



Oakland hosts preservation conference this May

By January Ruck

For the first time in 30 years, California's statewide preservation conference returns to Oakland! With the thematic title "Old Roots, New Growth—Cultivating Communities," this conference will focus on how California's preservation community can build on its strengths, appeal to new audiences, and continue to protect the unique places we live, work and play.

The "Old Roots, New Growth" conference will feature five tracks that cater to a variety of professional and community interests. Sessions, workshops, events and tours will:

- explore how professionals and communities integrate new perspectives and address cultural and social heritage;
- examine the impact of emerging economic trends on historic properties and identify how preservationists can influence real estate development;
- investigate the planning tools that are available for managing change in a historic



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

THE ALTENHEIM, built for Oakland's aging German population at the turn of the century, still stands today and is one of the stops on the preservation conference tour.

context and highlight successful strategies for designing the built environment and its landscapes;

■ discuss issues of fire and life-safety compliance, façade and material investigation techniques, seismic assessment and design, and interdisciplinary approaches to adaptive use; and

■ evaluate the economic, technical, and social impacts of reusing commercial, industrial and military spaces as exemplified by projects in Oakland and the greater Bay Area.

With 19 sessions to choose from, topics range from the basics of "Preservation 101" to more technical issues like "Grafted Stock: Evaluating Contemporary Additions." These educational opportunities will target the interests of beginners and enthusiasts, as well as seasoned professionals. In addition to preservation advocates, urban planners, architects, historians, engineers, educators, attorneys, contractors, real estate agents, and historic property owners from throughout California will find engagement.

Anyone concerned about protecting their community's rich and diverse heritage can benefit from attending this conference. Session highlights include: "Tool Shed: Virtual Building Blocks for Historic Preservation,"

"Pruning Public Parks: Landscapes Under Pressure to Perform," "What's Next for Redevelopment Agencies in California," "Economic Development Tool Kit," and "Cultural and Ethnic Significance."

While the conference is headquartered at the Oakland Marriott City Center, participants will have many opportunities to explore. Six mobile sessions will visit The Oakland Fox Theater, Altemheim Senior Housing, Wooden Windows Workshop, Middle Harbor Shoreline Park, and UC Berkeley Campus, among other locations.

Throughout the conference, examples of Oakland's rich architecture, landscapes, and history will be featured. The Opening Reception on May 3 at the Rotunda will provide participants with an opportunity to mingle during the first night of the conference.

On May 4, the Opening Plenary Session, hosted at the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, will feature Keynote speaker Aimee Allison (co-Executive Producer of RootsAction and founder of the local news site OaklandSeen) and an address by Mayor Jean Quan. An Emerging Professionals Reception will follow, and offer an opportunity for networking at Liege in Old Town Oakland. The schedule for Friday night is especially excit-



THE FOX THEATER, recently restored.

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM



ing. Sessions will end at 5:15 p.m. and conference attendees will be encouraged to enjoy Oakland's restaurants and explore Art Murrum on their own. At 8:00 p.m., the wildly popular Three Minute Success Stories event, which includes hilarious presentations and a dessert reception, will take place at the Kaiser Center Lakeside Theater.

On Saturday, May 5, the CPF Annual Membership Meeting luncheon will be hosted at the Washington Inn and, to celebrate Cinco De Mayo, the Closing Fiesta will feature a lively thematic reception and live auction in the evening. Afterwards, participants are encouraged to discover Lake Merritt's Necklace of Lights on a walking tour with Annalee Allen. Throughout the duration of the conference, registrants will also have access to the conference bookstore and vendors showcased in the "Preservation Products & Practice" Exhibit Hall.

Those who don't wish to attend the full conference can still participate! After CPF's March 16 early registration deadline, Study Tours will open to the general public. These tours have been organized by knowledgeable locals (Annalee Allen, Dea Bacchetti, Birgitt Evans, Donna Graves, Sarah Hahn, Nancy Hird, Jerri Holan, Madeline Horn, Tony Meadow, Frankie Rhodes, Kurt Schindler, and Allison Vanderslice). Study Tour admission rates range from \$15-\$65 and include:

- Oakland's Food Industries: Behind-the-Scenes Tour
- Rosie the Riveter/WWII National Historical Park
- Necklace of Lights Walking Tour
- From the Fox to Pflueger: Golden Age of Theaters

In this issue

Downtown photographs	3
Landmarks notes	4
Neon works tour	5
Pardee Chap Record	6
Story of a City returns	7
The Heights	8
New members	10
Lake Merritt Hotel	12



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

OAKLAND'S SHIPPING BUSINESS, and its world-famous cranes, played an important role in our city's development.

- Rebuilding Community through Urban Agriculture
- WWII to Present: Reusing Structures of the Past
- The Balancing Act in East Bay Regional Park
- Ground-breaking Women at Three Restored East Bay Historic Houses
- Old Town Oakland Walking Tour
- Ranches and Redwoods: Oakland's Early History.

The public also may sign up for individual workshops that will be held on May 3 and will feature in-depth tutorials on making new material substitutions in preservation projects, historic designation and documentation in the digital era, and completing rehabilitation tax credit applications.

