Sleeping Porches and Suffragette Banners:
Reclaiming History in South Park
by
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When my daughter and son-in-law bought a South Park home in 2008, I promised them that I would prepare the application for historic site designation for their house.. I had successfully completed my own application for historic site designation for our house in 2002, soon after my husband and I had bought our North Park bungalow. With only five owners, our house had been owner occupied for all but seven of its seventy-eight years. Moreover, since it had no historical significance beyond its architecture, the application process was rather simple; the project took me only two weeks.

However, to my surprise, the research for the historic site designation of 1436 31st Street, the South Park home, turned out to be complicated and labor intensive. The house had been used as a rental for many years, having turned into a duplex in the 1950's. In the course of its ninety-six year history, 1436 had had thirty-six different residents and eighteen owners. Thus, finding the chain of ownership, locating deeds in the County Assessor's Office, looking at almost a century of telephone directories to get names and dates of the renters and owners—all this was time-consuming indeed. But making up for this tedious work was the discovery that several women had lived in the house whose actions still affect San Diego today. Through newspaper articles and interviews with their families and friends, I was able to uncover the fascinating accomplishments of these women who made significant contributions to the civic life in San Diego.

I hope that sharing some of the conclusions of this research may exemplify how a lay person can complete the application for historic site designation and how such a project may reclaim significant local historical information about a site and its residents that otherwise would have been lost.

The Historical Resources Board has provided clear guidelines for the historic site application that include lists of key resources to consult, such as the California Room in the Central Library, the San Diego County Assessor's Office, The San Diego Historical Society, and the South Coast Information Center. The public libraries have a wealth of information on architecture that will provide the technical idiom to describe unique architectural features of a house. Crafts people—carpenters, painters, masons—are also great sources of technical terminology. Historical records of a neighborhood, microfilms of past issues of San Diego newspapers are extremely valuable in giving one documentary evidence of San Diego's history. Not to be overlooked are the huge books with early tax records, the boxes full of obituaries, and the well-organized files with photographs at the San Diego Historical Society. Except for primary records (such as Ancestry.com), I found the information on the internet related to histories of people consistently unreliable.

At the Historical Society (now the San Diego History Center), I checked for obituaries of all the owners and renters of the house. I found obituaries of the three daughters of the first family who lived at 1436. The names of their descendants, mentioned in those obituaries, led me—via the telephone book—to the granddaughter of the first owners. Mrs. Marilyn Royle Brucker, the "family historian," shared priceless photographs, poems written by her grandmother, family documents, and many vivid stories of her grandparents. At the Historical Society, I also located the obituary of Mary Maschal, who had died in 1998 while living at 1436. Maschal, a well known and long-time community organizer, had founded the Women's History Reclamation Project while living at 1436 and had opened the ground floor as a museum in 1995. With assistance from Ashley Gardner, Executive Director of the Women's History Museum, I was able to contact Maschal's daughter and a number of women who had worked closely with Maschal. Without these personal contacts and the support from friends and family members of both the first family and of Mary Maschal, the application for historic site designation would not have been complete. In June 2011, the Historical Resources Board commemorated the significance of Mary Maschal's contributon to San Diego by designating 1436 as a historic site with the name *Mary Maschal House*.

Historical Context: South Park 1913

In 1912-13, Charles and Veronica Burke moved from Iowa to San Diego and built an exquisite, one and a half story Arts and Crafts-style bungalow at 1436 31st Street in South Park Addition, at a time when San Diego was a place of enormous economic prosperity and of great expectations, especially with the opening of the Panama California Exposition slated for midnight of January 1, 1914. A headline in *The San Diego Union* of January 1, 1913, proclaimed the "advantage of possessing a San Diego home [as] the opportunity to make an abundant living in the finest climate in the world." The same New Year's issue stated that owning a home would be "pleasant and profitable" in San Diego with its "magnificent Harbor," with its nurseries raising 1,500,000 plants, and with its "mammoth concrete bridge" under construction that would connect the west side of the town to the Panama California Exposition. For the Burke family with three teenage daughters, San Diego would offer great educational prospects with its "splendid library" and "the best High School to be found in the State" (*SDU*, 1/1/1913).

