



## Pockets of Charm in the City

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*Author: MARGOT PATTERSON DOSS*

For rural charm and big-city convenience, plus that elusive quality planners call "livability," it's hard to beat a one-block-long pedestrian-only lane in the Western Addition called Cottage Row.

Glimpse it from Sutter Street, a half-block east of Fillmore Street, and its trees and rich, red brick pavement seem to beckon. For the most San Franciscan elements of its character, however, the place to begin this walk is uphill, at Fillmore and Bush streets. This is where Pacific Heights has been pushing its traditional boundary southward toward a new "Yuppieville."

"Mini-Boom in Western Addition" said a headline in the Chronicle on July 19, 1976. The story described how prices of the old Victorians in what was once known as Western Addition Redevelopment Area A-2 had soared.

They are still soaring. This fact should come as no surprise to anyone who knows how convenient and "livable" the Western Addition can be.

Our forebears bestowed on this part of the city, almost offhand, those things urbane people have always wanted: houses with high ceilings, spacious rooms, cozy open hearths, big gardens, all located within walking distance of their places of work, shops, schools, theaters, museums and playgrounds.

Where does one find such pearls? The yuppies who can afford it are finding them in the periphery of Japantown - an area that was once a slum, then a daring redevelopment experiment, and now, in the long run, a noteworthy success.

Signaling just how upscale the neighborhood has become is the elegant French bakery Patisserie Delanghe, at the southeast corner of Fillmore and Bush streets. Come along at the right time and you can see owner Dominique Delanghe, who once worked as a pastry chef at Buckingham Palace, creating pain au chocolat or lush berry croissants.

Walk east, and within a few steps old and new stand side by side in startling contrast. Alongside a modest, clean-lined contemporary house that seems to adjoin the Bauhaus-style bakery is a row of six fine false-front Italianate Victorians at 2115-2125 Bush, little changed from the time they were built in 1874.

There were other distinguished rows of Victorian houses in San Francisco's first Western Addition redevelopment plan, but they were torn down relentlessly, bulldozed away, displacing 15,000 people when the razing began in 1960.

In an unprecedented move, the late Justin Herman, then director of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, offered homeowners of the second section, Area A-2, the opportunity to renew and rehabilitate their own property, giving them the same financial breaks big developers get when creating a redevelopment project.

Stop before you pass completely by this elegant line of Victorians. "End Cottage Row" says a sign on the brown-shingled house. Look down it to discern a genuine "mews" built as servants' quarters for the larger, more elegant homes on Bush Street. The slightly later houses numbered 2103-2107 prolong the Victorian flavor of Bush Street, but turn right, if you will, down the steps of Cottage Row.

Notice the trees and greenery that give this lane a country look. A minipark, built the length of the row on the lot immediately on your right, has ensured that this handsomely simple group of houses, all sharing common walls, will continue to look onto an attractive space.

When you have reached the first of the minipark's gates, walk in and go as far as the pergola. Then turn around so that you can take in Cottage Row as a composition.

Walk downhill when you reach the pergola to enjoy this little oasis, which has been arranged like a series of outdoor rooms. Unusual in the lower park is an allee, a double row of trees, in this case Benjamin figs, which seem to be thriving outdoors in our benign climate.

At the southernmost gate, return to the Cottage Row sidewalk. As you step out onto Sutter, look west to see, on the far side of the street, three unusual establishments. The closest is Yamada Seika Bakery, which sells authentic Japanese pastries, many with sweet bean fillings, that are baked on the premises. Mieko Yamada told me that she and her husband, George, have been creating the authentic desserts for nearby Japantown for 26 years.

Its next-door neighbor, Bon Temps Restaurant, specializes in Cajun food, revealing another of the neighborhood's ethnic influences. At the corner beyond it, Henry Calhoun's Sidewalk Books & Records, a mecca for collectors of old wax pressings, materializes magically on the street corner most mornings.

Turn left a half-block to cross Sutter at Webster Street. Walk south on Webster alongside the attractive two-story brown-shingled townhouses until you reach a lane. Designed by architect Frank L. Hope for the Redevelopment Agency as equal-opportunity housing, this community of homes has taken a cue from Cottage Row. Turn right on its internal lane. When you reach the parking lot, turn left and in another 100 feet you reach an attractive green lawn and the rental office/community center of this handsome complex. Turn left to pass it and you'll find at its far side a continuation of the lane leading south again to Post Street.

At Post and Webster, you have reached Japan Center. Enticing as it is, for now turn right, away from it, on Post Street. The eye-filler in this block is the splendid glass roof of the AMC Kabuki Theater. In a few more steps, you are at Fillmore Street, where fast-food places have sprouted like weeds.

To escape this modern plague, turn right. In half a block, you reach Victorian Square, a cluster of big Victorians moved to this location to make way for new apartments. On their journey here from lots scattered throughout the Western Addition, the houses lumbered through the streets, usually in the early morning hours before traffic picked up, with linemen cutting and resetting overhead wires in each block to let them pass. This, too, was part of the innovative Western Addition A-2 Redevelopment Plan.

Within the Victorian Square houses, one finds a remarkable mix of enterprises, including Marcus Books, devoted to publications about the black community; May Sun Restaurant, which sells both Japanese and Chinese food; the Hoky Vacuum cleaner shop, and the Bearly New Thrift Shop. As you cross Sutter Street, the ambience becomes even more upscale, with shops offering designer clothes for kids, bejeweled belts, collectibles, flowers and Belgian chocolates, all within steps of an outdoor cafe named Trio, which offers such unusual fare as homemade granola, country pate and the mouth-watering French sandwich called Croque Monsieur.

If there is a chair vacant, pause to reflect. Within a two-square-block area, you have glimpsed five of the many little worlds that make San Francisco so livable.

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PHOTO CUTLINE: (1) The sign at the beginning of Cottage Row points to a secluded corner of peace and quiet in the midst of the Western Addition, (2) A woman and her dog followed the red-brick path through Cottage Row's lush minipark / PHOTOS BY STEVE RINGMAN/THE CHRONICLE

**Caption:** PHOTO (2), MAP  
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