE’s bar manager and spirits historian BRIAN NELSON says that when Prohibition became the law of the land, bartenders became soda jerks. Makes sense, since many saloons became drugstores — and the bars, with all those stools, became soda fountains. So he’s created two new, sinfully rich “booby” milkshake dessert cocktails for summertime sipping.

The Oaxacan Chocolate starts with Straus organic chocolate ice cream, then a shot and a half of Vida organic mezcal, spiced blood orange liqueur, an ounce of Kalani coconut liqueur, 10 drops of ancho tincture chili, some acid phosphate for the soda fountain fizziness and two dashes of Straus chocolate, automatically shaken by the Elite’s new milkshake machine and poured into a tall glass.

The Fat Palomino is inspired, says Nelson, by the always bizarre Fat Tuesday Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans. His concoction begins, again, with Straus ice cream — this time, vanilla bean — an ounce of Plantation Three Rum, an ounce of Cardamaro, an Italian bitter liqueur, an ounce of Lustau PX sweet sherry, a scoop of malt, a dash of chocolate bitters and six dashes of acid phosphate; garnished with nutmeg and coconut chocolate sprinkles. And the big news: The Elite now has a daily 5 to 6 p.m. happy hour with $1 oysters, $8 well cocktails and $3 off all beer and wine.

With humble apologies to the late, great Herb Caen: “Item, item, hoosegotta item?” Don’t be bashful. Send yours to chris@cbarnmedia.com.
Ask any true San Franciscan with a serious sweet tooth what tops the list of local culinary delights and the answer you’ll likely hear: Coffee Crunch Cake.

For more than three decades, customers have found this delicacy at Yasukochi’s Sweet Stop, tucked away inside Super Mira Market at 1790 Sutter Street in Japantown.

These days some voice concern about the fate of the fabled Coffee Crunch Cake should Sweet Stop owners Moses and Hatsy Yasukochi decide to retire. The Yasukochis have no imminent retirement plans, but even when they do, the future of the Coffee Crunch Cake is assured: Their grandson Kenji Yick, a graduate of the French Culinary Institute, vows he will carry on the tradition.


The Yasukochis grew up in the Bay Area — he in San Francisco and she in Oakland and Concord. Both spent time as children in internment camps during World War II.

“A friend of mine wanted to set us up on a blind date,” Hatsy says. “I said, ‘I don’t go on blind dates. I would have to see him first.’ And she said, ‘He...
can’t come out.’ I thought, ‘He can’t come out? Is he in jail or something?’ It eventually became clear that Moses couldn’t come out because he was in the U.S. Army. A year or two later, when they wound up on the same bowling team, the two soon became a personal team. They were married in 1964. Hatsy and Moses Yasukochi raised three daughters in San Francisco: Stacey Nolan, a project manager at Hewlett Packard; Wendy Prigge, a nurse and director of the operating room at Stanford Hospital, and the mother of Kenji and his sister Samantha; and Erin Yamamura, a San Francisco firefighter and the mother of Justin and Lindsay.

Before opening the Sweet Stop in 1974, the Yasukochis owned Antoine’s Bakery in Lakeside Village. Tony, a baker hired to help out, came to Antoine’s from the long-beloved Blum’s pastry shop on Union Square, where Coffee Crunch Cake was the tried and true choice for San Francisco special occasions. Tony shared the recipe with Moses, who soon learned to create it with such perfection that the retired Blums gave him their blessing to use the Coffee Crunch Cake name.

One slice costs $3.95, and full cakes range from an eight-inch round, for $35, to a flat cake that serves up to 100. Three-tiered wedding cakes can be created with two weeks’ notice.

The Sweet Stop counter features much more than cake. Thanks to Moses, who arrives at seven in the morning to fire up the ovens by opening time at 10, there are also cookies, pies, donuts and enough pastries to wreck the most dedicated diet in town. But get there early for the Coffee Crunch Cake — or order in advance — because it tends to sell out. The shop is closed on Sundays and Mondays.

