

**American Academy of Religion  
Annual Meeting – San Diego, 2014**

**Religious Architecture Tour**

Jeanne Halgren Kilde, University of Minnesota  
David Bains, Samford University  
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**Monday, November 24, 2014 - 1:00 PM-5:00 PM**

*Meet at Convention Center - Hall H Foyer*

This bus tour explores how San Diego's religious landscape has been shaped by a variety of immigrant communities and international contacts. It will include an exploration of noted architect Robert E. Des Lauriers's use of architectural modernism in the Islamic Center of San Diego (1986), formerly the Abi Bakr Al Siddiq Mosque; as well as the more traditional styles and spaces of the Spanish-revival Chinese Mission (1927), now the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum; a small Portuguese chapel on Point Loma (1922); and Our Lady of the Rosary Church (1925), a landmark church in Little Italy featuring murals by the immigrant painter Fausto Tasca. Visiting Shelter Island, the tour will also consider the mid-twentieth-century use of Polynesian architecture and Tiki decoration, including religious imagery, to evoke the free-thinking and free-living sought by many in Southern California.

**Note: Our hosts at the Islamic Center ask that women wear a headscarf while visiting that site. Please see the description of the Islamic Center for more information.**

**Schedule**

- 1:00 Assemble to leave Convention Center
- 1:30 Arrive at Islamic Center of San Diego  
7050 Eckstrom Avenue  
San Diego, CA 92111
- 2:15 Leave Islamic Center
- 2:30 United Portuguese *Sociedade do Espirito Santo* Chapel and Hall  
2818 Avenida De Portugal  
San Diego, CA 92106
- 3:00 Leave Portuguese Chapel and drive by St. Agnes Catholic Church  
1140 Evergreen Street
- 3:10 Arrive Shelter Island for Tiki Architecture  
Bali Hai Restaurant (and Humphrey's Hotel)  
2230 Shelter Island Drive  
San Diego, CA 92106
- 3:45 Leave Shelter Island
- 4:00 Arrive Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church  
1668 State Street  
San Diego CA 92101
- 4:30 Leave Our Lady of the Rosary
- 4:45 Arrive Chinese Mission / San Diego History Center  
290 J St.  
San Diego, CA 92101
- 5:00 Arrive Convention Center

**Islamic Center of San Diego**  
**7050 Eckstrom Avenue**  
**San Diego, CA 92111**  
<http://www.icsd.org/>

Originally called Abu Bakr Al Siddiq Mosque, this building was designed by Robert E. Des Lauriers in 1986 for a small group of Muslims living in San Diego County. Construction was completed in 1990.

Des Lauriers was raised in Los Angeles and settled in San Diego in 1952 after receiving his architectural training at the University of Colorado. He was an



important figure in southern California's embrace of modern design as a signature architectural style. Most of his work consisted of naval, residential, and educational structures. In 1959, however, he won an Award of Merit from the American Institute of Architects for his design of Carlton Hills Lutheran Church in Santee, California. This established his reputation as an architect who could design spiritually inspiring spaces in a contemporary style. Over the course of his career he completed sixty-seven religious projects including San Diego's Calvary Lutheran (1961), First Assembly of God (1971), and Hope United Methodist Church (1978).

Des Lauriers experience with both houses of worship and schools made him a natural choice for this Muslim community. The Center was designed to accommodate a variety of needs and services. It includes not only a mosque but also significant auxiliary spaces, including those housing the Islamic School of San Diego. The building's exterior combines clean modern lines with a traditional Islamic



dome and stylized minaret. This makes it easily recognizable to motorists on the adjoining streets and freeway as an Islamic house of prayer. These elements are not merely external signs, rather they extend inside the building itself. The prayer room features large windows letting in abundant light from the north and east, while its positioning on the northeast corner of property facilitates a harmonious orientation of the room toward Mecca. (The *qiblah* or direction of prayer in San Diego is roughly 25° or north-northeast.) Since the founding of the Center, the congregation has grown significantly, and now serves as an Islamic resource center for the region.

The Center's website offers the following information for visitors: "The Islamic Center of San Diego is open for visits from people of all faiths. Please note that visitors will have to remove their shoes when entering the prayer hall, while shoes can be worn when entering offices, library or participating in activities held in the Facility's Multi-Purpose room. In the Islamic tradition, men and women do not shake hands when introduced to each other. Also, there is a separate prayer hall upstairs for women while the prayer hall for men is located downstairs. Finally, all visitors must be dressed modestly and it is considered respectful for women to wear a head scarf, although not required."

