

# pictorial Living



Little Theater Rehearsal in a Berkeley

Home That Boasts a Built-in Stage

PAGE 16



# Potrero Hill

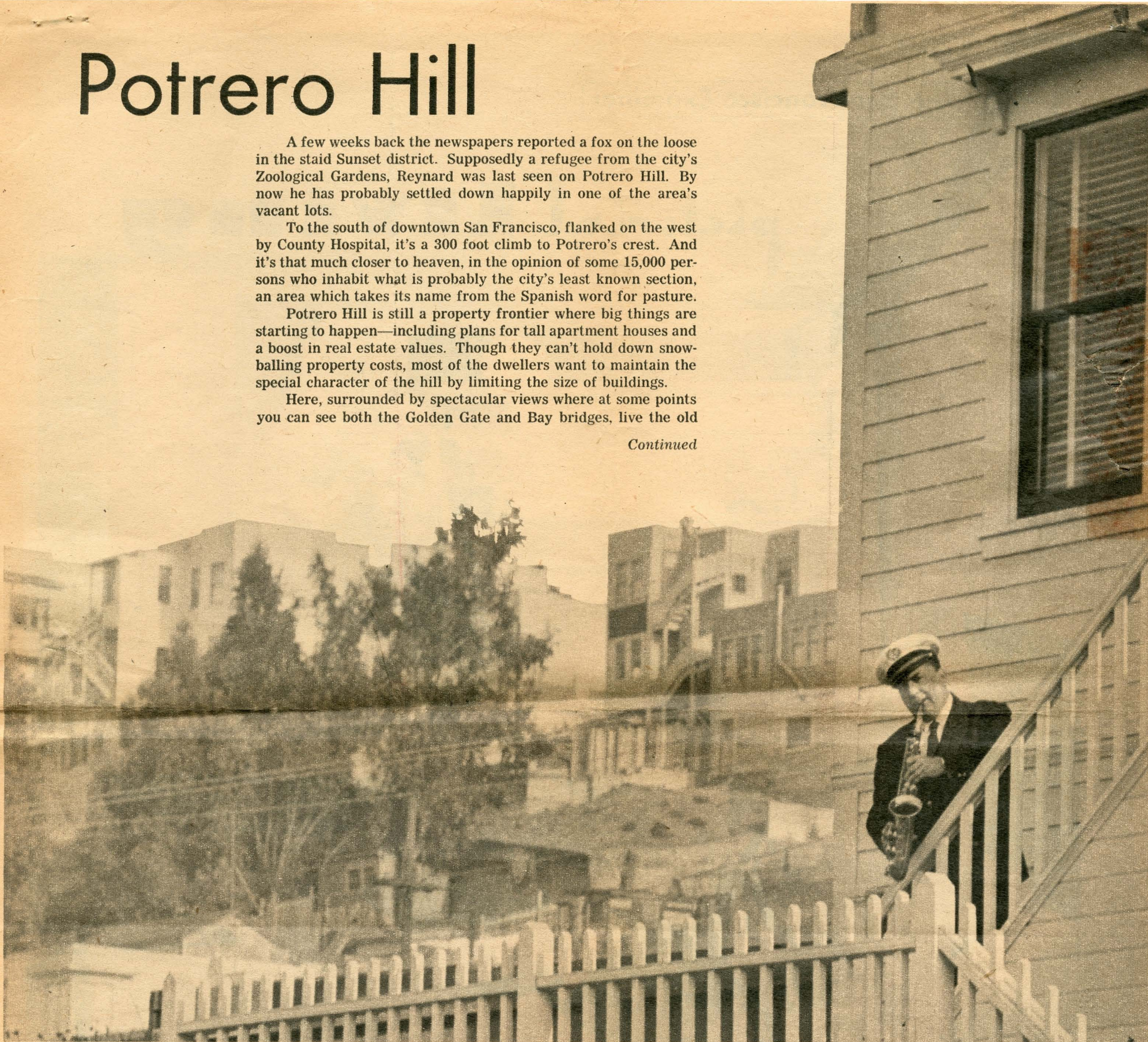
A few weeks back the newspapers reported a fox on the loose in the staid Sunset district. Supposedly a refugee from the city's Zoological Gardens, Reynard was last seen on Potrero Hill. By now he has probably settled down happily in one of the area's vacant lots.

