



Summer 2019

# ZOOM in on america

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## SAN FRANCISCO'S LANDMARK



*The Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco Marina*

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Zoom in on America

# The Palace of Fine Arts - San Francisco's Favorite Landmark

Built in 1915 for the Panama - Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, the Marina Palace of Fine Arts is still standing, even though it has been entirely reconstructed throughout the century. Like other buildings that housed the Exposition, the Palace was planned to stand only as long as the Fair lasted, and was therefore made of short-lived materials such as plaster, wood and fiber. However, San Franciscans liked the Palace so much that they didn't want to see it go. While most pavilions of the exposition were torn down, the Palace was left intact. Among the people who advocated for the Palace was Phoebe Apperson Hearst, who founded a Palace Preservation League even before the fair ended. Another one was architect Willis Polk, who wrote:

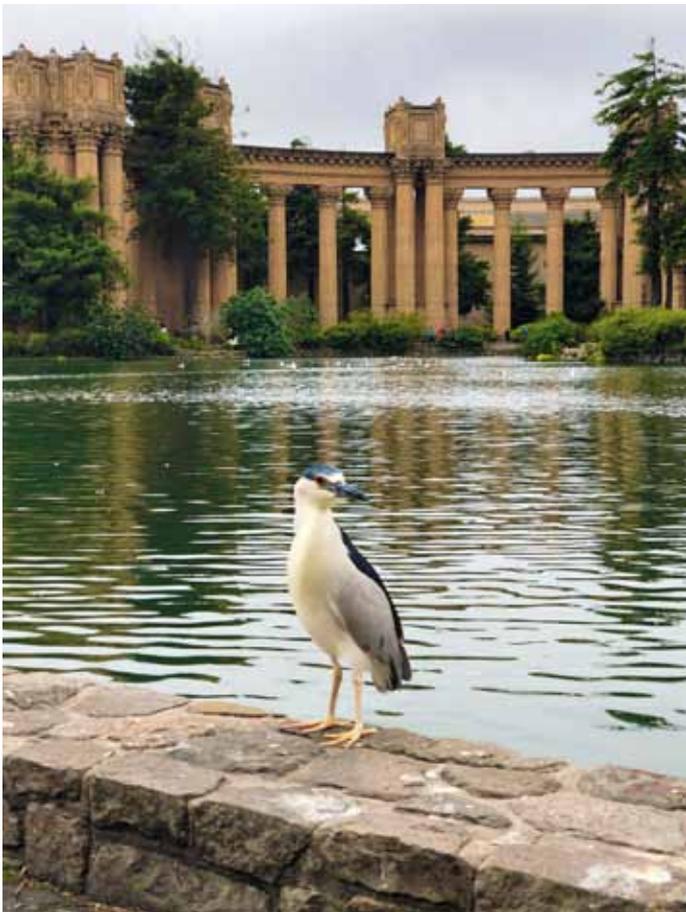
*Therefore, let us preserve our Palace of Fine Arts as long as possible, six months, six years, or any length of time - maybe someday it can be made permanent...*

The fair venues were built along the northern shore, between the Presidio and Fort Mason, now known as the Marina District. Architect Bernard Maybeck was commissioned to design the Palace. His idea was to weave it in the surroundings, which were also significantly re-shaped. Designed in the style of Greek and Roman architecture, the Palace was meant to look like ancient ruin to show "the mortality of grandeur and the vanity of human wish-

es." The soaring colonnade, grand rotunda, sculptures of weeping women on top, and a lagoon built around the Palace, which reflects the grand edifice like a mirror, were meant to evoke the feeling of quiet sadness and solemnity. The building resembles Château d'eau at the Promenade du Peyrou in Montpellier, France, which was designed by Jean-Antoine Giral in 1766. Bruno Louis Zimm designed the panels around the entablature of the rotunda, representing "The Struggle for the Beautiful", symbolizing Greek culture, while Ulric Ellerhusen sculpted the weeping women atop the colonnade and the frieze and allegorical figures representing Contemplation, Wonderment and Meditation.

The Panama - Pacific Exposition was organized to celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal. The choice of San Francisco was not accidental. The city that had been destroyed by the 1906 earthquake was now rebuilt and ready to show its new luster to the world. San Francisco businessmen tailored the exposition to draw tourism and business back to their city.