In addition to the Study Tour organizers, OHA's Board of Directors, local steering committee members, and CPF staff, the conference has enjoyed the support of partners such as the African American Museum and Library of Oakland; Alameda Architectural Preservation Society; American Institute of Architects, East Bay Chapter; American Institute of Architects, San Francisco Chapter; American Institute of Architects,

Santa Clara Valley Chapter; Art Deco Society of California; Association for Preservation Technology, Western Chapter; Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association; California State Parks, Office of Historic Preservation; Chinese Historical Society of America; City of Oakland; Oakland Downtown Association, Friends of the Oakland Fox; Friends of Peralta Hacienda Historical Park; PAST Heritage; Potomac Association; Samuel Knight Chapter, Society for Industrial Archeology; San Francisco Architectural Heritage; U.S. Green Building Council, Northern California Chapter; Victorian Preservation Association of Oakland, and Visit Oakland.

While the development of this conference relied heavily on local supporters, and will thrive with resident participation, we expect conference attendees will come to Oakland from throughout the state. OHA and CPF would like to offer visitors "must see/must do" information that will invite them to enjoy as many Oakland attractions as their schedules can possibly allow. If you have suggestions to share, please email January Ruck at info@oaklandheritage.org.

See **CPF** on page 3

Take a (photographic) stroll down yesteryear's Broadway

By Deborah Cooper:

Thanks to the Oakland History Room at the Main Library, you can take a visual stroll through downtown Oakland in the 1950s.

Among the remarkable collections in the History Room are 10 black notebooks with photographs of downtown Oakland from 6th to 17th streets, and from Jefferson to Harrison streets. Formed in 1931, the Downtown Property Owners Association hired photographers to create a detailed record of downtown between 1953 and 1958. In addition, the DPOA collected photographs of downtown from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, before-and-after images meant to showcase the modernization of facades on what were viewed then as tired old buildings.

The DPOA supported modernizing downtown Oakland as described in a February 27, 1935, *Oakland Tribune* clipping: "Buildings from the 1870s and 1880s have had towers and bay windows removed, new facings put on, and blending of modern, artistic exteriors



CANNON SHOES, the "after" image of a more modern facade.

with the functionality, sound construction of walls, floors, ceilings, etc."

The Oakland History Room also preserves a newspaper clipping file covering the

Downtown Property Owners Association. Clippings note that the DPOA formed to combat the problem of the "decentralization movement" as businesses moved out of downtown.

If you would like to see the architectural impacts of efforts to modernize the downtown, visit the History Room and ask for DPOA notebook #10. It contains before and after images of many buildings—first with 1880s towers and turrets and then the same buildings with handsome art deco facades. It's a fascinating view of Oakland, preserved thanks to the Oakland History Room. ■



CANNON SHOES, the "before" shot with grand corner tower. The store was located at 1030 Washington St.

CPF

Continued from page 2

For additional details about the conference, including access to registration information, visit: www.californiapreservation.org. ■

Volunteers may attend the conference for free, based on the number of volunteer hours worked. For more information, contact OHA's executive director January Ruck at 510-763-9218 or info@oaklandheritage.org.



From pub to train stations: keeping Oakland's character intact

By Naomi Schiff

A lively Landmarks Board meeting heard arguments about a proposal to landmark the **Kingfish**, an early 20th-century bar on Claremont Avenue. It was originally a bait shop, and for decades a much-beloved gathering place for Cal sports aficionados. A multi-unit residential project was approved for the site a few years ago, but didn't proceed. The developer still wants to clear and develop the site. The modest vernacular structure, with its shuffleboard court and plenty of atmosphere, has ardent partisans.

While there are some (limited) mechanisms for protecting important buildings, our preservation ordinances do not directly address community and cultural institutions, longtime businesses, or key organizations that don't own their own quarters. Yet, even humble institutions can provide the social connection and fine-grained urban sense of place that make cities work. A sizable, enthusiastic crowd of Kingfish supporters who attended the meeting, are pursuing a landmark effort despite the owner's opposition.

The **Lake Merritt BART Station Area** planning efforts moved forward through the fall. Working with other local organizations, OHA advocates sensitive treatment of historic areas in Chinatown and up as far as 14th Street, with particular attention to height and density, treatment of street edges, and discussion of open space and the potential for traffic improvements. New development should foster community connection, not block areas from each other, which is a major concern among neighborhood activists and residents of the neighboring Waterfront Warehouse District.

One persistent topic is the possibility of restoring some one-way streets to their original two-way configuration. Advocates, including some vocal and dedicated Tai Chi practitioners, shot down an earlier proposal to put structures on Madison Park, and the consultants and staff now foresee keeping it intact. BART would like to maximize the density of any future structures on the site of its former headquarters and its parking lot, and possibly on the ABAG/MTC site. After a hearing at the Planning Commission, an additional meeting was scheduled to address issues of height and density, which had not

received a full airing. The question remains: what impact will this have on the surrounding community and its key historic areas? What guidelines should be instituted if the goal is to put very tall structures next to smaller-scale Victorian-era frame housing?

In **West Oakland**, another planning study is moving forward, mostly focusing on opportunities to rejuvenate and re-use industrial and commercial areas in non-residential areas and near the West Oakland BART Station. Community participation has explored the stresses between gentrification, community improvement, economic development, and the interaction of West Oakland with the eventual development of the former Army Base. Various contingents want neighborhood-serving retail, and participants have brought up regional retail as well. Meetings will continue through spring.

