

Channeling the future: Lake Merritt meets the estuary

By Naomi Schiff

Oakland's Lake Merritt, originally San Antonio Slough, is one of many sloughs, inlets, bays, and marshes along the west coast. As in other coastal regions, many California cities arose around these natural features; today one can still see examples of less-built-upon slough and marsh landscapes at Elkhorn Slough and Point Reyes. As it develops, Oakland will transform the links from streams and watersheds to the Estuary, the San Francisco Bay, and the Pacific Ocean. Can some of these changes reconnect us to the bay, give us better access, and convey an understanding of the original landforms?

HOW IT WAS

Home to many Ohlone/Costanoan settlements, the rich bay waters furnished fish and shellfish, supplying sustenance for active villages. The area wasn't explored by Spanish expeditions until the late 1700s. In 1820, 44 thousand acres, including San Antonio Slough, were granted to Don Luís María Peralta by Spanish governor Pablo Vicente de Solá. Cattle ranching became the rancho's main economic activity. In 1842, after Peralta's death, the East Bay land was divided among his sons.

THE INFAMOUS HORACE

Tales of Oakland's founding and of Horace Carpentier's 1852 acquisition of the entire waterfront—a main reason for incorporating Oakland as a city—are entertainingly recounted by Beth Bagwell, in *Oakland: The Story of a City*. "At the third meeting, Carpentier was granted a deed to the waterfront. . . . As consideration . . . he was to pay \$5, to provide a wharf at the foot of Main Street (Broadway) and two other wharves, and to build a public schoolhouse, which was greatly desired by the townspeople. On August 27, 1853 . . . the council removed all restrictions and granted the waterfront to Carpentier 'in fee simple forever.' In other words, one man owned the port of Oakland."

In 1853, after a dispute with the county



NAOMI SCHIFF

A GREAT EGRET WADES into the channel. Nearby, young pickleweed plants grow in wire enclosures to protect them from Canada geese. Former Measure DD manager Joel Peter is experimenting to find the ideal zone at which this salt-tolerant native plant will thrive.

over payment for its construction, T.C. Gilman and Carpentier began exacting a toll from every person or wagon that traveled across the new bridge across the mouth of the slough, about where 12th Street/Lake Merritt Boulevard is today.

Around the turn of the century, the slough was dredged, the edges raised, a rock embankment built, and Lake Merritt was taking a shape we might recognize. Famously, in 1906 it sheltered earthquake refugees who lived in the park, in tents. Soon thereafter, public bonds were passed to finance improvements and for a grand new civic auditorium.

MID-CENTURY CAR MADNESS

By 1915, 12th Street had been paved across the dam, and the new auditorium opened. In 1934, the new County Courthouse was fin-

ished. But by World War II, the Chamber of Commerce was expressing dissatisfaction at the heavy traffic headed into and out of downtown, fearing it would impede commerce. The war ensued, but by 1950, a proto-freeway designed by Oakland City Engineer Walter Frickstad provided twelve lanes with merges, ramps, mid-roadway-bus stop, and pedestrian tunnels on the filled land between the City Auditorium and the lake. The importance of this roadway gradually declined with the construction of the Nimitz Freeway, completed in Oakland around 1958, and Route 580 in the 1960s. By 2001, community groups had come up with a plan to reconfigure the area, culminating in the 2002 passage of a large bond measure, Measure DD, to finance improvements.

See **SLOUGH** on page 2



Slough

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WHAT'S ON FILL?

Laney College (1970), the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center (originally Oakland Auditorium, 1915), part of the Oakland Museum of California (1969), and roadways stand on fill in what was once part of San Antonio Slough. On the other side of the channel, the Oakland Unified School District's Paul Robeson administration building (1926) stands on the original shore.

MEASURE CHANGES THE PICTURE

Now that the Measure DD improvements to 12th Street are nearly complete, DD construction is moving forward to reconstruct the bridge and widen the waterway at 10th Street. The next crossing is at the flood gate and pumping station at 7th Street. This Alameda County flood control facility is intended to prevent a recurrence of the enormous flooding that occurred in 1962. If you have ever wondered about the high curbs on Lakeshore Avenue, consider that when a large rainstorm coincides with a very high tide, the marsh grows larger, and tries to reoccupy its former range.

It is a short distance as the crow flies, but because the route from lake edge to Bay Trail is interrupted by four roadways, extremely active train tracks, and a huge freeway, and is surrounded by various institutional lands, it seems a long way. Now may be the opportunity to reconfigure and to make manifest the ancient connection between San Antonio Slough and the bay.

Plans are to continue the paths toward the



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

AERIAL VIEW OF LAKE MERRITT AND ESTUARY

Estuary, and, in an exciting bit of urban planning, architects and planners are at work finding the best way to make a pedestrian and bicycle bridge from the channel path to the Bay Trail in the Embarcadero overcrossing area. In the meantime, Laney College's 2013 master plan orients some activities toward the banks of the channel. In addition, the Oakland Unified School District has been

considering how to use its structures and land at 2nd Avenue, where a plumbing accident caused the administration to move out of the Paul Robeson building. Further discussions are expected to result in public hearings in spring 2015.

At the end of 2014, Oakland's City Council approved a Lake Merritt Station Area Plan to

*See **SLOUGH** on page 3*

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NAOMI SCHIFF

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT is contemplating ideas for its administrative building at 1025 2nd Ave. (the Paul Robeson Building), and Ethel Moore Building.



