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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ OCTOBER 2018





‘It’s Time to Go Home’

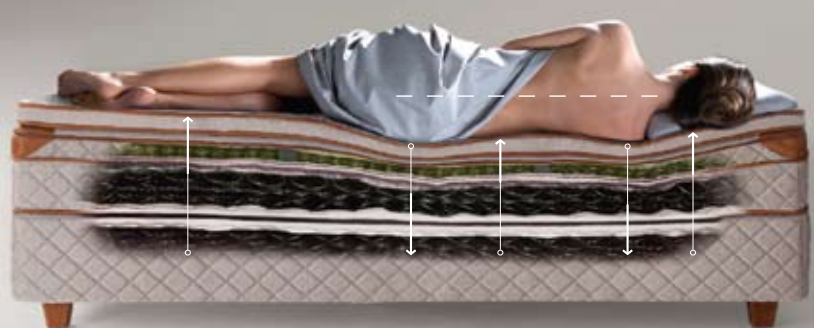
After 37 years on Fillmore, a treasure chest of Japanese dolls and antiques is closing. PAGE 6

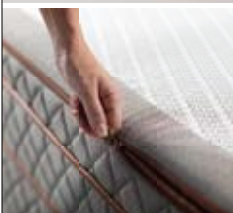





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UPFRONT



Browser Books staffer Catie Damon now leads Story Time for Kids on weekends.

Browser Starts a Book Club

WHEN Fillmore's venerable Browser Books asked its friends and neighbors for financial support earlier this year, the appeal came with a promise to pay off the store's debts and build its future with new leadership and activities.

The community responded enthusiastically and the \$75,000 fundraising goal was reached within a month. Now new staffers have come on board and new programming has begun.

New part-time bookseller and writer Charlie Citrine McKeever-Bartlett has launched a new **BROWSER BOOK CLUB**. It began last month with a reading of Jacqueline Woodson's *Another Brooklyn*. It continues this month with Casey Plett's *Little Fish*, a tale of transformation across generations.

The book club will meet monthly at the shop for discussion of that month's book. Generally the meetings will be held on the last Wednesday of the month

from 7:30 to 9 p.m. But this month, because that's Halloween, the meeting is a week earlier, on October 24.

Readers can sign up at the bookstore to join the book club, and members get a 15% discount on the featured books.

Browser has also begun holding **STORY TIME FOR KIDS** on weekends, featuring a rotating assortment of titles for young readers of all ages. Story Time is led by Catie Damon, daughter of longtime Browser owner Stephen Damon.

"We aim to connect with the community in new ways moving forward," said new manager Jordan Pearson. "We want to be the neighborhood's other coffee shop, where they can not only browse and buy their newest reads, but also meet up with friends and enjoy readings and other entertainment. We have a cozy new space in the back and would love to collaborate with our customers on creative and fun events."



Little Fish is this month's book.

THE NEW FILLMORE

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Connecting the neighborhood

Every month, 20,000 copies of the New Fillmore circulate to homes and businesses in the Fillmore, Pacific Heights and Japantown. We thank you for your support and encouragement and welcome your ideas and suggestions.



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Shake-up
at the markets

After 22 years as the manager of **MOLLIE STONE'S** on California Street — beginning when it was still the **GRAND CENTRAL MARKET** — Dave Parrisher has left the neighborhood. He has been called home to the mothership in Sausalito to manage the original Mollie Stone's there, succeeding Mollie's son Mike.

Meanwhile, at the Saturday morning **FILLMORE FARMERS MARKET**, the extended Hmong family from Fresno Family Farm — the largest and longest-running participant — has been kicked out for at least six months for selling produce they were not certified to sell.

■ **NEW & CELEBRATED:** South of Geary, the shuttered ex-**BLACK BARK** at 1325 Fillmore is reopening this month as **ISLA VIDA**, an Afro-Caribbean restaurant from Farmerbrown's Jay Foster and partners.

The transformation of **DINO'S** into **SANTINO'S VINO**, a wine bar named for his son, is taking longer than expected — surprise, surprise — but some familiar faces are beginning to return, and the re-opening is near. . . . Down the block, **PIZZERIA DELFINA** just celebrated turning 10. Mazel tov.

■ **ONE OF THE GREATS:** Bobbie “Spider” Webb — a steady presence on the Fillmore music scene since the '50s and a regular at the Fillmore Jazz Festival and other local clubs and events — died on September 21.

“One of my favorite places was the Blue Mirror — Leola King's joint,” he says in *Harlem of the West*. “I played the Blue Mirror with T-Bone Walker, the Ink Spots and Little Willie John. Leola knew everyone, so she was able to get the best bands of the day.” RIP.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS



DICKIE SPRITZER

Alta Plaza reopens

Neighbors and city leaders turned out on September 23 to celebrate the reirrigating and reopening of the top of Alta Plaza Park. A neighborhood planting party is still to come.

She Kept the
Neighborhood
Looking Good

SHE WALKED the street incognito, just another neighbor, often bandanaed, with a shopping bag on her arm.

But Lydia Ainsley was on a mission every time she walked down Fillmore Street. For more than two decades, she made it her business to remove the signs and posters taped to utility poles on Fillmore and discreetly tuck them in her sack.