The **16th and Wood S. P. Train Station** in West Oakland faces another tough moment with the withdrawal of redevelopment programs. A city redevelopment allocation of \$1.5 million towards securing its roof and

perimeter was made last summer, but it is not yet clear when it might be released to Bridge, the nonprofit which owns the station. Beyond that, planning for the station long assumed that some degree of tax increment money would be available for its restoration.

Because the Army Base reuse has taken so long to get started, those funds never appeared and now may not be generated. The campaign for funding this important landmark must be rethought. OHA is nominating the building for the National Trust's Most Endangered list, while community groups including RAILS and Train Station Partnership are working on an interim use plan in hopes that increased visibility will protect the building and support fundraising.

Union Pacific Railroad wants to remove dozens of catenary poles: tall, criss-crossed poles along its rail lines that are remnants of the old Key System Red Car lines. OHA and rail enthusiasts want to preserve and reuse them elsewhere. If you can help, email info@oaklandheritage.org, and we'll put you in touch with the team. ■

Occupy Oakland, latest in a long line of protests

By Naomi Schiff

Protest here is not new; recent events throw a spotlight on Oakland's role as a setting for contending groups and contesting ideas.

In 1894, the national Pullman strike shut down Oakland's rail yards and only ended with President Cleveland's federal injunction, as Beth Bagwell recounted in *Oakland: Story of a City*. Last fall, the commemoration of Oakland's 1911 suffrage march reminded us that marching downtown is a time-honored way for people to highlight a deeply-felt cause. In the 1870s, anti-immigrant groups threatened local workers, residents, and Chinatown neighborhoods. In 1934, Oakland workers participated in the huge dock-worker strike, which shut down Bay Area ports for days.

Some OO protestors have

See **PROTEST** on page 11

LOOK FAMILIAR? Originally from the OPD archives, this image depicts the 1967 Army Induction Center protest.



Visiting the Neon Works company was a very bright idea

By Naomi Schiff

January's packed Second Thursday event toured the Neon Works company after a terrific talk and slide presentation by Michael Crowe on the history, use, and types of neon lighting. Hospitable Jim Rizzo and his enthusiastic coworkers demonstrated making a neon lighting element, showed off a wonderful collection of vintage signs, and answered a great many questions.

For a post about the evening, visit Gene Anderson's online blog: <http://blog.ouroakland.net/2012/01/signs-oha-neon-works.html>.

After the event, lots of people asked whether OHA could come up with a tour of Oakland's historic neon signs. To do so, we need your help. If you know of or see an interesting neon sign, please email its wording or description and exact street address to michaelcrowe2002@yahoo.com. We'll give you plenty of warning before a tour actually occurs! ■



PHOTOS: JANUARY RUCK



We need a few good projects!

Our annual Partners in Preservation season is opening! Please visit www.oaklandheritage.org to nominate your own project or someone else's. This year, our PIP awards will occur later in the year, on June 14, to make time for the CPF convention. But the clock is ticking! We seek good examples of preservation projects in Oakland: residential, commercial, institutional, small or big. Our application form can be downloaded, and we'll ask for a photo (or photos) so that the winners can be featured in our inspiring annual celebration. Deadline is April 1, 2012.

Mark your calendars for a great lecture season!

By January Ruck

April 19 (THIRD Thursday!) "On Tap: Oakland's Beer Brewing History and Tasting": Learn about the history of beer production in Oakland with Brewmaster Adam Lamoreaux, and enjoy the taste of an Oakland tradition reborn! Due to space constraints and capacity limitations, this event requires advance registration. Location details will be provided upon registration. Registration begins March 15 and closes April 13. To register, call 510-763-9218 or email info@oaklandheritage.org

May 3–May 6: "California Preservation Conference: Old roots, New Growth—Cultivating Communities": OHA partners with the California Preservation Founda-

tion to host this statewide historic preservation conference in Oakland. For event, location, and registration details, visit: <http://www.californiapreservation.org/conference.html>

June 14: Partners in Preservation Awards Ceremony: Celebrate Oakland's historic preservation stewards with OHA. This annual event will highlight award-winning projects and individuals. A reception will follow the ceremony, offering a great opportunity for members and award winners to mingle. ■

Unless otherwise noted, lectures begin at 7 p.m. at Chapel of the Chimes, 4499 Piedmont Ave. \$10 for OHA members and \$15 for general admission.



Recordkeeping of male eligibility

By Erika Mailman

In 1910, finding a husband was thought to be every girl's ultimate goal. After all, she couldn't vote and her best form of employment was raising children. So then, what better Christmas present could there be than a book in which you could log all the eligible males you meet, making notes about their flaws?

In the archives of Oakland's Pardee Home Museum, you can find such a book, given to Carol Pardee, daughter of California's governor George Pardee. It was called *The Chap Record*. The book's flyleaf reads,

"Behold herein, all nice and neat
A record of the men I meet
Among them all, perhaps, there be
Who knows? The 'not impossible' He."

Carol was 19 years old at the time of the gift, and it's amusing to look at her entries. "Too big a sport, talks too much," she wrote about Ray Smith. "Pest-tiresome mutt" was hopefully not a scornful epithet for young Charlie Bradford but instead about his accompanying real dog. Most colorful, perhaps, is the note on Frank Handel: "Too dirty. Teeth are green."