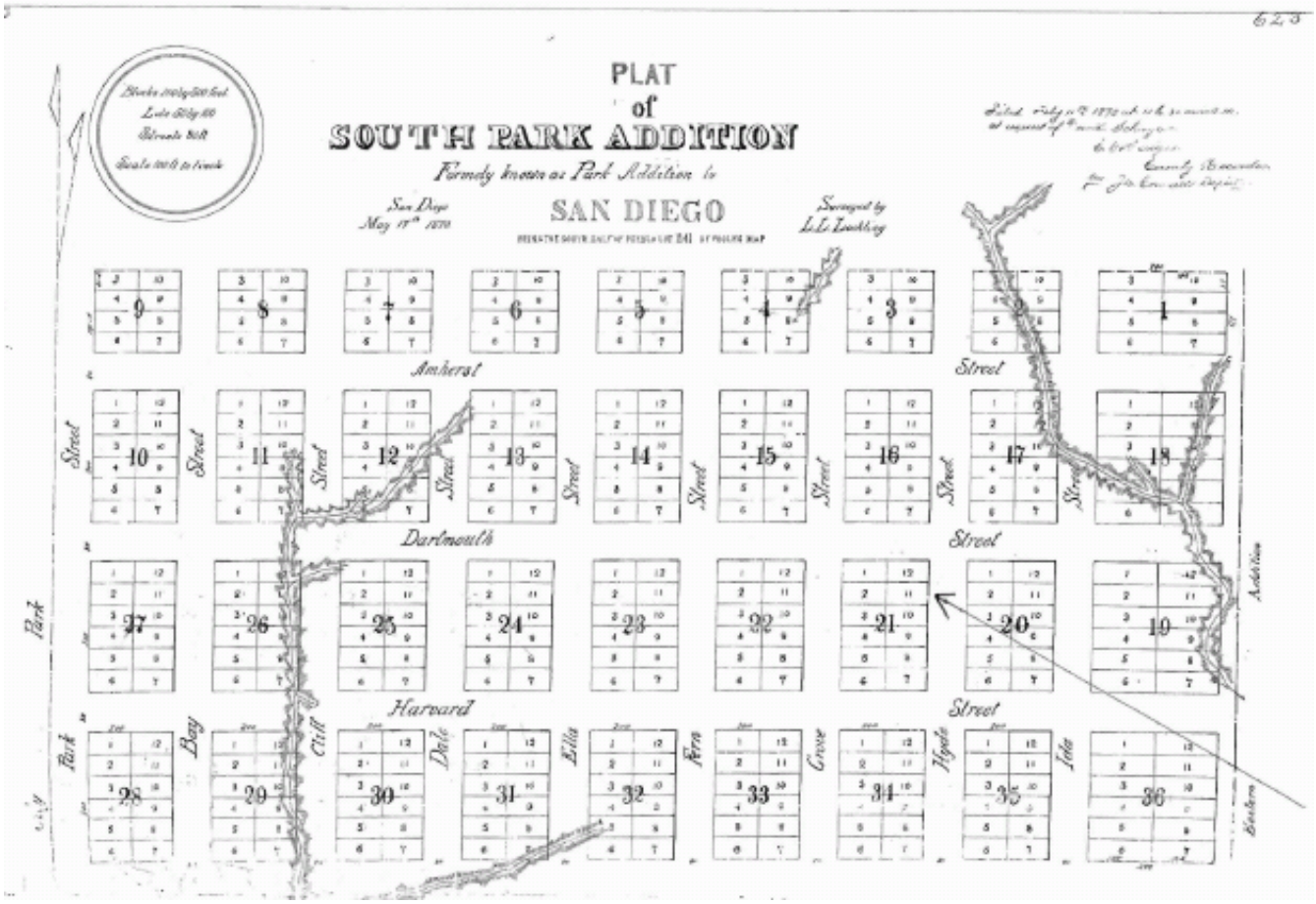

The San Diego Union
FORTY-FIFTH ANNUAL EDITION JANUARY 1, 1914
PANAMA CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION CELEBRATING THE OPENING OF THE PANAMA CANAL SAN DIEGO 1915

Front page of the San Diego Union, January 1, 1914

The architecture of South Park Addition still expresses a sense of this promise and optimism that characterized the pre-World War I period in San Diego. This predominantly single-family neighborhood was designed to cater to those who desire "much better," as E. Bartlett Webster, President of the South Park and East Side Railway Co., assured in 1906. The #2 street car line, established in 1906 under the presidency of Webster, had been a "strong factor in local transportation and in the development" of South Park (Smyth 442). For those who bought property in South Park Addition, free street car passes were issued on the South Park & East Side Railway. In 1912, the #2 was extended from Broadway along 30th Street to Upas Street and along University Avenue all the way to Fairmount Avenue in East San Diego. This

line stopped two blocks from the Burke residence. Although Charles and Veronica Burke had cars when they lived in Iowa, they never owned a car again after they moved to San Diego and used San Diego's extensive public transportation system all their lives.

From 1910 through 1913, San Diego was a prosperous, growing city as Alonzo E. Horton recollected, when his real estate company alone "would start the erection of one new house every working day," while his company was only "one of many subdividers of those exciting times" (Cotton 4). According to Samuel Black, the city increased by over 3000 permanent residents each month in 1912 (317). In addition, San Diego offered wonderful entrepreneurial opportunities. For according to the *San Diego Union*, the city was "destined to become the greatest port on the Pacific Coast." It must have seemed a wise decision to build a house in a city where building permits for 1912 had set a record with over 10,000,000 applications, a "phenomenal gain" over the previous year (*SDU*, 1/1/1913). Truly, for Charles and Veronica Burke and their three teenage daughters, San Diego must have seemed a city of promise, a place where they could be assured a prosperous and happy future.



Original Subdivision Map, South Park Addition, 1870

Come to South Park to LIVE!

The evangelist asked all who wanted to go to Heaven, to stand. All stood but one old man. The speaker then asked all who wanted to go to "the Other Place" to stand. None responded. The old man was still sitting. "Well, my friend," said the evangelist. "What about you? You didn't stand for Heaven, and you didn't stand for the Other Place. Where do you want to go?" The old man answered, "I want to stay right here. San Diego is good enough for me."