The Sweet Stop is inside Yasuaki Miura’s Super Mira Market at the corner of Sutter and Buchanan, where a dazzling assortment of Japanese foods and goods line the shelves. It is helpful to read Japanese, but essential translations appear on most items. Or a smiling Mitoki Inagaki, who is usually found at the checkout counter, will translate for customers in need. Other than being owned by good friends who share adjacent space, the market and the Sweet Stop are not related.

One local non-Japanese customer frequently stops by for mysterious seafood items, which her husband enjoys with his nightly martini: Tako Sunomono (Japanese cucumber octopus salad) or Chuka Ika Sansai (squid and vegetables) or Shio Kasunoko (salted herring roe.) A worried-looking clerk recently warned her as she was purchasing the roe: “It’s very salty.” Still, she proceeded, reasoning that a cheese plate featuring sliced octopus and salted herring roe could certainly help enliven any cocktail hour.

Also at Super Mira are assortments of meats, fish, sushi and fresh-made dishes. Customers are often found at quiet tables in the corner after assembling a tasty snack or lunch — a unique way to enjoy a stopover in Japan-town. More common than diners, though, are the regular shoppers who come to Super Mira for just about everything on their grocery lists. Customers often top off their trips with detours to the Sweet Stop. And lucky ones get there in time for a slice of Coffee Crunch Cake.
A View of the Bay Helped Lure the Maestro

By Pamela Feinsilber

M 

aestro — and neighborhood resident — Nicola Luisotti opens the San Francisco Opera’s summer season this month, conducting eight performances of Verdi’s heart-wrenching Rigoletto.

Italian to his core, Luisotti, who’s been music director of the opera company since 2009, is particularly renowned for conducting the works of his most famous musical countrymen. He will open the fall season conducting Puccini’s beloved Turandot in early September and Verdi’s romantic La Traviata later that month.

But if not for the charms of the neighborhood, he might not be in San Francisco at all.

You’ve worked in opera companies all over the world. What brought you to San Francisco?

I will never forget that important moment of my artistic life. I was in L.A. in 2005 conducting Pagliacci, by Leoncavallo. I’d been invited to conduct La Fara del Destino, by Giuseppe Verdi, in San Francisco, and I had to start the rehearsals. But I was so tired, I was close to canceling my engagement.

I decided to come here for two days; my wife, Rita, remained in L.A. When I entered the apartment the S.F. Opera had arranged for me in Pacific Heights, the windows provided a spectacular view of the bay and Alcatraz — a view I couldn’t have had in any other neighborhood. I immediately called Rita and said: “You will love this city!”

And it was one of the best musical experiences in my life. The S.F. Opera orchestra and chorus were just amazing. Four years later, when I was asked to become music director, I was in paradise.

And back in Pacific Heights. I fell in love with what the neighborhood first gave me — that view. Our apartment building in Pacific Heights was built in 1932, and I thought it was truly fate, since that was the year the Opera House opened. And Pacific Heights is so quiet, beautiful and elegant — just a perfect place for a musician to be inspired.

You began your career at age 10, playing the organ in your village church in Tuscany, learning to read music by watching the priest — and a year later you were conducting the church chorus. How did you become an opera conductor?

I have just been named director asociado at the Teatro Real in Madrid. I will also conduct a lot in New York at the Met, and in Paris, London, Munich, Rome, Turin and many other places around the world.

The first time I attended an opera, it was Madama Butterfly, when I was 12. But the first time I fell in love with an opera was La Bohème, when I was 21. When I saw it, I understood that one day, I could become an opera conductor. For sure, a bit of talent, a lot of work and some luck can contribute to achievement. Perhaps being Italian is why many theaters ask me to conduct Italian works, and so it can be said that I bring my Italian traditions to the music.

What exactly does an opera conductor do?

This month, Nicola Luisotti (above) conducts Rigoletto, the first of the summer season’s operas, which will be followed by Don Giovanni and La Bohème.

“I have a huge affinity with this opera,” he says. “Rigoletto represents how dramatic life can be when people try to force fate.”

What do you enjoy on your time off?