Lydia Ainsley in the act.

Nobody asked her to do it, but she approached her task diligently. Eventually the Fillmore merchants began paying her the princely sum of \$150 every month, which she expected on time.

She resisted all praise and publicity, insisting it would only blow her cover.

She was also a faithful volunteer for Food Runners, delivering excess food from local businesses to shelters where it was needed. And she did it via Muni, or on foot.

Lydia Ainsley died on August 6 at age 91, still in her beloved apartment of more than 40 years at Fillmore and Vallejo, overlooking the bay and the Golden Gate Bridge.



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November 6, 2018 Election

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PROP B

NO on PROP B / Unnecessary Regulations on Local Business

Hastily creates requirements regulating data collection that would be best addressed at the state or federal level, rather than on the local ballot

PROP C

NO on PROP C / Massive Tax Increase

Targets employers with single largest tax increase in SF history, creating a \$682 million set aside with no accountability at City Hall, putting middle-income jobs at risk

PROP 6

NO on PROP 6 / Save the Gas Tax

Retains vital funds for road, transit and infrastructure projects

PROP 10

NO on PROP 10 / Preserve Affordable Rental Housing

Discourages building of rental housing, compounding the statewide housing crisis and harming the people it intends to help

PROP A

YES on PROP A / Restore Our Port

Raises funds to begin the critical Seawall rebuild, better preparing the city for future natural disasters and challenges of climate change

PROP 1

YES on PROP 1 / Affordable Housing for Veterans

Issues bonds to finance affordable housing programs for veterans and low-income earners, helping mitigate state's extreme housing shortage

PROP 5

YES on PROP 5 / More Housing for New Buyers

Enables seniors and the disabled to downsize, making more housing available for families, helping alleviate the state's housing shortage

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CRIME WATCH

Aggravated Assault With Vehicle

Gough and Sutter

August 6, 3:45 p.m.

A man was riding his motorcycle when a female driver swerved her white SUV into him, making contact. She drove the SUV toward the motorcyclist several more times, attempting to hit him while the man struggled to evade her. Eventually she drove away, heading northbound on Buchanan Street. The man described her as approximately 60 years old. Police are still investigating the matter.

Robbery

Geary and Buchanan

August 11, 1:15 p.m.

A woman was walking down Geary when three teenage boys, roughly 15 to 16 years old, approached her from behind. One of them grabbed her phone. She struggled with him, but he managed to steal the phone. Then all three boys fled south on Buchanan Street. Police have no suspects at this time.

Hot Prowl

Octavia and Washington

August 19, between 4 and 5 a.m.

A woman was inside her residence when a man entered through a rear door in the early morning hours. The intruder stole a backpack, a tablet, a cell phone and cash before fleeing. A security camera picked up an image of a male, 40 to 50 years old. Police are still investigating the matter.

Robbery

Clement and 23rd

August 24, 9:37 a.m.

A woman was walking down the street with her cell phone in hand when a man rode by on a bicycle and grabbed it. The bicyclist sped up and fled. A witness to the incident called the police, giving dispatch a detailed description, along with the thief's direction of travel. Officers arrived and located the man; the stolen phone was in his hand. After the woman who was robbed identified him, he was booked at county jail.

Driving Under the Influence

Geary and St. Josephs

August 31, 2:30 a.m.

Officers spotted a car that was speeding. The vehicle ran a stop light while they watched. They set out after it and carried out a traffic stop. The driver showed obvious signs of intoxication, so the officers conducted field sobriety tests, and the suspect failed all of them. The passenger in the car then became combative; he was arrested and booked for being drunk in public. The driver was booked at county jail for driving under the influence, reckless driving, resisting arrest and running a stop sign.

Robbery

Geary and Fillmore

August 31, 3:35 p.m.

A 15-year-old girl was riding the Muni bus when a man snatched her cell phone, jumped off the bus and fled. She described the suspect as a male about 20 to 25 years old. Police have no suspects and are still investigating the matter.

Vandalism

Baker and Grove Street

August 31, 8 p.m.

A man was unloading his car when a second man came out of his house and approached with his dog. The first man had previously had unpleasant encounters with the dog. He was fearful of the animal and asked its owner to take it back inside. The man complied, then returned with a kitchen knife and slashed the tires of the man who was unloading his car.

The man with the slashed car tires called the police, and signed a citizen's arrest form. The officers cited the suspect for vandalism.

Hot Prowl

Octavia and Grove

September 2, 9 a.m.

A man woke up in his apartment to find his rear window open. His front door was unlocked as well. He discovered that a laptop and a video game console were missing. Police have no suspects at this time.

Shooting

Fillmore and Lombard

September 7, 2:50 a.m.

A restaurant employee was taking out the trash when a man approached him, demanded money, then shot him. The shooter fled on foot.

Police arrived and carried out a search for the suspect. Several minutes later, they detained him at Greenwich and Buchanan. The officers rendered first aid to the employee suffering from gunshot wounds and called an ambulance. Hospital personnel later determined that his wounds were not life threatening.

Burglary

Van Ness and Lombard

September 9, 1:51 a.m.