THIS story ought to be true, if it isn't, because that's the way San Diegans feel. San Diego is good anywhere—all over—all the time. But, if more people knew how much better it is to live up on the hill than in the lower sections, fewer would be content to stay down-town.

Come up to South Park to live; to breathe the best air, to see the finest view; to enjoy the pleasantest and most healthful surroundings; to LIVE!

See the sun come up from behind the mountains in the mornings. See it sink beyond Point Loma in the evenings. See the ocean sparkling in the sunlight. Sniff the fresh breezes, tempered by just the right distance inland. Isn't this better than to be where perhaps the only outlook is into somebody else's back yard; where the only view is a view of the house across the street?

Do you know that South Park lots are the choicest residence property of moderate price in San Diego? Do you know that South Park has graded streets, cement sidewalks, sewers, water, gas, electricity and telephone connection? Do you know that South Park has a ten-minute street car service? Do you know—

But this ad isn't big enough to tell a tenth of it. Come to our office for full details. Visit the place itself—that's the best thing. And let us tell you how little it will cost you to come up to South Park to LIVE!

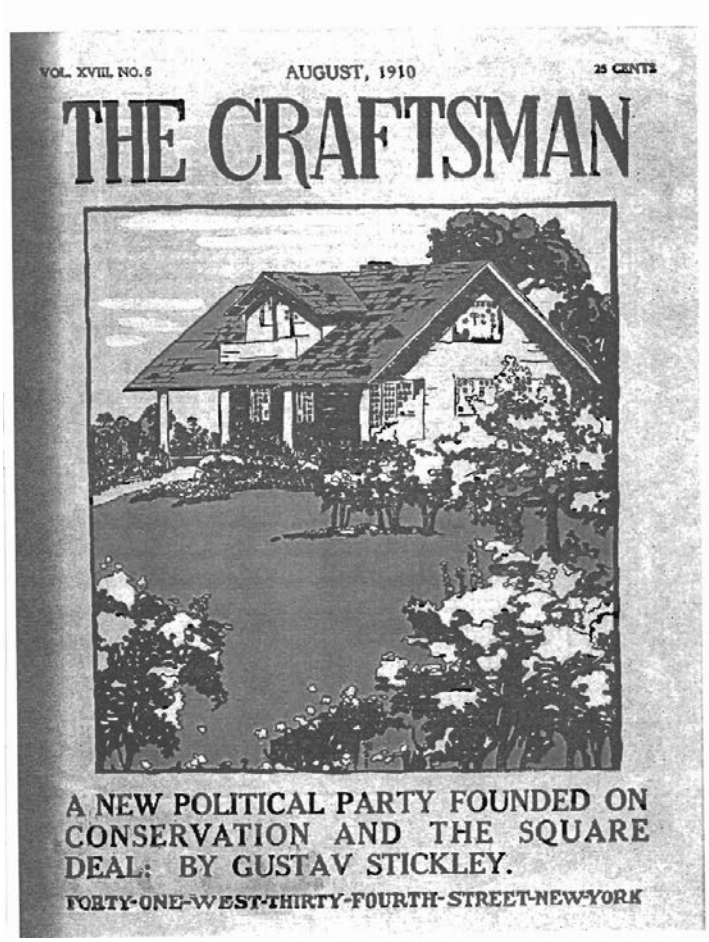
Bartlett Estate Company

ROOM 5, SEFTON BLOCK, SAN DIEGO.

Advertisement in the San Diego Union, June 13, 1906

Building an Arts and Crafts Style House

In the Spring of 1913, when Charles and Veronica Burke decided to build their house on 31st Street, South Park was one of San Diego's finest residential areas with a variety of beautiful, modern homes. Many of these Arts and Crafts architectural styles were championed by Gustav Stickley in his publications, especially in his journal *The Craftsman,* published from 1901 to 1916. Rejecting the clutter of the Victorian home and its extravagant and decorative architecture, Stickley argued for an architectural style based on "honesty, simplicity, and usefulness" (Stickley 196). Believing that the style of the house shapes character (Stickley 209, 211), Stickley developed simple architectural designs for affordable homes, using just a small number of architectural prototypes. Influenced by the English Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1870's, Stickley called this architectural style *Craftsman* architecture. The size, the materials used, the lay-out of the rooms were to express a connection to the optimistic, utopian values exemplified by the Arts and Crafts movement. Modeled on Stickley's *The Craftsman*, a number of mail-order catalogues soon offered affordable, ready-made plans, e.g., *Sears, Roebuck and Co*, *Bungalow Magazine* (1909-1918), and *American Carpenter and Builder*. Many of the homes built in South Park Addition during this period may have been based on these models.



The core Arts and Crafts concepts of simplicity and honesty should be expressed in the pronounced visibility of the structure of the home. Thus these Craftsman-style homes generally have exposed natural wood, exposed beams and visible brackets, and façades that highlight the structure of the house. Believing in the restorative powers of nature at a time of rapid industrialization and urbanization, Stickley sought to connect the outdoors to healthful living inside, a connection expressed by a front door that would open up right into the living room, by large, inviting porches, by screened sleeping porches, and by windows that would let in air and sunlight (Stickley 196).

