

Sign of the times, and the times they are a-changin’

By Miltiades Mandros

When the forty-niners rushed to California following the 1848 discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill, Lake Merritt was no more than a tidal slough, though it was then much larger than it is today.

Shortly after Oakland was settled in the early 1850s, a wooden toll bridge was erected over the neck of the slough about where 12th Street now lies. This bridge connected Oakland on the west side of the marsh to the communities of Clinton and San Antonio on the east.

A decade later, another bridge was built over where the marsh was dammed, creating what we now recognize as the lake.

As the 20th century dawned and Oakland grew, a handsome newer Beaux-Arts concrete bridge accommodated pedestrians, vehicles, and inter-urban trolleys. This structure stood until just after World War II, when the demise of the trolleys and the concomitant emphasis on the automobile convinced urban planners to build what became known as “the world’s shortest freeway,” a 12-lane behemoth of overpasses and underpasses dominating the south end of the lake.

Besides occupying so much space, which incidentally was all landfill, this new roadway destroyed the wonderful gardens surrounding Kaiser Auditorium.

The freeway, with its ramps, medians and underground pedestrian tunnels, was named the Frickstad Viaduct after the engineer who oversaw its construction. This paean to the age of the automobile opened to great fanfare in 1950. At that time, it was viewed as an example of the latest in highway planning, and presaged the soon-to-follow interstate highway system. To help motorists negotiate their way through the maze of spaghetti-like road ribbons, two huge signs were raised high on steel pillars on the east and west ends of the lagoon. The one on the east said, “1st AVE E. 14th ST” (with an



MILTIADES MANDROS

THE ICONIC SOUTHERLY/NORTHERLY SIGNS that charmed and guided drivers through the morass of lanes on the 12th Street dam, being loaded up to be preserved.

arrow angling to the left) & “E. 12th ST” (with a separate arrow angled to the right). The sign near Fallon Street read, “12th ST AND SOUTHERLY” (with an arrow to the left) and “14th ST AND NORTHERLY” (with an arrow to the right). The 6’ x 22’ signs were fabricated of dark blue porcelain enameled-steel and were pristine examples of highway signage frequently used in the United States from about World War I to the early 1950s. This manufacturing process resulted in an extremely durable and weather-resistant product.

When I moved from San Francisco to Oakland in the late 1990s, I loved passing by the south end of the lake simply to admire the old signs with their language so redolent of a bygone period in our history. The signs spoke nostalgically to me as a reminder of America’s automobile past, of two-lane roads before the advent

of interstate highways. When the Measure DD reconstruction began in 2010, I duly noted their removal, but I always assumed these two mighty beacons would be re-erected once the roadway improvements were complete.

At the beginning of 2012, I moved to the Eastlake area and began daily commutes around the south end of the lake. I continued to look for the signs to reappear. Since they had such an unforgettable presence, it seemed impossible that the traffic engineers wouldn’t be eager to re-erect them. Since that day never came, I called Betty Marvin, the historic preservation planner for the city, to ask about the situation. Betty, with whom I had previously collaborated to save two historic gas stations in West Oakland from destruction, referred me to Naomi Schiff, who shockingly told me that the city had

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Signs

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no intention of reusing the signs, a terrible circumstance in my opinion. Naomi herself had previously spearheaded an effort to find a way of keeping the signs in Oakland and had tried to persuade the Oakland Museum to take and display them. Sadly, she had no luck.

When I heard that the signs were sitting forlornly amid a pile of debris in the contractor's staging yard on the south side of Kaiser Auditorium, I knew I had to get a first-hand look at them.

I visited the job trailers of both the contractor and the city engineering staff and learned that the signs were soon going to be trashed, to me an alarming development. I asked the engineer in charge, Randy Mach, whether the signs might be removed if someone could be found to take them.

My past attempt to save the two 1920-era and 1930-era gas stations had led me to a website of collectors of automobile-related items, www.oldgas.com. I had posted ads for the two stations, which resulted in separate collectors arriving from Southern California to dismantle and remove the pair. These fanatics intended to restore the buildings once they had been reassembled on their properties. I guessed that if I once again posted an ad, I might again have luck. Fortunately, my post generated interest.

One of those who replied to me was a fellow from San Jose, an engineer named Ron Cabanayan. Ron stated that he had a basement full of automobile-related col-

lectibles and might be interested in acquiring something larger. I sent him photos of the old signs, suggesting that he make a trip to Oakland to have a first-hand look for himself. In June he did so and remained intrigued if a bit daunted by the prospect of removing and trucking the big signs off the site.

At the end of July, Ron drove up from San Jose with a flat-bed tractor-trailer. He cut the signs free from their steel armature. Then, with the cooperation of Randy Mach and the invaluable assistance of the site foreman of the project's general contractor, Hester-McGuire, the two behemoths were lifted off their resting place and firmly secured to the trailer. Cabanayan then happily returned to the South Bay.

At this juncture, he hopes to be able to display the signs publicly, but if he can't, he will mount them on property he owns.

Before the move was to take place, both Naomi and I felt that sign-moving day was a newsworthy event, so we made plans to notify the press. We anticipated reporters could come by to witness the lifting and trucking procedure.

However, when certain managers in the city engineer's office learned of our

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NAOMI SCHIFF



MILTIADES MANDROS

A ONCE VERY-FAMILIAR SIGHT for drivers on the 12th Street end of the lake, above. At top is a close-up view of the union tags on the back of one of the signs.

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Signs

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intent, they forbade the appearance of any news people. To allow the signs' removal to proceed, we reluctantly agreed. The reality is that a few city staffers were worried that they might be accused of giving away valuable historic artifacts. These higher-ups would have allowed the signs to be junked rather than to have looked bad publicly.

