



# PARDEE HOME MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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

Winter-Spring, 1998

## ***Pardee Home Declared California Historical Landmark!***



Jack Steinmetz hanging new lace curtains in the Music Parlor.

### ***Beautiful New Curtains Grace Dining Room and Front Parlors***

Jack Steinmetz and Richard Hall of Montclair visited the Pardee Home for the very first time during the 1997 holidays and lent their hands in decorating the house and also in running the kitchen during the holiday open house on November 30th (see related story on the reception). Jack and Richard noticed that the lovely, eight-foot-tall bay windows in the dining room were crying out for curtains. They had been without window treatments for some time, and, in fact, the trustees had already agreed to explore options for new curtains. Richard and Jack, long-time fabric store mavens, scoured the Bay Area for just the right lace pattern for the dining room. When

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On January 23rd of this year the State Historical Resources Commission met in Placerville, as part of the kick-off of the Gold Rush Sesquicentennial, and among other agenda items, declared the Pardee Home a California Historical Landmark. The house thus became state Landmark No. 1027, to be exact.

The Pardee Home was one of eight buildings in Oakland declared city landmarks at the very first meeting of the city's Landmarks Board in 1975. The following year, in 1976, the house was added to the National Register of Historic Places. In the often confusing field of landmarking historic sites, little thought was given to the possible benefits of seeking state landmark status until 1996. That year Bettie Clinton, President of the Friends of the Rengstorff House in Mountain View, informed us that their house had just achieved state landmark status, and had done so mainly to benefit from the free directional signs that CALTRANS will install on local freeways for any state landmark.

With the Pardee Home directly overlooking busy Interstate 980, and with so many of our visitors commenting that they had driven by the house hundreds of times without realizing that it is now a public museum, it seemed imperative to seek out California landmark status.

On September 29th of last year, Director David Nicolai mailed the completed application form to the State Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento. The three main criteria for landmark status were "architectural merit, site integrity, and historical significance," and David reported that completing the narrative for these categories was one of the most challenging, but rewarding, tasks he has completed at the house. "Particularly in the category of architectural merit," he observed, "completing this application forced me to think about the house as an architectural essay more extensively than ever before and really increased my appreciation of its elegant style."

On October 13th the city's Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board unanimously endorsed the house's application, and on November 21st, Mayor Elihu Harris, a big fan of the house, wrote an enthusiastic letter of support to State Historic Preservation Officer Cheryl Widell. Its approval by the state Commission in January was a "slam dunk," in the word of another preservation officer.

Caltrans engineers have already surveyed Interstate 980 near the house, and the four directional signs should be up within six months. Additionally, the Pardee Home Foundation trustees, at their February meeting, expressed support for purchasing a plaque honoring our California Historical Landmark status for the entrance to the house, or perhaps a plaque which

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## Two 1997 Holiday Receptions Were Great Successes

The Pardee Home hosted two festive holiday events during the past holiday season, the first on November 30th, our holiday open house, to kick off the season, and the second on December 13th, a joint Preservation Park/Pardee Home affair arranged by City Tours Director Annalee Allen. Due to the exceptional efforts of volunteer Joe Ware, the house was decorated more beautifully than ever before. In fact, a feature article in the *Tribune* before the first event extensively featured Joe's creative approach to decorating the Pardee Home, and this excellent publicity was probably responsible for the record attendance at the reception. The day before the reception the *Tribune* erroneously reported that the event was "today," resulting in a spontaneous and enjoyable "decorating party" for the dozen or so people who showed up a day early!

Besides the striking decorations, the open house featured caroling by the St. Paul's Choristers, informal house tours, refreshments from the kitchen of museum director David Nicolai,



Holiday decorations featuring one of the Pardee House's famous "feather" Christmas trees.



The fifteen-foot high ceilings in the Pardee Home allow for a spectacular tree in the Main Parlor.

and a special exhibit on historic holiday cards from the Pardee Home archives in the upstairs billiard room. The card exhibit was curated by Nicolai and beautifully designed by volunteer Laura Bajuk, who also produced the brochure for this exhibit. All in all, a great day for the house!

On December 13th, a "Holiday Stroll through Preservation Park," sponsored by the Oakland City Tours program, culminated in catered refreshments being served in the Pardee Home dining room. It was also a fine event, made more special by the fact that it was all being filmed for the city's cable station, KTOP. This marked the first time the house has ever been featured on local TV, and the hostess of the show, Gwen McKane of *Oakland Moving Forward*, did a great job of interviewing many of the guests, both at Preservation Park and at the Pardee Home. Gwen's enthusiasm for the house was obvious, and she has committed to returning later this year to do a show featuring a full tour of the Pardee Home.

