

# The Cupola

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Pardee Home Museum

DECEMBER 2004

Oakland City  
Landmark 1975  
National Register of  
Historic Places 1976  
California Historic  
Landmark 1998

## Six hundred block of Eleventh Street virtually transformed in 2004

Repainting of the Pardee Home, completion of the gardens' restoration Phase II, and opening of Landmark Place Condos dramatically change the visual landscape at the museum.

The year 2004 has seen major changes to the 600 block of Eleventh Street in Oakland's Preservation Park Historic District. The repainting of the landmark Pardee Home, underway since early September of 2003, was finally completed during the last week of that year. At about that time, new homeowners were moving into Landmark Place, the new condominium development which now shares the block with the Pardee Home. And in April, Phase II of the Pardee Home's gardens restoration, a project mainly adjacent to the new condos, was completed. Although the museum still needs to complete Phase III of the gardens project and, hopefully, replace our unsightly rear fence, overall one can say that the block has been greatly upgraded by the recent changes.

Change first came with the groundbreaking for Landmark Place in February 2002 (see the April 2002 *Cupola*). That ceremony marked both the beginning of construction and the end of a long period of planning mishaps for that lot, going back to the 1970s, when the buildings on the site were razed in the name of urban renewal (No significant historic buildings were lost.) Proposals for a Preservation Park II and a new headquarters for the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame were among the ideas which were initially proposed for the 30,000 square-foot lot (identical in size to the Pardee Home's grounds). Finally,

under Mayor Jerry Brown, the city accepted new proposals for the site in August 1999 and chose, from three submissions, the plans for ninety-two condominiums designed by Pyatok Associates and developed by Lalanne Volkman, later replaced by Signature Properties. The proposal was approved unanimously by the city's Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, which oversees new construction in historic districts, in May of 2000.

The \$12 million, 108,000 square-foot project (including the underground parking) centers on a generously landscaped courtyard, designed by landscape architects PGA Design, an Oakland firm which is also responsible for the design of the gardens restoration at the Pardee Home. Landmark Place was described in the *S.F. Chronicle* real-estate section last January as the "Latest from Downtown Brown," referring to the mayor's commitment to new downtown housing. The ninety-two units, ranging in size from 576 to 1,126 square feet, sold out early this year, at prices in the \$300,000-\$400,000 range.

With the help of a generous donation from Signature Properties, the developers of Landmark Place, and an equally generous matching donation from the Rollin Gerstacker Foundation of Midland, Michigan, the Pardee Home undertook a long overdue repainting of the main house in the fall of 2003. Months of planning for this work preceded the actual start date, including the selection of a color consultant, Blair Prentice of Berkeley, who also did the colors for Preservation Park, and a painting contractor,