A man received a notification on his phone that his car alarm had been activated. He and his wife left their apartment to investigate, and saw an unknown man sitting inside their vehicle. The car's front passenger side window was broken.

When the suspect saw the couple, he got out and fled on foot, carrying items he had stolen from the car. When the police arrived, they took the man into custody without incident.

Auto Burglary

Van Ness and Fern

September 12, 9:33 a.m.

A man called the police as he witnessed an auto burglary. On arrival, the officers caught one suspect while the second man fled on a bicycle. The man who was detained was carrying property taken from the car. He was booked for his involvement in the burglary and for an outstanding warrant for narcotics offenses. The man who fled on the bike is still at large.

Robbery With a Gun

Alamo Square

September 18, 2:42 p.m.

Officers in plainclothes driving an unmarked police vehicle spotted a robbery in progress in Alamo Square. They jumped from their car and began a pursuit on foot. During the chase, one of the officers noticed a high-capacity pistol magazine in the suspect's possession. Eventually they caught up with him and commanded him to raise his hands; the man complied. The officer seized the robber's loaded .40 caliber Glock pistol. They located the tourist who had been robbed, who confirmed that they had detained the right man.

Robbery

Japantown

September 19, 4:59 p.m.

Street crimes officers on patrol spotted a woman chasing two men while shouting, "Give me back my phone!" The officers exited their vehicle and gave chase. During the pursuit, they recognized one man from a prior arrest. Eventually they caught both men and arrested them. The woman who had been robbed positively identified the two men. The officers found her phone on the roof of a nearby business, where one robber had tossed it during their flight.



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A Death in the Family

By Chris Barnett

AFTER 25 YEARS, 2412 FILLMORE, a three-chair hair studio at that address owned by JIM BORGASANO, took a financial bullet and was forced to shut down at the end of September. The proprietor says he was facing a nearly one-third rent hike, plus pressure to pay for other improvements to the space out of his own pocket. On his last day of September, Borgasano was sweeping up the bare studio, its normally lush flower boxes empty, but took time for a look back.

“When we opened, the rent was \$1,200 a month and there were all these little shops on this block,” he recalls. “It was vibrant. It was a neighborhood. We were all very close. We were like family. Then the landlords started getting greedy and a lot of stores were hurt and they closed.” His landlords, the Wortham Family Trust, “were nice,” he says, but never met anyone in the family; he dealt with their property management company.

“I’m going to miss ’em all,” says Borgasano of his neighbors. “You’ve got Eric the jeweler; Gary the antique dealer; Eric the lawyer; Peter, Angelo and Lefty at the Mayflower Market. And all the ones who are gone. Like Ed, the shoe man. We called him the shoe Nazi because if he didn’t like the shoes, he wouldn’t work on them. They call me the hair Nazi. If I didn’t think a hairstyle was appropriate, I wouldn’t do it. A store closes on this block and it’s like a death in the family.”

Borgasano is moving to Windsor in Sonoma County and will rent a chair in a salon there for clients who’ve promised they’re willing to drive an hour and a half north for a styling.

■
ALIVE AND WELL: Fully stocked family-owned corner grocery stores seem to be a dying breed. But the **MAYFLOWER MARKET** up the block at Fillmore and Jackson remains an exception. The **PRONGOS FAMILY** of Greek grocers are carrying on a century-old tradition of food merchandising in that space previously purveyed by Russian and Japanese families. And they’re sticking with old world values. That includes fair prices, a family member at the cash register, a basic salad bar for \$3.99 a pound, homemade soups, a nice selection of wines and a deli that offers fresh sandwiches for \$7. It also stocks local and national newspapers, has a nice assortment of pints and half pints of top label spirits, flowers and fully dusted shelves where every day looks like a grand opening. For early birds, Mayflower opens at 6:30 am.

■
THE CHAMPAGNE OF JOE: Across from the Mayflower, **BLUE BOTTLE COFFEE** looks like the set of a Netflix series. Young and interesting-looking customers, kids and dogs



SNEAK PEEK – The menu is still top secret, but the new decor at Noosh — in the works at Fillmore and Pine — is looking sleek and airy, with cozy conversational seating planned upstairs on the mezzanine. Expect a year-end opening.

relaxing and chatting; smiling staffers earnestly grinding beans, delicately pouring scalding water as it drips, drips, drips in a custom made-just-for-you-coffee that can take five to seven minutes to create for \$5. Plenty of other brews and flavors such as a New Orleans iced coffee go for \$4.25. But for the uber-discerning, there’s the “grand cru” of coffees.

“It’s made from the rarest beans from the finest coffee farm in all of Guatamala,” according to one of the Blue Bottle baristas. One cup costs a full Alexander Hamilton. Matthew, a young investor reading his Barrons’ and munching on one of the tasty looking fresh breakfast sandwiches, said he would shell out a 10 spot for a cup if someone pitched him on the pedigree. Message to the Blue Bottle brass: Add a sommelier to your staff.


■
POPPING UP FOR TWO WEEKS: Fillmore is America’s fashion lab. The latest experiment is **PERENNIAL**, a two-week pop up showing monochromatic “seasonless” women’s wear created out of sustainable silk-hemp by newly minted Parsons School Design grad Amelia Haney. Located next door to the Elite Cafe in the space occupied briefly by **MODERN CITIZEN**, Perennial popped up in San Francisco, Haney says, because of our perfect year-round weather and commitment to style and sustainability.