**Sources:**

MIT Libraries. "Dome." <http://dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/30132>

Modern San Diego. <http://www.modernsandiego.com/RobertDesLauriers.html>

**United Portuguese *Sociedade do Espirito Santo* Chapel and Hall**  
**2818 Avenida De Portugal**  
**San Diego, CA 92106**  
<http://www.upses.com/>

Whaling supported the first Portuguese immigrants to Point Loma in the middle 1880s and eventually the Portuguese community found financial stability in the booming tuna industry. Today, although the tuna industry has largely left San Diego, the Portuguese continue to thrive and promote their heritage through the local United Portuguese *Sociedade do Espirito Santo* (U.P.S.E.S.) and through St. Agnes Catholic Church. The U.P.S.E.S. supports many religious and civic activities, sports teams, and generally encourages community spirit in what was sometimes called either "Roseville" or "Tunaville" but is now referred to as Point Loma village.



United Portuguese *Sociedade do Espirito Santo* Chapel and Hall (as built in 1922).

The best know of the annual events sponsored by the U.P.S.E.S. is the *Festa do Divino Espirito Santo*. The *Festa* celebrates the answered prayer of Queen-Saint Isabel of Portugal (1271-1336). During a time of famine, Queen Isabel imported food to feed her people. At a morning mass, having depleted all her funds and the famine persisting, she promised to the Holy Spirit, "I will give my crown to the Church if you will send me a miracle, so my people will be relieved of their hunger." As she left the church, she saw ships coming into the harbor loaded with wheat and corn. In accord with her promise, she gave her crown to the church in honor of the Holy Spirit's faithfulness to the people. For over 700 years Portuguese people have celebrated this event in the *Festa do Espirito Santo*. In 1884, immigrants brought the festival to San Diego. In 1910 the festival was formally established as an annual event in Point Loma.

The central feature of *Festa* is a formal procession of the leaders of the Portuguese community along with young people representing Queen-Saint Isabel of Portugal and her court. The queen carries the crown, called the "Holy Spirit Crown," representing the one donated to the church. The procession begins at the Portuguese Hall, marches several blocks up to St. Agnes Church where it stops for a celebratory mass. Leaving the church, the procession ends at the chapel where the Holy Spirit Crown is installed for the rest of the *Festa*.



*Festa* Queen holding the Holy Spirit Crown in front of chapel.

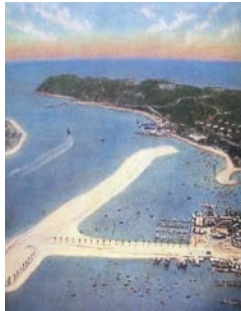
The chapel was completed in 1922 along with the first hall that stood on the same site of the present hall. The chapel is a facsimile of those that exist on the island of Terceira, Azores. The Azores being the ancestral home of many in Point Loma. Inside is a statue of Queen-Saint Isabel holding a mantle of flowers. The statue depicts a story about Isabel that is often represented in painting and sculpture. It was her practice to save bread from her own table and, herself, give it to the poor.

Her haughty husband, the king, tried to stop her from nightly mingling with the poor. At one point, catching her sneaking food out of the castle, he demanded that she show him what she carried. She said a prayer and threw open her cloak. Instead of bread, red roses tumbled out. God, in the interest of the poor, had protected her from the wrath of her husband.

**Sources:** Web sites and brochures of *United Portuguese S.E.S, Point Loma*, and the *Portuguese Historical Center, Point Loma*. Thanks also to Carl Silva, President of U.P.S.E.S.

**Tiki Architecture on Shelter Island**  
**Bali Hai Restaurant (and Humphrey's Hotel)**  
2230 Shelter Island Drive  
San Diego, CA 92106  
<http://www.balihairestaurant.com/>

As a by-product of the U.S. Navy's need to bring deepwater craft easily into the San Diego Bay, soil dredged from the bottom of the channel was used to enhance an ancient sand bar to create Shelter Island. With the end of World War II, Shelter Island had become a substantial piece of property and ripe for development. Such situations after the war offered many real estate developers the opportunity to create theme-centered neighborhoods—many of them in Cliff May's "Ranch Style" that harkened back to California's Spanish and Mexican ranchos. Shelter Island was owned and controlled by the San Diego Port District, whose director, John Bate, declared that all those who wanted to lease lands on the "island" would have to build with a Polynesian paradise in mind. Beginning in 1953, "Tiki" was the imposed aesthetic ideal for Shelter Island.