Stickley's beautiful and useful simple designs became the prototypes for many homes and, most importantly, enabled anonymous builders and their patrons to express their individual creativity resulting in neighborhoods that exhibit an amazing and richly varied vernacular architecture based on simple rectangular box designs. These elements all came to characterize the Arts and Crafts style architecture and are found in many of the homes in South Park Addition, including 1436 31st Street, the house that the Burkes built in South Park Addition. Charles and Veronica Burke may have used a mail-order plan for the basic design of their first San Diego home. Their house typifies the construction of a rectilinear floor plan and follows the lay-out and over-all design of a number of mail-order homes available from 1909 to1913.

Plan No. 603, published by the Seattle Building and Investiment Company around 1910, Swope, p. 101

1436 31st Street: An Arts and Crafts Style Home

Burke's house exemplifies core Arts and Crafts architectural features. Expressing Stickley's ideals of simplicity and honesty in structure, the house has wide overhangs held up with classic knee brackets and notched exposed rafters. Like many of the Arts and Crafts homes, the Burke house has plenty of windows to let in fresh air and sunlight and had two sleeping porches. But, in addition to core Arts and Crafts characteristics, this residence highlights noteworthy variations that express the builder's creativity. For example, instead of a restful horizontality created by a low sloping roof so typical of the California Arts and Crafts bungalows and so popular in South Park, 1436 has a high pitched gable roof with a pronounced hip roof dormer that is flanked, in a unique combination, by two shed roof dormers. This highly unusual combination of hip roof dormer with two shed roof dormers draws the eyes upward, a movement heightened by the repetition of two inverted V-lines of the gable of the second floor dormer and of the lesser pitched gable of the porch below. This sense of movement is reinforced by the asymmetry of the placement and pitch of the two gables, with the smaller gable just to the right of the centered larger upstairs gable. This asymmetry in the façade is heightened by the contrast between the downstairs row of living room windows on the right, shaded by a deep porch, and the French doors of the dining room to the left that open to the sunlight, covered only by a trellis.

Characterized by this dramatic asymmetrical façade, 1436 is an excellent example of a fundamental tenet of the Arts and Craft's style architecture in that its simple structural logic would elicit the individual builder's inventive design, with unique placements and shapes of porches, gables, and other details. Within the context of contemporary prototypes and models, 1436 shows that the core Arts and Craft principles of simplicity and structural directness created an architecture that reflected the period's optimism in its visualization of movement within a static structure and in its exceptional artistry and craftsmanship of the builder. Placed within the context of the Arts and Crafts style houses of South Park, 1436 is an excellent representative of the dynamic, creative principle that is at the heart of the Arts and Crafts ideology in its nostalgic desire for simplicity, its optimistic view of social possibilities, and its exuberant celebration of individual

creativity. The architecture of Charles M. Burke's residence exemplifies the quintessential Arts and Crafts-style philosophy of modern family life and substantiates that, without the huge expense of a master builder or a famous architect, non-professional, individual home-owners, such as Charles and Veronica Burke, could adjust the simple ready-made plans to their unique needs and their personal taste to build homes that would, in Stickley's words, "result in wholesome living," "express the character of the person dwelling there," and "serve for generations."

Reclaiming Women's History at 1436

In its early history, 1436 was owned by a woman who reflected the attempts by early twentieth-century women to free themselves from centuries of patriarchal oppression and to create new identities. As the outlines of her life indicate, Veronica Burke (1877-1951) tried to claim a new kind of life for herself. In her Iowa home town, she marched in suffragist parades and made history as the first woman to own and drive a car. In progressive California, where women had gained the right to vote in state elections in 1911, she initiated a divorce from her husband in 1919 and was listed in the 1920 census as "Divorced" and "Head-of-house," living with her three daughters in 1436. From 1919 to 1928, Veronica Burke was, in fact, the sole owner of this house.

At the end of the 20th century, 1436 would once again be owned by a woman. Mary Maschal (1924-1998), however, did not grow up with that sense of women's rights and possibilities that Veronica Burke had claimed and had handed to her daughters. Maschal's life was a long struggle against continued prejudice against women at home and in the workplace. Passionate about honoring the early Suffragist struggles to end discrimination against women, Maschal created the Women's History Reclamation Project at 1436 to preserve and exhibit artifacts and books that witnessed the struggles, the hopes, and the achievements of the women of Veronica Burke's generation. In 1996, the WHRP moved to a museum space in Golden Hill and was renamed in 2003 as the Women's History Museum and Education Center.

Within the context of Mary Maschal's drive to create a home for her collection of Suffrage memorabilia at the end of the 20th century, it is truly a remarkable coincidence that Veronica Burke, the first woman to own and live at 1436, marched with the Suffragists in Iowa at the beginning of that century. The living room where Maschal hung the actual banner behind which the Suffragists had marched was the living room where Veronica Burke may have told her teenage daughters about her participation in one of these marches and may have shared with them her belief in the importance of women's education and women's civic responsibilities. The dining room, where Maschal held her weekly Saturday morning Women's History Reclamation Project organizational meetings in the early nineteen-nineties, may have been the place where Veronica Burke taught her daughters about women's rights and shared her optimism about the historic possibilities available for the first time to her and her daughters.