When I asked Ron what compelled him to expend all the effort necessary to acquire the artifacts, he said, "What drew my interest towards these signs is their uniqueness. You don't see these things anymore. They are made of porcelain, which is very durable. You have to imagine the craftsmanship involved in fabricating such a mundane item. I was excited to find the union labels attached to the framework, which exemplify the pride we used to have in the most menial tasks. It's really hard for someone not involved in the working trades to understand the significance."

Although it would have been far preferable to keep the signs in Oakland, these



MILTIADES MANDROS

ON THE MOVE: no longer needed for service, the sign gets hauled away.

marvelous items—the very last of their kind in the state—would have been junked if not for a few individuals working together. At least we saved them from the scrap yard.

Miltiades Mandros is the principal of Miltiades Mandros Design Studios. ■

Upcoming events to warm your fall and winter

In tandem with your First Friday at Oakland Art Murrur, how about joining OHA for our Second Saturday Building Tours?

Go to www.oaklandheritage.org/events.html to make reservations for OHA's fabulous fall/winter events:

On Nov. 10, at 10 a.m., our second Saturday tour visits the **First Unitarian Church of Oakland!** This terrific Walter J. Mathews 1891 landmark is on the National Register of Historic Places, and housed organizing meetings for the United Nations. Its congregation has spent years fundraising toward the major restoration efforts for this spectacular anchor building in Oakland's downtown.

On the morning of Dec. 8, we're on to **Urban Legend Wine Cellars**, one of the new businesses lighting up the old warehouse areas near the waterfront. See what's going on inside (the bottles!).

On Jan. 12, join a hungry group at the

spectacular downtown **Howden Tile Building**, and follow up with lunch at **Spice Monkey Restaurant** with our congenial group!

Need yet more alliterative weekday evenings? Check out our Third Thursday Evenings! On Nov. 15, we're hosting a **Literary Extravaganza** with 14 local authors. There will be book signings and the (famously brief) **OHA annual membership meeting**, First Christian Church of Oakland, Fellowship Hall, 111 Fairmount Ave. from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Well-known architect William H. Weeks designed the First Christian Church of Oakland, completed in 1928, at the corner of Fairmount and 29th. It has wonderful Spanish colonial-inspired ornamentation, and many fine indoor spaces. Enter the parking lot from Fairmount; meeting hall entrance is on 29th Street. ■

Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members to our roster:

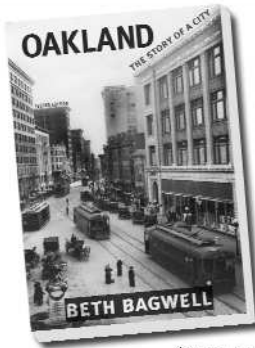
Elisabeth O. Anderson, Mike Bradley, Bill Iracki, Sam Cohen, Jim Ratliff & Eren Berkenkotter, Carol Strickman, Nicholas Rolle, Bob & Myrna Redman, Leigh-Ann L. Hawks, Sara Kane, Martin Freedman, Ann Buchlinder, Carlo Medina, Sandra DaBich, Libby Teel, Sandra Combs, Tara & Andy Sims, William Warner, Dee Evans, Sarah C. Pearlman, Susan Casentini, Alicia Goldstein, David & Isabel Bradshaw, Joanne A. Hickox, Susan Rovetta-Meriot, James & Linda Hargrove, Frank Woodward, Elaine Yamaguchi, Gary & Catherine Milliken, Anne Sands, Nicholas & Liza Mealy, Ron Scrivani, Ray & Sharon Johnston, Rachel Reinhard, Linda C. Bradford, Juanita Gerber, Anita Rao, Kathryn Ulrich, Alan Wofsy, Kent Rasmussen, Joan Greer, Judy & Bob Leet, David S. Wilson, Patricia & Roger Crawford



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Special thanks to Linden Street Brewery for hosting our Oakland Books and Beer event on Sept. 22, which featured readings by Gillian Bagwell and Erika Mailman of the second edition of *Oakland, The Story of a City*, written by Beth Bagwell.

Oh happy day! Bridge with view installed



A NEW PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE has been installed at the channel connecting Lake Merritt with the Estuary. Part of the Measure DD improvements, this bridge will allow bicyclists and walkers to go around the lake without having to detour onto 12th Street sidewalks. The channel, which had been narrowed to flow through constricting culverts, is now 140 feet wide and should allow a greater volume of water to flow in and out with the tides, improving the water conditions in the lake, a former tidal slough. —Naomi Schiff



ERIKA MAILMAN

BETH BAGWELL'S DAUGHTERS, Gillian Bagwell, left, and Jennifer Walker, at the Linden Street Brewery.

Books and beer, a powerful combination

By Erika Mailman

On Sept. 22, OHA hosted a fun evening at the Linden Street Brewery to celebrate the second edition of Beth Bagwell's *Oakland, The Story of a City*. Beth is no longer with us, but her daughter Gillian, a historical novelist in her right, came to read a few passages of her mother's work. Her sister Jennifer Walker and father Dick Bagwell attended as well, and I read a selection from my update chapter at the end of Bagwell's book. OHA's president Rachel Force introduced the evening, which included delicious brews from our host.

Big thanks to Naomi Schiff, January Ruck and Alison Finlay for organizing the event, and Linden Street for such lovely ambiance! ■



History of Oakland's redwoods, those fragrant behemoths in the hills

By Dennis Evanosky

First of a three-part series

A second-growth Coast Redwood forest graces the hills above Oakland. Its canopy spreads over Joaquin Miller Park above the Mormon Temple and onto Redwood Peak near the Chabot Space and Science Center. It covers the neighboring valleys to the east that contain Redwood Regional Park and the town of Canyon. One smaller grove with the region's only surviving old-growth Coastal Redwood fills a narrow valley along the York Trail below Carl Munck School on Campus Drive.