Shelter Island soon after World War II.

Kevin Starr, in a chapter titled "Designs for the Good Life" in his multivolume *Americans and the California Dream*, notes that the Tiki aesthetic "ranges from pop to kitsch" but has underneath it a Polynesian primitivism that complements twentieth-century modernism. In the 1950s, "Tiki" denoted as much an ethic as an aesthetic. The South Pacific Islands had long represented an alternative to Western civilization. Sexual liberation, light-heartedness, and free-wheeling spirituality were believed to be at the heart of Polynesian culture. Such were themes of artists such as Paul Gauguin, writers such as Jack London, and anthropologists such as Margaret Mead. In the 1932 Charles Nordhoff and James Normal Hall published *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and in 1935 the movie version won an Oscar for best picture. Clark Gable played Fletcher Christian. During World War II more attention was focused on the South Pacific and, upon the return of the sailors and marines to Navy towns like San Diego, primitivism and modernism met easily in whimsical Tiki statues, bamboo furniture, bikinis, and muumuus.

The Polynesian architecture along Shelter Island Boulevard, following the vision of John Bate, begins with Trader Mort's liquor store. Along the road it is expressed in a variety of woody gables of boating establishments, and it culminates with the exuberance of various entries to Humphrey's Hotel and the trickster-fool "Goof" surmounting the Bali Hai Restaurant. Throughout the interiors of Humphrey's and the Bali Hai, the Tiki ethic and aesthetic are still promoted even though the Port District no longer requires buildings to maintain the Polynesian theme.

**Religions in Polynesia.** The vast triangular region of the Pacific Ocean defined by the Hawaiian Islands at the north, Aotearoa (New Zealand) at the southeast, and Rapa Nui (Easter Island) at the east includes islands inhabited from around 900 BCE to others inhabited only as late as 800 CE. Linked by eleven related languages, the many cultures, prior to Christian missionizing, shared beliefs in the immanence of the gods and spirits and in their on-going engagement in the world and human life, an engagement that could be both beneficial and destructive. The major gods included Tane (or Kane), the god of the forests; Ta'aora, the god of the sea; Rongo (or Lono), the god of agriculture; and Ku (or Tu), the god of war. Lesser gods and spirits were beneath these four gods, including several female gods such as Papa, the earth mother. Beneath these were tribal chiefs, also understood to embody divine power, inherited from their forbearers. Protocols and practices designed to control or direct religious power, called *tapu* (from which the word *taboo* was derived), proscribed proper behavior and designated sacredness.



Image of the god, Ku, Hawaiian.

A significant material culture characterized these religions. Images of gods and spirits were carved of stone and wood, and sometimes decorated with feathered basketry, shells, and plant fibers. Barkcloth, of which we will see an example, elaborately woven and decorated with painting and stencils, was worn during



Barkcloth from Fiji

ceremonies and given as gifts. The people of the region were skilled navigators and boatmen, at home in a universe comprised of not only the surface of the land and its volcanic depths, but the sea and heavens as well. The carved canoe that we will see signals the centrality of the sea. The large heads and compact bodies of Moai from Easter Island, carved around 1000 CE, and of representations of other gods, such as that of Ku, depicted here, inspired the mid-twentieth-century Tiki trend, the term *Tiki* being the word for a human form.

#### Sources:

*Shelter Island: 50-Year Anniversary Tribute* in *The Log Newspaper* (Specialty Publication, 2003), and Kevin Starr's *California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (2009).  
British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/online\\_tours/pacific.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/online_tours/pacific.aspx)  
Seton, Rosemary. "Reconstructing the Museum of the London Missionary Society." *Material Religion* 8:1 (n.d.): 98-102. DOI: 10.2752/175183412X13286288798015.



## Our Lady of the Rosary Church Italian National Catholic Parish in San Diego

1668 State Street  
San Diego CA 92101  
<http://olrsd.org/>



**History:** Italian immigrants began arriving in San Diego in the late nineteenth-century. Their numbers increased steadily in the early twentieth century as Italians, like Portuguese, were drawn to jobs offered by San Diego's growing tuna industry. Their neighborhood near the docks and tuna canneries soon became known as Little Italy.

