

## Sacramento residents tour historic urban neighborhoods on Jane's Walk

[dreid@sacbee.com](mailto:dreid@sacbee.com)

Published Sunday, May. 08, 2011

Saturday morning found a group of Sacramentans, and two well-behaved dogs, meandering together through the historic inner-city neighborhoods of Alkali Flat and Mansion Flats on the first Jane's Walk of the weekend.

They peeked in at Barber Blues, where men can still get a close shave with a straight-edge razor, and noted the unusual streetside "carriage step" in front of the 1902 Calvin E. Crocker home.

They admired innovative infill projects, such as 9onF, where new construction blends in with century-old architecture, and saw the F Street Victorian where notorious landlady Dorothea Puente killed her tenants and buried them in the backyard. And they chuckled at the mural of a saucy cowgirl with a smoking six-shooter that overlooks a playground.

The tour ended inside **Globe Mills Lofts**, a onetime working white cornmeal mill that was transformed into trendy urban housing.

"These walks are a way to increase the public awareness of neighborhoods that historically have been dismissed as not important but are transitioning back as new life and preservation comes in," said tour guide Luis Sumpter, an Alkali Flat resident.

Jane's Walk, presented by the Sacramento Old City Association, will continue today with up-close looks at Southside Park, central Oak Park and downtown Sacramento. (Midtown was featured Saturday afternoon.) The tours are free.

Sacramento is one of 25 U.S. cities participating in Jane's Walk this weekend. The series of free walking tours are named for the late urban activist Jane Jacobs, who advocated dynamic, diverse and densely populated communities. Her 1961 book, "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," greatly influenced urban planning in the 20th century.

"It's always been diverse here, not just ethnically but it's where people of all social walks have always rubbed shoulders with each other," said neighborhood resident Louise Mehler, who lives in a restored 1894 Victorian.

Saturday morning's tour stops included what may be the oldest house in Sacramento, an 1854 Greek Revival that was home to two California governors, Peter Burnett and J. Neely Johnson, and a flourishing community garden in adjacent J. Neely Johnson Park.

Not all is thriving in Alkali Flat and Mansion Flats, though. Paul Dorn, who lives in the Fremont Park neighborhood, grimaced whenever the tour passed a paved-over parking lot where once a lovely home might have stood.

"The destruction is painful," he said. "It pains me to see that they demolished something that was pretty special. Vacant lots don't add to a neighborhood; they're a blight. It pleases me to see that people will come out on these tours to appreciate the architecture and the neighborhoods."

Land Park resident Phyllis Ehlert wished she and her husband, Dennis Blegen, had the time to take in all five Jane's Walk tours this weekend.

"We love history, we love Sacramento, and we love architecture," she said.

She turned to her husband. "Listen to the birds. Isn't this a lovely neighborhood?" she said.

© Copyright The Sacramento Bee. All rights reserved.

---

Call The Bee's Dixie Reid, (916) 321-1134.