A second, smaller grove clings to the hills above Sausal Creek, just south of Highway 13 near Park Boulevard. This grove is part of a broader swatch of trees above the highway, where Palo Seco Creek flows from the hills. Loggers borrowed the name of the creek for their mill likely obliterated when Highway 13 was built.

The Spanish arrived in 1769 and first encountered the redwood trees in the hills southwest of San Jose. "In this region there is a great abundance of these trees and as we know not their name, we gave them the name of the color of their wood, palos colorados," Crespi wrote in an Oct. 10, 1769, entry in his diary.

Seven years later, members of the 1776 de Anza Expedition trekked up a trail that



DENNIS EVANOSKY

LATE MORNING SUN dissipates the fog on Redwood Peak.

became Oakland's 73rd Avenue and out onto another trail that is today's Outlook Avenue. From there they arrived on a hill on the present-day Mills College campus and took a closer look at the forest of palos colorados above them.

In 1797, the Franciscans returned to this forest to harvest the redwoods to build Mission San Jose. They created a harbor near today's Oakland Coliseum Complex for their boats and followed the trail along today's Lion Creek to reach the precious trees.

They transported the lumber by boat to a landing near the mouth of today's Alameda Creek. From there they either carried or floated the redwood logs to the mission.

When the government of New Spain granted Luis Maria Peralta 44,800 acres of land in 1820, the Franciscans voiced their concern. The priests were worried that they would lose access not only to the redwoods in the hills above Peralta's grant, but harbor privileges in the cove below the redwoods.

"On behalf of the mission, I say that there is no objection to grant the petitioner the place he asks for," Padre Narcisco Duran wrote the government on behalf of

the missions. "But the Creek of San Leandro, where the launches are harbored in summer must at all times be at the disposal of the mission and the cutting of the wood in the place asked for must remain in common." Peralta agreed and the stand of redwood trees in question bore the name of Peralta's grant, "San Antonio."

In November 1826, British Captain Frederick William Beechey sailed into San Francisco Bay aboard HMS *Blossom*. He remained until just after Christmas, mapping San Francisco Bay for his government. While here, he noticed (or ran into) some underwater rocks just off today's Alcatraz Island.

Beechey discovered a way around the impediment, a sharp pinnacle just below the surface of the bay. "Line up the northern tip of Yerba Buena Island with the two trees," he advised. "Nearly the last of the straggling [sic] ones south of the palos colorados, a wood of pines situated on the top of the hill over San Antonio, too conspicuous to miss."

Beechey published a map in 1833 that included a pair of stylized redwood trees to mark the spot where mariners should look.

See **REDWOOD HISTORY** on page 6



DENNIS EVANOSKY

A RUSTIC SYLVAN BRIDGE provides a lovely vantage point in Leona Heights.



'Wondrous cool, thou woodland quiet': redwoods provide peace

By Dorothy Lazard

Seven minutes and three miles away from the rumbling traffic noise of MacArthur Boulevard, Redwood Regional Park beckons. It is here, among these towering trees that the city of Oakland—famous for its crime statistics, radical politics, and gorgeous weather—began. In a figurative sense, that is: settlers, squatters and others developed the physical presence of Oakland by culling from the redwoods for building materials. Walking among these giants, it's hard not to consider history, nature and metaphor.

California's history is rooted in myth and cartography. Even before it became part of the United States, it was described as a magical place. The state takes its name from a fictive warrior queen, Calafia, the heroine of the popular sixteenth century Spanish novel *Las Sergas de Esplandian* (The Adventures of Esplandian). Also known as Califia, she's come to represent the spirit of California, symbolizing the state's untamed and bountiful lands. You see her image in sculpture, paintings, and the state seal. She is Califor-

nia's mythic goddess. And that myth traveled along with 18th century cartographers who mapped the state as an island off the coast of North America.

Charting land is a declaration of arrival, an invitation to others to explore and occupy the documented place. Intrepid sailors, pious missionaries, gold seekers and land-grabbers were tempted west by those early maps. The California Gold Rush of 1849 promised average men instant wealth and, as a result, people flooded into the territory that would become California. Coming just one year after the signing of the Treaty of Hidalgo that ended the Mexican-American war, the cry for manifest destiny rang out like a clarion call. Thousands came to California for the gold, but many stayed because of the redwoods. Like a great continental tide, people flooded into San Francisco, transforming it from a coastal outpost to a truly cosmopolitan center, teeming with commerce and culture. As with all immigrant groups after a population boom, these pioneers ebbed eastward, landing in the East Bay, then known as

Here's another take on the redwoods, from a different perspective.

the Contra Costa (against the coast), where land was plentiful, if not legally attained.

At the time, Don Luis Maria Peralta owned over 44,000 acres of land along the eastern shore of the San Francisco Bay, territory that ran from present day El Cerrito to Hayward, a total of seven present-day cities. Peralta split the huge parcel, granted to him in 1820 by the governor of Alta California, among his four sons Domingo, Vicente, Antonio and Ignacio in 1842. Lured by the opportunities that open land promises, squatters occupied the coast redwood forests of the vast Peralta lands. The unfortunately-timed passage of the U.S. Federal Land Act of 1851 required all Californios (pre-statehood residents of Alta California) to prove that they had legal claims to their land. This led to nearly a decade of litigation that significantly reduced

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Redwood History

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Beechey's map made another contribution to San Francisco lore. On the Spanish maps made in the 1770s, the large island off Yerba Buena Cove is identified as "Alcatraz." For some reason, possibly because it lay off Yerba Buena Cove, Beechey's map either misnamed (or deliberately renamed) Alcatraz Island as "Yerba Buena Island." The "mistake" was repeated in other maps and the Spanish Alcatraz Island lost its name to a smaller, less impressive island in San Francisco Bay.