To the south of downtown San Francisco, flanked on the west by County Hospital, it's a 300 foot climb to Potrero's crest. And it's that much closer to heaven, in the opinion of some 15,000 persons who inhabit what is probably the city's least known section, an area which takes its name from the Spanish word for pasture.

Potrero Hill is still a property frontier where big things are starting to happen—including plans for tall apartment houses and a boost in real estate values. Though they can't hold down snow-balling property costs, most of the dwellers want to maintain the special character of the hill by limiting the size of buildings.

Here, surrounded by spectacular views where at some points you can see both the Golden Gate and Bay bridges, live the old

*Continued*



*The Municipal Band's Irving Person can practice his saxophone freely on uncongested Potrero Hill*

Cover photo by Tom King of Thomas Slattery's theatrical home in Berkeley shows drama students Rita Kadubek and Art Conrad in a scene from "A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court." (See story on page 16.)

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The San Francisco Examiner

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# At Home With the New Bohemians

*Continued*

Russians, for the most part followers of the Molokan faith. A schism from the Russian Orthodox Church, it's an almost Spartan religion which frowns on frivolity and frippery, and the fact is reflected in their simple, white wooden dwellings. Still sometimes seen in belted smocks and babushkas, they originally came to cosmopolitan San Francisco to escape the waves of Tsarist and Soviet persecution.

In recent years they have been joined by Italian families from overcrowded North Beach. Already those of Italian descent form the largest ethnic group on the hill. But the section also includes a healthy sprinkling of German-born, Mexicans, Danes, Canadians and the Scottish descendants of early boat builders who settled there in the '80's (it was once called Scotch Hill by other San Franciscans).

Now coming to the hill in increasing numbers is a new element likely to make the colorful though isolated community far better known.

Among the newcomers are some of the city's most noted artists, writers and musicians. They include novelist Marc Rivette, poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, sculptors Ruth Cravath, Art Adams and Gurdon Woods, head of the California School of Fine Arts, as well as such painters as Glo Kirby, Henri Marie-Rose and Charles Farr.

In the words of Marc Rivette, Potrero Hill—with its new influx of Jaguars and Cadillacs—"is fast becoming a part of San Francisco, and it is exciting to any one who creates to live in a

place that is in a state of flux, for ideas never stand still.

If artists, as some say, are "crazy," these newcomers are as crazy as the fox who made his getaway to Potrero Hill. Where the old Russians sought religious freedom, the recent settlers have found inspiring views, more sunshine than anywhere else in the city, peace in which to work—and low cost housing.

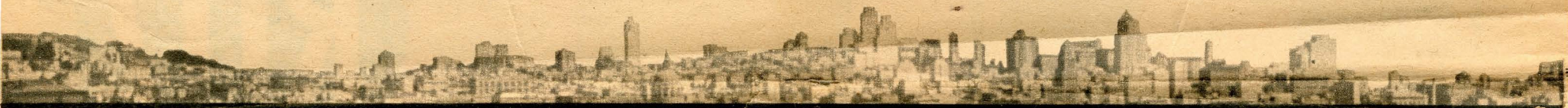
Poet Carl Padover—a former marine engineer now working at the Mark Hopkins—prefers Potrero to Telegraph Hill, traditional hangout for creative people.

"They call us lethargic," he snorts. "That's because we're manning the barricades here against so much artsy-craftsy commercialism on Telegraph Hill. We want to keep Potrero as it is—and not turn it into a fake bohemia with high rents.

"If it is becoming a bohemia, it's a bohemia with roots, not a place where people dabble in the arts on the way to Mexico. One of the reasons is because a poet can afford to buy a house here and feel he belongs. My own place cost \$5,000—and I wouldn't trade it for one of those swank mediocrities in the Sunset."