The Palace of Fine Arts provided space for fine arts galleries which exhibited works of art. And it was not alone. There were in all 10 palaces featuring among others: Education, Liberal Arts, Manufactures, Varied Industries, Agriculture, Food Products, Transportation, Mines and Metallurgy and Machinery.



*Humans and birds alike enjoy the quiet area around the Palace of Fine Arts. Photo Bozena Pilat*

*The Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco. Photo Bozena Pilat*

The area the fair occupied was vast; it covered almost 2,5 square kilometers and stretched along 4 km of waterfront property. Over 18 million people visited the fair; walking down boulevards, attending scientific and educational presentations, visiting international pavilions and enjoying display of sports, racing events (i.e. the 1915 American Grand Prize and Vanderbilt Cup auto races on a 6.18 km circuit around the Exposition grounds,) music and art. However, the fair was so large and spread out that it was practically impossible for any visitor to successfully see all of it.

The Exposition promoted technological and motor advancements. For the first time a transcontinental telephone call was demonstrated promoting wireless telegraphy, which opened the door to the communication we enjoy today. Among the exhibits was the C. P. Huntington, the first steam locomotive purchased by Southern Pacific Railroad. The Liberty Bell traveled by train on a nationwide tour from Philadelphia to attend the exposition. Each day the fair highlighted special events and exhibits, each with their own popular souvenirs.

After the Panama-Pacific International Exhibition ended, and other buildings and palaces were taken down, the Palace of Fine Arts housed a continuous art exhibit. During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) artists were commissioned to replace the decayed Robert Reid murals on the ceiling of the rotunda, a possibility for them to earn money at these economically difficult times. From 1934 to 1942 the exhibition hall was home to

tennis courts. During World War II, the military stored there trucks and jeeps. At the end of the war, when the United Nations was created in San Francisco, limousines used by the world's statesmen were parked and serviced here. The hall was put to various uses, including a City Park Department warehouse, a telephone book distribution center, a flag and tent storage depot, and even as temporary Fire Department headquarters. In 1969, the former Exhibit Hall became home to the Exploratorium interactive museum, which closed in preparation for its permanent move to the Embarcadero in 2013, and, in 1970, also became the home of the Palace of Fine Arts Theater.

The Palace of Fine Arts had to be build anew since the materials from which it was constructed could not last a hundred years. It was necessary to strip the buildings to their foundations and reconstruct the Palace in steel, concrete and cement. In 1959 Walter Johnson, philanthropist, donated 2 million dollars to raise preservation and in 1964 the buildings were reconstructed. All the decorations and sculptures were made anew. In the 1980s when the Palace was again in need of restoration, the "Light Up the Palace" campaign raised money for exterior lighting, and in 2003, the Maybeck Foundation and the city of San Francisco raised money for seismic upgrades, conservation of the dome, colonnade and rotunda, as well as for the improvements to the landscape of the lagoon.

Today, Australian eucalyptus trees fringe the eastern shore of the lagoon. Swans, ducks, geese, turtles, frogs, and raccoons made their homes there. Now, the Palace is ev-



*A family of swans feels safe and protected in the park surrounding the Palace of Fine Arts, June 2019. Photo Bozena Pilat*

everybody's favorite San Francisco's landmark and nobody would even think of getting rid of it. San Franciscans and tourists alike stroll the quiet precincts while newlyweds and university graduates pick it as a venue for photo sessions. The Palace and its surroundings can be rented for corporate events, private parties, trade shows, conferences, galas, weddings, etc. Palace of Fine Arts Theatre has capacity to seat almost 1,000 audience. The Palace of Fine Arts League continues to operate the theater today, honoring the legacy of Maybeck, Johnson, and many others who contributed to the rich cultural character of San Francisco made possible by the success of the Panama Pacific International Exposition.

The Palace of Fine Arts is also an iconic site for visual arts. It has been seen in films such as *Vertigo*, a 1958 film by Alfred Hitchcock, *Time After Time*, a 1979 science fiction movie by Nicholas Meyer, *The Room*, a 2003 ro-

mantic drama written, directed, produced by and starring by Tommy Wiseau, and *Twisted*, a 2004 psychological thriller directed by Philip Kaufman.