In 1835, the Mexican government granted Joaquin Moraga and his cousin Juan Bernal some 13,000 acres of land that would later include the towns of Lafayette, Moraga and Canyon. The men named their grant Rancho de Laguna de los Palos Colorados (Ranch of the Lake of the Redwoods). The name reflected not only the impressive trees that stood on their property a valley away from

Peralta's land, but a lake once located on the campus of today's Campolindo High School in Moraga.

Moraga, Bernal and Peralta were primarily interested in raising cattle. They paid little attention to the redwood trees on their lands.

At least not until the appearance of men whom M.W. Wood called "covetous Anglo Saxons" in his *History of Alameda County*.

We'll have more on these greedy men in the next issue. ■



DENNIS EVANOSKY

REST IN PEACE: This pair of innocent-looking sandstone boulders holds a secret. Loggers laid these stones over a pair of fallen comrades. The larger boulder has some illegible scratches that once formed words identifying the logger who rests beneath. The smaller stone in the background, however, bears the name A.R. Andersen and his death date, May 4, 1849.

Respite

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the Peralta estate. And all the while, lumbermen, cattle and horse thieves, and squatters kept coming. Horace Carpentier, who would become Oakland's first mayor, was one of the lawyers representing the Peraltas. He was compensated for his services with land.

Early maps of the territory, published in the late 1850s, show the expanse of the Peralta ranches and the unharnessed creeks and waterways. Just imagine an immigrant from Switzerland or France or some eastern American city trekking into the Oakland hills to find a virgin redwood forest, with trees clearing 200, 300, 400 feet! One particular tree was so tall that early 19th century sea captains used it as a navigational aide to guide them safely into San Francisco Bay. But these were enterprising men.

Any sense of awe most likely dissipated quickly as they realized a new kind of gold was to be had in Northern California—the riches that come from logging. The redwoods had been arbitrarily divided into three sections. The territory we know today as Redwood Regional Park was called the “middle redwoods” or “center forest,” sandwiched as it was between western slope of the Oakland hills and the Moraga redwoods in Contra Costa County. This land was owned by Antonio Peralta.

The city of Oakland was built on those trees: houses, roads, wharves, wagons, rail ties, public buildings, mill works, furniture shops. Ten sawmills operated in the redwoods from the 1840s to the 1900s. As legal battles raged in the courts between the Peraltas and various land claimants, the redwoods kept falling. The logs were loaded onto wagons, carted down to the estuary and out across the bay to San Francisco and points beyond. These redwoods were nurse-log for the Bay Area of the 1850s.

Rowdy lumbermen, enterprising merchants, and evangelizing preachers populated the forest, along with mountain lions, fox, and grizzlies. According to 19th century accounts of life in the forest, flocks of condors could be seen flying overhead. The habitat that the Oakland redwoods provide now—for golden eagle, deer, skinks, frogs, squirrels, and enormous annual hordes of ladybugs—is a half-empty house compared to

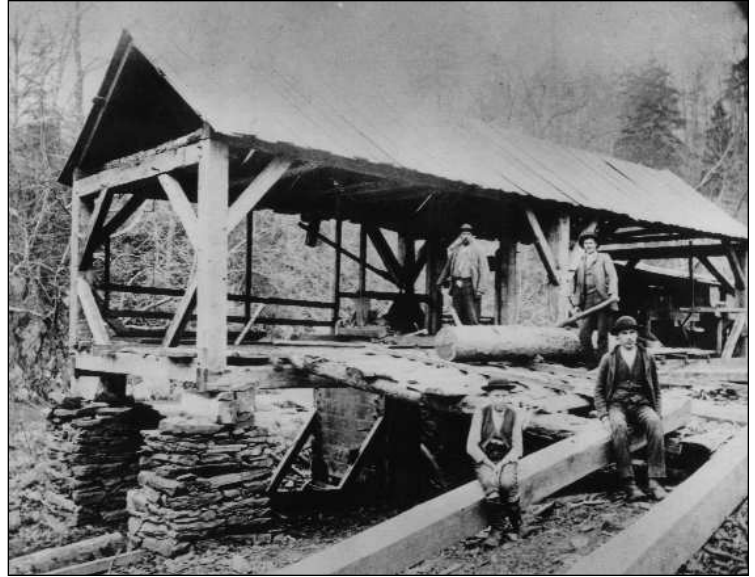
its original state. The chaparral, evergreens, fern dells, and native grasses vie for space with invasive vinca and other foreign intruders. And Redwood Creek, once swirling with rainbow trout, courses wildly through the park now only during our rare downpours. The redwoods we know today are a far cry from the dense forest Oakland immigrants found

a century and a half ago. By 1860, as contemporaneous accounts attest, the redwood forest was reduced to “a sea of stumps.” Every first-growth redwood tree was gone, even the colossus atop Redwood Peak which measured 33.5 feet in diameter. The trees we marvel at now are the great-grandtrees of the ones the Peraltas knew.

The coast redwood's native territory runs from Monterey in central California to the Oregon border. It's estimated, by people who concern themselves with such things, that 95% of California's redwood forests have been lost to logging. So to encounter a grove of redwoods so close to an urban space is a gift. To say that they remain—even in their youth—majestic, awe-inspiring, seems an inadequate use of language, especially when you're standing underneath one with over two hundred branches.

