

SECTION 3 OF THE INDEPENDENT

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

NOE/HAIGHT/CENTRAL EDITION

P 19 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1996

Flower power and more on Haight tour

HAIGHT ASHBURY

Eclectic look back reveals area's colorful past

BY KAREN POJMANN

Neighborhood Correspondent

Haight Ashbury residents who have seen the neighborhood through its many metamorphoses contend that you can notice something different each time you walk through the Haight. Likewise, tour guide Rachel Heller, owner of Flower Power tours, says she likes to add something new to each tour she gives. The latest version, a recently expanded tour, encompasses a study of the neighborhood's architectural offerings along with the usual multicolored look at history and gossip.

"People on the tour teach me a lot," Heller says. "I'm always

learning bits and pieces, and if they're interesting I incorporate them into the tour."

Like the neighborhood itself, the Flower Power Tour is casual and inclusive, covering history from the 1870s to the present and incorporating a sociological perspective on the Haight's history — particularly the rise and fall of the '60s hippie movement. But Heller reaches back before the summer of love, to a similarly pleasure-based period in the late 1800s when Haight Ashbury was a weekend playground for downtowners, sporting a football stadium at Stanyan and Waller streets and an amusement park down Haight Street.

Heller says the appeal of the tour for residents is the revelation of small bits of history they might not be aware of. For example, you could be shopping at Jimi Hendrix's famed "red house," living next door to Charles Manson's former home or, more likely, sleeping in one of the more than a dozen buildings where Janis Joplin is said

See **FLOWER**, page 20B

FLOWER: Haight Ashbury's past on tour

continued from page 19

to have hung her hat. Heller also includes recent neighborhood organization movements in the tour, covering the effort to keep The Gap off Haight Street, the arson fire that burned down an unwanted and nearly completed Thrifty Drug store at Haight and Cole, and the work of community help organizations such as the Haight Ashbury Free Medical

Clinic and homeless shelter.

From the walk's updated version, tour-goers come away with a new knowledge of the neighborhood's Cranston and Keenan Queen Anne Victorians and other architecture, and are even quizzed periodically on the differences among types of the Victorian and Edwardian buildings that still fill the Haight.

Swedish tourist Henrik Stromberg, who was drawn to

the Haight by his interest in psychedelic music, said the architecture was an unexpectedly pleasant bonus.

Most tour-takers, Heller said, are interested in the Haight's hippie history. New Yorker Rusty Fox said the tour helped him to reach a new understanding of the difference between 1960s protest movements on the East Coast and the hippie movement in San Francisco.

"I came here thinking, 'It's go-

ing to remind me of the old times,' but it's made me rethink the old times," Fox said.

Fox and fellow traveler Stephen Elliott also confided that they expected a touristy drag through the neighborhood vaguely guided by a stringy-haired old hippie in a granny dress. Instead, they were pleased to find Heller, who, they said, defies Haight Ashbury stereotypes as

much as the neighborhood did itself.

Heller originally designed the tour as a carefully researched final project for a class at San Francisco State University and decided to market it at her

mother's urging. Now she gives tours twice a week starting at the Stanyan Park Hotel. Two- or three-hour tours, offered Tuesday and Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m., can be scheduled by calling 221-8442.