Slough

Continued from page 2

take advantage of BART and the potential for more intense development. As a heated public discussion focused on community benefits and how to maintain Oakland's economic and cultural diversity in a time of real estate growth, the channel was also included in the study area, and came in for some rezoning.

The Auditorium came under examination too, as Oakland put out a request for proposals to reuse it, hoping to capitalize on lake-edge improvements (see page 5).

GOING BACK TO WHERE WE

STARTED. At the birthplace of our municipality, the channel—with its adjoining historic buildings, its watery connection of

slough and estuary, and its relationship to so many episodes of Oakland history—presents us with manmade puzzles and natural resource conundrums:

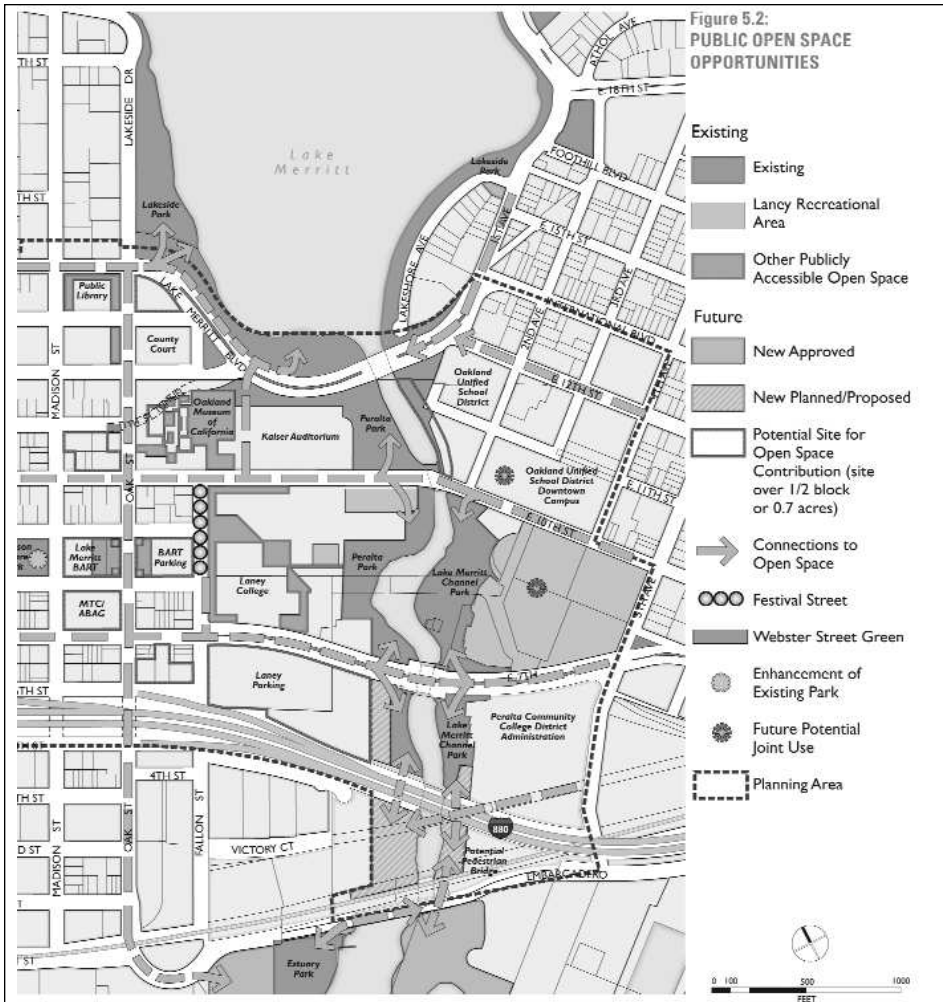
- how best can we use the many publicly-owned parcels around the channel?
- how can these connected (if awkward) open spaces provide the greatest opportunities for recreation and outdoor exploration?
- how can this railroad- and freeway-affect-ed area contribute to the ecological benefit of the saltwater slough/lake and the estuary, and the creatures and plants that inhabit it?



LOOKING WEST along Embarcadero, a visualization for a pedestrian bridge connecting the channel and the Bay trail.

LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Lake Merritt to Bay Trail Connection:** <http://www.lm2bt.com/>
- Lake Merritt Station Area Plan:** <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/oakca1/groups/ceda/documents/report/oak048456.pdf>
- Laney College Facilities Master Plan:** http://www.laney.edu/wp/business_office/files/2013/06/Laney2012FMP_Draft_LR-as-of-2.22.13.pdf
- City of Oakland RFP for Auditorium:** <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/oakca1/groups/ceda/documents/webcontent/oak049322.pdf>
- Volunteer opportunities:** <https://www.facebook.com/LakeMerrittWeedWarriors>
- Measure DD Coalition:** <http://www.waterfrontaction.org/dd/> ■



CITY OF OAKLAND

LAKE MERRITT STATION AREA PLAN focuses on open space present and planned around the channel area, as shown in this detail.

Welcome to our new members!