■
A BUFFETT’S BACK IN TOWN: Investor Warren Buffett’s late wife Susie lived in Pacific Heights for a time, his son Peter owned a home on Scott Street, and now his **BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY** branded residential real estate company is opening an office in the neighborhood, taking the two spaces on California Street previously occupied by the Vino wine shop and Kuraya antiques. **PAULA GOLD-NOCELLA** and **PETER SHOVANES** are leading the office.

The Beat goes on. Send newsy local items to chris@cbarnmedia.com or call 415-921-5092.

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Farewell to Narumi

Jiro Nakamura is retiring and going home to Japan

By Fran Moreland Johns

“YOU HAVE TO SAY: ‘This is the end. It’s time to go home,’” says Jiro Nakamura, with a shy smile.

Sadly for the neighborhood, that means the end of Narumi Japanese Antiques, Nakamura’s tiny jewel box of a shop at 1902 Fillmore Street. Narumi has been the go-to place for antique Japanese dolls, imported kimonos, essentials for a proper tea ceremony and a unique collection of Japanese antiques and art — including many of Nakamura’s own stained glass creations and hand-painted works — since it opened in 1981.

Nakamura is more philosophical than sad. “When they’re old, everyone wants to go home,” he says. So he will be returning to Kyushu, Japan, where he was born and grew up, and where his brother and sister still live. He is looking forward to the move, except for one thing. “The only thing bad about Japan is the weather,” he says. “The summer is very humid, very hot. The winter is very cold. Fall is okay.”

He has already shipped his personal collection, and hopes to sell everything that’s left within the next month or two. He plans to be back in Japan for the cold of December.

His neighbors will miss him. “If you have a shop right next door to Narumi, it’s hard not to develop an addiction to kimonos and an affection for Jiro. My crew and I were always the first ones in the door after a shipment arrived,” says Victoria Dunham, whose HiHo Silver and 1906 shops are his neighbors to the north. “But the real heartache, of course, is saying goodbye to our beloved neighbor and humorous good friend.”



After 37 years on Fillmore, Jiro Nakamura is closing his one-of-a-kind shop.

Nakamura’s unquestioned favorites among the treasures in his quietly elegant Fillmore Street shop are the antique Japanese dolls he has sought out on annual trips back to Japan. “The new ones are plastic,” he says, “some of them with wooden heads.” The antique dolls, he explains, have oyster shell faces. “You crush the shell, mix with water, glue, and apply the finish 20 times — 20 times!”

Narumi’s kimonos — another art form — are imported from Kyoto.

Still another art Nakamura has shared with the neighborhood is the traditional Japanese tea ceremony, which, he says, involves far more than preparing and serving tea. “The ceremony has a great history: art, directions, flower arranging,” he says. “I have been studying the tea ceremony for 25 years, and also teaching it for 25.” His classes have been held in his home, a few blocks from the shop.

Nakamura says he’ll miss a few things about San Francisco in addition to the weather. “The mix of different kinds of people, the nice restaurants and shops, the Golden Gate Bridge, the beautiful places,” he says. But “Japan has beautiful places, too.”

Going home also offers opportunity for more learning. “I plan to study more the tea ceremony. There is no end to what you can learn,” he says. “I love the techniques, the art, the flower arranging; the nice, sweet taste of green tea. And I like to wear the kimono.”



Among the treasures at Narumi: An “Okina” ningyo doll, modeled on human forms, from a Noh play that portrays a happy old man. His long white beard is an expression of wisdom and the dances are for peace and fertility.



Antique minister of government doll from the Edo period, made between 1800 and 1830.



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BY SHEILA PIERCE

La piazza: It's one of the things I miss most about Italy. Because *la piazza* preserves the traditions and habits of the past, which modern life is swallowing.

Because *la piazza* offers a newspaper stand instead of an app, interaction with people instead of technology and an outdoor space to breathe in where the world goes by in person rather than on a screen.

Because *la piazza* becomes a canvas of local flora and fauna, the central hub of a neighborhood, where kids migrate in the afternoon to kick a soccer ball and grandparents perch on benches to watch the next generation whiz by — where life slows down.

In the year and half I've lived in San Francisco, I've watched *una piazza* take shape, and by no coincidence it's thanks to a group of Italians. This *piazza* is not where you might think it would be: in the North Beach-Little Italy area of the city, which is an admirable community of shops, *pizzerie* and restaurants run by extraordinary Italian-Americans still operating their ancestors' businesses. And it's not oval, square or rectangular, like most piazzas.

Instead, it's linear, and it takes up two blocks on Union Street, between Laguna and Webster Streets. Here, my kids feel at home, as if back in Italy. In these places, my kids can speak Italian, enjoy homemade Italian cooking and gelato, feel the bond of neighborhood friends, reminisce about the Italian culture they miss and see how the tradition of family-run businesses transcends from Italy to America.

We start off at **THE ITALIAN HOMEMADE**, at 1919 Union, a restaurant where you can't make a reservation. Often there's a line out the door. But the kids say it's worth the wait, and seems as if they've flown to Italy for a homemade meal in a friend's kitchen.

