



UPPER EAST ASSOCIATION SANTA BARBARA

Upper East News

Feb 2024

<https://sbuppereast.org>

Annual Meeting

The Upper East Association held its required annual meeting on November 4, 2023 at the First Presbyterian Church. Approximately 80 association members attended and enjoyed refreshments provided by board members prior to the meeting. Co-president Steve Forsell outlined the board's activities for 2023 and gave a brief financial overview. To bolster association finances, the board raised dues to \$35 for 2024.

Greg Gorga, executive director of the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, gave an informative and entertaining talk on the history of the Santa Barbara Channel. Located at the harbor the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum is a real local treasure with permanent and rotating exhibits and programs throughout the year. To support the museum, go to <https://sbmm.org/>

To continue to receive this newsletter and other communications, please renew your membership by February 29 if you have not already.

Election of Board Members

As a result of the 2023 December annual board member election, we are pleased to announce that Rod Hersberger, Micheal O'Connell and Ryan Newell have been re-elected and will serve two-year terms beginning in 2024. At its January 2024 meeting, the board appointed a new board member Ross Foti to fill Jim Morouse's position as no additional candidates were identified to fill that position.

New Board Member Ross Foti

Our newest board member, appointed in January 2024, is Ross Foti. Ross, his wife Shelley, and their mini red poodle Raleigh are happy to be living in the

Upper East, enjoying its beauty and quietude in proximity to everything lovely Santa Barbara offers. Although this is their first time living here together as a family, Ross lived here 20 years ago while project-managing the restoration of five bungalow cottages on East Islay Street. Ross is also an Ordained Minister of Religious Science, holds a Masters Degree in Consciousness Studies, is a singer/songwriter, poet, pianist, and has designed gardens both large and small in public spaces and private homes throughout the desert in the Coachella Valley and across the San Francisco Bay Area.



Being here now, noticing the changes (and the changelessness) in the Upper East and in the city itself, Ross is grateful to get involved and contribute to our community through membership on the board of the Upper East Association. He looks forward to finding ways to broaden its membership and what we offer as well as encouraging its long-time and brand-new residents to get involved. Looking toward the future, he hopes we will find ways to cultivate a civic-minded, resourceful community enjoying our peaceful streets and the beautiful neighborliness that continues to define the Upper East.

Talking with Kevin

By Ross Foti

Almost daily, we see him in his Post Office-issued uniform, striding our sidewalks with a smile on his face, a man on a mission. That mission is delivering our mail, which **Kevin Ruskauff** has been doing for 27 years here in the Upper East.



He's watched houses change hands, children grow up, leave home, and return. He's watched hedges grow taller, get trimmed, and thicken. His 400-household route has brought him face to face with surprising characters with storied pasts. At some houses, he's as apt to drop a dog treat in the mail slot as he is a letter.

I asked Kevin, "What music reflects your day-to-day experience of the Upper East?" Immediately, he grinned, "Reggae!". Anyone who catches his easy gait and sunny demeanor on a cloudless day would agree, those are some *"pos--tive -- vi-bra-tions, ye-ah..."*

Reminiscing about different experiences he's had here, Kevin shared a couple of anecdotes. Once, while delivering certified mail, as the recipient was signing for the obviously legal contract, Kevin offered some tactful assistance, "some of these legal documents can be difficult to understand..." to which the woman responded, "Kevin, I was a lawyer." Another time, invited to one of our neighbor's 95th birthday party, he found out the honoree was friends with Franklin D. and Eleanor Roosevelt and

had written speeches for President Harry S. Truman!

Kevin has watched the Upper East subtly shift over the years as residents have updated their houses and redesigned their gardens, maintaining that quiet Upper East elegance while modernizing its timelessness. For Kevin, it's his relationship with the people that has kept his 27 years here fresh. Without the people, he says, his job would be boring.

When I asked Kevin if there was one thing he could change, what would it be, his answer was, unsurprisingly, the ability to safely cross Constance Avenue from Santa Barbara Street. Given the speed at which drivers approach the intersection from either direction on Constance, Kevin finds it increasingly impossible to get across the street. Like many of us, he laments the increased speed and distractedness with which drivers barrel through our streets, oblivious to the neighborhood they are passing through.

He says, "There is so much to see around the neighborhood – houses, gardens, trees, people – it really is a neighborhood. Take time to see and experience the world around you. If you're driving home from work, slow down and appreciate the place you live in. Don't take it for granted. Go for a walk."

Kevin will most likely be retiring from the Post Office later this year, perhaps as early as June. We here at The Upper East Association thought it would be nice to give you a glimpse of who it is that delivers your mail each day and to let you know that change is afoot. Perhaps reading this will give you time to say a proper farewell and an opportunity to thank Kevin for his years of service.