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

- Chris Andrews, Eve Arbogast, Joe & Dana Baca, Anne Bailey, Florent Bernard, Michelle Blackwell, Agatha Briscoe, Warrine Coffey & George W. Young, Rebecca Deville, Holly Eggleston, John Falconer, Stacy Farr, Allan Feinstein, David Foote, Stuart & Jennifer Gunn, Robert & Kathryn Gustafson, Jerry & Michelle Harrison, Diane Heinze, Steven Huss, Karen Ivy & Jim Ringland, Alice Jurov-Charles Altel, Marcia & Sheldon Kabaker, Judy Kahn, Maureen & George Lenahan, Patricia Maulet, Lawrie McDonnell, Linda Mehren & Roger Lambert, Krishna Jude Moore, Cliff & Liz Moser, Nathaniel Muhler, Robert O'Brien, Caitlin Patterson, Tara Reinertson, Kirsten Ritchie, Okashi Robles, Nancy Rowell, Robert Sandoval, Anne Whitacre, Christine Wilder-Abrams, Mark Wilson, Mary Ann Wloszek, Carol Wood, Edith Yhuel



“And the historical record says it was this high . . .”



PHOTOS: AMELIA MARSHALL



OUR FEARLESS TOUR LEADERS make for an entertaining and illuminating walking tour experience. At top, Dennis Evanosky talks about the historical McDonnell sulfur mine on his “Scaling Leona Heights” tour on Aug. 17, 2014. At bottom, Stuart Swiedler discusses Shepherd Canyon railroad history.

Thanks to our volunteers

Fall Building Tours and Presentations:

Chris Andrews, Michelle Blackwell, David Boysel, Paul Duchscherer, Andreas Lehmann, Stacy Farr, Mark Wilson

Fall Building Tours and Presentations

Volunteers: Susan Anderson, Dea Bacchetti, Charles Bucher, Claire Castell, Alison Finlay, Christina Herd, Wally Holmen, Joann Pavlinec, Martha Peck, Juanita Rynerson, Stephen Rynerson, Joyce Stanek

Walking Tour Leaders:

Phil Banta, Phil Bellman, Ernest Chann, Suzanne Christensen, Bill Coburn, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Riley Doty, Dennis Evanosky, Norman Hooks, Kathryn Hughes, Gary Knecht, Ruben Llamas, Pamela Magnuson Peddle, Betty Marvin, Celia McCarthy, Woody Minor, Naomi Schiff, Stuart Swiedler, Valerie Winemiller

Walking Tours Volunteers:

Susan Anderson, Charles Bucher, Marie Bushman, Myrna Dean, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Alison Finlay, Sue Gilkey, Ernie Grafe, Christina Herd, Lisa Hire, Wally Holmen, Kathryn Hughes, Ruby Long, Yorkman Lowe, Amelia Marshall, Melissa Pauna, Joann Pavlinec, Martha Peck, Juanita Rynerson, Steve Rynerson, Charles Smith, Sandra Tillin, Hugh West, Sue West, Elaine Yamaguchi, Vanessa Young

Graphic Design Support:

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Oak Tech Memories

This year Oakland Technical High School celebrates its centennial! The school’s PTSA has published a book to mark this momentous occasion. A 200-page sweep through Tech’s 100-year history, the yearbook-style book is filled with photos, bits and pieces of school newspapers and yearbooks, excerpts from local press, and memories and biographies of Tech alumni. Information about purchasing the \$40 book is at www.oaklandtech.com. Click on the upper right corner where you see “Centennial book.”



Got any requests?

By Naomi Schiff

The city of Oakland issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for reopening the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center/Oakland Auditorium. The city is looking for a project that will reopen the Calvin Simmons Theater and creatively reuse the big arena. The RFP requires a historic architect be part of any team, and that the building be preserved, with its Stirling Calder reliefs in the arches, and its classic detailing in the concert hall. Respondents were asked to include plans to operate the facility and make it available to public access.

With the improvements at Lake Merritt Boulevard, the neighborhood seems ready for renewed activity, but reusing the large public building is a big undertaking.

In August, the Oakland Unified School District issued a Request for Qualifications to work with a developer to rebuild Dewey High School, replace the Paul Robeson Administration Building, and create a housing development, all on their 2nd Avenue site. They received four responses and substantial public criticism for not following a community engagement process, so have delayed any action or reissuance of a request until spring.

The Robeson Building had been damaged in a water flooding incident, but a walk-through showed an intact building with no sign of mold or dampness. Next to it, the Ethel Moore building still stands on the site, originally a public health facility for the County of Alameda.

CONNELL SITE ON BROADWAY

A development is proposed for 30th and Broadway, currently occupied by a used car lot and the former Connell showroom. The residential building would incorporate and preserve the well-known corner building with its rounded modern-style showroom used for retail. This project meets zoning and planning guidelines in the Broadway-Valdez Specific Plan, which was passed recently.

GOVERNOR VETOES STATE HISTORIC TAX CREDIT

Despite passage through the State Assembly and Senate, and support from the development, historic preservation, architecture, construction, and affordable housing groups, Governor Brown vetoed AB 1999. However, he did state that he would remain open to a rewritten measure. Cindy Heitzman, executive director of the California Preservation Foundation, said, "We will continue our work to pass a state historic tax credit to see that California joins the ranks of 35 other states who enacted state historic tax credits." You helped us get this to the Governor's desk; let's continue the effort to pass a state historic tax credit.

ON THE OTHER HAND

The Lampworks Lofts, at 1614 Campbell Street in West Oakland, completed restoration and opened as rental units, which leased up in a matter of weeks. This 1912 industrial building used tax credits as part of the financing, and returns a vacant building to use.