We eat here every weekend — our kids beg to go on Sunday nights. To get in the Italian mood, my son brings his Italian crossword puzzle, *la settimana enigmistica*, and often the Italian waiters help him complete it as he waits for his pasta to boil. Or my daughter might strike up a conversation with any of the waiters about the latest Italian soccer game — passionate analyses of Gianluigi Buffon's latest save or Paulo Dybala's penalty kick happen in spitfire Italian over a mouthful of gnocchi.

Here you order your food and find a seat at either a communal table with high stools, at the counter or any of the six small tables in the back.

Mattia Cosmi, the owner of Italian Homemade, has opened up four branches



The Italian Homemade, at 1919 Union, offers a variety of fresh pastas and sauces.

Our Own Piazza

A taste of Italy on Union Street

of his shop (three in San Francisco and one in Berkeley) and might open another one soon in Seattle. This Italian eatery's concept is very American, in that you choose a type of pasta and then its sauce. (Rarely do you construct a plate of pasta in Italy — that's for the chefs to decide.)

The Italian owners have figured out that Americans often think there are only two sauces to be added to pasta: either a "red sauce" or "white sauce." But here, customers are encouraged to choose from alternative sauces: *salsa di crema di parmigiano*, *Bolognese*, *pasticcata*, *burro e salvia* and *pesto* are just a few.

Long ribbons of tagliatelle, fettuccine and spaghetti roll out of the pasta-maker operated by the ravioli and tortellini king who shapes meat or vegetables into succulent sachets with the adroit fingers of a surgeon. They ask you if you want parmi-

giano sprinkled on top of your pasta — a rhetorical question, no?

The wine served is mostly Italian, ranging from a Nebbiolo to a Sangiovese, by the glass or bottle. The beer served is from local Californian breweries. But if you're feeling like an *aperitivo*, they'll quickly fix you an Aperol spritz or a Negroni.

For the non-pasta lovers, they offer a classic *piadina*, a Northern Italian flatbread with *prosciutto di parma*, *stracchino* and *rucola*, or a *cassone*, a yeast-free flatbread stuffed with sausage, mozzarella and bell peppers, among other delicacies. There's the charcuterie plate of Italian cold cuts, coupled with an assortment of Italian cheese. Salads with a baseball-size burrata on top occasionally sail out of the kitchen. But oddly, the one thing you won't find at this restaurant is bread in a basket.

MISTER BOMBOLONI, a local baker, often

drops off two dozen of his donut-esque dynamos every day, which cry out to be devoured at the cashier. If you're lucky, you can snag one filled with either Nutella or vanilla cream before they disappear. Tiramisu is also a homemade top-off to a perfect meal — my son's favorite. Or, panna cotta with either a caramel or raspberry sauce on top — my daughter's go-to.

A few months ago, competition for dessert opened up down the street at **GIO**, at 1998 Union, home of Gelato Italiano Originale. This is the next stop on the piazza. Guido Mastropaolo, Patrizia Pasqualetti and Nicola Trois opened up shop in early 2018, and they are as sweet as their gelato. Pasqualetti comes from a family of gelato makers, and her family-run business, Gelateria Pasqualetti, attracts hordes in Orvieto. All made from scratch, the flavors range from the classic cioccolato and nocciola to sorbetti, depending on what they find at local markets. Mango, raspberry and blood orange are big hits.

These Umbrians are glam, far more stylishly dressed than any other hipsters strutting around this millennial-populated neighborhood, and they add an element of Italian style to the product they sell. The simplicity and elegance of the shop reflects Italians' innate sense of design — from the stylish orange Kartell chairs to the whimsical Californian-designed Heath for Hygge & West wallpaper.

In the past few months, they have given birth to a corner shop with buzz. Open every day from late morning until late evening, Gio has convinced Americans that gelato should be eaten at any time of day.

Customers linger as they devour their gelato, either within the shop or outside on the street corner. Gelato is not all that's on the menu here. You can opt to have an Italian breakfast of an espresso — with a dollop of *vaniglia* gelato in it, for instance — with a homemade *cornetto*, or you can take home an Easter *Colomba* injected with their trademark homemade whipped cream.

Stylish, Italophile San Franciscans who have heard of this new Italian hub sometimes show up donning Superga sneakers from the Superga boutique just up and over the hill at 2326 Fillmore. Recently spotted was Viola Buitoni, a local Italian chef who runs gourmet cooking classes out of her home, and who sends her teenage son to work behind the counters and learn from the Gio pros. We're dealing with serious scoops here.

My kids love the *capriccio* and *stracciatella* most. When I'm feeling adventurous, I'll have avocado. Californians eat avocado on toast for breakfast or lunch — why not have it on a cone as an afternoon snack?



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Treats from the linear piazza on Union Street (from left): fresh pasta at The Italian Homemade, gelato at Gio, a coffee chandelier at Illy Caffè and watch master Marcello Iacomini.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHEILA PIERCE



Recently, one of Pasqualetti's summer clients in Italy, an American who lives the rest of the year in Mill Valley, came to track her down. It was clear from their encounter that the Pasqualetti family offers more than just delicious gelato; friendship, smiles and a sense of community are at the top of their menu.