To put this in a bit of context, in November 1902, a *San Francisco Call* reporter visited the Pardee daughters at home to write a feature called "Four Typical Athletic Girls." The reporter watched them play croquet, tennis and billiards, and ride their bicycles: all before school. She asked them what their future held. Wrote the newswoman:

"They tell me they are all going to [U.C.] Berkeley," I reported to their mother.

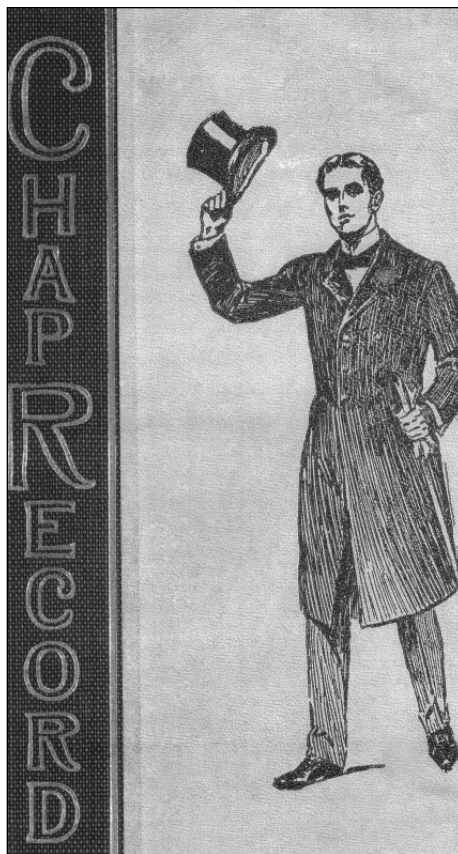
"Of course they are. They are all going to be trained to support themselves if they need to."

"My sister says she is training them to be old maids," put in Aunt Etta.

"What do you say to such a reflection cast upon you, Dr. Pardee?" I asked.

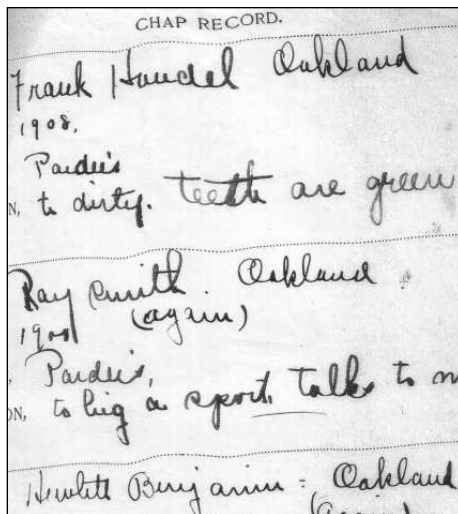
Dr. Pardee stopped long enough to smile at his wife and be smiled at in return, just as the four daughters of the house, tired of billiards, swept down, mounted their wheels, rode off hatless and happy into the sunshine.

When I saw that smile I knew no reefs were in sight.



PARDEE HOME MUSEUM

COVER, above, and entry page, below.



PARDEE HOME MUSEUM

Carol never did find her mate, nor did her sisters. She died in 1920 of the flu, living at home at age 29. Another sister also died young, while two others lived to be old women. One hopes they took pride in their ability to live their lives as they wanted. ■

Enormous thanks to our donors:

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The Story of a City to hit bookstores soon

By Kathleen DiGiovanni

If you receive OHA's weekly email communications, you know that we will soon be publishing the long-awaited second edition of Beth Bagwell's *Oakland, the Story of a City*. We expect the new edition to be available in April. First published by Presidio Press in 1982, OHA reprinted in 1996, but the volume has long been out of print. Before Ms. Bagwell's death in 2006, OHA had negotiated with her for permission to publish an updated edition of this local classic.

Oakland, the Story of a City is the essential single-volume history of Oakland. Highly readable and impeccably researched, the book grew out of a two-year series of articles Bagwell wrote for the *Montclarion* newspaper. Bagwell was also one of OHA's founders and served as its first president.

Her original edition covers our city's growth from the days of the Ohlone to the 1950s. An epilogue outlined the decades of the 1960–70s.

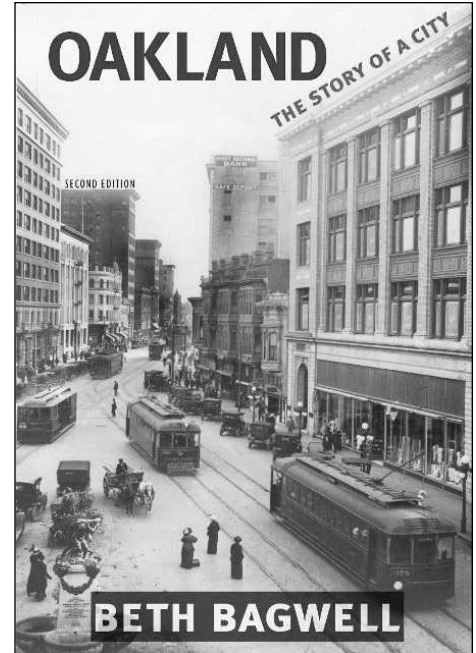
Local booksellers have eagerly awaited a reprint, with one commenting that the book

was its overall bestseller. The boxes have long been empty; now OHA has a chance to launch a jazzed-up version of the iconic volume.