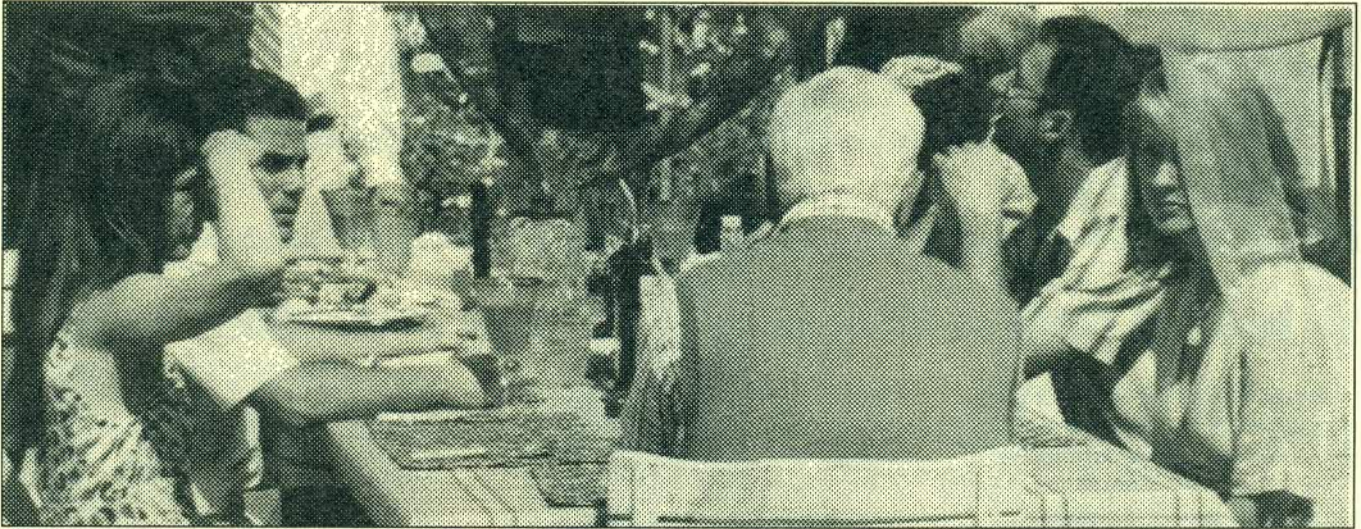
David Nicolai

**Sergio from the Victorian Restoration crew** puts finishing touches on the balustrade at the end of a four-month paint job. Landmark Place can be seen in the background.

Gustavo Caldarelli of Marin County, dba Victorian Restoration. Like the design of Landmark Place and the design of our gardens restoration, the details of our painting proposal went before the Landmarks Board, which at its September 2003 meeting endorsed one of the two final color schemes being considered by the Pardee Home board.

As Museum Director David Nicolai explained to the Landmarks Board

see **TRANSFORMATION**  
on page 3



Ron Nielson

Extras seated at a table in the rear gardens prepare for a scene which never made it into the televised commercial.

## Commercial scene shot at the Pardee Home in March

On Tuesday, March 23rd of this year, the Pardee Home was transformed into a Hollywood set, as a crew of some 100 people descended upon the house to film two scenes for a TV commercial for the anti-arthritis medication Enbrel. This shoot was arranged thanks to Oakland location scout Wilson Wu.

The morning hours were spent filming a mother giving her young son a haircut in the side porch which normally houses our gift shop, and the afternoon hours were spent creating a much larger-scale scene, an extravagant garden party set up in the rear gardens, between the water tower and the Castro Street fence. The scenario for the garden party involved a dramatic rain storm disrupting the party, so huge fans and rain-making machines were part of the eye-catching activities in the normally sedate Pardee Home yard. Remarkably, the hair-cutting scene did survive the final edit for the commercial, but the garden party scene, so much more involved and expensive to produce, did not.

According to Museum Director David Nicolai, "March 23rd was the most exciting day I've had as museum director during my eight years here, hands down! The entire crew was so Hollywood, if you know what I mean, particularly the flamboyant Argentinian director! They worked hard and fast, with non-stop demands and questions placed to myself and museum trustee Ron Nielson, who assisted me that day, but they also were extremely friendly and filled with questions about the history of the house and family. And who can complain about a breakfast buffet, set up for the crew on the Castro Street sidewalk at 7 a.m, truly worthy of a reception for British royalty, or an equally grand feast for lunch, an outstanding Mexican repast, served beneath the grand oak in our front gardens?" Speaking more seriously, Nicolai did note that the day was "highly lucrative" for the museum, although "We did learn some lessons about setting limits for a large Hollywood



Ron Nielson

Cameras in the back parlor face towards the side porch where the scene of the mother cutting her young son's hair was shot.

crew in the setting of a historic house." He also advised *Cupola* readers who watch a lot of TV to keep their eyes out for the Enbrel commercial- "If you really squint during the five-second haircutting sequence, you just might discern the door to the side porch of the Pardee Home, or perhaps even the camellia outside that door!"

### BECOME A DOCENT!

The Pardee Home seeks volunteers to guide tours, work with collections and help with events. Please call 444-2187 if you are interested in a meaningful volunteer opportunity.