Another building from the Expo that is still standing today - although it was completely reconstructed - is the Lands Ends' Legion of Honor. It houses a vast collection of ancient and European art in a structure that is a full-scale replica of the French Pavilion from the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

One hundred years later, the Exposition's legacy is still evident in San Francisco. A few of the city's buildings: the Marina's Palace of Fine Arts or Lands Ends' Legion of Honor remind the inhabitants of San Francisco and tourists about the Fair that took place 104 years ago. The fair's location and design also brought about significant landscape changes, including the filling-in of acres of waterfront marshland.



*Students come to the Palace of Fine Arts grounds for a photo session. The rotunda is reflected in the pool even on a cloudy day in June 2019. Photo Bozena Pilat*

Today, the Marina Green and Crissy Field, two of the city's most popular recreational open spaces, are products of these landscape changes.

The Palace of Fine Arts continues to be San Francisco's beloved landmark.



*Architect Hans Baldauf, center, of San Francisco, leads a tour beneath the restored rotunda of the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco on May 8, 2009. Photo AP*



*A group of joggers run past the illuminated Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco on January 28, 2011. Photo AP*



*A flamboyant show of flowers in the green area surrounding the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco in June 2019.*

*Photo Bozena Pilat*

# ACTIVITY PAGE

## Summer 2019 TRIVIA QUESTION

Who designed the Palace  
of Fine Arts in  
San Francisco?

Send the answer  
(with your home address) to:  
KrakowAIRC@state.gov

The 3rd, the 7th and 12th  
sender of the correct answer  
will be awarded with a book  
prize.

Deadline October 15, 2019

April - May 2019  
Answer:

Carl Sagan

The winners are:

Piotr from Skarzysko-Kami-  
enna, Pawel from Rymanow  
and Maciej from Fasty  
CONGRATULATIONS!!!

The prizes will be sent to you  
by mail.



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Exercise 1. Read the text about some architectural styles in America and then complete the sentences below.

The so called **Colonial** style of the mid-17th c. reveals English, Dutch and Spanish influences. The English colonists were fond of building their homes in rows and subscribed to the requirements of the renaissance symmetry. The Dutch characteristic was a gambrel roof, while the Spanish preferred flat roofs and used the locally known adobe in the construction of homes. The 18th and 19th century witnessed three prevalent styles, which have been termed **Early National**, **Romantic**, and **Victorian**. The Early National style includes the **Federalist** style which made frequent use of small windows above the doors, called fanlights, and followed a 16th century Italian architect Andrea Palladio, especially in his classic design of windows. The **Greek Revival** style also falls in the Early National, and, as the name suggests, is reminiscent of Greek classicist architecture with its fondness of columns and temple fronts. The **Romantic** period, popular in the second half of the 19th century consists of **Gothic Revival** style, characterized by pointed arches, finials, and battlements, and the Italianate, with tall windows and very decorative cornices. The **Victorian** style, also popular in the second half of the 19th century, cherished round shapes, gables, and rich, impressive masonry. The turn of the 20th century introduced the **Prairie** type as well as **International**, **Art Moderne** and **Art Deco** styles with their futuristic and geometric designs, and simple and elegant facades. A very interesting period was the years around 1910 - 1945 which brought about the revival of many older historical periods. These Revival styles included: the **Colonial**, **Dutch**, **Tudor**, **Neoclassical**, **Spanish**, **Mission**, **Beaux Arts** and **Italian Renaissance**. The **post-war period** got rid of ornaments and stylistic forms. It valued functionality and ignored history. The **Modern** style, as it was called, was followed by the **Postmodern**, which we witness nowadays. As a reaction to modern, it returns to history, but mixes historical styles in its own combinations. Eclecticism and simplification are characteristics of this style.

1. The Greek Revival and the Federalist styles were characteristic of the .....style.
2. Gothic Revival style made use of ....
3. Greek classicist architecture was fond of ...
4. The Romantic period was popular in ...
5. Round shapes, gables and rich masonry were characteristic of the ... style.
6. Simple, elegant facades are characteristic of the ... style.
7. The revival styles including: the Colonial, Dutch, Tudor, Neoclassical, Spanish, Mission, Beaux Arts and Italian Renaissance were popular around ... in the United States.
8. Characteristic features of the post-war period were ...
9. The post-war period is called ...
10. The present trend in architecture is to mix ...

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