

Mayor George Christopher & Geary Median Greening Project

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By Rose Hillson

1. George Christopher (b. Dec. 8, 1907) as George Christopheles in Arcadia, Greece¹
2. Lived in “Greektown” which is today’s SoMa area when 2 years old after emigration⁵
3. Accountant, business executive and partner for Christopher Dairy¹ and bought out a dairy on Fillmore Street which became Christopher Dairy.⁵
4. Mayor George Christopher was the major political force behind:
 - a. Japantown creation⁷
 - b. Embarcadero Center⁵
 - c. Golden Gateway⁵
 - d. new Hall of Justice⁵
 - e. opened Embarcadero Freeway (lead to the “freeway revolt”)⁵
 - f. demolition of the Fox Theatre movie palace⁵
5. 1957 – dialogued with New York Giants President Horace Stoneham to go west to SF with promise of new stadium called Candlestick Park³; in 1958, the Giants arrived in SF⁵
6. As of September 16, 2000, George Christopher was survived by his three sisters, Beatrice Tentes, Helen Christopher and Ethel Davies (all of SF)⁴
7. In 1959, Mayor George Christopher, first Greek-American mayor of San Francisco, embarked on the second largest greening project since William Hammond Hall planted Golden Gate Park.

This project was for the "Great Wide Way," aka Geary Blvd.

8. The greening project encompassed every block of Geary from Emerson to 33rd Avenue; a mass planting project.
9. On June 9, 1959, Mayor Christopher planted the first New Zealand Christmas Tree along Geary at Funston, with Hy Karp, President of the Greater Geary Boulevard Merchants Association; Police Chief Thomas Cahill; Leilani Michaels “Geary Girl;” Fire Chief William Murray; and Evelyn Gutman, 3rd Place in “Geary Girl” contest. The others in the picture are members of the Geary Boulevard Merchants Association.⁶ See picture in the book cited on Page 125. Photo courtesy of SF Public Library History Center.⁸

1. www.sfgenealogy.com/sf/history/hgmay.htm
2. <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/illmore/learning/people/christopher.html>
3. <http://articles.latimes.com/2000/sep/15/news/mn-21526>
4. <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/09/16/us/george-christopher-92-dies-lured-giants-to-san-francisco.html>
5. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Christopher
6. Ungaretti, Lorri, San Francisco’s Richmond District, 2005, ArcadiaPublishing, 128 page
7. <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/illmore/learning/time.html>
8. <http://webbie1.sfpl.org/multimedia/sfphotos/AAB-3758.jpg> (www.sfpl.org)



SF Chronicle, Sept. 15, 2000



SF Chronicle, Sept. 15, 2000

Link to SF Chronicle pictures:

<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/GEORGE-CHRISTOPHER-1907-2000-Big-Thinking-S-F-3239001.php>



Looking East along Gearsy Boulevard



Looking West along Gearsy Boulevard

Courtesy: Google Maps

New Zealand Christmas Tree (*Metrosideros excelsa*)

1. New Zealand Christmas Trees are endemic to New Zealand
2. Maori people call them *Pōhutukawa* and consider them to be “chiefly”
3. Evergreen with red flowers (stamens) – called *kahika* -- in bloom November to January
4. *Metrosideros* derives from Ancient Greek – *metra* = “heartwood” and *sideron* = “iron;”
excelsa= “highest”
5. Can grow on near vertical cliffs, salty breezes
6. Under threat in New Zealand due to possum stripping leaves
7. Easy to grow in coastal areas of mild to warm climates

(Source: Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrosideros_excelsa)

8. Pōhutukawa linked to a Maori legend of Tawhaki:

“...a young Maori warrior, who attempted to find heaven to seek help in avenging the death of his father. He fell to earth and the crimson flowers are said to represent his blood.”

9. A small pōhutukawa in the northern tip of New Zealand has great spiritual significance. The location of the tree marks the “place of leaping.” The dead begin their journey to their homeland of Hawiki. The spirits leap off the headland and climb down the roots of the 800-year-old tree, traveling to the underworld.

(Source: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/pohutukawa-flowers>)