Across the street from Gio at 2000 Union is the Belgian-inspired brasserie **BELGA**, run by another Italian, the restaurant-rain-maker Adriano Paganini. Two blocks away, closer to Gough Street, are two beloved historic Italian restaurants: **PANE E VINO** at

1715 Union Street, and **CAPANNINA** at 1809 Union. These two old-timers are the Italian pioneers of Union Street's linear piazza, and the only thing you cannot get at either spot is a bad meal.

Next door to Belga at 2030 Union, we find **MARCELLO IACOMINI**, who runs a watch repair shop. He's a black belt karate master and an ex-*carabinieri*, so don't mess with him. If you want to practice your Italian, he's always game for *una bella chiaccherata*. You can spot him a mile away because he's the best-dressed person in the neighborhood — either in a white lab coat with a silk scarf in its pocket or a fine Italian suit

and silk tie. He'll fix your Cartier, Rolex, Casio or Swatch — always with a dose of Italian *simpatia*.

And, finally, there's **ILLY CAFFÈ**, at 2055 Union, where its most beloved barista, known in the neighborhood as the Italian Marco, used to greet his local fans and serve an espresso with a smile. He was recently transferred to a downtown branch and the neighborhood misses him. Yet the baristi on staff have picked up Marco's habits and clients flock here for the coffee Trieste has made famous worldwide.

and craving an Italian fix in food, language or culture, they can just stumble down the hill to Union Street and hang out in the piazza. It's not just the food that lures them in. It's beings with their people — Italians transplanted to America, and Americans who love Italy — and hearing their second language that makes them want to *fare una passeggiata sulla piazza* of Union Street.

Passa la parola, spread the word: This linear piazza is worth the detour.

Follow Sheila Pierce's writing and photography at sheilapierce.com.



Images of the North is hosting the prestigious 2018 Cape Dorset Print Collection. An annual event, the collection consists of 34 images by 11 Inuit artists. The prints will be on view from October 9, with the sale commencing on Saturday, October 20.



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PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF FORGOTTEN MAN FILMS

A Master Sommelier – and a Star

Fillmore’s newest wine merchant is featured in a film premiering this month at the Clay Theatre

By DUSTIN WILSON

FOR ME, becoming a sommelier meant taking part in something much larger than myself. Working with a team of like-minded individuals on a restaurant crew for the greater goal of unforgettable hospitality really excited me. I was totally ready for the overall restaurant scene, challenging as it was at times. But taking part in a three-part film documentary along the way was completely unexpected.

In 2009, I had just passed the advanced sommelier exam in Anaheim, as did another classmate, Brian McClintic. I began working as a sommelier at the Little Nell in Aspen, and Brian happened to be on the hunt for a job. Luckily, the Little Nell had an opening and Brian immediately moved to Colorado. When we realized we had a mutual plan to pursue the

master sommelier exam, we became study partners. The following year, during one of our many tasting sessions, Brian said he had a friend who wanted to make a film, and asked if he could film our studies. I agreed, not thinking much of it. Later that year, I headed to Napa to take the rigorous M.S. exam for the first time, passing service on the first try. But the theory portion of the exam — a verbal test in which candidates are asked a series of questions about anything and everything to do with wine — was another story. The theory exam in 2010 was notoriously difficult; only one person out of 60 passed. It was there that I first saw Jason Wise, the director of *Somm*, who was relentlessly following and filming Ian Cauble, another M.S. candidate. The theory exam also defeated my good friend Sabato Sagaria, a colleague at the Little Nell. We drowned our disappointment in buckets of tequila and wine at Ana’s Cantina, proceeding to drunkenly

execute an epic karaoke rendition of Jay-Z. After our cringe-worthy performance, Jason approached us, along with Ian and some other guys, offering to drive us back to his place to hang out. This was the first time I met Jason — drunk, foolish and totally out of my element. We headed back and hung out for a bit, but nothing further came of it. Not then, anyway. In the fall of 2010, I moved to San Francisco to become a sommelier at RN74, then in SOMA. Brian also moved to the city to work with a new bar called Treasury. We continued to study intensely, and created a larger tasting group with some industry colleagues. Jason began filming our group, crashing at our apartment and following us around, incessantly filming. Before we knew it, the first documentary was officially in progress. I passed the M.S. exam in Dallas in February 2011 just as the film was wrapping up, and that became part of the story.

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Filming *Somm 3*, left and above; below, Dustin Wilson leads a blind tasting.



■ PREVIEW | SOMM 3

A Story of Big Dreams and the Quest for Perfection

By ANDREA CHASE

IF YOU’VE SEEN Randall Miller’s underappreciated film *Bottle Shock*, released in 2008, you’ve met Steven Spurrier, played with refined disdain by Alan Rickman, and you are familiar with the so-called Judgment of Paris. That was Spurrier’s brainchild, designed to reinvigorate the wine industry back in the 1970s by pitting the best French wines against the best California wines in a blind tasting.

To the delight of some, and the horror of others, the California wines won, changing the dynamics of the wine business forever.