A big thank you to our kind, thoughtful donors

We're grateful to the generosity of our donors, who make our programs and advocacy possible:

Annalee Allen, Charles Bucher, Laurie McHatton Burke, Sam Cohen, Caryn Combis & Jerry Barclay, Henry Massie & Bridget Connelly, Kevin Dwyer, Laine Farley & Roy Candles, David Farr & Ed Roybal, Kevin & Agnes Faughnan, Matthew & Jane Gabel, Karen Graf & Wes Wagon, Jessea Greenman & Darlene Ceremello, Earl & Bonnie Hamlin, Thomas Haw, Pieter J. Hazewindus, Paul Hennessey & Susan Dague, Kathryn Hughes, Robin Johnson, Alice Jurrow-Charles Atel, Kathy Krohn, Daniel Levy, Arthur Levy, Helen Lore, Edwin McCauley, Janet Mulshine, Carol Olmert, Margaret L. Pillsbury, Roy & Melinda Samuelson, Susan Schacher, Naomi Schiff, Laura Schlichtmann, Sandra Tillin, John Tuttle & Doug Drummond, Kathryn Ulrich, Susan H. Wester

GLENVIEW SCHOOL

OUSD appears willing to retain the well-known entry area and main doors of the school building, but is still planning to demolish most of the rest of the structure to rebuild a more modern school. Some neighbors are still in discussion about impacts to the adjoining properties.

The Art Deco Society of California and OHA held several conversations with the district, commented extensively, and TJ Towey of ADSC contributed sketches to show how more of the original building could be reused, but parents and school district priorities seem to have kept the district on course to replace most of the building.

OUSD made dubious claims that the building was "not historic," but this was not well substantiated in the documentation. The school district does not fall under city purview nor does it require city permits; rather, it is self-supervising as an agency, and goes to the Department of State Architect to get plan approvals.

See **REQUESTS** on page 6



JOHN KLEIN

HENRY J. KAISER ARENA interior, taken in Fall 2014.



Requests

Continued from page 5

COLISEUM AREA SPECIFIC PLAN

OHA commented on the proposed Coliseum City project draft EIR. The document had only the vaguest of mitigations (“If the Oakland Coliseum and/or Arena are demolished, project applicant(s) shall make a financial contribution to the City of Oakland” —but how much?) for a potential demolition of one or both of the mid-century iconic buildings that are key historic elements of the site: the coliseum and the arena.

OHA proposed a much more definite structure for contributing to façade improvements and/or tenant improvements of older commercial buildings in East Oakland as mitigation for any demolition. We look for a far more definite mitigation for this project or for any subsequent proposed projects that entail modification or demolition of these iconic buildings.

One building that might stand to benefit from a stronger mitigation program is the terrific 1928 former Safeway building (originally Mutual Stores) at 5726 International Boulevard, designed by architects Reed & Corlett. ■



Construction and deconstruction of a bridge

By David Boysel

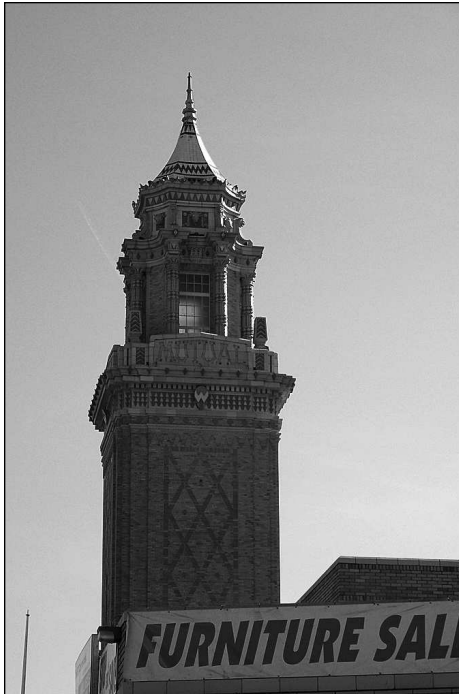
I was doing some research in the *Oakland Tribune* recently and ran across this article from 1936.

It was about the raising of a single girder that would be the first link from Oakland to Yerba Buena Island. The bridge was built out from each end, to be joined together high up over the bay, and these photos celebrated that first connecting beam, on a boat below, ready to be craned into place.

I cross the new span regularly; this section is parallel and quite close, so I have seen the demolition of this span week-by-week. The photographs made me realize that the bridge was being disassembled in reverse order, which is logical enough, but here was proof in this old article.

It makes me wonder how long the 1936 construction crew thought their work would stand. I’m guessing they thought longer than it did. ■

OAKLAND WIKI/CREATIVE COMMONS/WAYNE HSIEH



THE SAFEWAY BUILDING



OAKLAND COLISEUM AT NIGHT, around the 1960s.

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM



Beulah Heights once a place of respite for African-Americans

By Dorothy Lazard

The story of the former town of Beulah is a lost chapter in the history of the East Bay. It lay mainly in the area that is today sandwiched in between the current Highway 580 and Route 13 and High Street. Few have heard of this once-thriving community. In advertisements, Beulah's "superb climate," its distance from the bustle of Oakland, and its proximity to a Key System streetcar line were used to lure people to the area. It had its own post office, church, and school.

At the dawn of the 20th century, Beulah was a district of large, beautiful homes, many of which provided social services to the orphaned, poor and elderly. This made the community unique. One of Beulah's most prominent institutions at the turn of the century was the Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People. As other retirement homes at the time were racially segregated, Oakland's African-American civic and religious leaders combined efforts to establish a home for their seniors and aged homeless.