In late 1921 John J. Cantwell, bishop of Monterey-Los Angeles (and later first archbishop of Los Angeles), sent Father Sylvester Rabagliati (1871-1940) to serve the growing Italian community. A native of Italy, Rabagliati had served Italian communities in New York, San Francisco, and Washington State. Rabagliati found an ideal site for a church at the corner of Date and State Streets. Initially he celebrated mass in a small house on Columbia Street while raising money for the new church. Ground was broken in August 1923 and the church, which drew both Italian and Portuguese families, held its first worship service that Christmas Eve. The completed church was consecrated on November 15, 1925. While the parish struggled for many years with the debt on the building, the growth of various religious societies encouraged the completion of an adjoining parish hall in 1939.

The construction of the Crosstown Freeway (now Interstate 5) in the early 1960s bisected the neighborhood, destroying many homes and threatening the neighborhood. Businesses increasingly crowded out residences and families moved to the suburbs. This familiar American story dramatically threatened parish life. Since it was a national parish for Italian-Americans, rather than a territorial parish for a neighborhood, however, the leaders of Our Lady of the Rosary urged families to attend the church regardless of their place of residence.

Since 1969, the parish has been staffed by Barnabite Fathers (formally known as Clerics Regular of St. Paul). The order was founded in 1530 in Milan by St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria and others. The current pastor of the parish is Fr. Joseph M. Tabigue, C.R.S.P., a native of the Philippines.

Today the parish remains a central feature of San Diego's Little Italy and its Italian-American community. Several religious societies continue to be affiliated with the parish and to celebrate their annual festivals. These include the Addolorata Society and the Madonna del Lume (Our Lady of Light) Society, both of which carry the

statue of Our Lady in procession from the church to the Embarcadero on their respective autumn feast days to pray for fishermen and bless their boats.

**Art and Architecture.** The church is built in a simple Italian Renaissance style with arched windows and a central door flanked by two towers. A painted sculptural medallion over the front door depicts Mary holding the infant Jesus. The entrance is flanked by marble statues of St. Peter, the patron of fishermen, and of the Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus.

Our Lady of the Rosary is most noted for its interior decoration. Fr. Rabagliati commissioned Fausto Tasca, a Venetian painter working in Los Angeles, to decorate the ceilings and the walls of the church. Tasca immigrated to the United States in 1913, moving to Santa



Barbara in 1916, and then to Los Angeles in 1920. He completed these paintings on canvas in his Los Angeles studio and then they were mounted in the church. The greatest works are the mural of the crucifixion over the altar and that of the Last Judgment on the church's rear wall. Both are complex scenes with many figures. The likeness of Fr. Rabagliati is included in the bottom center of the Last Judgment presenting the Church of the Holy Rosary to Christ and Mary. The seven medallions in the center of the ceiling depict mysteries of the Christian faith. Along the sides of the ceiling are the apostles. The fifteen stained-glass windows depict the events in the life of Jesus and Mary that are the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries of the rosary. The depiction of Our Lady of the Rosary over the side entrance to the left of the altar was painted in Italy for the church. It was originally located above the altar.

Tasca commissioned fellow immigrant, Carlos Romanelli, to create the statues of Our Lady, the Sacred Heart, St. Anne, and St. Joseph. Other statues found in the church include St. Antony of Padua and Addolorata (a Sicilian devotion to Mary as Our Lady of Sorrows). Stations of the Cross line the walls of the church.

### Sources and Further Reading:

*1925-1975, The First Fifty Years: Our Lady of the Rosary Church.* San Diego: The Church, 1975.

*Fausto Bellino Tasca* <http://www.faustotasca.com/>  
*Italian Archives of San Diego: A Program of the Convivio Society*  
<http://italianarchives.smugmug.com/>

Quinney, Kimber Marie. *San Diego's Little Italy.* Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 2007.  
Solcia, Louis. *Our Lady of the Rosary: The Jewel of Little Italy* John B. Productions, Inc. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZlxDF8x9dE>

## Chinese Mission

### San Diego Chinese History Museum

404 Third Avenue (Third Avenue and J St.)

San Diego, CA 92101

<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/>

California was a leader in the nation's Progressive Movement between the 1880s and 1920s, and the Progressive Movement's racism—focused as it was on promoting White Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture—was most evident in the series of anti-Chinese laws that curtailed their access to citizenship, limited their immigration, shut down their booming fishing industry, hampered their access marriage and family life, denied their right to courtroom justice, and restricted them to circumscribed districts within California towns and cities. In San Diego, the Chinese who did not live as servants or cooks in the houses of the rich were restricted to living south of Market Street in a rough district called "Stingaree," a district that is now part of the "Gaslamp" next to the Convention Center.