In *Somm 3*, a new film directed by Jason Wise, we meet the real Spurrier, who’s at it again in Paris — this time not with a competition, but a wine tasting in the same room where California wines came into their own. He’s joined by renowned wine writer Jancis Robinson and Fred Dame, founder of the U.S. branch of the Court of Master Sommeliers, as they sample some of the rarest wines on the planet and engage in the sort of witty repartee for which they are all famous.

But that’s not the whole film. Back in the States, Dustin Wilson — one of the four master sommelier candidates introduced in Wise’s first *Somm* film, and now

owner of Verve Wine here in the neighborhood — is organizing a new iteration of the blind tasting to commemorate the Judgment of Paris in his other Verve shop in Manhattan.

The stakes in this tasting are high. The best “noses” in the business — including old friends from Wise’s first two films in this series — have their reputations as master sommeliers to protect. As they muse on their expertise, Wise intercuts wine experts weighing in on the relevance of blind tasting as a puckish counterpoint. The tension builds deliciously.

Wise captures the telling moments of these outsized personalities as they talk about their obsessions with a reverence, and sometimes irreverence, that helps us understand why they have made wine their raison d’être, even if most ordinary wine drinkers can’t quite tell the difference between a Chablis and a Chardonnay. As with the first *Somm*, the wine in *Somm 3* is secondary to the real story of a geek culture with big dreams and the quest for perfection in both production and consumption.

SOMM 3 premieres in San Francisco on October 25 at a one-night screening at the Clay Theatre at 2261 Fillmore, with a reception beforehand and a Q&A afterward. Advance tickets are available at somm3sf.splashthat.com.

In September 2011 I moved to New York, now officially a master sommelier. I accepted the highly sought-after wine director position at Eleven Madison Park. Summer of 2012 came along, and Jason sent me a DVD of his film, titled *Somm*. “Wow,” I remember thinking to myself. “People might actually watch this.”

The film landed the marquee spot on the opening night of the Napa Valley Film Festival in November 2012 — and then spread like wildfire. By early 2013, it was available on iTunes, Netflix, you name it. In fact, the film found so much success that Jason immediately created a sequel, *Somm: Into the Bottle*, in which I had a few cameos.

Then this past winter Jason told me he planned to create *Somm 3* and proposed we film a tasting. I wanted to make this one super special, so I gathered a group of top sommeliers in New York and put together a blind tasting, à la the infamous Judgment

of Paris tasting in 1976 when California wines outshone French wines.

Pinot noir would be the focus. The tasting went incredibly well — so well, in fact, that Jason totally changed the direction of the third film. Just a few weeks later, we were on a plane flying to Paris, ready to meet, taste and film with wine world luminaries Fred Dame, Jancis Robinson and Steven Spurrier — but that’s all I can share for the moment.

After standing on stage for the *Somm* premiere at the Napa Valley Film Festival, I put in four years at Eleven Madison Park. In 2015, I left to start my own retail business. My vision was to bring wine retail into a new era by elevating the in-store experience and adding a heavy focus on e-commerce, while remaining focused on delicious, handmade wines that reflect the area they come from.

We launched in December of 2016 with a Verve Wine shop in the Tribeca neighborhood of New

York and our e-commerce site, vervewine.com.

Then in June of this year we opened the doors to our second location, right here in the neighborhood at 2358 Fillmore Street, just south of Washington. And this month I’m thrilled that the third installation of Jason’s film series, *Somm 3*, will premiere at the Clay Theatre, just a block down the street from our shop, on October 25.

When I first began pursuing wine, I never thought the endgame would look as it does now, but I wouldn’t change a thing. The places the *Somm* films have taken me, the opportunities I’ve been presented with because of them — and, most of all, the people I’ve met along the way — have changed my life in a way that often finds me at a loss of words.

I’ve loved every bit of this journey — and I look forward (see what I did there?) to any future collaborations.

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He Helped Rebuild the City After the 1906 Earthquake

An architect and his partner designed many significant buildings

By BRIDGET MALEY

ARCHITECT Smith O'Brien's own home at 2032 Baker Street, between Washington and Clay, was not innovative or extravagant — or even the most well-designed on the block — when it was completed in 1903. But it may have been the most practical.

O'Brien and his wife lived in the two-flat building he designed for almost 50 years. They rented out a second flat on the property, at 2034 Baker, as an income-producing unit. The shingled building, likely originally dark stained but now painted, has a pair of bracketed, projecting windows and twin entry doors.

A native of Ireland, O'Brien immigrated to San Francisco in 1887 at the age of 20. He began working for architect Clinton Day, which indicates O'Brien likely had some training before leaving home.

Around 1902, O'Brien commenced a seven-year partnership with architect Frederick H. Meyer. During their association, O'Brien and Meyer designed many of San Francisco's most significant post-1906 earthquake buildings — including the Rialto Building (1902-07), the shell of which survived the earthquake, the Monadnock Building (1906), the Hastings and Foxcroft Buildings (both 1908) and the Cadillac Hotel (1909). Their landmark Humbolt Savings Bank Building at 785 Market Street was under construction before the earthquake, and was finished afterward.

O'Brien and Meyer reportedly traveled together to Chicago to study that city's early commercial architectural design. When their association ended, O'Brien continued to design a range of projects that included commercial, residential, industrial and ecclesiastical buildings.