The second edition will be updated with a new chapter by Erika Mailman, who also served as *Montclarion* history columnist, bringing the story forward. The fantastic photographs—nearly all from the Oakland History Room's collection—have been freshly scanned. For readers familiar with the reprinted edition, these crisp, new images will make the new edition a must-purchase.

Savannah Bundy, an intern at Seventeenth Street Studios, designed the proposed new cover, which provides an attention-grabbing, modern feel while displaying an historic image of downtown. The first edition book jacket featured four different images on a dark green or maroon background, depending on the edition. The new book will be a boon to any bookshelf, while the first editions will be collectors' items.

Ordering information will soon appear on the OHA website at oaklandheritage.org,



PROPOSED NEW COVER for the long-awaited second edition.

and the book should also be available at local independent bookstores. Something to look forward to! ■


AgeSong
 Lake Merritt
 An Independent Elder Community

California Preservation Foundation Conference attendees are invited to Brunch at the Terrace Room and Tour of The Hotel Lake Merritt, landmark building, now **AgeSong at Lake Merritt**, an independent senior community.

Visit a renovated 1927 Art Deco jewel recognized as hosting the "Best View of the Lake," located at 1800 Madison Street, Oakland

10% discount with Conference Badge or ticket

Bottomless Mimosas and Bloody Marys , 10:30am to 3:00 pm

Reservations required. Contact:

510-903-3600 Allison Rodman arodman@agesong.com



Joaquin Miller's trials and travails on the hilltop

By Phoebe Cutler

Expanded several times over the last century or so, Joaquin Miller Park currently comprises 500 acres of land in the Oakland hills. It was the city's first expansive open space. Endowed with numerous trails, picnic facilities, dramatic views and a 1930s amphitheater backed by an Italian baroque cascade, Joaquin Miller Park is surprisingly little visited. While it's virtually unknown to some residents, its originator, poet Joaquin Miller, is even less recognized—despite being one of the most colorful characters Oakland has produced over the course of its history.

While still known as “Cincinnatus Hiner Miller,” the fledgling poet was advised by Ina Coolbrith, at the time working for Bret Harte at the *Overland Monthly* (and soon to move to Oakland to become its first public librarian), who suggested that he change his name to “Joaquin” (wah-KEEN) after the flashy Mexican bandito Joaquin Murietta.

Not only the park's name but a number of structures, including his small house and several stone follies, commemorate this once-famous personality, who, along with verse, wrote copious journalistic pieces, a few novels, and a couple of hit plays. Almost all his writings have been forgotten, although his semi-autobiographical novel *Life Among the Modocs: Unwritten History* (1873) is considered a sympathetic view, unique for its day, of the indigenous California people. “*Modocs*” subsequently experienced some currency during the countercultural 1970s.

For a quarter-century, Miller lived on the property, the core of which he bought in 1887. Four years after his death in 1913, the city agreed to acquire the site that Miller from the outset had promoted as a potential park. When he settled down permanently in the house he built on “The Hights” (deliberately spelled that way “to save time and to save ink”), he had already passed through about five normal people's lifetimes. By the age of about 50 (his exact birth date has been debated for years, but the most recent and authoritative surmise is 1839), he had crossed the plains in a covered wagon as a boy; mined for gold and served as camp cook; fought Indians and lived among them; been arrested for stealing a horse; been employed



THIS 1910 VIEW shows the woods are well grown on the Hights, surrounding Joaquin Miller's modest and rustic structure.

as a pony express rider, a judge, and a newspaper editor; and had, he claimed, a special audience with Queen Victoria.

Failing to find an appreciative publisher or receptive readers in his home country, Miller sailed to England, hoping his talent might be better appreciated. It was. After publishing a collection of poems, *Song of the Sierras*, in the early 1870s, this talkative, real-life representative of the Wild West became the toast of the London salons. Journeying around Europe, he claimed to be the inspiration behind the planting of eucalyptus on the Roman marshes.

Eventually he returned to a more receptive U.S. His new popularity rested mainly on his prolific production of poetry. In the mid-1880s, he spent a couple of years in a log cabin he built a mile-and-a-half from the White House. Discouraged by this latest show of pioneer zeal, his aspiring socialite wife of five years returned, toddler in tow, to New York. (The cabin, following a stint putting in an appearance at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, was relocated to Washington, D.C.'s Rock Creek Park. Today it hosts an annual series of poetry readings.)

Soon after Miller's arrival in the Bay Area in 1886, he marshaled the Pacific Coast's inaugural celebration of Arbor Day. He led a

throng on a boat over to Yerba Buena Island, where he partnered with Comstock Lode tunnel-builder Adolph Sutro and regional military commandant O. O. Howard (a founder of the eponymous Howard University in Washington) to install a 150-foot x 650-foot arboreal cross composed of Monterey cypress, eucalyptus, and pines.