As for Kevin, he's looking forward to a more leisurely life, finding new ways to get his steps in and spending more days enjoying our beautiful city, his hometown, and all it offers. Who knows? Maybe we'll see the post-Post Office Kevin walking and enjoying our neighborhood as he invites us to do, noticing the beauty here that never seems to fade... *"pos-i-tive -- vi-bra-tions, ye-ah!..."*

Thanks again, Kevin. You've truly blessed us all.

"Walking Man"

Walkers, bicyclists, and drivers on East Valerio have long wondered about the stylized, two-dimensional image of a man who appears to be strolling across the front garden at 309 E. Valerio. Sculpted in metal, he's grasping what look like walking poles to support his heroic stride.

"Walking Man" was installed by Julia Lowell and Doug Steinwald in 2016 shortly after they and their son moved into the large – and graceful – classical Edwardian house. (You may recognize the house by its massive evergreen coulter pine that drops unusually large cones in season.)

"Walking Man" was sculpted by Wim Griffiths, who works in metal sculpture, and had been a gift to Doug's mother. It came to Doug and Julia after her passing. Now it adds a distinctive touch to the Upper East.



Upper East Association Mission Statement
*To preserve and enhance the spirit
and essence of this historic
neighborhood and its quality of life.*

History Corner

A Home With Interesting Connections

By Betsy J. Green



ADDRESS: 218 East Padre Street

The large Colonial Revival home at 218 East Padre Street was built in 1904 for \$4,500 – an above-average price for that time. It was built for a woman – not a common occurrence a century ago. Her name was Mabel Houston Lazear. She was a widow in her mid-20s with two small children. Taking charge of the construction of her own home was not the only unusual event in her life.



The Cuba Connection

In 1898, the United States had fought the Spanish-American War in Cuba and in the Pacific. During the war, more U.S. soldiers in Cuba had died of tropical diseases such as yellow fever and malaria than from battle wounds. Mabel's husband, Dr. Jesse William Lazear, had graduated from Columbia University in

1892, and started practicing at Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1895. In 1900, he volunteered to go to Cuba to help investigate how yellow fever was transmitted. Mabel bravely joined her husband with their one-year-old son. She was in Cuba for several months until she became pregnant with their second child.



Mabel Lazear and her son on the beach in Cuba, 1900.

This was not a safe time for the family to be in Cuba. Not only because of the danger of tropical diseases, but also because of political turmoil. Cuba was transitioning from being a Spanish colony to becoming independent, and wanted the American military to leave. But the U.S. armed forces stayed on the island even though the war had ended two years earlier.

But Dr. Lazear was determined to investigate yellow fever. At the time, most experts blamed the spread of the disease on bacteria. But a few experts guessed correctly – that the disease was spread by mosquito bites.

The eventual discovery that mosquitos transmitted yellow fever and malaria was too late to save the soldiers in Cuba, but the discovery paved the way for the successful construction of the Panama Canal. The French had tried to build a canal through Panama in the 1880s, but gave up because of the high mortality rate of their workers. The U.S. began construction of the canal in 1904, and worked on eliminating areas – such as uncovered cisterns – where mosquitos breed. The canal was finished in 1915, and Californians celebrated with enormous expositions in San Diego

and San Francisco.

Unfortunately, Dr. Lazear died of yellow fever in 1900 after being bitten by a mosquito during his research. He was called a martyr and a hero. He received a number of posthumous awards and honors, including a stained-glass window at the altar of the War Memorial Chapel at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.



The doctor was 34 and died shortly after their daughter was born. His death left Mabel a widow at age 25 with two young children. She and the children settled in Santa Barbara – probably because there were several other Lazear families here. Mabel and the children lived in the home until the children were grown.

The Rose Garden Connection

Other residents of the home included prominent attorney Adolphus Claus Postel and his wife Norma, who lived in this home in the 1930s and '40s. Rose lovers of Santa Barbara may know that there is a boulder with a plaque in the rose garden in front of the Santa Barbara Mission that honors the Postel family. Norma Postel supported and maintained the garden.



When I visited the home, I was happy to see an old hitching post still on the parkway that I had written about in my recent survey. One thing that is no longer here, thankfully, is the prize-winning kitchen. In 1963, the home was owned by Rev. Stocking of the First Congregational Church and his wife Elizabeth. They won an award from Better Homes and



Gardens Magazine for their newly updated kitchen which featured appliances in the latest color – turquoise! (I am happy to report that these appliances are no longer here.)

Please do not disturb the residents of 218 E. Padre Street. This article originally appeared in the [*Santa Barbara Independent*](#).

Help Wanted! If you own an older home that you would like me to write about in my Great House Detective column in the *Independent*, you can get in touch through the contact page of my website: betsyjgreen.com.

Membership Renewal

Some of you have not yet renewed for 2024, but it's not too late to stay connected with the Upper East Association. Only by being a member will you continue to receive the [Newsletter](#) and other important communications. Only by being a member may you attend the annual meeting, go on guided neighborhood walks, and participate in other events. Renew at our website:

sbuppereast.org/membership