Oakland's redwoods stand today not as factory floor but as recreational space, a destination away from the noise and moil of city life. Silence welcomes you in Redwood Regional Park. Hike along its undulating ridge trails or down in its cool, shaded valleys, and you notice a different rhythm in your heartbeat.

You become more sensate, aware of your surroundings. You realize that there's a beautiful chaos to a forest as you pass trees that have lost their grip on the earth and slid into other trees, creating a unique architecture. ■



SAWMILL in Redwood Heights, attended by the men who built the Bay Area with redwood logs.

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

Billboards, barns and break-bulk terminals

By Naomi Schiff

Should we have billboards by the bay? OHA has teamed up with other community advocates to stop the planting of multiple digital billboards near the new Bay-Bridge splash-down, the planned Gateway Park, and the intersection of 880 and 580 freeways.

Appearing in a list of budgetary supports for a new job center related to redevelopment of the Oakland Army Base as a new maritime services facility, the billboards would generate less than \$500,000 yearly despite their high visibility. Advocates pointed out that they would create distracting conditions for drivers, mar the majestic view of the East Bay hills, deface the historic sawtooth CalTrans building, and blight the planned \$200-million Gateway Park, currently the focus of East Bay Regional Parks and a committee of other groups. West Oakland residents pointed out that they are already suffering from light pollution from existing signs, and do not welcome more. Concerned citizens should raise the issue with city councilmembers and candidates, so that alternate funding sources can be secured for the job center. The purpose of the job center is to connect

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History Room closes for two days to clean, organize

By Dorothy Lazard

As some of you know, the Oakland History Room was closed in late August for a major cleanup project. Our storage facility in the library, the area we at the library call Level F, had become a disorganized mess (think Grandma's attic). So to improve the retrieval of materials stored there, we took the unprecedented step of closing down OHR for two days, and really digging in to set things right. With the generous help of staff and members of the Friends of the Oakland History Room, we accomplished our goal.

The Oakland History Room shares the Level F space with the Government Documents collection. So our first step was to create a more discrete division between the two collections. This will help library aides more easily locate and page OHR materials. Our enthusiastic Friends—namely, Alison Finlay, Ed Clausen, Jeff Norman, and Naomi Schiff—helped us move and re-shelve about 180 linear feet of books and boxed collections. They donated a total of 26 hours of manual labor, weathering extreme amounts of dust and insufficient amounts of air.

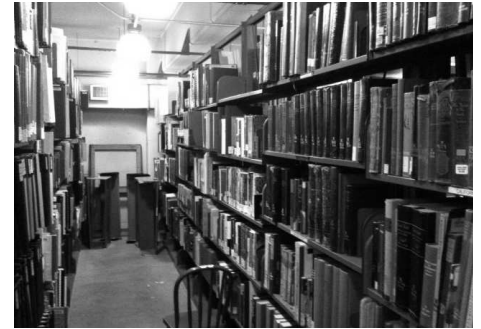
Along with the physical reorientation of the space, we gathered and boxed unprocessed collections, labeled shelves, grouped similar materials (like our spare high school year-

books) together, and prepared items to be cataloged.

Worn and fragile materials were sent to the bindery or to our processing office to be put in protective covers.

All in all, we unearthed hundreds of valuable items that will be of great service to our patrons once they are cataloged and repackaged. Some of these include the Lions Club of Oakland archive; the Junior Chamber of Commerce records; a photograph and publicity collection from Laney College; the Rockridge Women's Club archive; a collection of William F. Knowland's private books; the Ebell Society Archive; and the extensive 1991 Firestorm collection of Don Pearman which includes photos, audiotapes, written reports, and clippings.

These and many other items will join the already-cataloged Dunsmuir House Archive; the Ina Coolbrith scrapbooks; the Louise Jorgensen collection (Oakland Xmas Pageant); Oakland high school yearbooks (1880s–1990s). A particular gem was finding copies of the *Tanforan Totalizer*, a newsletter produced in 1942 at the Tanforan Assembly Center by Japanese internees about life and



DOROTHY LAZARD

THE INFAMOUS LEVEL F

events in the camp. (It's headed to the bindery!)

As we are always willing to share the wealth, we passed along many unprocessed items that will be of greater service to other California library or museum collections.

There are still large and small gifts yet to be evaluated and processed on Level F, but we made significant progress in the past two months. So make sure you regularly check the Oakland Public Library online catalog or consult with the staff for newly-added materials to the History Room collection.

The OHR staff and administration of the Oakland Public Library thank the Friends of the Oakland History Room for their tireless and continued support! ■

Billboards

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local residents with the hoped-for available jobs at the maritime facilities.

Ninth Avenue Terminal: OHA and numerous other organizations responded to a notice from the Army Corps of Engineers, inviting comment as they go into a federal environmental review of the Oak to Ninth project. From the letter: "The developer proposes to demolish 90 percent of the historic Ninth Avenue Terminal Building and platform. This approach would constitute 'facadism': not among the best practices under the Secretary of Interior's Standards and would therefore result in the loss of integrity and historical listing eligibility of the building. The Terminal and platform indisputably constitute an historic resource that requires USACE to

conduct in-depth environmental review of project impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. . . [T]he necessary federal environmental law compliance provides a new opportunity for public review and comment on the Ninth Avenue Terminal, not only as an historic asset, but also as a public asset that could enhance the public character and public access to and enjoyment of the estuary waterfront for generations to come." Thank you to members who wrote in! We are eager to make sure that the Army Corps understands the key role of Ninth Avenue Terminal as our last remaining waterfront break-bulk terminal, publicly funded, and put into service about 1930, continuously in use since then.