Rita and I love to cook and we do not eat out very often, although we have been many times, either on our own or with visiting friends and family, to Pizzeria Delfina. We bike from home to Crissy Field and beyond and like to hike in the Marin Headlands.

What will you miss?

I have simply miss everything about this fantastic, charming city that gave me so much. But I will come back here as a guest, and sooner than expected. Remember that all who have lived in this city have left their hearts in San Francisco!
The Art of Neighborliness

Many say they want to shop local and know their neighbors. Suzanne and George Burwasser do it.

“We still give all the new stores a try, but there are fewer things of interest now,” says Suzanne. Still, they keep hope alive by stoking their grand fantasy: “They’ll come into a windfall, buy up the commercial property on Fillmore Street — and reduce the rent to make it affordable for neighborhood entrepreneurs and people who have great ideas and want to try them out.”

“We would pop the bubble and do away with the crazed commercialism going on here now,” says George.

They purchased their home, a three-flat on Bush Street facing St. Dominick’s, in 1983. They live in the top flat, and the tenants they attract tend to stay. One was Richard Hilkert, the legendary bookseller and bon vivant who lived on the second floor for 27 years until he died three years ago. “Richard is still with us,” says Suzanne, with a nod to the church outside their window, where he is interred in the columbarium. “He said he wanted to keep an eye on us.”

Though both Burwasser are now retired from “cold work,” maintaining the flat and nurturing friends and neighbors more than fill their time.

George also regularly gives blood every six weeks or so, a practice he started in high school. A couple of years ago, he gave his 60th donation at the Blood Centers of the Pacific. “It can be a little uncomfortable, but think about what you’re doing; you have exactly what another person needs to stay alive,” he says. “It’s a way of returning value to the community, and almost anyone can do it.”

The passing decades have only stoked their mutual admiration, their appreciation for bad puns and their sense of fun. “Come on, folks, it’s life; it has to be silly,” Suzanne says. “If you can’t see some of the humor and fun in life, it’s not worth living.” She attributes their longevity together partly to advice from her mother: Have a decent sense of humor.

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“For Melville, it’s hilarious,” George insists.

They married when Suzanne graduated and loaded up all their worldly goods, including a motorcycle, into the car George’s mother gave them as a wedding gift, the same gigantic model used as Checker cabs.

Over the years, their jobs and additional schooling took them to Canada, to Sukkot, and Toronto, posts they now refer to as “educational,” especially when it came to study incentives for students. “And I still tell a relative who was a teacher would buy them by the case for my sister — they would know where to find it. And Fillmore Hardware,” Suzanne says. “If you can’t see some of the humor and fun in life, it’s not worth living.” She attributes their longevity together partly to advice from her mother: Have a decent sense of humor.

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“They were the first buildings we saw,” says George.

One of their first flingings was over books. Early on, they threw down a challenge: She was to read her beloved Steinbeck; he to read her favored Dickens. Then discuss. Their literary tastes didn’t always meld, and still don’t. George proudly shows off a tome he just acquired — a gift Suzanne snagged for him at Browser Books. It’s a compendium of the three novels Melville wrote before Moby Dick, which is still one of his all-time favorites.

“Chapter 13 is hilarious,” he says. “It’s humorous now and then,” says Suzanne. “I wouldn’t call it hilarious.”

“At first, it was fun, but there are fewer foundations here,” he says. “I have to do a lot of moving and need a little something to snack on,” she says. “Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn’t.”

Many locals get quiet distributions of homebaked cakes on birthdays and soda bread on St. Patrick’s Day. George says Suzanne is a master at sending hand-made homebaked cakes on birthdays and soda sometimes it doesn’t.

She remembers the world’s last supply of carbon paper — including a motorcycle, into the car George’s mother gave them as a wedding gift, the same gigantic model used as Checker cabs.

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One of their first flingings was over books. Early on, they threw down a challenge: She was to read her beloved Steinbeck; he to read her favored Dickens. Then discuss. Their literary tastes didn’t always meld, and still don’t. George proudly shows off a tome he just acquired — a gift Suzanne snagged for him at Browser Books. It’s a compendium of the three novels Melville wrote before Moby Dick, which is still one of his all-time favorites.