Many of them exhibit at Potrero Hill's modern library, and they are also active in the section's Neighborhood House, now celebrating its 50th anniversary. They complain, like other dwellers, of the antiquated bus service on the hill—an irritation offset by the convenience of nearby freeways for those who own cars. Above all, however, the new bohemia of Potrero Hill feel proud to be part of the colorful community and lucky that they have gained a toehold before property costs get too steep.

STORY BY MICHAEL GRIEG



## Potrero's Russian Steam

Potrero Hill is the San Francisco home of steam beer and the Russian steam bath.

The two can go well together although only the bath has anything to do with steam.

Most likely named after Gold Rush brewer Pete Steam, the beer is a naturally fermented beverage that seems to pack the wallop of a two ton truck freewheeling down a San Francisco hill. It is made by Anchor Brewing Co. on Kansas St., the only place in the world where the dark amber liquid is brewed.

After drinking too much steam beer, a Russian bath is a handy thing. To steam away that hangover (in as short a time as a half hour), you'll first have to be on familiar terms with a Potrero Hill dweller who is lucky enough to have one in his backyard.

Although the so-called progress of the modern stall shower is fast creeping up the hill, there are still quite a number of private steam baths around. Usually situated under a maze of backyard clotheslines, the typical Potrero Hill steam bath is housed in a shack the size of a Volkswagen crate. An adjoining room contains a standard shower.

An outside fireplace extends under the steam bath, and the first step in the ritual is to get a good fire going. This heats the stones at one corner of the steam bath. While the fire is roaring, the steam bather takes his shower, gradually adjusting the heat of

the water to that of the ordeal to follow.

With a pan of water (some adventurous souls use bottles of beer), the steam fancier enters the little shack, closing the door snugly behind. A table inside will usually seat two or three persons, and the one nearest sets off clouds of steam by pouring the water over the hot stones.

While the heavy steam performs its job of opening the pores to get rid of what fanciers call "the poison in the system," veterans of the steam bath add to the fun and health of the whole thing by beating one another with eucalyptus branches. This is supposed to start "the blood humming," they say.

A Russian or Finnish steam bath, according to local expert Edward Zydelis, utilizes "dry" steam in contrast to the boiled water steam of the Turkish bath. In Finland or the far reaches of Siberia, bathers usually cap the ritual by diving nude into an embankment of snow. This is particularly exhilarating, it's pointed out. But even on snowless Potrero Hill, says Zydelis, a steam bath performs wonders for the kidneys, rheumatism, taking off excess fat and, on the other hand, stimulating the appetite. Not to mention what it does for hangovers.

But lacking the tingling effect of snow, Potrero Hill habitués advise against doing anything strenuous after a steam bath. It's best, they say, to relax with another glass of steam beer and just enjoy the view.