Camron-Stanford House: In October, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board commented on plans for improvements to the

grounds around the Camron-Stanford House. The report included some great tidbits of area history, such as: ". . . the rear yard area of the house has undergone many changes since the house's construction in 1976. The rear of the house was originally a farmyard, as documented by period photographs. Early Sanborn maps show four outbuildings between the house and the Lake Merritt shore. By 1902 two of the outbuildings have been removed. During the museum years there were many additions. By 1911, the opening of the museum, there is an addition to the rear of the house and only the barn remains. By 1950 further museum additions are shown and the barn has been removed."

The new proposal includes a central lawn area, surrounded by pathways and planting beds with trees, shrubs and perennials, docu-

See **BILLBOARDS** on page 11



Julia Morgan's legacy of green building, sustainability

By Sandhya Sood

I first heard about fellow UC Berkeley alumna Julia Morgan, the first female graduate of the civil engineering program, when I graduated with a masters in architecture 105 years after Morgan graduated from the same institution in 1894. Word was that she had designed several beautiful buildings in California. That was a rather limited description, as I discovered through my research and as a project partner of Julia Morgan 2012, a statewide collaboration to celebrate her amazing life and work.

Education: Morgan's contribution is significant not only to the architectural heritage of California and America, with many local, state and national landmarks attributed to her work, but is also a benchmark of the profession that reluctantly opened its doors to women in the early 20th century. Standing at barely five feet and weighing 100 pounds, she was the first woman in the world to be admitted (in 1898, after several failed attempts) to the sought-after architecture certification program at the Ecole Des Beaux Arts in Paris. As one of the few women architects in America to establish a private architecture practice in 1904, she worked over four decades with more than 700 buildings to her credit, translating on average to one building every six weeks!

Practice: A formidable measure indeed, more so due to the diversity of project types that she undertook: academic, commercial, health care related, humanitarian, governmental, residential and religious including funerary. She was an architect for the common man's simple home, an advocate for women's movements by designing female-exclusive clubs and YWCAs, and a catalyst for ostentatious estates. At William Randolph Hearst's estate at San Simeon (1919 to 1947), now a historical state monument and park, she is said to have diverted spring water to fill the sumptuous swimming pools. Morgan was a versatile and talented architect who embraced every project that came her way.

Rather progressive for her time, she employed an interdisciplinary approach to her practice. Her knowledge of civil engineering, lighting design, landscape and interi-

or design informed her work. A proficient practitioner, she collaborated with contractors, masons, carpenters and clients through long letters, telegrams and site visits, often traveling on weekends to ensure the utmost quality of construction and professional service. Above all, she brought compassion to every commission, providing simple touches and thoughtful details that made each one special. An astute problem-solver, she reused fixtures and old materials for house alterations, keeping a tight rein on budgets. Leading projects from her atelier in the heart of San Francisco, she produced hand-drafted drawings accompanied by specifications outlining methods for testing materials as early as 1907. Colored sketches exploring a variety

To see the original article with gorgeous full-color images, visit <http://www.oaklandheritage.org/files/57833723.pdf>

of design options considered client needs and satisfaction, earning her many referrals and a successful business for almost half a century.

Environment: Building in harmony with nature, Morgan oriented her structures to take advantage of desirable views without intruding on the existing topography. Such an environmentally-sustainable approach to architecture was not pervasive at the time nor considered a mainstream philosophy the way it is now. Our recent discourse on the impact of new buildings on the ecosystem is pushing us to reconsider our carbon footprint, choice of building materials, products and methods of construction.

And yet, over 100 years ago, Morgan belonged to an activist group led by women who founded the Hillside Club in Berkeley to protect the natural environment of the North Berkeley hills. Charles Keene and Bernard Maybeck joined as members, and in 1904 Keene presented his book *The Simple Home* at the clubhouse. It described an organic lifestyle with the home as an abode for the soul built with "unadorned" materials and the microclimate as a guiding principle. The idea was inspired, in part, by the ideals of the bur-

geoning Arts and Crafts movement begun by John Ruskin and William Morris as a reaction to the widespread industrialization of England in the late 19th century.

Morgan, who spent her formative years in the East Bay—attending high school in Oakland and later studying at the UC Berkeley—was at heart a nature lover. She was influenced by this ideology as she built in a language termed the "First Bay Tradition," seen in her early homes at Berkeley and the Asilomar Conference Grounds at Pacific Grove (1913–1937), a National Historic Landmark. It is this vernacular building approach that contributed to the Bay Area's distinctive regional tradition and that later influenced the Bay Area Modernist style. Architecture in California in the early 20th century was broadly eclectic and somewhat idiosyncratic, with several influences emerging at the same time. Although client desire and site conditions became Morgan's primary determinants, she also explored the fusion of classical elements owing to her Beaux Arts training.

Materials: Supervising large-scale reinforced concrete at UC Berkeley's Greek Theatre while working for John Galen Howard in 1902, gave her abundant experience in using poured in place concrete. She used the material for her own projects at Mills College (1905) and the Hearst Gymnasium for Women at UC Berkeley (1925–1926), both on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Berkeley City Club (1929), a California Historic Landmark. Her palette of low-embodied energy materials acquired locally included quarried stone juxtaposed with rustic redwood planks; brick and thick stucco; cedar shingles and even canvas used to shade sun porches. The elegance with which she assembled materials expresses their integrity, creatively integrating form with function. In the minimalist interior of St. John's Presbyterian Church (1908–1910), a Berkeley landmark (now Julia Morgan Center), the bare wood beams and posts define a human scaled yet spiritually uplifting space.