O'Brien's design of the ornate, domed Humbolt Savings Bank tower, where he maintained an office, gained him much admiration. Of this architectural gem, clad in terra cotta, a February 1913 *Architect & Engineer* article noted: "The whole scheme is a veritable tour de force." Another *Architect & Engineer* article declared: "Many architects are under the impression that the exterior finish is sandstone instead of terra cotta, so faithful is the imitation."

For the bank's president, Alexander D. Keyes and his wife Kate, O'Brien designed a lovely brick, Tudor-inspired home at 3476 Jackson Street between Laurel and Spruce. The house was subsequently covered in stucco and the facade remodeled, but the form of the original house remains apparent.

O'Brien's buildings include numerous Bay Area projects for the Catholic Church. This wide range includes the 1911 large-scale Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum at Mount Saint Joseph near Silver Terrace. O'Brien also took on an expansion and renovation of the Jesuit Novitiate of the Sacred Heart in Los Gatos, which had been designed in 1888 by architect B. J. Clinch. His traditional St. Edwards Catholic Church, on California near Laurel, was

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later replaced with a modern church. The second St. Edwards was then offloaded by the diocese in the early 1990s to a housing developer, who quickly demolished it and built condos.

O'Brien also designed St. Dominic's Priory in 1913. Situated at the northeast corner of Bush and Pierce Streets, the building is three stories over a raised basement. It contains elements of the Renaissance Revival such as quoining, a monumental entry stair, cartouche over the entry door and a low hipped roof. A February 1913 *Architect & Engineer* article noted: "St. Dominic's Priory building exhibits color, charm and frankness in pleasing contrast to the forbidding austerity, false work and downright ugliness characteristic of so many modern buildings of this type." A later overview of the architect's work in a 1919 *Architect & Engineer* professed that the priory design "shows a simple and dignified building in the Italian style, of red brick, white cement and red tile roof, with wide overhanging eaves."

Smith O'Brien was a gifted architect, but also an exceptionally talented artist. While he often sketched buildings, he excelled at landscape painting, with coastal scenes around the Bay Area a favorite. During travel to Paris, he purportedly studied with artist and teacher Andre Lhote. O'Brien exhibited his work at the San Francisco Art Association, the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery, Stanford University and the Beaux Arts Club of San Francisco. He was awarded a prize from the California Society of Etchers in 1930. His sketches appeared in a focused portfolio in the September 1925 edition of the *Architect & Engineer*. Given the audience, these sketches are mostly of buildings — including California missions, old mills and the Robert Louis Stevenson House in Monterey. They are romantic in character, and he is often referred to as having an Impressionist quality.

O'Brien and his wife, Emily, did not have children. Just after his death in 1952, Emily sold the two Baker Street flats her husband had designed and moved out to 38th Avenue, just south of Golden Gate Park.



Architect Smith O'Brien designed St. Dominic's Priory at Bush and Pierce Streets, pictured today and shortly after completion in 1913. The cupola of the temporary post-earthquake church rises behind the newly built priory.

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3046 Jackson St #D	3	2	1	1,303	72	8/21/2018	1,198,000	1,195,000
2200 Sacramento St #308	2	2	1	n/a	15	8/17/2018	999,000	1,300,000
1970 Sacramento St #301	2	1	1	1,358	18	8/16/2018	1,395,000	1,395,000
3115 Buchanan St	2	1	1	1,100	16	9/5/2018	1,350,000	1,512,000
3008 Sacramento St #A	2	2	2	1,284	12	9/14/2018	1,850,000	1,850,000
2440 Green St	2	1	1	1,750	17	8/17/2018	2,050,000	2,050,000
1940 Bush St	4	2	1	n/a	39	9/4/2018	2,100,000	2,100,000
3239 Steiner St	3	3	1	1,921	28	8/16/2018	2,300,000	2,375,000
1911-A Vallejo St	3	3	2	n/s	22	9/11/2018	3,995,000	4,250,000

— Data and commentary provided by PATRICK BARBER, president of Pacific Union. Contact him at patrick.barber@pacunion.com or call 415-345-3001.

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A color portrait of Dr. Robert M. Anderson, an older man with white hair and glasses, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a light blue striped shirt, and a yellow and blue striped tie. He is seated at a dark table, with his right hand resting on it. The background is a blurred office setting with framed pictures on the wall.

A detailed black and white woodcut-style illustration of a fortified city, likely Constantinople, showing its extensive walls, numerous towers, and a complex internal street layout. The city is surrounded by a body of water, and a large bridge or causeway is visible on the left side.

STREETSCAPE



It’s tidier, if no more accessible

Kids still play ball and ride their bikes in the street on Perine Place, the one-block alleyway just above California Street that runs between Steiner and Pierce. But plants and pots of flowers no longer line both sides of the block, as they did for many years.

In recent months and years, some longtime neighbors on the tight-knit block have moved away. Older cottages have been remade and new carriage houses built. City inspectors have insisted the sidewalks be cleared of all greenery, in the name of accessibility. And a little more of the quirkiness of the neighborhood has been erased.

But nature — and nature-lovers — will not be denied, and some plantings have begun to return.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DICKIE SPRITZER



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