Soon afterwards, in 1887, the “Poet of the Sierras” acquired his 75-acre Oakland estate and began to install orchards and shade trees on the bleak slopes of the then-separate suburb of Fruitvale. There he confronted a task more daunting than the planting of trees on Yerba Buena. At that time, the “Contra Costa hills” (as the Oakland-Berkeley hills were called in those years) were barren. Much of the terrain was steep, stony, and dry, with frequent strong winds. The land had accommodated the cattle of the Spanish and Mexican rancheros in the first half of the 19th century, when Miller's land was part of the Peralta family's vast Rancho San Antonio. By the 1850s, the cattle industry had begun a slow decline. In the 1870s fruit farming began to be widely promoted in the area and soon supplanted both cattle and wheat.

Miller's property was unusual in that, in addition to its open fields, it also contained redwoods. These were confined to the

canyon formed by Palo Seco Creek, the Hights' northern border. As the lumbering spurred by Northern California's spectacular, post-Gold Rush growth had decimated most of the trees in the region, Miller's redwoods, with few, if any, exceptions, would have been second growth.

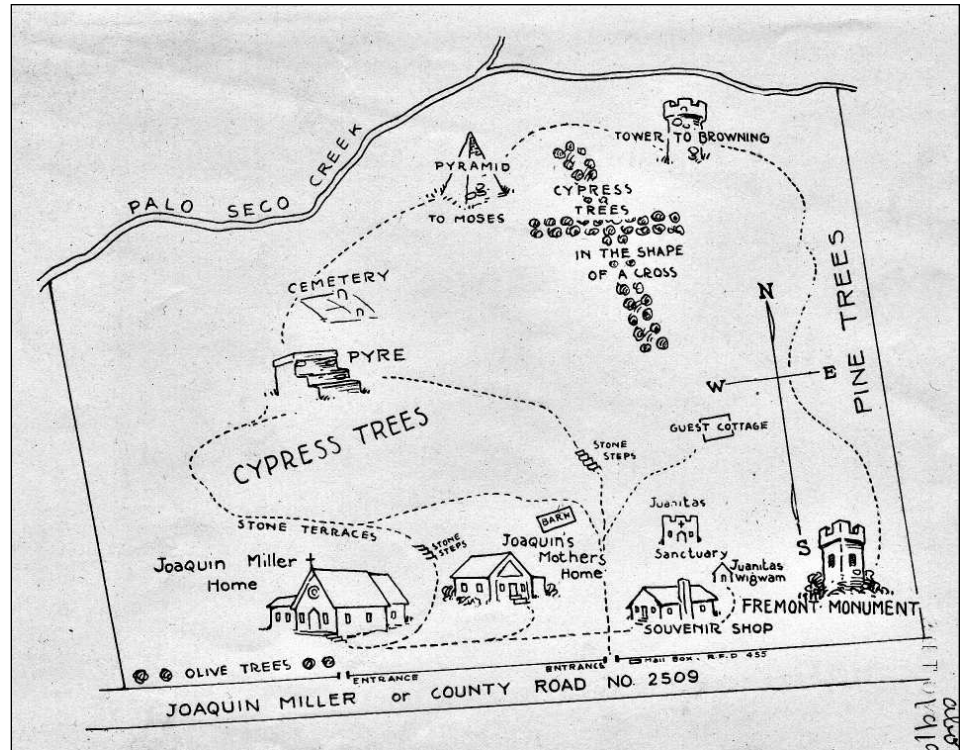
For the most part, the ranch looked as seen in the early view showing Joaquin standing proudly on the plank bridge, a view taken to memorialize the poet's purchase. Indeed, so few trees stood in all of the Oakland surrounds that a year after being established there, he was able to take Swedish baroness Alexandra Gripenburg for a carriage ride near Lake Merritt and direct her attention to his house in the hills four miles away.

In late 19th century California, reforestation was becoming almost a universal obsession. Miller, an alumnus of the Indiana and Oregon woods, stood out for his dedication to the planting of trees, and he didn't need perpetual Arbor Days to inspire it. Initially the fledgling rancher focused on setting out the orchard that would help subsidize the good life he intended to have in California.

Miller submitted an order for young bare-root stock: 200 apple trees from Nova Scotia and 200 peach trees from New Jersey, as well as "jumbo chestnuts" from a local supplier and, he claimed, over a thousand olive trees. He optimistically set out banana and orange trees. Yet the winter of 1887 to '88 was cruel, with low temperatures decimating his plantings.

Writing a year later in the New York-based *Independent* to an audience that included scores of eager potential immigrants to California, Miller conceded that Northern California was not a reliable region for producing tropical and semi-tropical crops. But he wasn't one to give up easily. The Alameda County directory for 1889-90 reflected his agenda. The new resident's submission read, in bold letters, and in a telling order of priority, "Fruit Grower" and "Poet." The wording reflected his enduring hope that the proceeds from his land would someday free him from the constant pressure to produce copy.

In his early tree-planting years in Oakland Miller had yet to compose his chef d'oeuvre, the much-memorized poem "Columbus," which he produced in 1892 to honor the 400th anniversary of the Italian mariner's discovery of the Americas.



PLAN OF THE HIGHTS drawn by Joaquin's daughter Juanita, found in her 1919 booklet *About the Heights with Juanita Miller*.

*Then, pale and worn, he kept his deck,
And peered through darkness. Ah, that
night*

*Of all dark nights! And then a speck-
A light! A light! A light! A light!*

It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!

It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.

*He gained a world; he gave that world
Its grandest lesson: "On, sail on!"*

This work secured Joaquin Miller's position for a couple of generations as one of the nation's best-loved poets.