Veronica Burke (1877-1951)

Veronica and Charles Burke moved from Stuart, Iowa, in 1913, with their three young daughters—Mary Margaret (age 13), Mildred Anita (age 10) and Noreen Agnes (age 9)—to fashionable South Park in San Diego. Veronica and Charles Burke's migration from Iowa concluded a history of migration for both their families. In the early 1870's Veronica's parents emigrated from Puerto Rico (at that time part of Spain) to Iowa. Charles' parents both escaped Ireland's potato famine in the mid-1800's by immigrating to the USA, and, after having lived in New York, settled in Iowa. Both Veronica and Charles were first generation Americans.

In 1899, Charles and Veronica married, and, in 1907, Charles became the owner of the Bank of Stuart in Iowa. In 1913, Charles sold this bank and, worried about the health of Noreen, the youngest daughter, moved to San Diego where he built 1436. He and Veronica at first

owned 1436 as joint tenants. However, in 1919, he and Veronica divorced, at her request, and Veronica became the sole owner until 1928. In the 1920 census, she is listed as "Divorced" and "Head-of-house" with her three daughters. The 1920 census shows that Charles Burke lived in a hotel and is identified as "married." Mary, the oldest daughter, married in 1921, and Veronica, herself, married again in 1922 to George L. Sprague. During the four years that Veronica was married to Sprague (1922-26), she rented out the house, living with him and her two younger daughters at 3740 7th Avenue. After her divorce from Sprague, *The City Directory* lists her again as residing at 1436 31st Street, first in 1928 as Mrs. V. Sprague, but in 1929 as "Sprague, Veronica T (wid[ow] G L)." G. L. Sprague, however, had not died. He is listed in the same *City Directory* as married to "Marie L" and died in Lemon Grove in 1954.

Charles M. Burke, 1896

The identifications of Charles as "married" while legally divorced and of Veronica as "widowed," after her second divorce, signify the enormous complexities of their lives at that time. In the first part of the twentieth century, divorce was still considered something unusual, even shameful. Veronica's granddaughter, Marilyn Royle Brucker (born in 1928), does not recall that this part of her family history was ever discussed, not only because divorce may have been considered disreputable but also because Charles and Veronica created a busy, loving family life after they remarried in June 1928, in Saint Patrick's Church.

Veronica Burke, 1896

Consequently, the family did not dwell on this difficult part of their grandparent's lives. In fact, the granddaughter still finds it difficult to believe that her wonderful, attentive grandparents, who in their roomy house in Mission Beach provided such a happy family life for their grandchildren, would ever have been divorced from each other.

Charles Burke is remembered by Marilyn Royle Brucker, his granddaughter, as a caring grandfather, easy-going, and ready to help any family member build anything. But Veronica Burke is remembered as a "character," a "strong personality," always full of "fun"—an intelligent, creative, highly independent person, who loved controversy. Always progressive, she did not mind upsetting her Republican husband by announcing that she might vote for Mr. Roosevelt "because he is the better man." An accomplished musician, she played the piano and the violin and entertained the suitors of her three daughters with songs before she allowed them to go out. To her grandchildren, she was "different," a grandmother who did not cook and did not have a cookie jar filled with home-made cookies. When her grandchildren complained, she provided them the next time with a jar with store-bought Oreo cookies. Veronica loved to be the center of attention and disliked boring, proper people. When a particularly boring relative was visiting her, she did not hesitate to try to embarrass him by playing a practical joke. She put on a man's cap, dirtied her face, put on some old clothes, pinned on her chest a big sign "I am deaf," and slipped out the back. When she knocked on the front door, the relative opened the

door but did not recognize her. Cruelly, he tried to shut the door on her, and, when she would not go away, he pushed her down the porch steps so hard that she broke her ankle. Mrs. Brucker believes that Veronica did not speak to this heartless relative for two years.

Veronica was musical, loved to act and to entertain, and, for personal occasions, wrote poetry, eloquently expressing sensitivity and empathy. For example, one of her poems commemorated her older cousin Nell, who, after Veronica's mother had died at a young age, raised Veronica and her three siblings and devoted her life to serving others. When Nell was old, Veronica cared for her in her home in Mission Beach until Nell died. Veronica's most moving poem, still treasured by her grandchildren, was written on the occasion of her 1917 visit to Puerto Rico, the only time Veronica would meet her mother's family. In the poem, Veronica describes her young mother's homesickness in cold, damp Iowa for her beloved home country. Unlike the silence around the divorce, Veronica's visit to her Puerto Rico family was often discussed. Mrs. Brucker still recalls that her grandmother would describe how sick she became on the ocean voyage to the island. There still is a strong bond, formed during Veronica's visit, between Veronica's descendants and their Puerto Rican relatives. In fact, Veronica's granddaughter was warmly welcomed in 2009 by over thirty relatives when her cruise ship briefly stopped by the island.

Veronica Burke's Daughters: Mary, Mildred, and Noreen

During the period from 1916 to 1924—the period in which Veronica Burke visited Puerto Rico (1917), divorced Charles (1919), and married George Sprague (1922)—her three daughters attended Russ High School (now San Diego High School). Even though the divorce must have affected the girls, the Russ yearbooks show these three to be exceptional students and outstanding, popular student leaders. The prominent roles that the three daughters played in their school may be taken as an indication of Veronica's and Charles' continued, supportive parenting and their shared love for their three daughters even though their marriage had fallen apart.