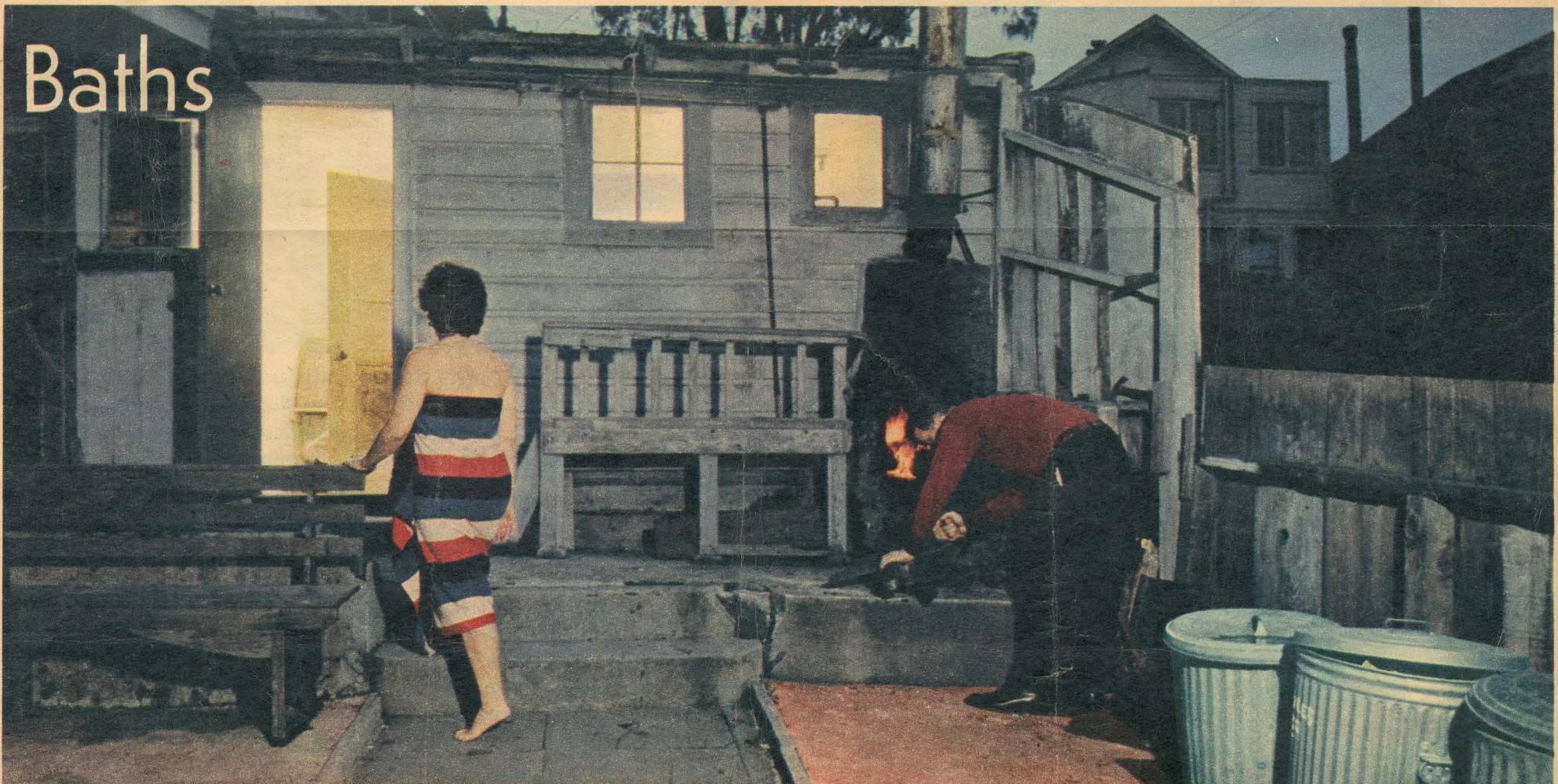




*The Gurdon Woods home is a hilltop art showplace*



*Art Enamelists Jerry and Darlene Long work in nearby Mission District*



## Baths

*Potrero bather hurries to backyard steam shack while ritual fire begins to roar beneath the stones*