“Chapter 13 is hilarious,” he says. “It’s humorous now and then,” says Suzanne. “I wouldn’t call it hilarious.”
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When the late David Ish founded the New Fillmore in 1986, he put me to work as the book columnist. I spent many years reviewing anything that caught my interest — and, of course, anything by neighborhood residents. David was even kind enough to publish my poems from time to time. One of the things that makes me happy is that one of my New Fillmore readers told me she kept a poem of mine taped over her sink. That’s the kind of thing that can happen when you live and work in the same neighborhood.

If our conversation goes on past congratulations, people will ask me what my book is about. If they really want to know, I try to tell them. It’s about the Scopes trial. I say. But it’s not really — that’s just part of the time and place in which the story takes place.

It’s about Prohibition and bootleggers — well, sort of, but there’s more to it than that. It’s about a battle between two magicians, but they’re not the lead characters.

It’s a love story, a coming of age story and an adventure story. It’s about magic and youth.

Oh, and I hope it’s funny. It’s a story I composed in my head between conversations over the counter at Bi-Rite and while unloading cases of Champagne at D&M. It’s a story that occurred to me as I walked around this neighborhood that has been my home for decades. But it’s not set here. I’ve never been successful in capturing the flavor of this place in fiction, though I have tried. The Magic War takes place in a lost and imagined America.

The story has taken a long and winding path to publication. I wrote it almost 17 years ago. It was accepted by a publisher that closed its doors just before the book reached print. Last year it got picked up by Loose Leaves Publishing, and we spent a lot of time polishing it up. I hope it is shiny enough so that all the Fillmore folks who ask me how my writing is going can enjoy it.

To celebrate, I hope you’ll be able to join me at a book launch party on Sunday, June 11, from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Thomas Reynolds Gallery at 1906 Fillmore.
A mix of documentaries from whimsical to profound

**DocFest at the Vogue**

Lynn Hershman Leeson’s new film, *Tania Libre*, screens at the Vogue Theater on June 9.

**SF DocFest** begins on May 31, with initial films shown at the Roxie Theatre at 16th and Valencia. For more information, go to sfdocfest.com.
Two noteworthy houses along the south side of Green Street, where it slopes steeply toward the crest at Scott, emulate the craftsmanship of the English townhouses and rural cottages that influenced their design.

The James McGauley House, located at 2423 Green Street, was built in 1891, two years before its neighbor at 2421 Green Street. Both were designed by architect Ernest Coxhead, a British transplant. The house at 2421 Green was Coxhead’s own, which he shared with his brother, Almeric. Around the corner at 2710 Scott Street, the Charles Murdock house, also built in 1893, rounds out the grouping. This set of residences reflects Coxhead’s transition from his earlier ecclesiastical work to the residential projects that shaped the second phase of his California career.

Leaving England together, Ernest and Almeric Coxhead opened an architectural office in Los Angeles in early 1887. His own home and the one next door would have been new and somewhat daring within the Victorian landscape of San Francisco. While employing British vernacular architectural language and embracing what was developing on the rural English cottage and its more urban counterpart, the townhouse, as executed by British architect Richard Norman Shaw. In its roof form, small dormers, heavy masonry chimney, large multi-paned windows, half-timbering and overall rustic character, the McGauley house mingles everyday elements and materials with exceptional craftsmanship to create what would have been a new, somewhat daring facade within the Victorian landscape of San Francisco.
East Coast as the Shingle Style, Ernest Coxhead’s early San Francisco houses helped establish a local, architectural language that would eventually be known as the First Bay Tradition.

Two years later, in conjunction with his brother, Coxhead designed a house for their use on the lot immediately to the east of the McGauley residence. The Coxhead brothers took advantage of the narrow lot, creating an almost tower-like, slender facade rising to a steeply pitched roof. The roof of the McGauley house runs parallel to the street; the Coxhead house roof is perpendicular. This was an ingenious approach to creating a sense of separation between the two houses, which are actually in close proximity. It also allowed for a sequence of stairs and walkways accessing each residence. Both houses are set on significant masonry retaining walls, elevating them above the pedestrian level of the steeply pitched street.