Their oldest daughter, Mary, was an energetic and engaging student. She made history when, as a sophomore, she was elected the first female Class President at Russ High School. Her school career culminated in her position of Vice Chair of her Senior Class, when The *Russ Yearbook* referred to her as "the popular senior." She had leadership positions in many clubs. However, all these extra-curricular activities did not harm her academic record. A high achiever, she was admitted to Stanford University. Before she could enter, however, Stanford decided to admit only three girls to its freshman class. Because Mary was number four, she was rejected and, therefore, attended the University of California at Berkeley.

Soon after her marriage in 1921 to Harold Royle, Executive Vice President of the First National Bank, Mary and three friends from Russ High School founded the Thursday Club. They gathered twenty charter members to "share warm friendship, have cultural opportunities and engage in civic and benevolent activities." Within seven years, the organization had 140 members. It offered such educational "departments" as "Book and Drama," "Art Appreciation," and "Business and Protective Law." This 501(c)(3) organization with its emphasis on education, social interaction, culture, and philanthropy still exists and continues to raise substantial amounts of money for many organizations, such as Children's Hospital, Goodwill Industries, Cancer Society, Blind Recreation Center, Burn Institute, Urban Corps, Children's Dental Health

Association, Cerebral Palsy Foundation. With its popular annual Rummage Sale in Balboa Park, it continues to be one of the most effective charitable organizations in San Diego.

Mary Burke Royle was elected the first president of the Thursday Club, serving from 1921 to 1922. She was re-elected in 1923 for another one year term. Her crucial role in conceiving the Thursday Club and her pronounced leadership in this organization with its emphasis on "ideals," "friendship," and "civic betterment" may have grown out of the values nurtured by her mother while living at 1436. We may even assume that Mary and her three friends who founded the Thursday Club just two years after they graduated from high school may have discussed their dreams of new possibilities and responsibilities as women while sitting around Veronica's dining room table. Mary, in turn, included her own daughters in the Thursday Club activities. Marilyn Royle Brucker, her only surviving daughter, has been a member since 1955.

Charles and Veronica Burke's middle daughter, Mildred, was as active in Russ High School as her older sister Mary had been. An energetic student leader, she was elected Vice President of her Sophomore Class, and, like Mary, became Vice President of her Senior Class. She too was an excellent student and, after briefly attending Berkeley, graduated from the University of Oregon in 1923. She married Ed Fletcher, Jr., the oldest son of Ed Fletcher, Sr., the State Senator and real estate developer. After her marriage, she joined Mary in the philanthropic activities of the Thursday Club.

The "colorful" life of Noreen, the youngest of the three sisters, started when, at the age of 14, she got trapped for three month on a three-masted schooner in the icy waters off the coast of Alaska. The Russ High School yearbooks list many contributions that Noreen made to student life of Russ High School. She, like her older sisters, became class president. She, like Mildred, studied at the University of Oregon. Noreen received her pilot license in the early thirties and once landed by accident on a secret airbase. An avid pilot all her life, she had one of only ten private airstrips in the country. She married Dr. John Steen, a dentist, and was active in the Thursday Club with her older sisters.

The records of these three sisters would support the interpretation of Veronica Burke as a woman full of hope and energy, who expected to be able to construct a new kind of life for herself and for her daughters in South Park. Though Veronica may have been frustrated in her marriage at that time, she raised her daughters to take advantage of the new possibilities for women in education, culture, and politics. While living at 1436 and still in the care of Veronica, her daughters developed into exceptional young women. Coming of age during a time when people in San Diego believed that this city held exceptional promise for prosperity and for a vibrant culture that included opportunities for women, these three sisters became significant contributors to the welfare of the San Diego community and continued to do so all their lives. The obituaries of all three women speak of their cultural and philanthropic contributions, especially as members of the Thursday Club.

In 1936, Charles and Veronica Burke, joint owners of 1436 since their second marriage in 1928, granted this property to their three daughters, who, after their father's death, sold the house in 1945. Thus, 1436 was owned by members of the Burke family for thirty-two years: by Charles and Veronica jointly (1913-19), by Veronica alone (1919-28), by Charles and Veronica jointly (1928-1936), and finally by their three daughters (1936-1945).

Mary B. Maschal (1924-1998)

Mary Maschal bought 1436 when she was sixty-two years old, twice divorced, and a widow for over fifteen years. Maschal had been looking for a historic home, large enough to exhibit her vast collection of suffragist memorabilia. Upset that much of women's history had been ignored and lost, she was driven—"obsessed" as one of her friends said—to find a home where women could reclaim their history, a cultural center where women would feel safe to tell their stories. Maschal was also attracted to 1436 (then still a duplex) because, with an upstairs apartment for

an eventual caretaker, she envisioned that she could live out her life there. This beautiful Craftsman house with its large, inviting porch would fulfill her dream in every respect. It became the home of the Women's History Reclamation Project and the birthplace of the San Diego Women's History Museum. Moreover, Maschal was able to spend her final days there, surrounded by her beloved youngest daughter, Mary Maschal, Jr., and by her close friends who took turns caring for her.