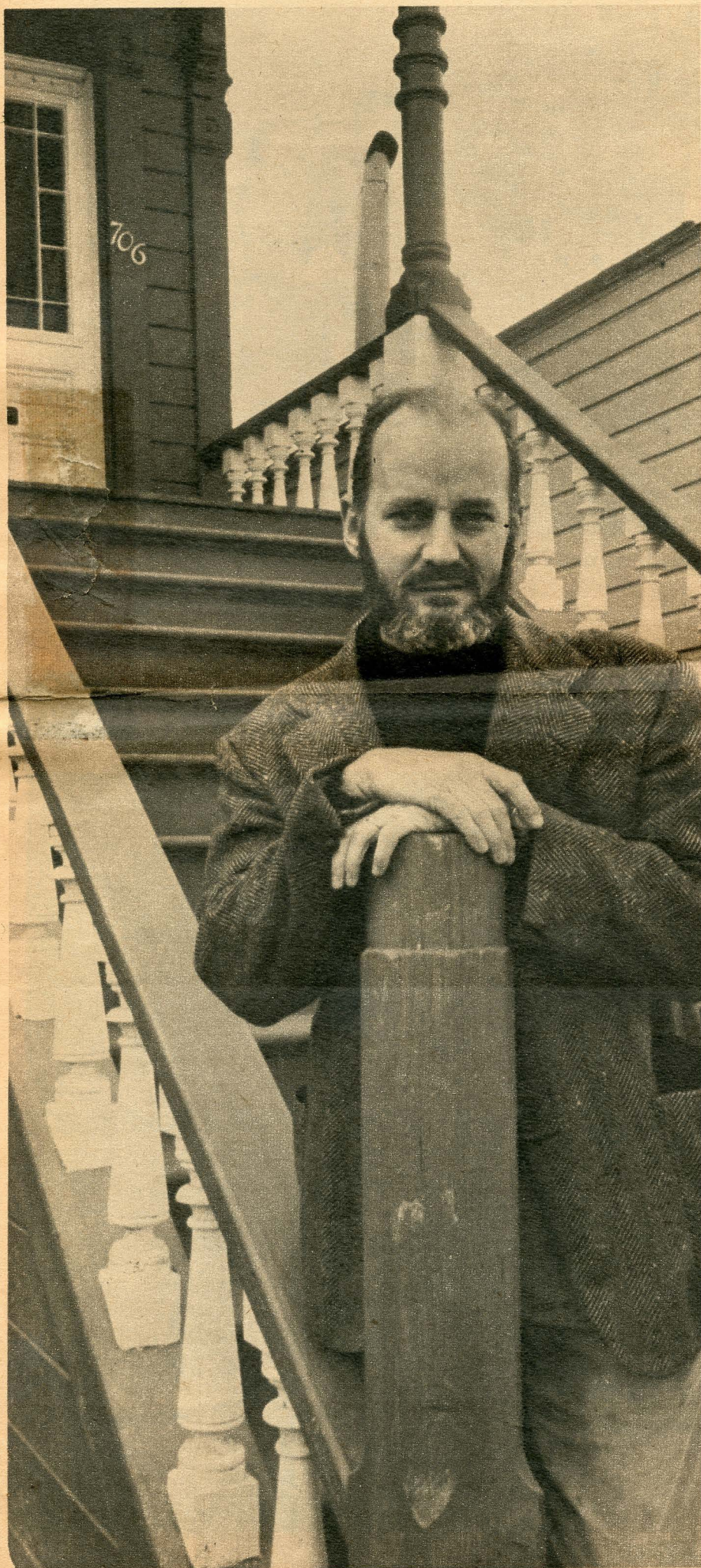


# The Artists Are Moving to Potrero

2-22-59

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They Find It Offers  
Views, Sunshine, Room  
To Work, Low Cost Homes



For Wisconsin Street sculptor Ruth Cravath, whose monumental work occupies the front of neighboring Starr King primary school, ample room to work outdoors is a major attraction of the hill

Poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti has tried living in Paris, Mallorca, North Beach. He prefers Potrero Hill, explains: "I always envied those poets who sit in the full lotus position on mountaintops, calling each other on golden telephones, and Potrero Hill, where phones were recently installed, is the closest thing to it"

2-22-59





From his 20th Street home, artist Art Adams, adding finishing touches to metal llama sculpture, says Potrero offers inspiring panorama of industry in contrast to the Bay beyond



A cultural link between early Russian settlers and new-comer artists is painter Ben Vaganov. Since fracturing his arm, Vaganov has been working in the unusual medium of painting on plaster casts he gets from hospitals



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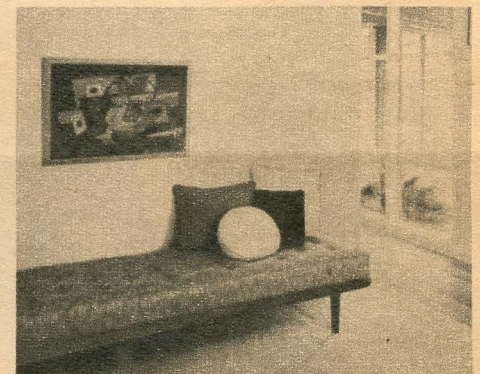
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