



# E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE

## February 2005



Russian River at Tile Heritage. Early February. 2005.

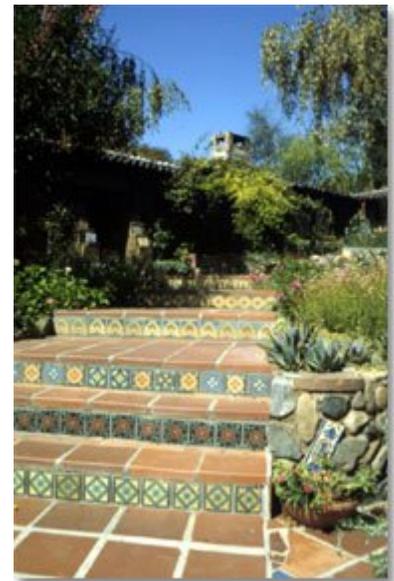
Between the inevitable periods of heavy rainfall, the Russian River becomes emerald green at this time of year. While we wait for the next series of storms to arrive, the fish are on the move, often visibly from the shore. While the willows begin to break from their rosy stems, the chinook have already put redds in the mainstream, and the steelhead are still busy in the tributaries. Spring is just around the corner.

### You are invited!



One of many "mystery" tiles at Casa Tierra.

Bay Area members are invited to **join us at 11 a.m. on Saturday, March 5th, in Saratoga for a special tile treat!** Casa Tierra is a 1940s Historical Landmark, hand-built by two women from adobe bricks made on the premises and then adorned inside and out with period California tiles: Cathedral Oaks, Handcraft, S&S, and many "mystery" tiles, among others. Just the history of the house alone



Casa Tierra, Saratoga, CA.

is fabulous! Lauren and Darrell Boyle, who have lived in and cared for the house for the past 16 years, are moving on and have invited Tile Heritage for one final visit. After we tour the 7000+ sq. ft., single-story home and hear from the attending tile experts and the Boyles, we'll be off to the new factory location of Handcraft Tile in Milpitas where we'll be hosted by owners Shirley Dinkins and Frank Patitucci, and share a stand-up (sack) lunch. It's a rare opportunity to visit a tile plant that's been in operation since 1926! For reservations, directions and other details, email [foundation@tileheritage.org](mailto:foundation@tileheritage.org). A \$25 per person donation is requested. **Deadline: February 28th!**

## Netherlands tour in May. There's still room!

For those of you who may have missed it last month, we are visiting The Netherlands in late May, and we're inviting you to join us! The primary purpose of the trip will be to attend the opening of "Industrial Tiles 1840-1940," an exhibition of decorative tiles from five European countries that is opening at the tile museum in Otterlo on May 28, 2005. Over the following four days we will tour with tile historian Hans van Lemmen and tilemaker/conservator Joop van der Werf looking at tiles in situ, visiting private collections, tile factories and museums in Utrecht, Zaandam, Friesland, Leeuwarden, Harlingen, Delft and Gouda. We will be staying in one hotel, the Golden Tulip in Zaandam, just 12 minutes by train to/from Amsterdam-centre and 16 minutes by train from Schiphol Airport.



**Dates:** Arrive in Amsterdam on Friday, May 27th (or before), then by train to the hotel. Departure from the hotel will be Thursday, June 2nd, by train back to Amsterdam.

**Size of tour:** minimum 15 (maximum 20). We will be taking reservations on a first-come-first-served basis. We will have a short waiting list as necessary.

**THF Fee:** \$695 per person. This fee covers your in-country tour bus transportation to all sites for five days to and from the hotel, your lunches for five days (excluding alcohol), all entrance fees, group gratuities and a tax-deductible donation to Tile Heritage. It is important to know that our tour guides, Hans van Lemmen and Joop Van der Werf, are providing their services at no charge!

You will be expected to pay for your own airfare to and from The Netherlands, your hotel accommodation (we have already reserved a room

for you for 6 nights, inc. breakfast), train transportation, dinners each evening, gratuities, etc. (The Golden Tulip is charging about \$180 per night for a "deluxe" room with twin beds, roughly \$25 more for a King.)

