

# 2014 GEM Award Winner Announced: 'The Glenn Curtiss House'

In 2011, a real estate listing for a 100+ year-old dilapidated bungalow on Alameda Boulevard was "based on the value of the land." In other words, it was considered a "teardown." But when Chander and Jami Burgos bought the property, they immediately saw its potential and set out to restore it. Over the next two years, Chander, Jami, and their extended family did most of the work themselves.

Careful restoration work included all of the windows, exterior wood and shingles, roofing and floors. At the time, little did they know about the true history of this home. Located at the entry to North Island Navy Field, this was the house of the "Father of Naval Aviation." Now referred to as "The Curtiss House," this property received its historical designation last year.

Beginning in the winter of 1911, aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss put Coronado and North Island on the map. Seeking winter warmth, ideal flying conditions, and a degree of isolation, Curtiss arranged a free-of-charge, three-year lease of barren North Island from John D. Spreckels. There he began an early flying school, sponsored aviation exhibitions for the public, and tinkered with new aviation designs and breakthroughs.

By the next winter, Curtiss had selected an empty plot at 301 Alameda Boulevard between Third and Fourth Streets and built a Craftsman-style bungalow for \$7,000 for his family, and as his office. The home overlooked Spanish Bight, where Curtiss could easily follow aircraft operations, but also stood across the street from Coronado's golf course of the day where Curtiss, an avid golfer, kept his game in shape. Curtiss and his wife Lena would return periodically through the winter of 1915. His mother lived for years in a home next door at 357 Alameda.



(l.to r.) Chander and Jami Burgos with Russ Haley

For their efforts in preserving and restoring their historic home, rather than tearing it down and replacing it, the Burgos recently won CHA's 2014 GEM (Going-the-Extra-Mile) Award. Each year, a committee of CHA board members and local architectural experts look

for projects that best represent Coronado's history and character. Individual committee members search the island and select 10 homes that fit the criteria, and then make the difficult selection of three finalists. These finalists reflect the commitment and "sweat equity" that enhance neighborhoods and perpetuate Coronado's cherished village atmosphere.

All three finalists for this year's GEM Award had "Gone the Extra Mile" in renovating their Coronado homes and all were recognized



for their contributions. The winner was announced at CHA's annual gala at the Marriott Coronado Island Resort in February. The two other couples who have "gone the extra mile" in renovating their houses were: Steve and Charlene Rose, 1034 5th Street; and Beto and Gaby Garza-Santos, 708 A Avenue (featured in this year's Historic Home Tour). Last year's GEM Award winners were Paul and Debbie Vadnais for the stunning renovation of their 1912 Craftsman home on Adella Avenue.

The thoughtful efforts of Coronado homeowners to preserve and restore original structures sparked CHA to recognize residents who are "Going the Extra Mile." Thus was born the G-E-M--GEM Award. The initial focus is on exterior architecture, but consideration is also given to interior design. Residential and commercial projects are both considered. To be recognized, a project does not need to be historically designated, but must have authentic, historic detailing. There is no building-age restriction, but the renovation must have been completed within the last two years.

At the Celebrating Coronado History gala on February 22, CHA Board Member Russ Haley announced the winners and presented a trophy to them, following a professional slide show of before and after shots and interior photos of the three competing homes.