The Old Peoples Home Association incorporated in 1892 for the purpose of building such a home. Its founding board included several key African-American women, such as Hettie Tilghman, Julia Shorey, Harriet E. Smith, Ann S. Purnell, and Mary C. Washington. This early board of directors—and those who followed them—sponsored festivals, dances, and concerts to raise money for building costs. Land for the home was donated by a white Christian missionary, George S. Montgomery, who had settled in the area with his wife Carrie in 1890. Carrie Judd Montgomery called the sun-soaked, hilly setting above Mills Seminary "Beulah Heights."

The Home was completed and receiving "inmates" by October 1897, a mere two months after the cornerstone was laid. Its first resident, Alvin A. Coffey, was a former slave who made his fortune during the Gold Rush. Mr. Coffey contributed \$500.00 to the home association to help finance the home's completion. Located at 5245 Harrison (now Underwood Avenue), it bordered the northern side of Mills College. The two-story Victorian originally had 16 rooms. By 1905, after an eight-room addition, the home could accommodate 19 residents. The seniors, who were charged a \$500.00 lifetime membership fee,



DOROTHY LAZARD

MILLS COLLEGE bus shelter with "Beulah Gate" carved on its lintel.

were kept busy with tasks such as sewing, knitting and gardening. The use of alcohol and drugs were prohibited and living quarters were sex-segregated.

Money was always an issue for the Aged and Infirm Colored Home. The directors of the home hosted "Donation Days" to garner much-needed funds and supplies for the maintenance of the building and services. The staff accepted not only monetary contributions, but linens, cooking utensils, supplies, volunteer labor, and food.

The home is historically significant because it was the first institution in California to serve African-American seniors, most of whom were former slaves.

In 1893, George S. and Carrie Judd Montgomery founded the Home of Peace in Beulah Heights as a school of ministry and retreat for Christian missionaries. Right next door on Daisy Street, they built the Beulah Chapel, a nondenominational church that provided church services every Sunday morning at 11 a.m. Sermons were delivered by Carrie Judd Montgomery for many years.

The Beulah Orphanage and Rescue Home, established in 1895 by the Montgomerys, was another important social service estab-

lishment in the community. Originally on Alice Street, near Mills College, it advertised in the *Oakland Tribune* to "any poor girl in need of a friend, and a home." During its 13 years of operation it housed over 500 children. By 1905, the Rescue Home had been in business for a dozen years and was overcrowded, according to a January 11 *Tribune* article. In the previous year alone, 106 girls had passed through the home. In 1908, the Montgomerys handed over the management of the home to the Salvation Army.

Naturally a growing community needed a school. The Beulah School, at 4820 Tompkins Avenue (near Buell), was in operation from 1902 to 1927, according to the Oakland city directories.

The Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Church in California founded the Beulah Rest Home in 1909 at 4690 Tompkins Ave. to serve retired preachers, deaconesses, and other Christian workers. Its original building stood until 1927 when it was destroyed by fire.

Oakland's 1909 annexation of the territory from Fruit Vale south to the San Leandro

See **BEULAH HEIGHTS** on page 9



Remembering Christmas with Louise Jorgensen

By Erika Mailman

Method acting is challenging when you're trying to channel the emotions and motivations of a peppermint candy. Still, thousands of Oakland schoolchildren pulled it off year after year in Louise Jorgensen's Christmas pageant, held from 1919 to 1987.

An extraordinary woman who left a New York dance career to return to Oakland, Louise Jorgensen choreographed and organized the event each year. As a staff member of the city's recreation department, she'd visit 50 schools a week to conduct a half-hour rehearsal in the last few months of the year. The Kaiser Convention Center hosted the pageant's crowds (8,000 proud parents, says one source).

Jorgensen taught the children how to act as fairies, elves, reindeer, holly berries, polar bears and toys: like the Nutcracker's Land of Sweets writ large.

Wrote Austin Lewis in 1923's *San Francisco News Letter*, "[A] quite beautiful spectacle was that of some hundreds of little girls of three to five or six years of age who represented snow girls and, dressed in white, running in large masses, gave the most striking and touching effect. There was a pathetic loveliness about this which actually brought tears."

For two performances in the first weekend of December, more than 1,500 performers ranging from clueless kindergartners to world-weary high school seniors created holiday magic on a huge scale. A small orchestra



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

THE FAIRIES' PERFORMANCE in the early 1950s, with students kneeling on the floor waiting for their turn.

played at one end of the enormous auditorium, and each year in the finalé, Jorgensen herself would appear as the Spirit of Christmas. She died in 1995, eight years after the last performance.

In 2006, nostalgic teachers organized The Winter Festival to revive and secularize the pageant, but this may be one of

those feats of the past that is impossible to replicate. At the Facebook page "You Know You're From Oakland When . . .," I asked people to post their favorite memories from the Louise Jorgensen Christmas pageant years. Here are a few responses.

See **MEMORIES** on page 9

Pageant archives inventoried in History Room collection

By Kathleen DiGiovanni

After Louise Jorgensen's death in 1995, her personal archive was given to the Oakland History Room of the Oakland Public Library.

This very extensive archive covers Miss Jorgensen's life and work and includes photographs, newspaper clippings, programs, and posters.

Oakland History Room staff have recently completed a detailed inventory of the collection that can be found in the library's online catalog by searching the keywords "Louise Jorgensen," "Oakland Christmas Pageant," or "Oakland May Day Festival."

Our goal is to make this collection more broadly visible to researchers by uploading it to the Online Archive of California.