**Deadline extended to February 28th.** Send a deposit of \$295 per person to secure your place on the tour. The balance, \$400, is due on or before April 15th. Fax a credit card to 707 431-8455 or mail a check to THF, P. O. Box 1850, Healdsburg, CA 95448.

**Hope you can join us!**



Tiles, mostly Dutch, that will be seen during the tile tour in The Netherlands. From Industrial Tiles 1840 to 1940.

## Sonoma Tilemakers: Reciprocal Visits



**A niche of Tantrum. Sonoma Tilemakers, Windsor, California.**

In mid-January, Sheila Menzies and Joe Taylor joined the leadership crew at **Sonoma Tilemakers in nearby Windsor, California** for a nice lunch and a tour of the factory, located in three sizeable warehouses, each a quick walk from the next. It was in 1994 that we last had visited, when the company had sponsored and produced the THF Commemorative Tile that year. And what incredible



**Michael adds his artistic touch at Sonoma Tilemakers.**

changes we saw! From a company of perhaps 30 people then to one of about 150 now. It used to take about a week to produce tile; now it's less

than 24 hours. With their 150 glazes and textures and literally hundreds of decorative tile shapes and sizes, It used to take about a week to produce tile; now it's less than 24 hours. With their 150 glazes and textures and literally hundreds of decorative tile shapes and sizes, the company now offers more product possibilities than one would want to count. But it was the spirit of the place that was most impressive; they're busy 24/7 and seemingly enjoying it all.

*"Handcrafted in America by really nice people"; that's one of their mantras. "Peace love and clay"; that's their other. To quote from their impressive website, "At Sonoma Tilemakers, it all starts with our passion, our incredible people, and a whole lot of clay. The result is an adventure for the eyes where the traditions of tilemaking and modern design are harmoniously combined."*

Take it from two trusted observers, these are more than just words. This is the way that business is done at Sonoma Tilemakers. Both the people and the products are equally honored.



**Rosie Starchild, Torben Neilsen and Marsha Williams visit the Tile Heritage Library.**

Second only to being there, visit <http://www.sonomatilemakers.com/>.



**The home of Ahmed Agrama, atop Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles.**

## Mesmerized in the Southland

Sheila had a **Tile Partners for Humanity** board meeting to attend in Las Vegas, our "excuse" for skipping town toward the end of the month. On our way, we stopped in Los Angeles for a day (turned into two!) to meet with

collector **Norman Karlson**, who will be lending tiles for the "History of Tile" exhibition at Coverings that Tile Heritage is organizing (see [www.coverings.com/special\\_events/tile\\_heritage.php](http://www.coverings.com/special_events/tile_heritage.php)).



**Entry with its handmade tiles.**



**Sheila Menzies and Norman Karlson discuss the intricacies of zillij with Ahmed Agrama (center) in his studio.**

The three of us were invited to lunch with THF member **Ahmed Agrama** at his home atop Laurel Canyon, where for the past eleven years he has produced tiles in the zillij tradition of ancient Morocco to adorn his residential environment. Every room has a different compelling pattern on the floor, most often complemented by a related installation on an adjoining wall, countertop, fireplace, staircase, door or window surround. It is a

mesmerizing experience, intensely beautiful yet endlessly intriguing. If you choose to stare at any particular pattern, what at first appears as a single design suddenly transforms into a multitude of designs, all interlinked with one another. It will be several more years before the work is complete, and we'll give you an update then. In the meantime, know that the luncheon was sumptuous, as delicious as the tilework. Ahmed, thank you!