Maschal, born in Southern Missouri, was not urged by her mother to pursue an education. She grew up in a culture with limited expectations for girls. Her daughter remembers that, while all Mary Maschal's five brothers went to college, her mother told Mary that she did not need to further her education because "she would always have a man to take care of her." But despite the expectations of her mother, Maschal ended up working all her life, supporting her five children mostly by herself. During the Second World War, Maschal made ends meet as a "Rosie the Riveter," working in St. Louis as a "lineman" making torpedoes for the Defense Department. She moved to San Diego in the fifties, working for Convair. When she became a widow in 1970, she first supported her family by caring for boarders in her house in Clairemont. After that, she started her own business, a "handy-woman's business," cleaning, repairing, painting and wallpapering homes. Maschal was good at upholstering, wall papering, and even plumbing. For a while, she also managed the United Nation Association's gift shop in Balboa Park. She continued to work occasionally, even after she retired, at the Flagship Shop in Hillcrest when her friend, the owner, needed to take a day off. She had still worked in that store the week before she died at the age of 74.

"Portrait of Mary B. Maschal"
by Susan E. Rhoden, pastel,
at Women's History Museum
and Educational Center

Handy and technical, Mary Maschal could have become an engineer, her daughter thinks, had she been educated. Her daughter remembers that her mother, growing up in Southern Missouri, did not know women who were educated but that her mother always felt that there was something not "right" about what was considered the proper role of women. Another friend tells that, as a little girl, Maschal would line up her dolls and, imitating her minister father, would preach to her dolls, only to be told that girls could not be preachers. After a life time of painful, personal experiences and having been hemmed in by gender bias, Maschal devoted her later years to developing opportunities for girls to learn about women's history and educating young women about the ideals and the struggles of the Suffragists. Maschal's devotion to reclaiming women's history and establishing the Women's History Reclamation Project at 1436 came out of her own awareness that a lack of knowledge of women's history affected how young girls thought of themselves.

An energetic volunteer all her life, she had been active in the Clairemont PTA and the Boys Scouts and Girls Scouts. When she was widowed in 1970, she joined the Unitarian

Church first in Hillcrest and later in Solana Beach, as well as the National Organization for Women (NOW). After moving from Clairemont to her home in South Park, she invited women activists whom she had learned to know in her volunteer work in the Unitarian Church, the PTA, and NOW. In the period between 1994 and 1996, as many as thirty women would gather every Saturday morning around Maschal's dining room table at 1436, constructing the Women's Reclamation Project while drinking Maschal's coffee and eating the muffins made by Judy Forman, owner of the Big Kitchen.

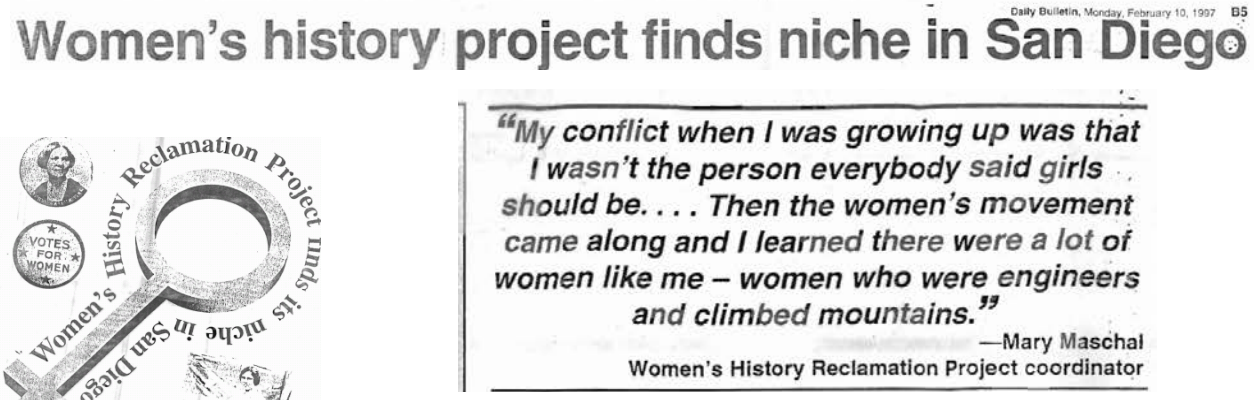
Maschal never threw anything away. In her cleaning business, she often emptied homes of people who had died and would save from the garbage dump all kinds of objects, books, and ephemera—memorabilia related to the lives of women. She collected kitchen objects, a huge collection of books, but, most significantly, she inherited the Alice Park collection of objects of the Women's Suffragist Movement. Because Alice Park also had not thrown anything away, this treasure trove included rare artifacts, including correspondence between Mrs. Park and Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other Suffrage leaders. It also included newspaper clippings, photos, "Vote for Women" buttons and badges, banners, pins, postcards, calendars, posters, dolls, and even the outfits women had worn in these historic demonstrations. All these objects Maschal stored at 1436, in the rooms, in the many closets, and even in the unfinished attic. When the house was full, Maschal rented storage lockers.