The Progressive Movement, however, was complex and had its human quirks. In San Diego, one of the leading proponents of WASP culture and Progressive politics was George Marston, a man who also wanted to promote San Diego's Spanish-Catholic past and assimilate the Chinese fully into American Protestant life. Fortuitously, the leader of the Chinese community was Ah Quin, a man who also wanted the Chinese to embrace American Protestantism. The San Diego Chinese Mission has a long and successful history in San Diego largely because of the compatibility of these two men. The building that now houses the Chinese Historical Museum represents well the personal relationship between Ah Quin and George Marston along with San Diego's WASPish promotion of Spanish architecture.

Quin, whose formal name was Tom Chon-kwan, was born in China in 1848. Educated at a missionary school in Canton, he learned English, and converted to Christianity. At age twenty he came alone with many other young men to seek his fortune in California. Talented and sociable, Quin eventually was invited in 1880 by George Marston to come to live in San Diego as a mediator and translator on large construction projects. Marston, whose statue is at the Laurel Street entry to Balboa Park, was also deeply active in both his own Congregational Church and the First Presbyterian Church. Marston in the early 1870s had taught in a Sunday School for Chinese children and helped establish the first Chinese Christian congregation,



Chinese Mission and rear dormitory, 1927.



Margaret Fanton and students in front of the mission building prior to the 1927 structure.

sharing the building owned by the First Presbyterian Church.

Marston and Quin worked together for each other's financial benefit while networking with churches and businesses to create a strong working relationship between San Diego and its Chinatown. Before Quin had arrived, the local branch of the American Missionary Association of the Congregationalists chartered themselves as the California Chinese Mission, and in 1885, with Quin's leadership, they established the Chinese Mission School in the First Presbyterian Church. At first, Ah Quin's children were the only children attending, but eventually the school drew more students. In 1909 Marston donated land nearer to the Stingaree district and the school moved to First Street into a small building where now stands Ralph's Grocery. Mrs. Margaret Fanton was hired as teacher, and she remained with the school for more than forty years. Her classes were much about Americanization, but she deeply loved China and traveled there in 1925. Upon her return, she worked with Marston and Reverend C.C. Hung, the pastor of the Chinese Mission to raise money for a new building—Ah Quin had died in 1914.

The new church was designed in 1927 by Louis J. Gill, the nephew and partner of Irving Gill who is San Diego's most famous architect. Attached to the rear of the chapel was a boxy structure that was first used as a dormitory for young men who were recent immigrants. In this way the building and the organization served as a type of Chinese YMCA along with being a church and school. The awkwardness of a Spanish-tiled bell tower on a Chinese church may be taken to represent the assimilation achieved in San Diego. Led by Marston and Quin, what could have been an antagonistic and oppressive relationship became, in general, a thriving alliance that still flourishes. When in the 1980s San Diego, under the auspices of urban renewal, began to create "The Gaslamp" and a Chinese/Asian Historic District, it was first proposed to tear down the old mission building since the Chinese church had long since moved to a better building and the old mission was itself a block outside the official district's boundaries. In response, Chinese organizations gathered to save the building by advocating that it be repaired and moved into the district. One redevelopment official wrote "I find it difficult to understand the passions that seem to go beyond common sense here." Another official thought that a Spanish-style mission in a Chinese-oriented district was a bit "crazy." But the Chinese won and the mission building was saved as a Chinese Heritage Museum. As such its exhibits focus on Chinese culture, but across the street one of Ah Quin's properties still stands as a memorial to him and his family and Ah Quin's role in San Diego is honored by a large window display.

**Sources:** Elizabeth C. MacPhail, "San Diego's Chinese Mission," *The Journal of San Diego History*: 23:2 (Spring 1977),

<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/v49-1/chinese.htm>.

Murray K. Lee, *In Search of Gold Mountain: A History of the Chinese in San Diego, California* (2011).