**The interior atrium, open to the sky.**



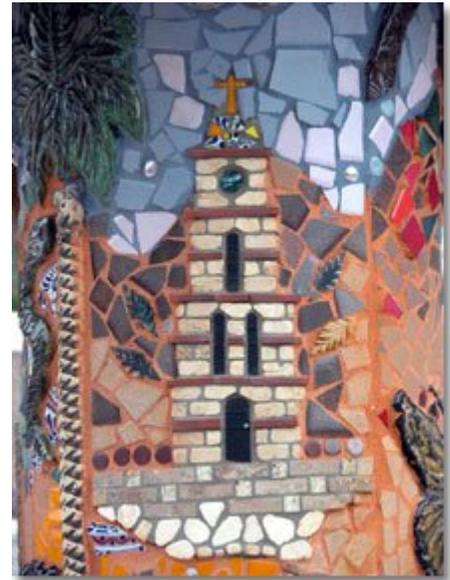
**Baja Palapa stands on the corner of Primrose and Fred Waring Way, Palm Desert, California.**

## Baja Palapa: A Haven in the Desert

"Baja Palapa" is the first collaboration for **Donna Billick**, sculptor and terrazzo artist, Billick Rock Art, Davis, California and **Arthur Gonzalez**, Chair of Ceramics, California College of Art in Oakland. The palapa is located at the corner of Primrose and Fred Waring Drive in **Palm Desert, California**, part of the Baja-themed walking park.

Unique elements of the mosaic work include handmade tiles and sculpted elements representative of the flora and fauna of Baja. Many of the elements were produced by school children in the local community at the direction of the two artists who provided a workshop venue

especially for their production. Fabrication of the columns took place in Davis and incorporated a workshop to teach people mosaic fabrication skills. The Tile Heritage Foundation board of directors, of which Donna is a member, participated in the fabrication in the summer of 2004. Thanks to the generosity of Donna and Arthur the project generated a fundraising element for Tile Heritage as well.



**Joe Taylor's first attempt at mosaic! New career perhaps?**

While you're in the area, check out "Palm Desert Obelisk" by **Laguna Beach artist Marlo Bartels**, a 3' x 21' four-sided, tapering pillar of tile mosaic and cement that stands at the entrance to Palm Desert Country Club. The surface imagery includes contemporary designs interpreted from Cahuilla Indian baskets, color from local flora and fauna, snake spirals, whirlwind designs and other secrets. An Art In Public Places project, the work was completed in 1995. It's located on Washington Street, several blocks north of Fred Waring Drive.



**21-foot tall obelisk by Marlo Bartels. Palm Desert, California.**

Palm Desert was the first city in Riverside County to create a public art program. In 1986 the City Council adopted an ordinance requiring developers to place art or pay a fee to the Art In Public Places fund for each new structure they built. These funds are then used to purchase art for the community. The goals of the Public Art Program are to create an artistic harmony between the buildings, landscaping, and open spaces as

well as to serve the people of the community and visitors by bringing art into daily life. The Art In Public Places Commission serves as a technical advisory committee to the Council and makes the initial selection and recommendation of artists and artworks for public and private projects. Imagine your own community with such a program for the arts in place!

## A Textured Expression in Clay: Hans Sumpf



Sheila with Tom Bryan at Hans Sumpf.

Driving back north we stopped to visit our friends at the **Hans Sumpf Company in Madera**, just up the road from Fresno.

Here is a company that today specializes in stabilized adobe brick, artistic garden pottery as well as the

production of custom roof tiles and clay pavers, but when you arrive at its remote location, surrounded by orange groves and almond orchards, it looks more like a rustic ceramic art studio.



Examples of garden pottery at the Hans Sumpf Company, Madera, California.

**Hans Sumpf (1914-1985)**, the founder, who had successfully stabilized adobe with an emulsified asphalt, was a man dedicated to the arts. His first job was rebuilding the Mission at San Juan Bautista, later the company would help recreate Mission San Jose in Fremont. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Sumpf began inviting local, aspiring ceramic artists, offering them studio space and access to all the clay they could use. In return the company was able to take advantage of these artistic talents, developing distinct lines of garden pottery, textured wall surfaces and murals, the largest of which (10,000 sq. ft.) adorns the interior lobby of the Fine Arts Center at Pensacola Christian College.

Today, under the supervision and management of **Tom Bryan and Bobbie Kemp Van Ee**, the company will custom make an unglazed paver or roof tile in any shape, color or texture desired. Glazing is also an option. There is no standard line of products other than the ever-popular garden pottery and adobe bricks.



Sheila finds a favorite 50 pound paver!