What can you find in the Louise Jorgensen Collection? There are more than 11 linear feet of material on our shelves including:

- Christmas Pageant photographs arranged chronologically and by theme. These are a window into the organization and flow of the pageant
- a volume on Christmas Pageant costuming and staging and several volumes of sheet music used in the pageant

- commemorative albums of the Christmas Pageant including ones prepared after the last pageant in 1987
- photographs of Miss Jorgensen's private dance students
- photographs, clippings, and instructional workbooks on the May Day Festivals
- you can even see Miss Jorgensen's briefcase, inscribed "L.J."

The Oakland History Room is in the Main Library, 125 14th Street. Phone: (510) 238-3222. ■



Memories

Continued from page 8

“It was an awesome pleasure to have been able to be a part of it for almost 15 years. Her dedication to her students, her creativity and her love of dance, made the pageants a wonderful experience for all who participated! I remember being in numerous numbers: the toys, the court, the eskimo with the penguins and a few others. I remember subbing for a few parts when needed, and having to hurry down different hallways at the Henry J, trying to find the right door to come out of,



COURTESY DIANA CAVALLITTO-HANNA

LOUISE JORGENSEN flanked by two of her student dancers. At left, Charlene (last name unknown), and at right Diana Cavallitto-Hanna, whose memories are captured above.

which meant Mrs. J taught us several different numbers so that we could sub at any moment’s notice! The auditorium filled with guests, cameras flashing, and parents cheering proudly. I feel so blessed to of been a part of something so wonderful. She’s definitely an Oakland legend.”

—**Diana Cavallitto-Hanna**

“I was in the pageant at least three times. It was elementary school (I’m now 45), so I don’t remember many specifics. What I do remember is rehearsing at our elementary school in the auditorium with Louise Jorgensen. I also remember going to rehearsals at the Oakland Convention Center. Those were either the week or day before our performances. Getting dressed backstage was always exciting, seeing which costume we would get to wear and my mom putting on my "stage makeup." I distinctly remember being jealous one year about the costumes that another school or act was getting to wear. I remember dancing one year around a large Christmas tree on the main floor. After we would perform, we would sit on the perimeter of the floor and watch the younger kids perform. Louise Jorgensen would dance in a beautiful fairy costume.”

—**Anjie Gammje-Gordon**

“I remember the first time my daughter [Anjie, above] was chosen to be in the pageant! She was in kindergarten and was to be a little fairy! Mrs. Jorgensen came to Redwood Heights and practiced with the kids. At the performance, about 100 little girls came out near the end and did a little dance. So precious! Imagine my shock when my daughter was chosen again to be in the pageant in 5th grade, this time as a candy cane or

perhaps as a toy in the March of the Wooden Soldiers. I just remember the costume was pink and red and had a silly hat. All that parents had to pay was something like 50 cents or \$1 for the little footies everyone would wear (coordinated with costumes).

Anjie was in it again in Junior High (McChesney). Of course, each child was given one ticket for each performance as someone had to bring them there. Joy fills a mother’s heart. I went to see it once more before Mrs. Jorgensen retired. I wonder what happened to the costumes.”

—**Sue Yascolt** ■

Beulah Heights

Continued from page 7

border signaled the end of Beulah as a separate city. The community’s social service institutions began to relocate to other parts of Oakland or vanish altogether for a variety of reasons, largely financial. Those organizations remaining in Beulah Heights after 1910 are listed in the Oakland city directory as being in the “Leona Heights” district.

By 1914, this Rescue Home had changed its name to the “Salvation Army Rescue and Maternity Home,” according to the 1914 city directory which listed its address as 5205 Harrison (on Mills College property). The home would soon relocate to a site donated by the Elks at East 27th and Garden streets in the San Antonio district. The Aged and Infirm Colored Home closed in 1938 and the property on which it sat was purchased by Mills. In 1939, Mills ordered the home razed. Beulah Elementary closed in 1927 and was replaced by John Swett Elementary, originally located at 3741 Buell St. Beulah Chapel, at 4750 Daisy St., was in existence till the early 1940s. Carrie Judd Montgomery died in 1946.

The Beulah Rest Home remained in business and in Beulah Heights, serving the elderly, through 1980. The Home of Peace retreat still sits on its hill, providing a “healing home” for returning and outgoing missionaries and a B&B for Christian travelers. You can see remnants of Beulah Heights near the entrance to Mills. Just outside the college’s entrance, a covered, stucco bus shelter bears on its lintel the carved words “Beulah Gate.” ■

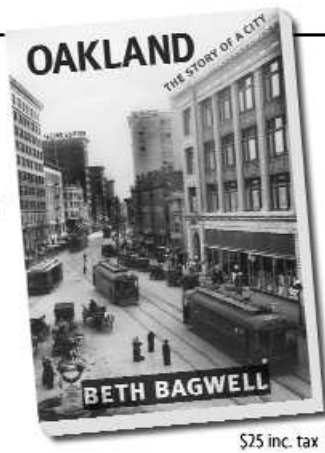
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Barbara Cohen Donald (1922–2014)

By Annalee Allen

Barbara Cohen Donald passed away this past October at the age of 92. Barbara was a long-time friend and member of OHA and a direct descendant of the Cohen-Bray family whose 1880s Stick-Eastlake style home is a city landmark. Located in the Fruitvale District of Oakland on 29th Avenue near International Boulevard, the home contains the furnishings and family belongings of three generations of the Cohens and the Brays and has been carefully maintained throughout the many decades of its history.