The eventual lack of success of this self-anointed "Byron of the Rockies" in his new avocation may be partly explained by his tendency to confuse poetry and agriculture. By embracing the olive he was joining a stampede to that tree, but he was also ignoring warning signs about its viability in the area. Miller's acquaintances argued that the trees wouldn't bear. He himself was aware that in the courtyard of a convent five miles away a well-established representative of the genus was sterile. But seduced by the olive's beauty and fired by the romance of its role in Biblical and classical literature, the neophyte rancher ignored the evidence. He rationalized his stance in his customary, florid manner:

"Will olives pay here? Pay? Pay? In every breath of the salt sea wind that lifts their silvery leaves in the sun I am paid-paid in imperishable silver every day."

One year after he set out the first planting, Miller was effusing over the appearance of a flock of doves in his grove. So convincing and frequent were the poet's paeans to the "sheltering shade of the olive," that a reporter from the *San Francisco Call* was shocked to discover, five years after the initial planting, that not one stripling was large enough "to afford shelter to an infant."

Ultimately Miller had to admit that his foray into commercial agriculture was a failure. His fruit-growing efforts could only be half-hearted. Agricultural productivity at the Hights suffered from its owner's frequent absences and a persistent lack of capital and labor.

Despite these hindrances, Harr Wagner, Joaquin's agent and early biographer, attested that the olives and the "silver prunes" (an Oregon varietal called Coe's Golden Drop) were the most successful of the various fruits that Miller attempted. Yone Noguchi, the

See **HIGHTS** on page 10



Rotary Club helped green up Oakland in 1916, and still going strong

IN OUR NEXT

ISSUE: Watch for an article on the Rotary Club, which is celebrating its 103rd year. In 1916, the club planted 1,200 trees along Foothill Boulevard, which were maintained by Boy Scouts. Rotary met in the Hotel Oakland (seen in the background) from as soon as it opened its doors until World War II.



COURTESY ROTARY CLUB OF OAKLAND

Thanks to the volunteers, homeowners, donors and sponsors who helped make OHA's "Glenview: Bungalow Heaven, Craftsman Paradise" a great success!

Homeowners: Jamie Howell, David Bernstein, Tomm Smail, Joyce Smail, Leon Borensztein, Roxanne Andersen, Ocean Quigley, Kelly Stratman, Scott Stratman, Mary Ann Karonis, Blair Allen, Melissa Lucas, Vincent James, Mary Allen, Jim Michael, Robert Raburn, Pat Raburn, Derrik Williams, Robin Jensen

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Welcome to our new members!

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

Ron & Sue Bachman, Jan Barry-Kadrie, Ariella Ben-David, Rene Boisvert, Maria Goode Costen, Michelle de Robertis, Mary Dolven, Linda Fernandez, Mark Janowicz, Morton Jensen, Ray Kidd, Harvey Lee, Linda Lewin, Laura Schlichtmann, Erik Schroder, Susan Schultz, Margaret Stephens, Melissa Wheeler

Hights

Continued from page 9

most famous (both for his own poems as well as his role as father of the sculptor Isamu Noguchi) of the neophyte rancher's succession of unpaid, resident help, both Japanese and native, recounts the poet's disgust when a local minister and his family and friends picked the plum trees clean. This anecdote suggests that not a lot of picking was necessary to clean out Miller's less-than-bounteous crop.

By then, anyway, the poet could tolerate a scanty return on his orchard, because planting and maintaining a veritable forest of trees all around him at the Hights had become his passion. Plus, they were already proving to be far more durable than their fruit-bearing predecessors. Over the years Miller added vegetation, people, and monuments to his spread. He did not stop with apples and eucalyptus, but experimented

with violets as a cash crop and devoted himself to rose-growing. In addition to his ranching, he entertained freely and eventually gathered a resident "hillside bohemia" around him, that included a Hungarian count who painted history scenes and a talented, strong-willed woman sculptor who defied contemporary mores and married one of Joaquin's Japanese followers. His ill-fated family flitted in and out, adding considerable drama to the scene.

This article was previously published in Eden, the magazine of the California Garden & Landscape History Society. Watch for Part II in our next edition.

Minted as a landscape designer from UC Berkeley, Phoebe Cutler first explored this park in the early 1970s for her thesis, later published as The Public Landscape of the New Deal (Yale 1986). Until she revisited the topic several years ago, she knew as much about Joaquin Miller as you do. ■



Exciting changes afoot for OHA HQ

By Rachel Force

I am extremely pleased to offer my first message to OHA's members as president of the board of directors—greetings! There is a lot of work ahead of us this year.

First, I am very happy to announce that January Ruck has been promoted to executive director. She has been with OHA since April 2011 and has taken on greater responsibilities for the organization, including developing and implementing fundraising strategies. She brings a great deal of professional preservation experience to the position and is a wonderful asset; we are lucky to have her!

I would also like to welcome several new board members: Melissa Pauna, Patricia Gregoire, and Tom Haw. We still have openings and are looking for people with fundraising and marketing experience. We also seek people who would like to serve on individual committees without being on the board. Please contact the office if you are interested.