Sustainability: What is truly remarkable, however, is the sense of well-being felt in her warm

See **MORGAN** on page 10



Morgan

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and calming enclosures that are earthy and magnificent at the same time. Climate-responsive design uses the sun's energy to keep the building comfortable and naturally ventilated. Rooms with shaded windows, clerestory and skylights are still bursting with daylight. Openings are located at varying heights to capture the changing quality of natural light, from diffused in the morning to golden at sunset. Morgan was also adept at designing for flexibility by placing elements such as movable partitions to permit multiple uses within an allocated space. Courtyards, breezeways and verandas connect indoors to the outdoors, gracefully allowing the building to breathe. Morgan's robust and durable buildings have seen several changes in use, adapting to contemporary culture and lifestyles over the decades.

Conclusion: Even though we now have established measures rating the "greenness" of new buildings, the passive solar design and healthy strategies such as those found in Morgan's buildings established their own standard over a century ago. These sustainable design interventions are simple, affordable and have no running cost since they are integral to the building design. More relevant today than ever, they facilitate resource conservation and longer building lifecycles, thereby contributing positively to diminishing the pressures of climate change. A ground-breaking study was released by the Preservation Green Lab, a project of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It objectively quantifies the environmental benefits of reusing existing buildings over demolition or even new "green" construction.

Morgan's over 700 buildings (though some have been demolished) tread lightly on this

earth, graciously accommodating changes of the 21st century, sustaining their preservation. And that, I believe, is beautiful architecture.

Sandhya Sood ALA is an award-winning architect, certified green building professional and Principal of Accent Architecture +Design in the San Francisco Bay Area. This article was commissioned by Landmarks California (www.landmarksocalifornia.org), a collaboration of preservation organizations that promote historic preservation of places of diverse histories and cultures statewide. A project of Landmarks California, Julia Morgan 2012 celebrates in the fall of 2012, the remarkable legacy of California's pioneering woman architect, Julia Morgan through events, lectures and tours of some of her houses and buildings. www.accentarchitecture.com. ■

Swedish community's history to be highlighted with new funding

By Kitty Hughes

The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation has awarded Oakland's Tegner Lodge a \$15,000 grant to study the East Bay's Swedish legacy. The project will research Swedish-American immigration, settlement patterns, customs, and contributions to the arts and crafts in the greater East Bay. Focusing on Oakland, which was the center of the early Swedish community, the study will branch out to explore the spread of Swedish culture through the activities of other local Swedish organizations.

Many records hold clues to the early and evolving Swedish life in Oakland, but they are scattered throughout many documents and files from the City of Oakland's Cultural Heritage Survey, the Oakland Heritage Alliance, the Public Library History Room, the Swedish American Hall in San Francisco, and locally-housed immigration records in the National Archives, as well as other archives and personal collections. The project will integrate and interpret these records and memorabilia, develop a website, and culminate with a celebratory event with a slide show and traditional Swedish music and food.



SWEDISH-BORN Erik Lindblom invested in, and later owned, the Claremont.

Although the earliest Swedish-Americans represented a minority in the entire population, they left a permanent mark on Oakland and East Bay Area life and culture. Today, residents of Swedish heritage, as well as the general public, are largely unaware of the legacy of these individuals and their communities.

The public may also not be familiar with the concept of "lodges." Originally, these Swedish organizations served as fraternal societies for the benefit of Swedish immigrants. Oakland's Tegner Lodge is Northern California's second oldest Vasa lodge; Vasa is a Swedish-American fraternal

organization. Tegner formed in 1908, and has always been open to women and men. Tegner has been meeting continuously in Oakland for over 103 years.

Today Tegner lodge is open to anyone interested in learning more about Nordic history and culture. The group meets monthly at the Sons of Norway Bjornson Hall, 2258 MacArthur Boulevard in Oakland at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month, except for July and August.

The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation supports Swedish-related cultural and educational projects in North America and Sweden. This project hopes to serve as a model to other ethnic organizations interested in preserving their unique history and contributions to East Bay life. As archives and personal recollections become more dispersed and disappear, our multi-faceted East Bay community history is in danger of being lost and forgotten.

Tegner Lodge seeks photographs, documents and oral interviews for the project slide show. If you have materials to share, please contact project director Marie-Ann Hill via email at marieannh7@gmail.com or writer/researcher Kitty Hughes at khughes5@earthlink.net. ■



Pride in our city and our organization

By Rachel Force, President

I was looking at OHA's mission statement recently and reflecting about how our programs engage people. Through walking tours, lectures and building tours, we are able to shine a light on Oakland's rich heritage. Everyone who attends our events shares a common interest in knowing more about this city, and thereby feeling a sense of ownership in Oakland. I have encountered such great enthusiasm among attendees—from our PiP Awards to the recent *Oakland: The Story of a City* reading at Linden Street Brewery—and it is incredibly rewarding to see how OHA can help foster people's love of Oakland.

However, we aren't resting on our laurels. OHA's board of directors frequently puzzles over how to increase our membership and expand outreach so that more people know about our organization and take advantage of our events. If you are reading this, it's likely that you are already a member, and I hope you share my opinion about the important role OHA plays in engaging people in our community. I encourage you to mention our events to your friends, neighbors and colleague; talk us up! You can forward on to friends the information that we

send out via email, Facebook or Twitter (see our website for the links to follow us). The bottom line is, we rely on memberships and donations to keep offering these programs, and we need your help to get the word out.

And here's a great holiday idea: consider gift memberships to OHA for friends and colleagues you know may be interested.

I'm very excited about our fall and winter lectures and building tours—everything from a 100th birthday lecture at the Hotel Oakland to a winery tour and tasting at Urban Legend Wine Cellars. You can find more information online and look for updates in our email news. Please contact us at info@oaklandheritage.org for more information.