The house stands in a neighborhood that has seen many changes since the era when orchards and open fields predominated the then-outlying unincorporated district called “the Fruit Vale.” Barbara’s maternal great grandparents, Julia and Watson Bray, were large landowners whose country estate was located across the street. Her paternal great grandparents, Emilie Gibbins and A.A. Cohen, were also prominent residents whose even larger estate, Fernside, was nearby in what is now the city of Alameda. A.A. Cohen was an attorney, who served as the principal advisor to “the Big Four”: Charles Crocker, Leland Stanford, Collis Huntington, and Mark Hopkins—the developers of the Central Pacific Railroad.



PATTY DONALD

BARBARA DONALD

In the early 1880s Emma Bray and Alfred Cohen met and became engaged, and both sets of parents, the Brays and the Cohens, contributed to the building of a “honeymoon cottage” for the newlyweds. In February 1884, following a well-documented festive wedding reception attended by the local prominent citizens of the day, Emma and her

bridegroom moved into their new home, where over the years they would raise four children. Their youngest child Miss Emelita lived into her nineties as a single lady, still residing in the family home. Miss Emelita was Barbara’s aunt.

In the early 1980s, Barbara and other family members turned to OHA for advice on how the house and its treasures could be preserved and maintained in the long term. OHA established a fund for the house and encouraged the family to form a nonprofit to oversee its future. In the years that followed, the Cohen Bray House has opened its doors on a regular basis for teas and tours, and family members have invited scholars to study the home’s Victorian era interiors and furnishings.

Barbara Cohen Donald actively worked as a steward of her family’s unique historic landmark home for many years. The name of the nonprofit formed to protect the home is the Victorian Preservation Center of Oakland. Those interested in making a donation in Barbara’s name can send checks to VPCO, 4123 Broadway, Ste. 145, Oakland, CA 94611.

A memorial service for Barbara Cohen Donald was held on December 20 at All Souls Parish in Berkeley. To learn more about the house, go to www.cohenbray-house.info. ■

JOIN OHA FOR GREAT EVENTS!

- Geoffrey’s Inner Circle: the former Athenian-Nile Club. SUNDAY, FEB. 15, tour 3–5 p.m. with Annalee Allen. After, stay for live jazz at 5pm; or enjoy a soul food buffet dinner.

- Learning the Ropes and Rolling With It: Double Hung Windows and Pocket Doors THURSDAY, FEB. 19, 7:00–8:30 p.m. Jim Smallman shares secrets and answers questions.

- Mills College and the Legacy of Julia Morgan. SATURDAY, MARCH 14, tour 10:00 a.m.–noon. See the outstanding Morgan work at Mills.

- Julia Morgan’s Cohorts. THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 7:00–8:30 p.m. Inge Horton explores other women in architecture.

See oaklandheritage.org for more info.



CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

ORIGINAL SPLENDOR: 1945 Broadway

Capwells’s/Sears Building purchased

By Naomi Schiff

New owners Lane Partners and their architects are beginning design work on the prominent 1929 building at Broadway and Thomas Berkeley Way. They plan to re-use the building for retail on the ground floor, with working spaces above. The challenge will be to improve it in a sensitive and attractive way. Shortly after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, concrete shear walls were installed over parts of the original brick facade, and a skin was hung over the whole structure, leaving only a few windows and its elaborate parapet to indicate its one-time splendor. Its original architects, Starrett and van Vleck, designed the 1924 Saks Fifth Avenue flagship in New York City; our Oakland landmark resembles it in shape and feel, although it is a smaller structure. ■



Please support us in the new year

By Alison Finlay, President

One of our board members, Kathryn Hughes, drafted a particularly compelling appeal letter to our membership, and we thought it important to share it with our readers.

“It’s that time of year again and your mailbox is flooded with donation requests from your favorite non-profits and good causes.

Ever stop to realize that you are not exactly sure where your money goes? Sometimes it is hard to grasp the tangible results, as worthy as some organizations may be.

Lucky for you, there is one easy choice. There is a small, hardworking non-profit called the Oakland Heritage Alliance that has a 34-year track record of making your city a better place to live, and the results are all around you.

You see and experience them everyday, walking past or watching a movie in the Paramount Theatre, attending a music event at the Fox Theatre, strolling around Lake Merritt, appreciating the Oakland skyline, with the City Hall tower and church spires, or enjoying the Craftsman architecture on walks around your neighborhood.

We are the only organization that keeps up

the conversation with city planners, developers and others, keeping an eye on preserving quality of life and our historic context. We show up for planning and zoning meetings and notify the public when issues may impact local quality of life, from weighing in on proposed projects at Mountain View Cemetery, to planned high rises in Chinatown, to developments along the waterfront and the Coliseum area. You may not see us always at work, but we are there.

Who but OHA has recognized those who have made significant contributions to our city’s diverse culture, from jazz musicians to the Art Murrmur, from house restoration projects to books on Oakland history? Who else has said that our natural resources deserve protection as well, from street trees to creeks to parklands?

OHA operates on a lean budget, a lean staff, and the big hearts of Oaklanders like you. Over the years, with your support, we have accomplished far more than a tiny nonprofit should ever be expected to do. Not only have we worked at the forefront of every campaign and grassroots effort to sustain our city’s quality of life, we have raised public awareness through our house

tours and walking tours, our lecture presentations, and our informative newsletter. We believe that an engaged and informed public will participate more fully in our city’s ongoing life and make Oakland a better place to live.

Frankly, we need your help to keep all our programs and advocacy efforts in motion. The OHA board believes, and we hope you do too, that a city that recognizes and values its unique identity and sense of place is one that will survive and thrive into the future.”