The understated exterior of the Coxhead cottage masks a phenomenal interior that commences from a long, glazed entrance gallery running the length of the west elevation. The entry begins with a set of stairs and landings and turns through an archway, up another set of stairs to a long gallery that defines both the interior and exterior space. At the outside, it forms a pathway along the rear garden of the McGauley house, while at the interior it serves an entry hall accessing the front living room at the north end of the house or a sitting area and dining room adjacent to the south facing garden. This unique configuration offers both intimacy and spectacle, as surely the western-facing windows of the gallery would have looked directly into the neighboring McGauley rear garden. The experience of this interior space has an almost religious feeling; yet the separation of the space and the sequence of movement through it is clearly residential.

Both houses feature expertly placed windows of varying sizes and shapes that generally employ small panes covering a fairly large expanse. The fenestration breaks up the exterior shingled walls creating cut-out elements in the wall surface. In the Coxhead house, the front windows terminate at end walls, furthering the punched opening effect. Each house has cleverly placed dormers to interrupt the large expanse of roof surface.

It is unclear how Coxhead and McGauley met, but McGauley does not appear to have lived in the house for very long. He married Minna Hoppe in San Mateo in 1898. Five years later, a Chronicle article detailed the couple’s rather shocking divorce, with Mrs. McGauley claiming much anguish over her husband’s “aboriginal manner of dressing while at home” and complaining that he is “either mentally unbalanced or that he is a crank and possessed of a monomania upon the subjects of food, hygiene and religion.” Ernest Coxhead also married in 1898. His bride, Helen Brown Hawes, was the daughter of an Episcopalian minister. According to the Chronicle on June 19, 1898, their San Francisco wedding was a most pleasant affair. Esteemed architect Willis Polk was Coxhead’s best man at the ceremony at St. Luke’s Church. Helen died in 1909 at their home in San Mateo. Coxhead’s biographers have speculated he never recovered from her loss.

In 1893, the same year he designed his own house, Coxhead executed a residence for Charles Murdock, an eastern transplant, California intellectual and printer, who collaborated with and published the works of many of the state’s best writers, including Robert Louis Stevenson and Bret Harte. Located on Scott Street, just uphill from the other two houses, the Murdock commission used many of the same elements as the two Green Street houses: a shingled exterior, a steeply pitched roof, quirky dormers, a deeply recessed front entry and an understated ribbon of windows at the front elevation.

The three houses at Green and Scott are Coxhead’s earliest extant San Francisco residential experiments, a far cry from the Victorian houses that preceded them. They compete in significance with other First Bay Tradition residential assemblies, including the houses marching up the 3200 block of Pacific Avenue and the grouping at the apex of the Vallejo Street steps on Russian Hill.
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Hill & Co. Real Estate is proud of the recognition its agent Soni Goodman recently received from the San Francisco SPCA. Soni and her Bichon Frise, Lilli, were recently honored for 5 years of service, visiting the sick and elderly throughout our City.

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— Data and commentary provided by PATRICK BARBER, president of Pacific Union.

The corner house at 2700 Broadway sold in late April for $13.9 million.

A surge of spring sales
The weather typically has no effect on the pattern of local home sales. But this year was far from typical, as sales in San Francisco’s northside neighborhoods surged during the height of the spring selling season, which followed on the heels of an uncommonly rainy period here.

There were 48 single-family home and condominium sales recorded in the neighborhood between the middle of April and the middle of May. That’s a 50 percent increase from the same period last year, and the busiest spring since 2013.

The transactions included San Francisco’s two largest single-family home sales so far in 2017: a $13.9 million, eight-bedroom house at 2700 Broadway in late April and a $15 million, seven-bedroom property at 3540 Jackson Street, about a week later.

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Fillmore Street, looking north toward the bay from Chestnut Street, on March 11, 1926.
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