As always, we are grateful for the efforts of our volunteers, board members, and our executive director January Ruck. Our walking tour season this summer was very well attended, and I'd like to especially recognize the efforts and dedication of Alison Finlay, the walking tour committee chair and a member of the board. My thanks to all who organized and attended, and all of our members for their ongoing support, and I look forward to seeing you at future events! ■

Billboards

Continued from page 8

mented as used during the Victorian era in Oakland, 1960-1900.

To see the plan, go to <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/o/PBN/OurOrganization/PlanningZoning/o/Commissions/index.htm>, scroll down to the September 17 LPAB agenda and download it to read the staff report for item 3.

On the same agenda, you can find the lengthy staff report on the Central Estuary Plan report, covering Jingle Town and historic industrial areas along the waterfront. ■

Get that fabulous glow!

In response to robust demand, join us on a return visit to the Neon Works Factory, 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 17.

See a demonstration of neon lighting construction, from glass-bending through the spectacular gassy result, and admire a fine collection of vintage neon signs. Please make reservations in advance, as space is limited at this working manufacturer's premises; register at: www.oaklandheritage.org/events.html. ■

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PRODUCTION: Erika Mailman

OHA News welcomes article submissions. Send to news@oaklandheritage.org.

MISSION STATEMENT: OHA is a nonprofit membership organization which advocates the protection, preservation and revitalization of Oakland's architectural, historic, cultural and natural resources through publications, education, and direct action.

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OHA membership keeps you informed, helps make our city more livable, and puts you in touch with our many events. It makes a wonderful gift, too!

- \$45 Cornerstone** (individual): newsletter, advance notice and discounted pricing on programs, events and tours.
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Some limited income memberships are available. Call for information

- I'd like to contribute _____ to the OHA Leadership Fund, and help assure the future of historic preservation in Oakland.

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There's no place like Holmes

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni

Ah, Holmes Books! How many were the hours I spent in your cool and dusty aisles! How inviting your storefront banner: "New and Old Books . . . Libraries Purchased"!

Now only a fond retail memory, Holmes Books was a fixture on 14th Street from 1925 to the store's last day in May 1995.

It was founded in San Francisco in 1894 by Robert Holmes, a native of England who immigrated to Canada and later to Oakland. He built his business by carting books in a wheelbarrow from his Mission Street store to the docks and selling them to sailors to read on their long voyages. Harold Holmes, his son, joined the business the next year at the age of 15 when a second store was opened on Market Street. The younger Holmes attained only an eighth grade education but became a recognized authority on Western Americana and Californiana and was a noted supplier to the Bancroft Library and the California Historical Society.

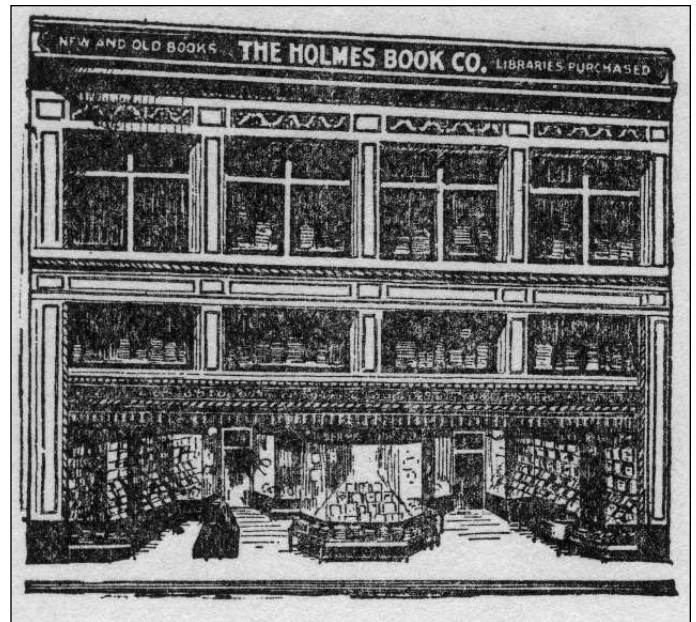
In 1925 Harold moved the business to Oakland. He built a two-story store on 14th Street across from the Hotel Oakland. Builder M.P. Brasch provided the design in the Chicago Commercial style. The store included a large first-floor sales area and a three-sided balcony mezzanine reached by a broad, welcoming staircase in the back. The second floor housed offices and the store's holdings of rare books and Western Americana. Below all was a basement stuffed with

even more books and the biggest collection of *National Geographics* in the West. The entrance was recessed behind deep display windows, always filled with back issues of *Life* and ample editions of everything in and out of print.

Prominent patrons included Carl Sandburg and Earl Warren. Francis Ford Coppola shopped here for science fiction and a 49ers quarterback bought old books by the yard to furnish his home.

Always eclectic, Holmes Books carried new and used books, antiquarian specialties, and paper ephemera. At its peak it comprised five locations in San Francisco and the East Bay. In the 1990s the 14th Street store was reported to have as many as a half-million volumes in stock.

The venerable bookstore survived the Great Depression, World War II, and the arrival of television. The end came when Constance Holmes Keyston, Harold's daughter, died in 1993. The family faced estate taxes and expensive repairs, including a seismic upgrade. Business had declined, and



THE COMPANY'S LETTERHEAD featured this drawing.

debts had grown. Staff and family, led by Robert's great-granddaughter Evelyn Hayman, kept the store going until 1995, liquidating its vast stock and selling the building.

In 1998, the building's new owner demolished its display windows. Betty Marvin of the Cultural Heritage Survey caught the demolition as it was happening. The owner was required to rebuild the windows as closely as possible to their original appearance.

Holmes now exists as an online bookseller and the storefront houses a fabric store. Book retailing has changed since the store closed, but when all is said and done, there was no place like Holmes. ■