

# Preservation

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## TACTICAL RETREAT

WHY THE BRITISH ARE WILLING TO ABANDON  
THREATENED COASTAL LANDMARKS

BY SUSAN ARTERIAN CHANG

PITTSBURGH GOES GREEN  
ANN PATCHETT ON EUDORA WELTY  
VANISHING KENTUCKY LANDSCAPES

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Historic beach cottages that might have been bulldozed have moved to a compound at 7210 La Jolla Blvd. Shown here: the Corey House

## Cottage Industry

*Finding a home for beachside houses in a town of glitzy mansions*

BY LILI WEIGERT

**I**N THE EXCLUSIVE SEASIDE TOWN OF La Jolla, Calif., where houses typically go for \$1.8 million to \$26 million, preservation is a tough sell. Many of the town's historic houses are small, unassuming beach cottages built at the turn of the last century, when La Jolla was a quiet artists' community. The land they sit on is now worth about two million dollars an acre, which means that aggressive developers want to replace them with sleek condos and modern mansions.

For that reason, the corner lot at 7210 La Jolla Blvd. is remarkable. This half-acre plot, known as the Cottage Compound and located a few blocks from Windansea Beach, could—if creatively parceled—sustain up to 16 con-

dos. But for now, it's a refuge for three historic beach cottages.

The compound was the brainchild of one of La Jolla's most-beloved preservationists, Pat Schaelchlin. In 1974, she and her husband, Bob, bought the empty lot as an investment, then realized that developers could dump unwanted cottages there instead of demolishing them. For the price of loading them on flatbed trucks and carting them across town, the Schaelchlins acquired the three houses.

They took advantage of Proposition 13, a 1978 statewide initiative that allowed them to lock in the compound's property taxes at the relatively low price of the land, regardless of how much the property value increased. Since Prop

13 applies to income-generating properties as well, the Schaelchlins turned two of the cottages into year-round rentals and used the income to help pay the mortgage.

Along the western edge of the compound sits the Yellow Cottage, a rare vernacular Victorian built in 1895 and once owned by prominent local businessman and fire commissioner Galusha B. Grow. The Corey House, a 1905 hybrid of Victorian and early craftsman styles, dominates the southeastern corner. Its original owner, Martha Corey, was La Jolla's first female doctor. The Wall Street Apartments, a 1918 craftsman bungalow, runs along the compound's northern edge. Its original occupant, Horace Rhodes, was general manager of the West Coast Penny Papers, which included the *San Diego Sun*.

In 2001, the Schaelchlins sold the compound to Terry Jo and David Bichell. The Bichells have adopted Pat Schaelchlin's model—applying for tax breaks reserved for historic properties and renting out the Yellow Cottage and the Corey House. They're also updating the interior of Wall Street, where ultimately they plan to live with their five children.

"When I drive by 7210 La Jolla Blvd., I see a spot out of the past," says Bob Schaelchlin (Pat died in March). "Houses like these are torn down every day in La Jolla to make room for 5,000-square-foot mansions."

The Bichells see the compound as a tribute to the original residents of La Jolla. "Here we are in 2006 in La Jolla living in the same homes where these people lived so long ago," says Terry Jo Bichell. "Imagine a railroad executive, a newspaper man, and a pioneering female doctor sharing this courtyard. I wonder what they'd think of how things have changed."