Maschal envisioned these objects and books as the core of a long-term project to reclaim and collect the history of women, a history that had been unknown to her as a young girl and that was omitted from the mainstream history texts. Her goal was not only to preserve, catalogue, and exhibit the objects she had collected but to reclaim the history of the early women's movement, especially the Suffragist Movement, and to disseminate this information to young women and girls. With a friend, she founded and incorporated the Women's History Reclamation Project in a 501(c)(3) in 1983. The following year, she received a grant to collect women's oral histories, travelling all over the country. Finally, on the Saturday before Mother's Day in 1995, she and her friends opened 1436 to the public. She had converted her garage into a library, with shelves along the walls filled from top to bottom with thousands of books and with additional bookshelves, back to back, in the middle of the garage, fastened to the rafters. In the bright addition behind the house, she exhibited women's art work. The downstairs of the house itself became the public exhibition space. The kitchen exhibited her varied collection of kitchen tools, with the walls covered with washboards, eggbeaters, etc. Everything was professionally labeled. They had advertised and distributed flyers, generating great public interest. The event was well attended and covered by the media, including articles in the *San Diego Union*.

With this Open House, 1436 became the formal birthplace of the San Diego Women's History Museum, the name of the Women's History Reclamation Project since 2003. The reality of caring for such a large collection—the complexities of preserving, cataloguing, and exhibiting the objects—surpassed Maschal's vision. Therefore, with the money that the open house had generated, Maschal began to look for a new place. Wanting to make this Reclamation Project "significant and workable," as she would tell her friends, Maschal was delighted to be able to move her rich collection to an actual museum space in September 1996, when the Women's Reclamation Project moved from 1436 to the Art Union Building in Golden Hill. There, with more space, the collection of objects related to women's history has continued to grow with contributions by many community members. The Women's History Museum—only one of five such museums in the country—has developed into an important and influential cultural institution, with a paid executive director. Over the years it has offered a wide a variety of changing exhibits. It offers a monthly lecture series, poetry readings, film screenings, and outreach educational activities. It collaborates with the Women's Center at UCSD and the Women's Studies Department at SDSU. In addition, it has received numerous grants. It also has established a Women's Hall of Fame that inducts six women every year.

Maschal's contributions were recognized during her life time. She received the Unitarian of the Year Award in 1982 and the NOW Susan B. Anthony Award for Contributions to the Feminist Movement in 1997. She was for many years a member of the San Diego Commission on the Status of Women. She attended several women's conferences, including the 1980 United Nations Conference for Women in Copenhagen. Maschal also was inducted into San Diego County's Women's Hall of Fame. Maschal's vision went beyond the reclamation of women's history and beyond raising awareness of that history. In her work with the Women's History Reclamation Project, she also searched for a different organizational model, one that would not be hierarchical. Consequently, she insisted on calling herself "coordinator," rather than chair or president.

Though there were many people involved—mostly women but also men—Mary Maschal was the guiding force. Her enthusiasm was contagious and her energy enormous. She hardly slept and ate little. Her friends still remember this period of working with Maschal on the Women's History Reclamation Project as pivotal to their lives. The descriptions of Mary Maschal by her friends indicate that Maschal indeed was a major figure in the history of San Diego. She is describe as "enthusiastic" by her friend Betsy Stevens; as "tenacious" and "the wisest woman I ever met," by Cindy Stankowski who took over the organization when Mary became ill; as one of the "most important women who have ever lived in San Diego" by Judy Forman, the owner of The Big Kitchen, and a strong supporter of Maschal. After Mary Maschal died, Mayor Susan Golding called her a "courageous lifelong community activist" and said that "she was a woman ahead of her time [who] lived her life with gusto, forged new paths for women, and promoted a better quality of life for San Diegans. Her daughter, Mary Jr., remembers her as someone who, above all, "believed in social justice" for all.

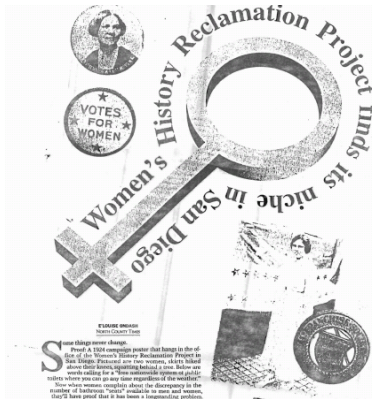

Daily Bulletin, Monday, February 10, 1997 B5

Women's history project finds niche in San Diego

"My conflict when I was growing up was that I wasn't the person everybody said girls should be. . . . Then the women's movement came along and I learned there were a lot of women like me – women who were engineers and climbed mountains."

—Mary Maschal
Women's History Reclamation Project coordinator

San Diego Union, February 10, 1997



North County Times, January 19, 1997

Conclusion

The promise to my daughter and her husband that I would write their application for historical designation of their house has given me the tremendous privilege of highlighting the remarkable Craftsman-style architectural features of 1436 and of uncovering the remarkable history of several of its residents. Though many of the particulars may have been lost, the broad outlines of the lives of Veronica Burke at the beginning of the 20th century and of Mary Maschal at its end may inform us of ways in which two remarkable women in San Diego, living in the same house, claimed new possibilities in the early part of the twentieth century and, shocked by the lack of progress, reclaimed those almost forgotten accomplishments at the end of that century.

Notes

The information about Veronica Burke and her daughters is based on Fletcher, Jr., and on extensive interviews with Marilyn Brucker (Veronica's granddaughter). The information about Mary Maschal was kindly provided by Judy Forman, Ashley Gardner, Mary Maschal Jr., Cindy Stankowski, and Betsy Stevens.

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