In addition to our lecture series, we are ramping up for the California Preservation Foundation conference being held in Oakland in May. Volunteering during the conference is a great way to attend at low or no cost. Email info@oaklandheritage.org if

you're interested. Meanwhile, check out the conference website: www.californiapreservation.org/conference.html.

We hope to release the second edition of Beth Bagwell's *Oakland: Story of a City* in time for the conference. It's the perfect opportunity to provide historical information to visitors who want to know more about our wonderful city. Those who have already donated to the publication efforts: thank you! We are still accepting donations from those who would like to contribute.

In June we will hold our annual Partners in Preservation award ceremony, honoring people, organizations, projects and programs demonstrating a commitment to excellence in historic preservation. The nomination form is online: www.oaklandheritage.org/Partners_In_Preservation.html. Self-nominations are welcome; get recognized!

Oakland's cultural institutions continue to face difficulties due to city budget cuts and the overall economy. I'm happy that OHA supports them through our advocacy and partnerships, and thankful to our members who donate time and funds to allies such as Peralta Hacienda. Your support is more important than ever: thank you. ■

Protest

Continued from page 4

claimed antecedents in a 1946 postwar strike, sparked by a retail clerks' walkout at Kahn's and other department stores, which completely paralyzed downtown. Later, some remember the huge protests of the 1960s, during the Vietnam War. In 1967, a contingent of 400 war supporters tried to counter-protest while several thousands of antiwar demonstrators sat down in streets, blocked the Army Induction Center and drew major police suppression. Scores were arrested. (Singer/activist Joan Baez was among those jailed, once for 10 days, then again for a month.) In 1991, protest signs went up downtown when President Bush began Operation Desert Storm. In 2003, large numbers protested war looming in Iraq, and the police department reacted in force, shooting rubber bullets at close range during a port protest. More recently, the death of Oscar Grant during a BART police arrest triggered protests. Throughout this history, we debate what constitutes legitimate protest, and what helps a movement and hinders it. How can police protect free speech, keep order and not overreact; and how can we tell in the moment whether protests are counter-productive or produce useful change? ■

CONTRIBUTORS: Deborah Cooper, Phoebe Cutler, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Rachel Force, Erika Mailman, January Ruck, Naomi Schiff

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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- \$500-\$999 Ionic**: same as above plus four tickets to a walking tour.
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A lakeside dowager lives!

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni

In this issue we look at the Lake Merritt Hotel, a jewel on the shore of Lake Merritt. First known as the Madison-Lake Hotel Apartments, as defined by its street corners, it was built in 1927 and opened to short- and long-term residents in 1928.

According to the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, the Madison-Lake was a product of the apartment-hotel boom of the 1920s, reflecting “the early 20th century fashion in large urban centers for convenient hotel living close to the entertainment and other amenities of downtown.” In Oakland, these apartment hotels, or “serviced apartments,” were principally developed in the Lakeside district. The Madison-Lake’s initial owner and principal investor was Dr. David Hadden, an Oakland gynecologist with a practice on Pill Hill. By the 1930s, the hotel, now called the Lake Merritt Hotel, was in the hands of a hotel investment group,

Architect William H. Weeks designed the hotel, as well as the nearby Hotel Jackson (now the Lakehurst) and Hotel Leamington. He also designed Piedmont High School and the Melrose Branch of the Oakland Public Library, as well as many other high schools and Carnegie libraries in California. He is often confused with architect Charles P. Weeks of the firm Weeks & Day, who was active in California at the same time.

An *Oakland Tribune* article from 1927 touted the color-coordinated kitchens planned for each studio or one-bedroom unit. Kitchens featured Spark Lid-Top gas stoves

“in the new green, canary and blue trim,” with the stove trim color carried throughout the room, and “genuine Frigidaire in all units.”

The hotel’s signature restaurant, the Terrace Room, is not original to the structure. It was added in 1934 by enclosing an outdoor terrace. It opened in April of that year as the Orange Grove Terrace complete with a house band, Selwyn McDonald and his Orchestra, who were broadcast nightly “by remote control” on Tribune radio station KLX. Over the decades, it has been the venue for many an engagement party and wedding reception, as well as dinner dances and club meetings. The Lake Merritt Breakfast Club held its first meetings there. In 1956, artist Andre Boratko enhanced the restaurant with a mural depicting Lake Merritt.

Threatened with demolition and replacement with a condominium tower in the late-1980s, the hotel was saved by outcry from Oakland’s preservation community. Disappointed in their effort to tear down this lakeside dowager, the Handlery Hotel chain put the hotel on the market, where in 1987 it entered the hands of its current owner, Randy



THE LAKE MERRITT HOTEL before the Terrace Room was added in 1934.

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

Berger and Berger Enterprises. Berger’s million-dollar renovations in 1989 and 1990 restored Art Deco details that had fallen victim to 1960s-era updating.

It also changed at that time to a boutique-style business-class hotel. Oakland conferred landmark status on the hotel in 1992. The boutique-hotel years ended in 2005 when the owners decided a change in direction was in order. There followed a brief experimental period when development as a residence for LGBT seniors was undertaken (a project that was ahead of its time), followed by a few years as an extended-stay business hotel. Since 2010, Berger Enterprises has partnered with Age Song to turn the building into an independent-living residence for seniors. The Terrace Room remains open to the public, a lovely venue for lunch or dinner, its unbeatable view of the lake unchanged. ■