Another way to take action: Just to the bottom left of my words here, you will note the form to order a membership to OHA. Perhaps you are already a member; if so, you may purchase a gift membership for a friend or family member. And if you are not yet a member, please consider joining our vibrant preservation community.

Board changes: We are delighted to add Amelia Marshall to our board of directors and we thank her heartily for her hard work thus far. Amelia has written in the past for the newsletter, and this very issue contains photos she took of our walking tours during the summer. With regret, we say goodbye to Martha Peck and Dea Bacchetti, and thank them wholeheartedly for their contributions over the past few years. ■

CONTRIBUTORS:

Annalee Allen, David Boysel, Christopher Buckley, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Alison Finlay, Dorothy Lazard, Erika Mailman, Amelia Marshall, Naomi Schiff

PRODUCTION: Erika Mailman

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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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.
- \$65 Pilaster** (household): same as above, for two.
- \$110 Pediment** (organization/corporate): same as above for four (for corporate or organization, transferable).
- \$250-\$499 Doric** same as above plus two tickets to a walking tour
- \$500-\$999 Ionic:** same as above plus four tickets to a walking tour.
- \$1,000-\$2,500 Corinthian:** all access pass for two (transferable).

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.

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, Zip _____

Phone (h) _____ (w) _____

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Send your check to:
Oakland Heritage Alliance,
446 17th St., Suite 301
Oakland, CA 94612
or go to
www.oaklandheritage.org
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Christmas at Mechanical Granny's

By Kathleen DiGiovanni

Do you remember the animated Christmas windows at the Breuner's store at Broadway and 21st? As part of a Christmas tradition in Oakland, the furniture store decorated its windows with animated holiday displays from 1935 to 1975. Displays were revealed the weekend before Thanksgiving and stayed up until New Year's.

Solidly "old-timey" and nostalgic in feeling, the animated windows were set around the end of the 19th century. According to a 1974 *Oakland Tribune* article, Breuner's Oakland display manager William McGuinness based them on his own experience of Christmas as a child in Canada. Display titles included "Christmas Shopping at the Old Country Store," "Christmas Eve at Granny's," and "Christmas Visit to the Hotel Ace." McGuinness designed the scenes until his retirement in 1968. He shopped for the antiques that filled the scenes. Display figures were three-quarters life-sized and many were mechanized: Grandpa got a shave at the barber shop; Grandma hung tinsel on the Christmas tree. Holiday music was piped outdoors to accompany the scenes inside.

The displays were rotated among the store's many locations. In a 1980 letter this writer has seen, a Breuner's staff member wrote that once a display had made the rounds of each store in the chain, it was dismantled and the parts were stored for use in future tableaux. The first display, in 1935,

depicted a horse pulling a two-seater sleigh.

Breuner's printed up postcards for most of the annual displays, too, given out to shoppers on a first-come, first-served basis. The Oakland History Room has a nice collection of them, one of which is illustrating this article.

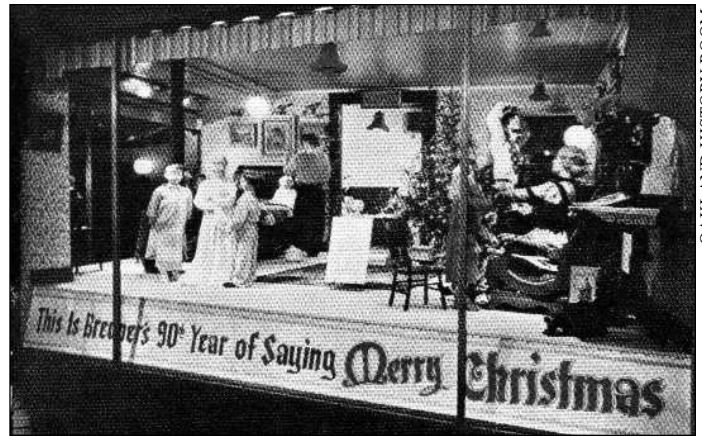
Breuner's promoted the holiday displays in its newspaper advertising. Full-page ads might include a reminder to customers to visit the windows but sometimes the window got its very own announcement. A 1959 *Tribune* advertisement asked "Have you enjoyed Breuner's mechanical window?" The same ad promoted a jazzy new Christmas sight: "Don't miss seeing our Ski-Jumping Santa Claus on our street floor with Santa leaping from the mezzanine." How's that for holiday spirit?

Beginning in 1953 the displays were built by the Gaffney family of Pope Valley. Ken and Marjory Gaffney had been in the display business in Fruitvale since the 1930s, designing and building seasonal window displays for local department stores.

The two final years of Breuner's Christmas displays were a complete departure from the ones that had gone before. In 1974 and 1975 the displays featured only animals, not peo-

ple. 1974's window was titled "Christmas Eve in the Forest." Designed and built by the Gaffneys, it featured 30 animals, 23 of which were mechanized. A store spokesperson said at the time that the change from human- to animal-populated displays was an effort to engage younger audiences. She called the animal theme "timeless" and said that "the nostalgia scenes each year appealed less and less to the younger people."

What happened to the Breuner's display windows after they were discontinued in the 1970s? The component parts returned to Gaffney Display and have been used and reused for years in the animated displays the company continues to create for fairs. As recently as 2011 the old Breuner's pieces were on display in Sacramento's Grebitus jewelry stores livening their Christmas windows with the old animated rocking horses and elves. ■



A BREUNER'S POSTCARD of the window display

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM